# **Lessons 131-140**

The Ministry of Jesus







Answers Bible Curriculum

Unit 14 • Adult Student

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For more information write: Answers in Genesis PO Box 510 Hebron, KY 41048 Printed in China.

## **Contents**

Introduction to Answers Bible Curriculum
131 Jesus Overcomes Temptation
Prepare to Learn
132 Jesus Calls Followers13
Prepare to Learn
133 Jesus' First Signs19
Prepare to Learn
134 Jesus Teaches Nicodemus25
Prepare to Learn
135 Jesus Offers Living Water31
Prepare to Learn
136 Jesus Is Rejected in Nazareth37
Prepare to Learn
137 Jesus Cares for the Sick43
Prepare to Learn

138 Jesus Calls Matthew	49
Prepare to Learn	
Studying God's Word	
139 Jesus Heals on the Sabbath	55
<b>139 Jesus Heals on the Sabbath</b>	
	56



# Introduction to Answers Bible Curriculum

The purpose of John's ministry was to prepare the way for the coming Messiah. His culminating act was to identify Jesus as the Christ, baptizing him who did not need to repent.

After Jesus was baptized by John and supernaturally affirmed, he was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, where he was tempted by Satan. After overcoming temptation, Jesus returned to Galilee to gather his first disciples.

As he began his public ministry, Jesus revealed his authority through signs and miracles. Jesus' first year of ministry was characterized by private encounters and miraculous healings. Initially, most people followed Jesus with excitement and curiosity, but as he taught, the hostility of the religious leaders increased.

Adult • Unit 14 Introduction • 5

We encourage you to read the Prepare to Learn section before class each week. This will provide important background information, so that you will get more from each lesson.

6 • Introduction Adult • Unit 14



# Jesus Overcomes Temptation

#### Lesson Focus

Jesus was led into the wilderness by the Spirit where he was tempted by the devil. Jesus was fully man, and as such he was tempted in the same way man is, but without sin. In response to each temptation, Jesus quoted the Word of God, fending off the temptations of Satan.

#### Key Passages

Matthew 4:1–17; Hebrews 2:17–18, 4:14–16; 1 Corinthians 10:13

#### What You Will Learn

- · How Jesus overcame the temptation of Satan
- How temptations come to us and how we can resist

#### Memory Verse

**Isaiah 61:1** The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound.

Adult • Unit 14 Lesson 131 • 7

## Prepare to Learn

#### Scriptural Background

Immediately after his baptism, Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, where he was tempted by the devil (Matthew 4:1). Again, we see Jesus identifying with those he came to save. Jesus was fully man, and as such he was tempted in the same way man is. Because of this, we are assured that this sinless Godman—our Redeemer—is one who can empathize with our weaknesses because he was tempted in all points, yet without sin (Hebrews 4:15).

The first specific temptation recorded for us came after Jesus had fasted from food for 40 days. The tempter suggested Jesus command the stones to become bread. The ploy was to get Jesus to doubt his Father's provision and to meet a legitimate need himself. Jesus answered, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4). Jesus refused to use his divine power in response to Satan's temptation. He was identifying with us as humans, who do not have his miraculous power but do have the Holy Spirit to empower us in obedience.

Then the devil tested Jesus again. This time he quoted from Psalm 91:11–12 as he took Jesus to a high pinnacle on the temple and suggested if Jesus were really God, he could jump off and God would send his angels to protect him (Matthew 4:5–6). Again, Jesus responded with

the Word of God, "It is written, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test'" (Matthew 4:7).

The third test came on a high mountain where the devil promised Jesus all the kingdoms of the world if he would bow down and worship him. Jesus again stood firm on the Word of God, saying, "It is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve" (Matthew 4:8-10). Jesus' response came from Deuteronomy 6 where Moses showed Israel the promised land and warned them not to become satisfied with possessing the land of Canaan without God. Satan had no true authority to offer the rule over the kingdoms, and Jesus rightly acknowledged the true authority to rule came from his Father.

Jesus' response to these temptations gives us a model of how to successfully overcome temptations by God's grace. Jesus responded to the devil by relying on God and his Word. We must learn to respond in the same way. By saturating our hearts and minds with the truth, we will recognize temptations and lies that come at us in attempts to cause us to sin. We must have a firm grasp on the offensive weapon God has armed us with—the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God (Ephesians 6:17). This will give us the strength and power we need to turn from temptations as we encounter them.

8 • Lesson 131 Adult • Unit 14

#### Historical/Apologetics Background

Temptation has been a problem throughout the history of mankind. In fact, giving into temptation is what brought sin into the world. Satan, in the form of the serpent, tempted Eve to disobey God and his clear command not to eat the fruit. Eve was deceived and succumbed to the temptation. Since the fall, when Adam and Eve sinned, all of humanity has faced temptation and given in to that temptation at some point. Cain was tempted to kill his brother—he failed (Genesis 4:8). Noah was tempted to drunkenness-he failed (Genesis 9:21). Abraham was tempted to lie about Sarah being his wife-he failed (Genesis 20:2). David was tempted to adultery and murder-he failed (2 Samuel 11:4, 15). Peter was tempted to deny Jesus-he failed (Mark 14:71). You have been tempted to sin and failed.

But there was one person who did not fail—Jesus Christ. Not only did he not fail, but he also triumphed over temptation by the power of the Holy Spirit. Many aspects of the life of Jesus demonstrate his humanity. He was born, he grew in wisdom and stature (Luke 2:40), he learned obedience (Hebrews 5:8), and he was even baptized in the same manner as sinful man (Matthew 3:13-17). He can empathize with our weakness because he was tempted just as we are (Hebrews 4:14-16). Jesus identified himself with every person who has ever walked the earth.

That common experience of temptation is described by Paul in

1 Corinthians 10:13. God's Word offers hope to overcome the temptations that we find in the world and in our own flesh (James 1:13-15). As believers, we can escape these temptations by the power of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit enables believers to obey the commands of God and escape temptation, looking to the everlasting pleasures of Christ above the fleeting pleasures of sin. Additionally, it was the Holy Spirit who moved the holy men of God to deliver the Scriptures to us (2 Peter 1:19-21). It is from these Spirit-given words that we know the will of God and his commands to us. When temptations come, we can fight them with the words of God we have stored up in our hearts, that we might not sin against him (Psalm 119:11).

Iesus was able to use the words of Scripture to fend off the temptations of Satan. He had the words of truth from Scripture ready. We should follow his example. But how can we use God's Word when temptation comes upon us if we do not have it stored in our minds? Memorizing Scripture, meditating on Scripture, sitting under sound teaching, and personal study are all important aspects of living a godly life and being prepared to face temptations. Let us all strive to be prepared so that when we draw the sword of the Spirit, the words of God will be used skillfully in our hands under the divine guidance and power of the Holy Spirit.

Adult • Unit 14 Lesson 131 • 9

Studying God	'S	Wo	rd
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	What weapons do you have ready for battling temptation?
	Take notes as you study the following passages.
S	atan Tempts Jesus
	Matthew 4:1–17
Je	esus Is Our High Priest
	Hebrews 4:14-16
	Hebrews 2:17–18
	1 Corinthians 10:13

#### Personal Battle Plan Activity

For each of the following categories, write a short summary of how you could grow in this area to become more like Christ in battling temptation. Identify other passages of Scripture that could help you as you continue fighting against sin.

10 • Lesson 131 Adult • Unit 14

- Reading the Word (Job 23:12)
   Studying the Word (2 Timothy 2:15)
   Memorizing the Word (Psalm 119:11)
- 4. Walking in the Spirit (Galatians 5:16-26)
- 5. Walking with other believers (Galatians 6:1-5)
- 6. Whom can you share this plan with to encourage you to pursue your preparations for battling temptation?

