

# 7 Bible Studies



## Walking with Christ to the Cross

Throughout this Bible study are links to Bible Gateway corresponding to the Bible text with reference resource notes that open automatically in the RESOURCES tab on BibleGateway.com.

# Introduction

While this Bible study is appropriate any time of the year, it's especially pertinent in the weeks leading up to Resurrection Sunday, the period of the church calendar known as Lent. This study is designed to help you deepen your understanding of God's plan for salvation, culminating in [Jesus'](#) sacrificial death and glorious resurrection.

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Each week's study includes links that take you to helpful Scripture passages and resources on Bible Gateway. You'll discover:

- side-by-side Bible translations
  - commentary notes and other study material
  - reflection questions and prayers
  - and other features to help you grow in your understanding of God's Word.
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# Week 1

## An Invitation to Return to God

Read [Joel 2:12–13](#) as well as the note “[Call for Repentance \(2:12–14\)](#)” in the *Asbury Bible Commentary*, or “[A Call to Repentance \(2:12–17\)](#)” in the *Zondervan Bible Commentary*. Pay particular attention to the cultural background and meaning of the words “heart,” “return,” and “rend.”

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Once you’ve read the verse and sidebar notes, take a minute to reflect on the following questions:

- In what ways is the ancient Semitic understanding of the human heart *different* from the way we think of the heart today? In what ways is it *similar*?
  - The prophet Joel uses the words “return” and “rend” to describe actions that demonstrate repentance. What do these words reveal about what it means not just to repent, but to do so “with all your heart”?
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The 40 days of Lent as a season of preparation echoes the 40 days Jesus spent in the desert as preparation for his earthly ministry. Read the story in [Luke 4:1–13 \(ESV\)](#).

- For an overview of this passage as a whole, read the note on “[The Temptation of Jesus \(Luke 4:1–13\)](#)” in the *IVP New Testament Commentary Series*. Jesus’ obedience when tempted stands in contrast to the history of Israel’s disobedience going all the way back to Adam. How does the contrast between Israel and Jesus demonstrate that he’s the messianic King and Son of God?
- In the desert, Jesus was empty of food but full of the Holy Spirit. See the [Believer’s Bible Commentary note for Luke 4:1](#) about what it means to be “filled with the Holy Spirit.” How does Jesus demonstrate that he is “emptied of self”? That he is “richly indwelt by the Word of God”?
- Luke refers to Satan as the “devil,” a name that conveys the “tempting and deceiving role of Satan” (see the corresponding note for “DEVIL” in the [New International Encyclopedia of Bible Characters](#)). In what ways does the devil not only tempt Jesus, but also try to deceive him with each temptation? What is the lie in each temptation?



# Questions for Reflection

- In what areas of life are you most aware of wanting to return to God with a whole heart? For example, you might consider areas in which you feel defeated, have grown cold, or need forgiveness.
  - The prophet Joel stresses God's grace, compassion, and love for those who return to him. What grace, compassion, or demonstration of love do you most need from God in the areas of life you just identified?
  - What do you hope might change in these areas if you were completely yielded to Christ, emptied of self, and richly indwelt by the Word of God?
  - What lies might the devil use to keep you from returning to God with a whole heart?
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## A Prayer for the Week Ahead

Examine me, O God, and probe my thoughts.  
Test me, and know my concerns.  
See if there is any idolatrous way in me,  
and lead me in the everlasting way.  
([Psalm 139:23–24 NET](#))

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## For Additional Study

- [Deuteronomy 26:1–11](#) describes how God fulfilled the promise to deliver his people from their suffering in the Exodus, and how God's people are to express their love and gratitude in response. Note that in the [Luke 4](#) passage, Jesus quotes the book of Deuteronomy three times to counter Satan's temptations ([Deuteronomy 8:3; 6:13, 16](#)).
- [Psalm 91:1–2, 9–16](#) affirms that God is a refuge and the source of our salvation. Jesus also quotes this psalm in refuting Satan ([Psalm 91:11–12](#)).
- [Romans 10:8b–13](#) states the promise and hope of our salvation.