#### Application

1. Have you ever been tempted by Satan?

Adult • Unit 14 Lesson 131 • 11

2.	Satan has probably never physically appeared to you, carried you to a temple, and goaded you to jump off. So, what would a trial of temptation look like in your life?
3.	What are some ways to fight temptation?
4.	How can memorizing Scripture help you to fight the temptations you face in this world? Do you have any verses you use to combat specific temptations?
5.	What is the danger of quoting only part of a verse or pulling one verse out of context to prove some point?
6.	What have you learned about your Savior today that stirs you up to love him more?
F	Prayer Requests

12 • Lesson 131 Adult • Unit 14



## **Jesus Calls Followers**

#### Lesson Focus

As Jesus began his public ministry, he called disciples to follow him. These disciples were convinced that Jesus was the Messiah and ran to tell friends and family that they had found him. In their enthusiasm to learn from Jesus, they left their old lives behind and followed him.

#### Key Passages

John 1:29-51; Matthew 4:12-22, 9:9-13

#### What You Will Learn

- How the first disciples began to follow Jesus
- What Jesus expected of his first disciples

#### Memory Verse

**Isaiah 61:1** The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound.

Adult • Unit 14 Lesson 132 • 13

### Prepare to Learn

#### Scriptural Background

The word disciple means a student, a pupil, and a follower. The first disciples Jesus called were followers of John the Baptist. John the Baptist had been preaching to the people for months. John was highly revered by the people of Israel as a prophet. So, what would their reaction be as he looked up at Jesus and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God" (John 1:36)? John's disciples heard the announcement, and they followed Jesus—just like that. They left their mentor, John the Baptist, and followed Jesus. One of these disciples was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. The Bible says that Andrew went to find his brother to tell him that he had found the Messiah, and they both went to Jesus (John 1:40–42). Jesus also called to Philip, "Follow me" (John 1:43). What did Philip do? He went and found Nathanael and told him he had found the one whom Moses and the prophets had written of-Jesus of Nazareth (John 1:45). Nathanael and Philip went after Jesus.

We later read of Andrew and Peter, who had apparently returned to fishing after their initial meeting with Jesus and accompanying him on his trip to Cana, committing to follow Jesus. Jesus walked by the Sea of Galilee and saw them. He said, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." The Bible says they immediately left their nets and followed him (Matthew 4:18–20).

As Jesus went on, he saw two other brothers, James and John, the

sons of Zebedee. They, too, were fishermen. The Bible tells us they were mending their nets when Jesus called to them. They immediately left the boat and their father and followed Jesus (Matthew 4:22).

While he was preaching throughout Galilee, Jesus saw Matthew, a tax collector, and said to him, "Follow me." Matthew rose and followed him (Matthew 9:9). Matthew invited Jesus to his home for dinner, where others who did not know Jesus could come and meet him (Mark 2:15).

how the kingdom advances. People meet the Savior, and their hearts are moved to call on friends and family to come and meet him as well. These men called by Jesus were not spectacular in any way. They were simple men and had no influence with important people. They often faltered in their faith, struggling and doubting God. Yet God used them to influence the world for all eternity with the truth that they witnessed in Jesus Christ. We can learn from this. The Bible tells us that God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise; he has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things that are strong (1 Corinthians 1:27-28). Likewise, we are weak and foolish. We are called as believers to follow the examples of these early disciples. We are called to spend our lives declaring the truth of Christ to others.

14 • Lesson 132 Adult • Unit 14

#### Historical/Apologetics Background

If you read the accounts of the calling of the disciples in Matthew 4, Mark 1, Luke 4, and John 1, you might get a bit confused about how and when Jesus called the disciples to follow him. But if we slow down and carefully organize our thoughts and compare each of the passages, the apparent contradictions disappear. But that takes some effort—effort far too few people are willing to exert.

Let's look at each of the Gospels and determine the order of the events of the baptism of Jesus, the temptation in the wilderness, and the calling of the first disciples. Look for additional notes in your Bible that will help you: footnotes, margin notes, headings above passages that connect the various accounts. Remember, the Gospels give different perspectives on what Jesus did, but they are all true.

Synoptics: Iohn the **Baptist** repentance preached (Matthew 3:1-12; Mark 1:4-8; Luke 3:1-20); baptized (Matthew was 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-22); Jesus was tempted in the wilderness (Matthew 4:1-11; Mark 1:12-13; Luke 4:1-13); Jesus preached in Galilee (Matthew 4:12-17; Mark 1:14-15; Luke 4:14-30); Jesus called Simon, Andrew, James, and John (Matthew 4:18-22; Mark 1:16-20; Luke 5:1-11).

John's Gospel: John the Baptist preached (1:19–28); Jesus was baptized (1:29–34); Andrew, Simon, and a third disciple followed Jesus (1:35–42); Philip and Nathanael followed Jesus (1:43–51); Jesus and the disciples traveled to Cana, and the

water was turned to wine (2:1–10); Jesus and the disciples traveled to Capernaum (2:11–12); Jesus and the disciples traveled to Jerusalem, and Jesus cleared the temple (2:13–25); Jesus talked with Nicodemus (3:1–21); Jesus' disciples were baptizing (3:22–36); Jesus and the disciples traveled through Samaria (4:1–42); Jesus traveled to Galilee (4:43ff).

John gives us a lot more detail and shows that there are a lot of events that happened between the time the first five disciples began following Jesus and the setting aside of the nets to become fishers of men. Many of the events described by John must have happened between Matthew 4:11 and 4:12. Specifically, we know that John the Baptist had not been imprisoned in John 3:23-24, so the first five disciples had been following Jesus for quite some time before the calling from the seashore. There is a reasonable explanation for the apparent conflict if we take the time to carefully and prayerfully study the text.

Sadly, even when we can explain these ideas to skeptics, they still refuse to accept the spiritual truths that are rooted in these historical events. John the Baptist called people to repent and trust in "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). May we boldly proclaim the gospel, trusting that God will use our preaching to open the eyes of those who hear so that they, too, may know that all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are found in Christ (Colossians 2:1–3).

## Studying God's Word

	How did Jesus gain his first disciples?
	Take notes as you study the following passages.
D	isciples Follow Jesus John 1:29–51

#### Are You an Evangelist? Activity

Right before Jesus left the earth, he gave what we commonly call the Great Commission. He called his followers to spread the good news. But who should be doing this work of spreading the good news now that those disciples are dead and gone? Let's look to the Bible for an answer.

- 1. Are you a disciple of Christ? (John 8:12, 8:31–32)
- 2. When Andrew knew he had found the Messiah, what did he do? (John 1:40–42)
- 3. When Philip knew that Jesus was the Messiah, what did he immediately do? (John 1:45)
- 4. Where are repentance and forgiveness of sins to be proclaimed? (Luke 24:46–49)
- 5. Who are supposed to be made into disciples? (Matthew 28:19)

16 • Lesson 132 Adult • Unit 14

- 6. What are the disciples to be taught? (Matthew 28:20)
- 7. Does teaching all that Jesus commanded include sharing the gospel with people who have not heard?
- 8. If the church at Corinth is to imitate Paul (1 Corinthians 11:1), to what ministry does Paul call the members of the church at Corinth? (2 Corinthians 5:16–21)
- 9. Can you think of any passages of Scripture that teach that some disciples are exempt from making disciples by sharing the good news?
- 10. Are you called to share the good news of the gospel and make disciples?

#### Fishers of Men

Matthew 4:12–22

Matthew 9:9–13

#### Application

1. Where has there been a shift in your thinking as a result of our lesson today?

Adult • Unit 14 Lesson 132 • 17

2.	How does understanding what Jesus gave up and then endured
	to make you a disciple encourage you to share that good news
	with others?

- 3. What is the difference between making a disciple and discipleship or discipling someone else?
- 4. If you are a disciple of Jesus, what hinders you from telling others about his offer to free them from their sin? What can you do to begin overcoming this hesitation?
- 5. What questions has this lesson raised in your mind, and how can you go about answering those questions?

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18 • Lesson 132 Adult • Unit 14



# Jesus' First Signs

#### Lesson Focus

Jesus performed his first miracle at a wedding in Cana, turning water into wine. Then he traveled to Jerusalem, where he found merchants and money-changers in the temple. He became angry and drove them out with a whip. When asked for a sign of his authority, he foretold of his crucifixion and resurrection.