# Week 2

## Waiting and Persevering for God's Promise

From [Genesis](#) to [Revelation](#), the Scriptures are full of God's promises to his people—promises to provide, to rescue, to save. God was true to every promise, but between the promise and the fulfillment, God's people often had to wait and persevere through hardship and opposition. They had to have faith. Scripture has much to teach us about what it means to wait on the Lord, to persevere, and to have faith in God's promises for our own lives.

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1. Biblical writers portray [Abraham](#) as a model of faith; as one who “received what God promised because he waited patiently for it” ([Hebrews 6:15 GW](#)). Read [Genesis 15:1–12, 17–18 \(NRSV\)](#), which tells the story of God's covenant promise to Abraham.

- For insights into this passage, read the note “[The covenant dramatized \(15:1 – 21\)](#)” in the *Asbury Bible Commentary*. What are the promises inherent in the statement God makes at the beginning of Abram's vision ([v. 1](#))? What foundation do they provide for the promises that follow?
- Abram is a model of faith, but his faith is not “blind.” Two of his three sentences in this passage are questions ([15:2, 8](#)). Even as he receives God's promise, he laments the impossibility of his circumstances, seeks reassurance, and experiences “a deep and terrifying darkness.” What three words or phrases would you use to characterize the “model” faith exemplified by Abram's conversation with God?
- Commenting on [verse 6](#), the *Asbury Bible Commentary* states that Abram “accepts the word of God as trustworthy” and “believes God to be God.” What does this suggest about the nature of faith? How might Abram's faith have been different had he chosen instead to put his faith in the promise (of land and an heir) rather than the giver of the promise?

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2. One of the ways we journey with Christ to the cross is by taking seriously anything that might keep us from taking up our own cross ([Matthew 16:24](#)). Read [Luke 13:31–35 \(NLT, NIV\)](#), which tells one story of how Jesus did this—how he faithfully persevered on his journey to the cross.

- Both the Pharisees and Herod are intent on frightening Jesus away from Jerusalem with threats. In his response, Jesus uses two animal metaphors, fox and hen/chicks. To learn more about the significance of these animals, see this note in the [\*Expositor's Bible Commentary\*](#), or the note "[Go tell that fox \(Luke 13:32\)](#)" in the [\*Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary of the New Testament\*](#). What does the nature of the fox reveal about how Jesus views the threats? In contrast, what does the image of the hen/chicks reveal about how Jesus views his purpose?
- Jesus counters the threats against him not by running away to save his life, as the Pharisees urged him to do, but by boldly proclaiming that nothing would keep him from sacrificing his life—he must proceed to Jerusalem and to the cross. He must complete his mission of love, even in the face of rejection by those he came to save. What does Jesus' response reveal about the true nature of the threat from Herod and what was at stake?

## Questions for Reflection

- In what current circumstances do you most need to receive a promise from God? How do you need God to be your shield, to protect you while you wait for the promise to be fulfilled?
- In the circumstances you just identified, how would you describe the difference between putting your faith in the promise and putting your faith in the giver of the promise?
- To follow Jesus to the cross is to join him in his mission of sacrificial love. In the week ahead, what obstacles or threats might keep you from taking up your cross and choosing to love? Consider both internal threats (self-defeating habits of thought and behavior) as well as external threats (opposition or rejection from others).
- What comes to mind if you think of the threats you just identified as having the nature of a fox? For example, how might the threats be sly in deceiving you, or perhaps more insignificant than you realize?
- How might you be bold in your faith, declaring that nothing will keep you from taking up your cross and accomplishing your mission of love?

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# A Prayer for the Week Ahead

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Read [Psalm 27:7–14](#) in The Message and again in the New King James Version.

## For Additional Study

- [Psalm 27](#), the prayer for the week, has been described as a prayer of courage or fearless faith. See the [notes in the Believer's Bible Commentary](#), which pairs this psalm with events in the life of Christ, and suggests how he may have prayed these verses when he was suffering and needed courage.
- In [Romans 4:1–25](#), the [apostle Paul](#) makes a connection between how Abraham was justified by faith and how we are justified by faith in Christ. God's promises are always realized through faith. For an overview of God's promises and their characteristics, see the corresponding note for this passage in the [Dictionary of Bible Themes](#), "[5467 promises, divine](#)."
- To learn more about how New Testament writers describe Abraham as both a model and forefather of faith, see [Hebrews 11:8–12, 17–19](#); [Galatians 3:6 – 9, 14–18, 26–29](#); [James 2:21–24](#). For a comprehensive overview of Abraham's life, including geographical context, chronology, and archaeology, go to [Genesis 15](#) and read the corresponding note for "Abraham" in the *Encyclopedia of the Bible*.