#### Key Passages

John 2:1-22; Matthew 21:12-17

#### What You Will Learn

- · Jesus' first miracle at the wedding in Cana
- · Why Jesus cleansed the temple

#### Memory Verse

**Isaiah 61:1** The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound.

Adult • Unit 14 Lesson 133 • 19

## Prepare to Learn

#### Scriptural Background

About a week after John declared Jesus to be the Lamb of God (John 1:24), Jesus and his new disciples went to Cana in Galilee. There they attended a wedding, along with Jesus' mother (John 2:1–2). When the wine ran out, Mary brought the matter to the attention of her son. Jesus took the opportunity to make a point: he was not there to do miraculous signs for the benefit of people; he was there to fulfill the will of his Father. He was on the Father's schedule (John 2:4).

This comment must not have been meant as a refusal, because Mary turned to the servants and told them to do whatever Jesus instructed (John 2:5). Obeying his words, the servants filled six jars with water. These were stone jars that the Jews used for ritual washings. Then they drew some out and took it to the master of the feast. When he tasted it, it was wine. And it was better quality wine than what had already been served (John 2:9-10). Only the servants and the disciples had witnessed the sign Jesus had just done. He had shown his glory, proving himself to be the Son of God, and the disciples believed (John 2:11).

Not long after the wedding in Cana, Jesus and his disciples traveled to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. Jesus entered the temple where he encountered money-changers and merchants selling animals (John 2:14). Those selling animals were

there to provide a service to God's people. The merchants were providing animals for sacrifice during feast time. This was a convenience for Jews traveling great distances. They would not need to bring livestock with them; they could buy the necessary sacrificial animals right at the temple. The money-changers were also there for a service. A tax was collected from every Israelite 20 years and older (Exodus 30:11–16). When Jews came to Jerusalem to pay their temple tax, they could only pay it with a special coin, the half-shekel. It was the only silver coin at that time without the image of a pagan emperor; therefore, the Jews saw it as the only coin acceptable to God. The money-changers exchanged unacceptable coins for these shekels. While our text does not mention it, these animal sellers and money-changers were probably overcharging the pilgrims and extracting a hefty profit.

When Jesus entered the temple, he was enraged at what he saw. God's house, his temple, should have been a house of prayer, worship, and devotion, but they had made it into a house of trade. Jesus made a whip of cords and drove them out of the temple, overturning their tables and pouring out their coins. He also verbally rebuked them for the way they were dishonoring God and his temple (John 2:15–16).

20 • Lesson 133 Adult • Unit 14

#### Historical/Apologetics Background

Throughout his Gospel, John described the miracles of Iesus as signs. Interestingly, John never used dunamis ("power"), the most common word for miracle. Instead, John used the word semeion ("sign"), pointing to the spiritual significance of these supernatural acts. John structured his book around these signs, of which the account in Cana was the first (John 2:11). John wanted to emphasize not the powerful work itself, but the meaning behind it. In this case, John gives us the purpose of the sign: to reveal Jesus' glory to his disciples. In other words, this was the first sign Jesus himself performed to demonstrate that he was the Son of God, full of glory and power. And the disciples believed.

John said this was the first sign of Christ. This is significant because it means he could not have performed miracles prior to this. This is a clear apologetic for those who claim Jesus performed miracles as a child. Islam teaches that Jesus spoke from the cradle to protect Mary from slander (Quran 3:46; 19:30-33) and that he created a living bird out of clay (Quran 3:49). Some of these ideas in the Quran were based on pseudepigraphal works, like the Infancy Gospel of Thomas, which imagines an entire childhood for Jesus. In this work of fiction, five-year-old Jesus redirected the flowing of a brook with his voice and created sparrows from clay. When another child disrupted the pools he had formed, he got angry and cursed the boy, who withered

like a dead tree. In one story, Jesus killed a boy—just by speaking—for bumping into him as he was running.

Whenever we hear incredible claims, we must check them against Scripture. We can confidently point to John 2:11 to refute the idea of child-hood miracles of Jesus. The miracle at Cana was the first of his signs. Also, the true Gospels demonstrate that Jesus was never interested in abusing his power or glorifying himself; rather, he was interested in glorifying his Father. It is contrary to Scripture and the character of Jesus to claim he did miracles while he was a child.

Additionally, we can compare these alleged outbursts of anger with the scriptural account of Jesus cleansing the temple. The Infancy Gospel of Thomas shows Jesus as a vindictive, impulsive terror who flaunted his power, rebelled against his elders, and was quick to anger. But we see a different picture in the Bible. He did not rebel against authority but submitted to his parents (Luke 2:51). In John's inspired Gospel (2:13–21), we see that Jesus is righteous in his anger, not vindictive. He performed miracles to bring glory to the Father, not himself.

Our God is a loving God, slow to anger and abounding in mercy (Joel 2:13). Our Savior is blameless (Hebrews 4:15) and powerful (Colossians 1:15–20), yet humble and obedient (Philippians 2:5–11). Let us stand on the Word of God as we proclaim, like John the Baptist, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).

Adult • Unit 14 Lesson 133 • 21

## Studying God's Word

	Is anger always a sin?
	Take notes as you study the following passages.
J	esus' First Sign
	John 2:1–12
J	esus Cleanses the Temple John 2:13–22
	Matthew 21:12–17

#### Righteous Anger Activity

In John 2, it is clear that Jesus was angry when he cleansed the temple. The question we need to answer is whether or not anger is always a sin. Examine the following passages to gain a biblical perspective on anger. For each passage, note what you learn about anger.

Psalm 7:11–13 —

22 • Lesson 133 Adult • Unit 14

- Nahum 1:2-3 —
- Matthew 2:16 —
- Mark 3:5 —
- Ephesians 4:26-27 —
- James 1:19-20 —

Based on this small sampling, how would you describe anger from a biblical perspective?

#### **Application**

1. How do the ideas we have studied today help you to love and honor Jesus as your Savior and example?

Adult • Unit 14 Lesson 133 • 23

- 2. Does the fact that Jesus chased the money-changers and animal sellers out of the temple mean that we should not allow the sale of anything on Sunday or in the church building?
- 3. Do you tend to lean toward avoiding confrontation over sin and not even getting angry at sin, or do you tend to get angry and lash out in a sinful way? How can you seek to find a balance between these responses and glorify God in your actions?
- 4. In light of the two different accounts of Jesus cleansing the temple, how could you answer a skeptic who thinks the accounts contradict one another?

# Prayer Requests

24 • Lesson 133 Adult • Unit 14



## Jesus Teaches Nicodemus

#### Lesson Focus

Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews, visited Jesus at night to learn more about his teaching. Jesus told him that he must be born again, born of the Spirit, to see the kingdom of God. Jesus also explained his mission—to be lifted up so that all who look to him and believe can have eternal life.

#### Key Passages

John 3:1-21, 6:38-40, 17:1-5; Philippians 2:5-11

#### What You Will Learn

- What it means to be born again
- Who receives eternal life
- Jesus' mission in coming to earth

#### Memory Verse

**Isaiah 61:1** The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound.

Adult • Unit 14 Lesson 134 • 25

## Prepare to Learn

#### Scriptural Background

Nicodemus, a Pharisee, came to Jesus at night to question him. Some believe that he came in secret because he was afraid of the other Jewish leaders. Jesus had just cleansed the temple and was doing great signs in Jerusalem (John 2:23). It is reasonable to expect the Jewish leaders were beginning to resent him. Nicodemus greeted Jesus with a title of respect, "Rabbi," and acknowledged his great signs. Nicodemus admitted that Jesus must be from God, and Jesus responded by telling him that he must be born again to see the kingdom of God (John 3:3). He explained that to be born again is a work of the Spirit, not of the flesh (John 3:5–8).

Jesus then pointed to the serpent that Moses lifted up in the wilderness to foreshadow how he would be lifted up on the cross to die (John 3:14-15, 8:28, 12:32). Nicodemus was an expert in the law. He would have been familiar with the Old Testament allusion. The bronze serpent was raised on a pole, and any Israelite who had been bitten by a deadly snake, if they looked up to the bronze serpent, would be healed (Numbers 21:4-9). The serpent was a picture of the salvation that Jesus would bring. He confirmed this meaning by teaching that eternal life comes through belief in God's Son (John 3:14-17).

Next, Jesus spoke of light and darkness, a symbol that continues

throughout Jesus' ministry (John 8:12, 12:46) and the work of the apostles (Romans 13:12; 1 John 1:5-10). Light exposes things that are hidden by darkness. Those who love wickedness love the darkness, because their works are hidden (John 3:20). But Jesus came to be the light, to expose our sin, so that we might repent and believe in him (Mark 1:15). This conversation with Nicodemus is the first recorded discourse of Jesus' ministry, and his message was the gospel.

Sometimes, like Nicodemus, when we think of Jesus' life, we first think of the miracles he performed-feeding multitudes (Matthew 14:13-21); healing the crippled, blind, and sick (Mark 2:1-12, 5; John 9:1-7); and controlling nature (Matthew 8:23-27, 14:22-33). But his mission was not merely to rid the world of hunger, pain, sickness, or sadness. As Jesus explained to Nicodemus, God's plan for Jesus' life, death, and resurrection was about saving the lost (John 3:16; Luke 19:10). He would save his people from their sins (Matthew 1:21). The Apostle Paul understood this and stated it plainly in his letter to Timothy: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" (1 Timothy 1:15). He came to save sinners, and the salvation he offered would bring eternal life (John 3:15, 5:24, 10:28).

#### Historical/Apologetics Background

Jesus' primary reason for coming to earth was to glorify his Father. Even as a boy, Jesus spoke of this to Mary and Joseph in the temple when he said, "Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" (Luke 2:49). And when the hour for his death had come, he prayed that the Father would glorify him so that he could glorify the Father (John 17:1). Likewise, Jesus prayed, "Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? But for this purpose I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name" (John 12:27-28).

Though Jesus was God from the beginning and never ceased to be God, he willingly set aside his own glory, "taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men ... he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross" (Philippians 2:7–8). Jesus glorified the Father by finishing the work that the Father had given him to do—even unto death (John 17:4).

To glorify God means to extol him, worship him in the splendor of holiness, and submit to him in humble obedience (1 Chronicles 16; John 17:4). God himself described his glory: "The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness" (Exodus 34:6). God's glory is manifested through his marvelous attributes. And God, in his grace, chose to display these attributes to mankind through the work

of his Son in salvation. Jesus is God's glory on display.

If we were to seek our own glory, we would be called arrogant. So, if God seeks his own glory, doesn't that make him a narcissist? This is a frequently misunderstood subject, chiefly because we forget the difference between the infinite, eternal, holy God and ourselves, finite and fallen creatures.

The Westminster Shorter Catechism asks, "What is the chief end of man?" The answer given is: "Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever." Indeed, our failure or refusal to worship and honor God would be idolatry. If mankind's highest good and greatest aim in life is the glory of God, how can God have any other aim? If idolatry is worshipping anyone or anything as god, instead of the true God, then for God to seek any other end than his own glory would amount to idolatry on God's part. Since he is the eternal, infinite Creator, he deserves all glory, so for him to seek his own glory is not selfishness, but entirely proper.

God created us for his own glory (Isaiah 43:6–7), our good works are so others will give God glory (Matthew 5:16), everything we do is to be done for God's glory (1 Corinthians 10:31), and God's plan is to fill the earth with the knowledge of his glory (Habakkuk 2:14). God is glorious, and he wants his fame—his glory—to be seen and enjoyed by his creatures. Jesus' goal was to glorify his Father, and that must be our goal, too.



	Why did Jesus come to earth?
	Take notes as you study the following passages.
N	icodemus Comes to Jesus
	John 3:1–21
J€	esus' Mission
	John 6:38-40
	John 17:1–5
	Philippians 2:51–11

#### Glory to God Activity

The glory of God is on display throughout creation and in the pages of Scripture. To glorify God is to acknowledge who he is in all his fullness. What do each of the following verses teach about the glory of God?

Genesis 1:26–27

28 • Lesson 134 Adult • Unit 14

- Isaiah 43:6-7
- Matthew 5:16
- Romans 11:33–36
- 1 Corinthians 10:31
- 2 Corinthians 4:5–6

In his book *Godless*, Dan Barker of the Freedom from Religion Foundation wrote, "Speaking for myself, if the Bible's heaven and hell exist, I would choose hell. Having to spend eternity pretending to worship a petty tyrant who tortures those who insult his authority would be more hellish than baking in eternal flames. There is no way such a bully can earn my admiration."

- 1. What errors about God's character are evident in Dan Barker's statement?
- 2. Based on the passages above, how would you seek to correct this misunderstanding about God, especially about the glory due to God?

#### **Application**

1. What have you learned (or gained a deeper appreciation for) with respect to the mission of Jesus on the earth?

Adult • Unit 14 Lesson 134 • 29

F	Prayer Requests
5.	Where do you see yourself falling short in glorifying God, and how can others in this room help you to change so that God may be glorified more fully in your life?
4.	What are some of the false views of Jesus' mission on the earth (social well-being, healing of all diseases, prosperity, etc.)?
3.	In what ways can our lives bring glory to God?
2.	What have you learned about Jesus today that you can share with someone else, pointing them to forgiveness in Christ?

30 • Lesson 134 Adult • Unit 14



# Jesus Offers Living Water

#### Lesson Focus

As Jesus left the area around Jerusalem, he purposefully traveled through Samaria. He met a woman at a well and spoke the gospel to her. He used the symbol of water to share spiritual truth with her. He revealed himself as the Messiah, and the woman accepted his message and immediately ran to tell the rest of the town.

#### Key Passages

John 3:22-36, 4:1-45

#### What You Will Learn

- · How Jesus used water to share spiritual truth
- For whom Jesus' message was intended

#### Memory Verse

**Isaiah 61:1** The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound.

Adult • Unit 14 Lesson 135 • 31

## Prepare to Learn

#### Scriptural Background

After the Passover celebration, Jesus withdrew to the Judean countryside. People followed him because of the signs he had done in Jerusalem, and his disciples began baptizing the new followers. John the Baptist was also continuing his ministry at this time, but more people were following Jesus than John. John's disciples were concerned, seeing Jesus' ministry as competition. But John knew that his ministry was one of preparation for the Christ. He exalted Jesus, rejoicing for him as a friend rejoices with a bridegroom (John 3:29). He clearly understood his role in God's plan, humbly proclaiming, "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30).

John's ministry had been a bold one; he had spoken out against Herod, and the tetrarch arrested him (Luke 3:19–20). When Jesus heard that John was arrested, he left Judea to return to Galilee (Matthew 4:12). But John records an interesting detail: "And he had to pass through Samaria" (John 4:4). He goes on to record another private encounter of Jesus, this one with a Samaritan woman.

Jesus met the woman at Jacob's well near the town of Sychar (John 4:5–7). He was weary from his journey, and he sat to rest at the well as the disciples went into town to buy food (John 4:8). The woman came to the well alone in the heat of the day (John 4:6), which was unusual. This

seems to suggest that she was an outcast of society. Jesus addressed the woman, which was contrary to custom for several reasons, most notably because of a cultural hostility between Jews and Samaritans. But Jesus was not concerned with social customs; he was concerned with the woman's spiritual state. He turned his simple request for water into an offer of eternal life. Like Nicodemus, the woman mistook the meaning of Jesus' analogy, thinking in physical terms rather than spiritual.

Jesus immediately turned the conversation to her history, demonstrating his omniscience and illuminating her need for a Savior. Recognizing that he must be a prophet, she asked him about religious practices, another disagreement between Jews and Samaritans. Jesus explained that God was more interested in true worship than where worship occurred. The woman knew that the Messiah was coming and that he would teach them truth, and Jesus told her that he was the one she was waiting for (John 4:26).

The woman left her water jar and ran back to the town to tell the others about her encounter with Jesus (John 4:28–29). The people believed her and came out to meet him. At their request, Jesus stayed with them for two days. Because of his teaching, many believed (John 4:39–42).