# Week 3

## Seek the Lord

God's invitation to us is to wholeheartedly seek him, and to call on him for mercy, forgiveness, and restoration. We should reckon with the areas of our lives in which we feel defeated, have grown cold to God, or feel stuck in self-defeating or sinful patterns. And we should remember our great hope, because greater than any human failure is God's lavish grace and faithful love. Even as we humbly take account of our sin, we boldly expect to be forgiven and changed.

1. For a beautiful depiction of God's invitation to repentance and new life, read [Isaiah 55:1–9 \(NIV\)](#).

- In this passage, the prophet promises hope, blessing, and restoration to God's people who are living in Babylonian exile. Here is how the [Encyclopedia of the Bible](#) describes some of the conditions of their captivity:

*They could own their homes and land, and enjoy the produce of their gardens ([Jer 29:4–7](#); [Ezek 8:1](#); [12:1–7](#)). This would enable them to provide for some of their physical needs. . . . Jeremiah 29:5–7 indicates that the Israelites were able to accumulate wealth. Many were so successful financially that . . . when the exiles were given permission by Cyrus to return home, they refused because according to Josephus, “they were not willing to leave their possessions” (Jos. Antiq. XI.i. 3).*

- Given these conditions, why might Isaiah choose to appeal first to the exiles' thirst, hunger, and dissatisfaction ([vv. 1–2](#))? What might his appeal suggest about their spiritual condition?
- In [verses 3–5](#), Isaiah reminds the exiles of God's “everlasting covenant” and “faithful love,” references that point to the promised Davidic Messiah (see the corresponding note for [Isaiah 55:1–5 in the Expositor's Bible Commentary \(Abridged Edition\): Old Testament](#)). How does Isaiah's emphasis on God's promises—of an everlasting covenant, international prestige, and national splendor—contrast with the exiles' present circumstances? For what have they exchanged God's promises?
- In [verses 6–7](#), Isaiah's call for repentance becomes increasingly direct and urgent.

*The call of verses 1–3 is echoed here but with a stronger moral emphasis. Earlier the folly of self-willed waywardness was stressed, while here it is its wickedness. . . . There is urgency in this call, for the time is not unlimited. (Expositor's Bible Commentary (Abridged Edition): Old Testament, “Isaiah 55:6–7”)*



What connections might there be between the Israelites’ “self-willed waywardness” and their “wickedness”? How might each condition lead to and magnify the other?

Isaiah stresses the urgency of seeking the Lord, and specifies the need to forsake both “ways” and “thoughts” ([v. 7](#)). What is at stake if the exiles ignore any one of Isaiah’s pleas—to respond swiftly, to change their thinking, or to change their behavior? Why are all three necessary?

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2. The invitation to repentance and new life was a constant theme in Jesus’ earthly ministry. In [this passage](#) from the [Gospel of Luke](#), Jesus urgently calls his listeners to repentance, and yet also tells a parable that affirms God’s grace and forbearance.

- What rationalizations were Jesus’ listeners using to assess their lives and spiritual condition?
  - What would change if they were to instead assess their lives and spiritual condition on the certainty of their mortality and subsequent judgment?
  - Read [Luke 3:7–14 \(NIV\)](#) to see parallels between Jesus’ parable of the fig tree and the teaching of John the Baptist. John calls his listeners to “produce fruit in keeping with repentance” ([v. 8](#)), and then goes on to list examples of such fruit in [verses 10–14](#). Based on his examples, how would you define “fruit in keeping with repentance”?
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## Questions for Reflection

- The Israelites in Babylonian exile had become so accustomed to their captivity that they were no longer aware of their spiritual thirst, hunger, and dissatisfaction. In what ways, if any, might the circumstances of your life as it is now have dulled you to your desire for God?
- What “self-willed waywardness” or “wickedness” are you aware of in your own life? In what ways, if any, have you become accustomed to it, tried to minimize it, or put off addressing it?
- Overall, which do you find it harder to forsake—sinful patterns of thought or sinful patterns of behavior? Why?