32 • Lesson 135 Adult • Unit 14

#### Historical/Apologetics Background

Scholars have suggested various reasons that Jesus had to travel through Samaria (John 4:4). Some suggest that the road through Samaria was the shortest route to Galilee; Jesus went that way because it was faster. Some point to the arrest of John the Baptist as the reasoning. If Herod was living in Perea, which was likely, then it may have been dangerous to use the eastern route to Galilee via Perea. Regardless of whether any of these scenarios hold any truth, we can be sure that Jesus had to go through Samaria so that he could meet the woman at the well of Sychar. In fact, he told his disciples as much when they urged him to eat. He told them that his food, his sustenance, was to do the will of his Father (John 4:34). He explained that the time of the harvest was at hand, and he was already gathering fruit for eternal life (John 4:36). The woman and many Samaritans from her town believed in Jesus, accepting his gift of living water that wells up for eternal life (John 4:14).

By understanding historical context, we can draw more significance from this encounter. The Jews and the Samaritans did not get along. During the time of the divided kingdom, northern Israel named Samaria as her capital. Jerusalem remained the capital of Judah. The Jews believed that God had chosen Jerusalem as the place for his temple, where he would dwell and be worshipped. The Samaritans did not believe in the full canon of Scripture;

they believed only the Pentateuch was from God. Because of this, they believed Mount Gerizim, believed to be the first place Abraham built an altar (Genesis 12:6–7), was the correct place for worshipping God. Jesus pointed out that the debate was moot, since the time was coming when neither place would be central to the worship of God.

The Jews also despised the Samaritans for cultural reasons. The Samaritans were viewed as defiled half-breeds. When the Assyrians conquered Israel, they deported many Jews and brought in many non-Jews to inhabit the land. The remaining Israelites intermarried with these foreigners, resulting in a population of Samaritans who were part ethnic Jew and part foreigner. As the Jews returned to the area after the exile, tensions developed between the two groups.

intentionally **Jesus** traveled through the region of Samaria in order to interact with the despised people, bringing them the hope of salvation and eternal life. This account confirms that the gospel of Jesus Christ is not just for the Jews, but for every people, tribe, nation, and language (Revelation 7:9). It didn't matter that the Samaritans were of a different ethnicity or had a different culture and religious practice. They needed a Savior, and they believed in Jesus as the Savior of the world (John 4:42), just as he claimed to be (John 4:26).

Adult • Unit 14 Lesson 135 • 33

Jesus in proclaiming his gospel to ran to share the truth with others. all people, regardless of background. He didn't get caught up in cultural differences or theological debates.

Let us follow the example of Likewise, the woman immediately May we be as intentional in sharing the hope of eternal life.



	Why did Jesus travel through Samaria?
	Take notes as you study the following passages.
Jo	hn Exalts Jesus
	John 3:22–36
Th	ne Samaritan Woman
	John 4:1-45

#### Timeline of Christ Activity

Skim through the book of John and use the space below to make an ordered list. Find the four Passover markers and note other references that mark movement of time or location. Then fill in the timeline on the provided worksheet.

#### **Application**

1. In what ways did the account of the Samaritan woman demonstrate the deity of Jesus?

Adult • Unit 14 Lesson 135 • 35

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6.	Are there any types of people you tend to avoid sharing with? What types and why?
5.	How should Jesus' approach to the woman at the well inform our encounters?
4.	What are things that get in the way of the appropriate response to Jesus?
3.	Compare the responses of Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman. How should we respond to Jesus?
2.	How did we see his humanity?



## Jesus Is Rejected in Nazareth

#### Lesson Focus

As Jesus began to teach throughout Galilee, those in his hometown of Nazareth refused to believe his message, recognizing him only as the son of Joseph. Jesus encountered many others who believed he was the Son of God. Some gladly accepted his message and began to follow him, while others refused to trust in him for salvation.

#### Key Passages

Luke 4:14-37; John 4:46-54; James 2:19

#### What You Will Learn

- Why Jesus was rejected in his hometown
- The difference between believing in who Jesus is and trusting in Jesus for salvation

#### Memory Verse

**John 3:36** Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.

Adult • Unit 14 Lesson 136 • 37

## Prepare to Learn

#### Scriptural Background

After the arrest of John the Baptist, Jesus returned to Galilee and continued to minister throughout the region for the next year. As he went, he proclaimed, "Repent and believe in the gospel" (Mark 1:15). His message was one that demands a response, as it is today. In the first few accounts from his time in Galilee, we see examples of the two possible responses: rejection or acceptance with belief.

When Jesus taught in his hometown of Nazareth, the people rejected his message. He claimed to be the Messiah (Luke 4:21), pointing to the prophecy of Isaiah (Luke 4:18-19). The people recognized Jesus as Joseph's son (Luke 4:22). They had known him all his (earthly) life, grown up with him, and studied with him in the synagogue. And now he was claiming to be the Messiah? Jesus confronted their unbelief, refusing to give them a sign but illustrating a point from the Old Testament. He spoke of Elijah and Elisha, two of the most well-known prophets. Both were known for being empowered by the Spirit of the Lord and doing incredible signs. But both experienced times where their own countrymen rejected their message and God sent them to show grace to Gentiles instead (Luke 4:25-27; 1 Kings 17:9; 2 Kings 5:1-14). God did not send them to their kindred, but to foreigners. Jesus' message did not sit well with the Nazarenes, and the Jews were filled with wrath and attempted

to drive him out of town and throw him off a cliff (Luke 4:28–29). But Jesus miraculously escaped (Luke 4:30) and went about Galilee, preaching the gospel. The people of Nazareth did not believe Jesus was the Messiah, rejected his message, and responded with violent hostility.

Although there are many accounts in Scripture where Jesus was rejected, there were also many who accepted his message. The official from Capernaum was an example of one who believed in Jesus and his message. The official heard that Jesus had returned to Galilee, and so he set off to meet him. His son was deathly ill, and he wanted Jesus to heal him (John 4:46-47). Jesus told him, "Go; your son will live," and the man believed him (John 4:50). He came because he believed that Jesus could perform great works. He left because he trusted in Jesus to provide healing. He acted on his faith, and his son lived. In fact, he received reports that his son had become well at the exact time that Jesus had spoken to him (John 4:51–53). He believed, and because of his testimony, so did his household. This man responded like the Samaritan woman at the well. He believed in Jesus, trusted his message, placed his faith in him, and shared this truth with others.

There are really only two options—reject Jesus and his teachings or embrace them—and the consequences are eternal.

38 • Lesson 136 Adult • Unit 14

#### Historical/Apologetics Background

There are many today who promote a pluralistic view of religion, teaching there are many paths up the mountain to God. Some people believe that Jesus was just a good teacher or a moral activist. Perhaps more common in our lives are those who acknowledge the truth about Jesus and pay lip-service to him, but have never truly trusted in him for salvation, repented, and submitted to Jesus as Lord. James 2:19 demonstrates the difference: "You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe and shudder!" Paul explains that salvation comes through believing the truth about Jesus and confessing him as Lord (Romans 10:9, 13). Knowing the truth doesn't save us. Doing righteous works doesn't save us (Romans 9:31–32). By the grace of God, we are saved through faith (Ephesians 2:8-9) when we repent, call upon the name of the Lord (Acts 2:21), and recognize that "there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

Jesus claimed to be the only way of salvation—the only way that sinners can be reconciled to God. He stated, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). He also said, "I told you that you would die in your sins, for unless you believe that I am he you will die in your sins" (John 8:24).

And consider this: "And I tell you, everyone who acknowledges me before men, the Son of Man also will acknowledge before the angels of God, but the one who denies me before men will be denied before the angels of God" (Luke 12:8–9).

As Christians, we must be careful not to water down the gospel or Jesus' claims in order to promote a feel-good Jesus or a Jesus who is here merely to fix our societal problems. And we must never change the gospel in order to be seen as culturally tolerant or inclusive. It is actually more loving to tell people of sin, judgment, and salvation through Christ than it is to leave them believing a false gospel, only to have them perish outside of Christ and his great salvation.

Jesus was not just a good moral teacher or example for us to follow. No, he was the eternal Son of God, the second person of the Trinity, who claimed to be the exclusive Savior of men and women. Jesus brings division. The gospel is a stumbling block to many. A misguided response to a false presentation of Jesus will not save anyone. But when people understand their need for a Savior because of their sin and then recognize Jesus as the sinless Son of God, crucified and raised, then by God's grace they can repent and trust that Jesus, the God-man, is mighty to save.

Have you trusted in the Lord for salvation?

Adult • Unit 14 Lesson 136 • 39



What is the difference him for salvation?	ce in believing in who Jesus is and trusting in
Take notes as you st	udy the following passages.
People Reject Jesu	IS
Luke 4:14-30	
Belief or Faith?	
John 4:46-54	
Luke 4:31–37	
James 2:19	
Romans 9:30–10:4	

#### Do You Believe? Activity

Read over the following passages and take some time to personally reflect on your faith. Are you truly in Christ and fully assured that he stands as the advocate for you before God? Will Jesus claim to know you on the day of judgment? After each passage, write down what you believe about the truths expressed in the passages with respect to your own submission to Jesus as Savior and Lord.

- 1. Matthew 7:15-27
- 2. John 3:16-21, 3:36
- 3. 1 John 2:3-6
- 4. In light of these passages, are you confident that you are believing in Christ alone for your salvation and that you have eternal life in him?
- 5. Are there any areas in your life where you are not really submitting to Christ as Lord and instead you are asking him to step off the throne and setting yourself in his place?

#### **Application**

1. In our current cultural setting, why is it so important to think through ideas like we have covered in the lesson today?

Adult • Unit 14 Lesson 136 • 41

2. In calling Jesus a good teacher or a good example, what are these people claiming about the moral character of Jesus since Jesus claimed to be God and the only Savior?

3. When people claim that all religions lead to the same place, like a mountain with many paths leading to the top where we will all find God, how can we respond to them and expose their wrong thinking?

4. If you know someone who claims to be a Christian, yet his life does not seem to indicate that he is walking on the narrow path to eternal life, how could you use today's lesson to help him consider how he is responding to Jesus?





# Jesus Cares for the Sick

#### Lesson Focus

Jesus was compassionate and loving toward people who were sick. He often showed his compassion by healing them. But this was not the main reason Jesus healed. Jesus healed so others would see the power of God in him, and God would be glorified. Not only did Jesus heal physical disease, but he was able to forgive sins—healing men's souls for all eternity!

#### Key Passages

Mark 1:29-34, 1:40-45, 2:1-12

#### What You Will Learn

- How Jesus has power over incurable ailments
- Two evidences that Jesus is God

#### Memory Verse

**John 3:36** Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.

Adult • Unit 14 Lesson 137 • 43

## Prepare to Learn

#### Scriptural Background

Jesus came to do his Father's will. Part of that mission was to present who he was and who had sent him. The miracles he performed confirmed these things. Jesus truly was God in the flesh, the Creator, the Messiah, and the Son of God.

The Gospel of Mark reveals Jesus as the compassionate, suffering servant who came not to be served but to serve (Mark 10:45). He often revealed his servant's heart and compassion to the people he ministered to, especially those who were sick (Mark 1:41, 5:19, 6:34, 8:2).

But Jesus was not concerned primarily with physical healing. He came to do his Father's will. That included providing a way for sinners to have eternal life (John 5:24). This could only be accomplished through spiritual healing—through the forgiveness of sins wrought by sincere repentance and faith in the Messiah.

The account of Jesus healing the paralytic is an example of his ability and desire to heal physically as well as spiritually. As Jesus preached in a house in Capernaum, a large crowd had gathered, and the house became full (Mark 2:2). Four men came to the house with a paralytic friend on a bed, presumably to be healed. Seeing the crowded house, they went up on the clay roof, opened a hole in the roof, and lowered their friend down to Jesus (Mark 2:3–4). Jesus saw their

faith and said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven."

Jesus ignored the physical condition of the man and spoke directly to the man's more serious problem—the sin in his heart. The scribes immediately accused Jesus of blasphemy in their hearts as they considered that no one can forgive sins except God (Mark 2:6–7).

Knowing their thoughts, Jesus answered, "Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise, take up your bed and walk'?" There is some irony here. It is easier to say the words, "Your sins are forgiven," since the forgiveness cannot be seen. And yet, forgiving sins is the more difficult of the tasks since only God can forgive sins—and the price paid on the cross for that forgiveness is immeasurable.

Jesus continued with a miracle to confirm plainly that he is God. He told the man to rise, take his bed, and go home (Mark 2:11). The walking paralytic revealed and confirmed that Jesus, as God, not only has power to heal but also to forgive sins and grant eternal life!

Jesus showed compassion to those who were both physically sick and spiritually sick. He has power over disease and sickness. And he can forgive sins! He is truly God.

For all who receive him, repent of their sins, and accept the forgiveness he offers, there is a greater promise:

44 • Lesson 137 Adult • Unit 14

that one day our lowly bodies will conquered, and there will be no be transformed to be like his glorious body. In heaven sin will be

more sickness, sorrow, or death (Revelation 21:4).

#### Historical/Apologetics Background

Some claim that God's will is that everyone be healed. They assert that physical healing is guaranteed to believers based on Jesus' death on the cross. All we have to do is believe. But is this what the Bible teaches?

When Adam and Eve sinned. God cursed his perfect creation, and it is now under bondage to corruption (Romans 8:20-22). Now people get sick and die. There are natural causes of disease, such as viruses, bacteria, defective genes, and so forth. Then we have war, accidents, and disasters that may result in injury, paralysis, and disfigurement.

There are several biblical examples where God did not heal people. The Apostle Paul had a thorn in the flesh that God would not heal (2 Corinthians 12:7-8). Timothy suffered from "frequent ailments" (1 Timothy 5:23). Trophimus remained in Miletus because he was sick (2 Timothy 4:20). Epaphroditus was once sick to the point of death (Philippians 2:25–30).

Why doesn't God heal everyone? First, God frequently allows circumstances that we would not have chosen for ourselves. God sovereignly directs the circumstances of our lives and allows things as he wills (Daniel 4:35; Psalm 115:3). Maybe more than being healed, God wants us to see and understand life from his perspective—something we cannot do while we think the world revolves around us.

Second, God may want to reveal his power in another way. When Paul asked for healing, God responded, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9). Paul understood that the weakness caused by his infirmity was an avenue for God's power to be shown in his life. He wrote, "For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Corinthians 12:9-10). Suffering can be a tool of sanctification.

Third, our physical condition is not God's primary concern. Our Father's first priority is his own glory. Sometimes he may be best glorified when someone is healed. But sometimes God's glory may be better revealed by how a child of his responds to difficulties, sicknesses, and trials.

Fourth, God may be equipping us to help others. When we undergo suffering and trials, we are comforted by God. And we are to comfort others who are experiencing the same things with the comfort that we have received from God (2 Corinthians 1:3-11).

If we are believers, we can look forward to the day when God will wipe away our tears and remove all pain and grief (Revelation 21:4). But for now, we are still in our mortal bodies, subject to pain, disease, and death.

And there is a present purpose for our	reveals God's power in weakness,
suffering as it shapes us, challenges	and draws our hope toward eternity
us, conforms us to the image of Christ,	(James 1:2–4; 2 Corinthians 4:16–18).

Studying God's Word
What type of healing did Jesus bring?
Take notes as you study the following passages.
Jesus Heals
Mark 1:29–34
Mark 1:40-45
Jesus Forgives
Mark 2:1–12

#### Purpose in Suffering Activity

Work through the questions below, looking to Scripture to help you formulate a biblical understanding of healing.

1. Some people teach that disease or disorders are always the result of sin in the life of the individual and that he will not receive healing until he repents of that sin. How do John 9:1–4 and 1 Corinthians 11:27–30 give a biblical understanding of sin leading to sickness?