- What rationalizations are you prone to use to assess or justify your life and spiritual condition? What changes when you consider your life and spiritual condition instead in light of the urgency of the biblical call to repentance? Similarly, what changes when you focus on the magnitude of God's love and mercy rather than your own guilt, sins, and failures?
  - Isaiah stressed the deep satisfaction of God's blessings as well as God's faithful love, nearness, mercy, and pardon. Which of these do you need most as you turn to God and seek him in this Lenten season?
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## A Prayer for the Week Ahead

Read [Psalm 63:1–8](#) in the New King James Version in parallel with the New Living Translation.

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### For Additional Study

- For a comprehensive overview of the prophet Isaiah's life and ministry, go to [Isaiah 55](#) and read the corresponding note for "Isaiah" in the [New International Encyclopedia of Bible Characters](#).
- To better understand the message of the [book of Isaiah](#) as a whole, go to Isaiah 55, click on the corresponding note for "Introduction to Isaiah" in the [King James Study Bible Notes](#).
- Fig trees are mentioned several times in Scripture. To learn more about the fig tree's biblical significance, go to [Luke 13:1–9](#) and read the corresponding note for "Fig Tree" in the [Encyclopedia of the Bible](#).

# Week 4

## Our Merciful, Reconciling God

The focus of last week's study was the invitation to wholeheartedly seek the Lord and call on him for mercy, forgiveness, and restoration. This week, we focus on God's mercy to those who seek him, and how he initiates and sustains the work of reconciliation in our lives.

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1. The story of the prodigal son is perhaps the most well-known of all Jesus' parables. The word prodigal means to be extravagant or excessive. In connection with the rebellious son in the story, it connotes recklessness, self-indulgence, and debauchery. However, the word prodigal could also be used to characterize the extravagance of the father in the parable. As you read the story in [Luke 15:1–3, 11b–32 \(ESV\)](#), pay particular attention to the words, actions, and demeanor of the father.

For deeper insights into significant elements of the story, see the corresponding verse-by-verse notes for the parable in the [NIV Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible](#).

- What does the father say and do—and not say and do—that could be described as extravagant or prodigal?
- If the prodigal son is reckless, self-indulgent, and debauched, what three words or phrases would you use to characterize the prodigal father?
- How is the father's extravagance also evident in the way he relates to his older son?
- In what ways do the older son's words, actions, and demeanor embody the opposite of prodigality? What three words or phrases would you use to characterize him?
- How is the father's mercy evident in the way he relates to both of his sons? How does he attempt to reconcile his sons, not only to himself but also to one another?

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2. The apostle Paul stresses the reconciling work of God in [2 Corinthians 5:16–21 \(NIV\)](#):

- For insights on Paul's reference to a "new creation," read the corresponding note in the [NIV Application Commentary](#). Based on what you read, how would you describe the scope of the "new creation"? What does it include?

- Reconciliation refers to “a change of relation from enmity to peace” ([“2Co 5:18” NKJV Study Bible](#)), and Paul makes it clear that “all this is from God.” In other words, God is the initiator and sustainer of reconciliation. What parallels do you observe between God’s work in reconciliation as Paul describes it here, and the way Jesus describes the father in the parable of the prodigal son?
- Once we are reconciled to God, God appoints us to be reconcilers ([vv. 19–20](#)). Paul describes our role as that of “ambassadors.” “Ambassadors are more than messengers. They are representatives of the sovereign who sent them” (see the note, [“2Co 5:20” in the NKJV Study Bible](#)). How do you understand the difference between a messenger and a representative? What might be required of an ambassador of reconciliation that wouldn’t be required of a messenger?