46 • Lesson 137 Adult • Unit 14

- 2. We know that God is able to heal because he is omnipotent. We see that expressed as the leper worshipped and spoke to Jesus in Matthew 8:1–3. What important aspect did this leper acknowledge about healing?
- 3. There are many examples in the New Testament of God not healing people, even those closely connected to Paul (e.g., 2 Timothy 4:20; Philippians 2:25–30). How is God's willingness to heal when we ask related to his sovereignty, wisdom, and love?
- 4. There are instances in Scripture where healing was connected to the faith of an individual (Mark 5:34). And James 5:14–15 instructs us to pray for healing as we have faith that God can heal. Does this mean that someone who is not healed of a disease after prayer is lacking faith?
- 5. How do Paul's experience of suffering and enduring a thorn in the flesh (2 Corinthians 12:7–10) and James' exhortation to see trials as an opportunity for joy (James 1:2–4) help us understand God's purpose in suffering in disease or disorder?
- 6. As we experience various forms of diseases and suffering in this world, how can that help us to long for heaven?
- 7. In light of eternity, is it accurate to say that all people who put their faith in Jesus will be healed of every disease or disorder they experience?

Adult • Unit 14 Lesson 137 • 47

#### **Application**

- 1. How could you use one of these passages we studied today to show someone that Jesus is God?
- 2. As we think about the two types of healing we saw in our study today, which is more important: physical healing or spiritual healing?
- 3. What struggles have you experienced with suffering and disease in your life, and how does what we have discussed from the text today help you understand that idea better?
- 4. Other than instant miraculous healing, what other means has God provided for our healing?
- 5. When brothers or sisters in Christ are not healed of sickness, what is the danger of accusing them that they don't have enough faith or else they would be healed?
- 6. How can we respond to those who say that if God did a miracle of healing right in front of them, they would believe?

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48 • Lesson 137 Adult • Unit 14



## **Jesus Calls Matthew**

#### Lesson Focus

Matthew was a tax collector, a sinner despised by the Pharisees, but Jesus chose him as one of his closest disciples. At the call of Jesus, Matthew left everything behind and followed Jesus. He gave a feast in honor of his new Lord and invited those he knew, tax collectors and sinners, so they could encounter the Savior.

#### Key Passages

Matthew 9:9-17; Luke 5:1-11

#### What You Will Learn

- · What Matthew gave up to immediately follow Jesus
- How the legalistic views of the Pharisees contrast with the compassion of Jesus for sinners

#### Memory Verse

**John 3:36** Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.

Adult • Unit 14 Lesson 138 • 49

## Prepare to Learn

#### Scriptural Background

As Jesus ministered in Galilee during the first year of his earthly ministry, he passed by a tax collector sitting at his booth. He looked to him and simply called, "Follow me" (Matthew 9:9). Matthew, who would become one of Jesus' 12 chosen disciples and the writer of one of the eyewitness accounts of Jesus' life, rose from his table, left everything behind, and followed Jesus (Luke 5:28). Matthew is one of seven disciples whose call is recorded in the Bible.

Matthew was identified as a tax collector (Luke 5:27). During that time, tax collectors were despised by the Jews. They were considered thieves and traitors. The tax collectors worked for Rome, collecting taxes to send to Caesar. Because of this, other Jews thought of them as traitors. Typically, the tax collectors dealt dishonestly as they collected the money, becoming rich at the expense of their Jewish brethren, and so they were thieves as well. We can assume Matthew's background was no different, judging from the objections of the Pharisees (Matthew 9:11).

When Jesus called, the tax collector followed, leaving behind his former life. His first recorded act as a follower of Jesus was to throw a feast in honor of Jesus, inviting all his prior associates. Apparently, he had been well acquainted with a number of "tax collectors and sinners" (Matthew 9:10). His first desire after

encountering Jesus was to direct others toward a similar encounter. This is a common reaction when people experience true life change through Jesus. The other disciples had done the same thing, calling others to meet Jesus (John 1:35–51). The disciples saw their need for a Savior and wanted everyone else to experience that good news, too.

The Pharisees had a different reaction to Jesus. They were trusting in their own good deeds to earn their righteousness, and they didn't recognize that they needed a Savior to make them righteous. They didn't understand the gospel, so they didn't understand the need to share it. They thought that righteousness required isolating oneself and avoiding those who were classified as sinners. When Jesus heard about their complaint, he explained that he came for a specific purpose, to call sinners to repentance (Luke 5:32). The problem was that the self-righteous Pharisees didn't see themselves as sinners. As those who thought they were well, they did not think they needed a physician (Luke 5:31). Indeed, if they were righteous, as they believed, they ought to be more concerned with mercy than sacrifice (Matthew 9:13), as the prophet Hosea recorded (Hosea 6:6). The Pharisees conducted the rituals, but they didn't truly know God.

This truth is evident through many passages where Jesus dealt with

50 • Lesson 138 Adult • Unit 14

the Pharisees' misunderstanding. In Matthew 9:14–17, the Pharisees and John's disciples questioned the fact that Jesus and his disciples did not fast, as was the custom of self-righteous Jews. Jesus explained to them that fasting was a practice connected with mourning and seeking God's will. His disciples had no need for lamenting, because their bridegroom was with them. They didn't need to seek God's will, they were living it. Jesus pointed out that though there would be a time for mourning, now

was a time for joy. Using analogies, he went on to explain that his covenant was new, and the old ways were no longer sufficient. The Pharisees wanted the Messiah to fit into their understanding of the law of Moses. They didn't recognize that their law was just a copy of things they didn't understand and that Jesus' new covenant would make the shadows obsolete (Hebrews 9:23–26, 10:8–14). The Pharisees looked to the law for justification, so they rejected Jesus' message.

#### Historical/Apologetics Background

Jesus taught that we should interact with sinners in order to share the gospel with them. Throughout the Gospels, we see Jesus compassionately engaging with sinners and rebuking the religious leaders for their condemnation of others. But some look to Jesus' engagement with sinners as an excuse to continue in the patterns of their old lives. They justify sinful environments and behaviors by claiming to be a light in a dark place. Jesus did not "hang out" with sinners. He ministered to sinners; he taught sinners; he proclaimed truth to them. But he did not engage in sinful activities with them. He did not sit by and watch while they continued to sin. He called sinners out of their old ways (2 Corinthians 5:21; Ephesians 4:17-24). Paul wrote to the church at Ephesus, "Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them" (Ephesians 5:11). He instructed the Corinthians to flee from sexual immorality and idolatry (1 Corinthians 6:18, 10:14).

He warned Timothy to flee false teachings and youthful passions and to pursue righteousness (1 Timothy 6:11; 2 Timothy 2:22). The ends do not justify the means; we should never use the excuse of reaching a sinner to justify participating in sin. We should not act like the Pharisees, avoiding those we perceive to be sinners, but neither should we engage with them in the sinful or tempting lifestyles out of which we have been called. Perhaps Peter said it best:

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to

abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul.

Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation (1 Peter 2:9–12).



	Where is Jesus calling you to follow?
	Take notes as you study the following passages.
Je	esus Calls Matthew
	Matthew 9:9–13
Fo	asting or Following
	Luke 5:1–11
	Matthew 9:14–17

#### Four-Part Harmony Activity

The table below has a small section of a harmony of the four Gospels. Take a few minutes to examine each of the rows, reading each of the passages, and then answer the questions below. The rows are listed chronologically.

52 • Lesson 138 Adult • Unit 14

Event	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Jesus in Jerusalem				5:1-47
Plucking grain on Sabbath	12:1-8	2:23-28	6:1-5	
Jesus heals a withered hand	12:9-14	3:1-6	6:6-11	
Jesus chooses the 12 disciples		3:13-21	6:12-16	
Jesus heals many		3:7-12	6:17-19	
Jesus teaches in Galilee	5-7		6:20-49	
Centurion's servant and widow's son	8:5-17		7:1-17	

- 1. As you read the text from one of the rows, how did the texts compare?
- 2. As you look at the table, what things stand out to you as these passages are laid side by side?
- 3. Look at Matthew 5–7 and Luke 6:20–49. Were these the same event, or did they happen at different times? What evidence would you use for your conclusion?
- 4. Do these differences between the four Gospels mean that the Bible is not reliable? Explain your thinking.

#### **Application**

1. Do you tend to react more like Jesus or like the Pharisees when you encounter someone our religious culture would label as a sinner? In what ways can we work toward showing Christ-like compassion?

Adult • Unit 14 Lesson 138 • 53

- 2. Have you ever recognized your sin and turned to follow Jesus as Savior and Lord?
- 3. In what ways is Jesus calling you to follow him today?
- 4. When Jesus called, Matthew left everything—gave up everything—to follow him. Is there any aspect of your life that is holding you back from following Jesus with abandon?
- 5. How would you answer someone who suggests that Jesus "hung out" with sinners so it's OK to hang out with unbelievers in sinful environments?

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54 • Lesson 138 Adult • Unit 14



## Jesus Heals on the Sabbath

#### Lesson Focus

On several occasions, the Pharisees objected to Jesus' actions on the Sabbath. When Jesus healed a lame man, they rebuked the man for carrying his mat on the Sabbath. As they were walking through the grainfields on Sabbath, the disciples plucked grain to eat, which the Pharisees claimed was unlawful. Jesus responded by declaring to be the Lord of the Sabbath and pointing out the fault of their legalism.

#### Key Passages

Matthew 12:1–8; John 5:1–18; 1 Samuel 21:1–6; Numbers 28:9–10

#### What You Will Learn

- The difference between the legalistic laws of the Pharisees and Jesus' authority over the law
- · How Jesus was Lord of the Sabbath

#### Memory Verse

**John 3:36** Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.

Adult • Unit 14 Lesson 139 • 55

## Prepare to Learn

#### Scriptural Background

After ministering in Galilee for about a year, Jesus returned to Jerusalem for the Jewish feast (John 5:1). This was likely the second Passover of Jesus' public ministry. The Pharisees had been watching him since the previous year, when he began doing signs in Jerusalem, and had previously expressed concern over the teaching of Jesus and his disciples. After this trip, the Jews' concern escalated to hostility.

In Jerusalem, there was a pool called Bethesda. It was believed that this pool had healing powers. People who were blind, lame, and paralyzed would lay near the pool, waiting for the sign (John 5:2-3). It was believed that when the waters were stirred up, the first to enter the water would be healed. One Sabbath day while Jesus was in Jerusalem, Jesus met a man at the pool who had been an invalid for 38 years. He had no one to help him to the pool, and so he was never the first to enter the water. Jesus said to him, "Get up, take up your bed, and walk" (John 5:8) and disappeared into the crowd (John 5:13). The man was immediately healed. He took up his bed and walked.

The Pharisees confronted the man as he walked away because carrying his bed was considered a violation of Sabbath law (Jeremiah 17:21–22). The Jews found out that Jesus had healed the man, and they began to persecute this Sabbath-breaker. Jesus answered their objection by calling God his

Father, a claim the religious elite recognized as a claim of equality with God. Their persecution quickly turned to murderous intent (John 5:18).

This was not the first time he had ministered on the Sabbath (Mark 1:21-28) nor would it be the last. Shortly after John's account, Jesus was again embroiled in Sabbath controversy (Matthew 12:1-8), this time due to the disciples plucking heads of grain and rubbing them in their hands (Luke 6:1), which was considered work by the Pharisees. In another account (Matthew 12:9-14), Jesus healed a man's withered hand. In both of these instances, the Pharisees objected, accusing Jesus and his disciples of dishonoring the Sabbath. Jesus answered by establishing his authority as the Son of God, come to do the will of the Father (John 5:19–47). He referred to Jewish history and the law the religious elite knew so well. He pointed to David, who had eaten the bread meant only for priests, and to the priests who performed sacrifices on the Sabbath (Matthew 12:3-5). It was not mere adherence to the rituals that God valued, but rather the attitude and actions that come from truly knowing and obeying God.

Additionally, Jesus called himself lord of the Sabbath (Matthew 12:8). His Sabbath was instituted as a rest and reminder for man. It was intended to glorify God, to point the people back to the God who created, delivered, and provided for them. The

Pharisees had turned the Sabbath—and the law itself—into the god to be worshipped. They were so concerned

with honoring the Sabbath that they had profaned it, rejecting the one it was meant to honor.

#### Historical/Apologetics Background

You will note that most versions of the Bible do not include John 5:4. There is likely a footnote in your Bible, regardless of translation, that addresses this. The earliest manuscripts do not support the inclusion of this verse. Textual criticism suggests that this was a scribal note added after AD 400 to explain the stirring of the waters mentioned in verse 7 based on a tradition held by the people. There is no other biblical support for this seemingly superstitious idea. The verse is included in the KIV and with a note in the NKIV. Other versions will likely have a notation explaining this "missing" verse. However, we can only say that this verse is missing if we use later manuscripts as the standard. In the lesson, we have noted that the people sitting by the pool "believed" this was the action of an angel and healing would result, not that this was actually the case.

God established a pattern of Sabbath rest from the very first week (Genesis 2:2–3). The Israelites were to follow the pattern of creation; they were to work six days and rest on the seventh (Exodus 31:17). This supports the fact that God created in six literal, 24-hour days. The Sabbath was given as a sign and a reminder. It was meant to point the Israelites back to God, that they might reflect on the truth that it is the Lord who sanctifies (Ezekiel 20:12). It was

established as a reminder of God's deliverance from Egypt and provision of rest (Deuteronomy 5:12–15).

Jesus clearly taught that God was interested in mercy over sacrifice (Matthew 12:7) and that it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath (Matthew 12:12). Paul taught that Christians have the freedom to esteem any day higher than any other or to not hold one day in honor above another (Romans 14:5-6). He also taught that believers should not pass judgment on each other over the foods they choose to eat or festivals they choose to celebrate (Colossians 2:16–23). One person highly esteems a given day while another esteems all days the same. Both positions are fine as long as each person is fully convinced in his own mind. These issues are matters of the conscience.

Historically, there are three main views regarding how a Christian should view the Sabbath. Some believe that the Sabbath must be kept on Saturday, in accordance with the law of Moses (Exodus 31:16). Others believe that the principle of Sabbath rest must be transferred to Sunday, the first day of the week (Acts 20:7). The third position holds that Christians are no longer obligated to observe the Sabbath, only to glorify God (1 Corinthians 10:31).

Any of these views are permissible according to the law of liberty taught in the New Testament. However, Paul

does give two commands alongside this freedom: do not pass judgment on your brother and do not cause your brother to stumble (Romans 14:13). The problem comes when we condemn other believers who are convinced of a different biblically acceptable view. For example, Ellen G. White, a prophetess of the Seventh-Day Adventists, claimed that observing the Sabbath on Sunday is accepting the mark of the beast. By

condemning those who hold a different view of the Sabbath, she has taken her teaching too far (Romans 14:3–4).

On matters that do not alter the gospel and do not undermine the authority of God's Word, we are to be gracious and welcoming to others. "Whoever thus serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men. So then let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding" (Romans 14:18–19).

## Studying God's Word

	What was significant about the Sabbath?
	Take notes as you study the following passages.
J	esus Heals on the Sabbath
	John 5:1–18
L	ord of the Sabbath
	Matthew 12:1–8
	1 Samuel 21:1–6

58 • Lesson 139 Adult • Unit 14

## Numbers 28:9–10

#### Sabbath Rest Activity

To understand the Pharisees' attitude toward the Sabbath, as well as Jesus' response, we must look to the origin of the Sabbath day. Read the verses below and answer the questions.

- 1. Genesis 2:2–3; Exodus 31:17 What is the Sabbath day based on?
- 2. Ezekiel 20:12; Deuteronomy 5:12–15 What did the Sabbath day represent?
- 3. For each of the following verses, identify its context and what it commands concerning the Sabbath.
- Exodus 20:8-11
- Exodus 35:2-3
- Exodus 16:23-30
- Jeremiah 17:21–22
- 4. Amos 8:4–6; Isaiah 58:13–14; Nehemiah 13:16–19 How were the people in these passages dishonoring the Sabbath?

Adult • Unit 14 Lesson 139 • 59

5. Mark 2:27–28; Matthew 12:9–14 — What did Jesus teach about the Sabbath?

#### **Application**

- 1. What are some present-day examples of adding regulations to the law of God?
- 2. What is the difference between doing what is lawful and doing what is right?
- 3. How do you fail to honor God? How can you correct that attitude/ perspective?
- 4. If you found yourself in a discussion regarding the present obligations of the Sabbath, how would you explain and defend your position?
- 5. How can the principles of a Sabbath rest help focus our worship?

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60 • Lesson 139 Adult • Unit 14