## Questions for Reflection

- In the parable, the father pursues reconciliation with both sons. Which son’s experience comes closest to expressing your own experience of being reconciled to God? How did God demonstrate the extravagance of his love to you in salvation? In what small or large ways have you experienced God’s initiating love for you recently?
- In what ways, if any, do you relate to the older brother, resentful of God’s extravagance with others who seem less than deserving or who haven’t been as faithful or obedient as you have?
- The [Zondervan Illustrated Bible Dictionary](#) defines reconciliation as “the act of restoring harmony, bringing again into unity or agreement what has been alienated.” In what relationships—with God, self, or others—are you most aware of alienation or a lack of unity right now? How might you be “prodigal” or extravagant in seeking reconciliation?
- To whom might you be an ambassador of Christ’s reconciling love and grace this day?



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# A Prayer for the Week Ahead

When I refused to admit my wrongs, I was miserable, moaning and complaining all day long so that even my bones felt brittle.

Day and night, Your hand kept pressing on me. My strength dried up like water in the summer heat; You wore me down.

When I finally saw my own lies, I owned up to my sins before You, and I did not try to hide my evil deeds from You.

I said to myself, “I’ll admit all my sins to the Eternal,” and You lifted and carried away the guilt of my sin. . . .

Tormented and empty are wicked and destructive people, but the one who trusts in the Eternal is wrapped tightly in His gracious love.

Express your joy; be happy in Him, you who are good and true. Go ahead, shout and rejoice aloud, you whose hearts are honest and straightforward.

([Psalm 32:3–5, 10–11 VOICE](#))

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## For Additional Study

- The Pharisees were shocked and disgusted by Jesus’ association with those they considered sinners and outcasts. To better understand the Pharisees’ disdain and Jesus’ love for all who are lost, go to Luke 15 and see the corresponding note, “Why Did Jesus Associate with the Lowest People of Society?” in the [Case for Christ Study Bible](#). For additional background on these religious leaders, see the corresponding note for this passage titled, “Pharisees,” in the [New International Encyclopedia of Bible Characters](#).
- For a comprehensive, verse-by-verse study of Jesus’ parable in Luke 15:11–32, see the corresponding note, “The Prodigal Son,” in the [Zondervan Bible Commentary \(One Volume\)](#).
- In 2 Corinthians 5:16–21, the apostle Paul stresses God’s reconciling work. For deeper insights into the meaning of the root Greek word Paul uses for reconcile/reconciliation in this passage, see “G2904 καταλλάσσω” in the [New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology](#). For a comprehensive overview of reconciliation in the Bible, see the corresponding note for this passage titled “Reconciliation” in the [Encyclopedia of the Bible](#).
- For a comprehensive overview of the life and ministry of the apostle Paul, go to [2 Corinthians 5](#) and see the corresponding note, “Paul,” in the [New International Encyclopedia of Bible Characters](#).

# Week 5

## The Losses and Gains of Knowing Christ

On our journey with Christ to the cross, we gain two companions this week: Mary of Bethany and the apostle Paul. With their actions and words, both Mary and Paul help us understand the necessary losses and inestimable gains of knowing Christ.

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1. Jesus is now in the closing days of his earthly ministry. In a brief calm before the tumultuous events to come, he and the disciples are having dinner with dear friends. But even among his closest companions, there is trouble. Read the story in [John 12:1–8 \(NLT\)](#).

For insights into the setting and characters in this story, see “Jesus Is Anointed at Bethany (11:55–12:11)” in [The IVP New Testament Commentary Series](#).

- The [NIV First-Century Study Bible note \(“Jn 12:1–11”\)](#) characterizes Mary’s act of anointing Jesus as “a great reversal of royal expectations.” To better understand this reference, read the entry for “Anoint” in Easton’s Bible Dictionary. How does Mary’s anointing both fulfill the purpose of a royal anointing and also constitute a “great reversal” of it? In what other ways is her act a unique fulfillment of the various purposes of anointing?
  - The story contains other “reversals” as well, particularly in the contrasts between Mary and Judas. For insights into the actions and character of both Mary and Judas, see this note in the [New Bible Commentary](#). What contrasts are evident between Judas and Mary? In what ways do they constitute opposites?
  - It is the scandalous extravagance of Mary’s offering that Judas criticizes—and that Jesus affirms. To learn more about the nard Mary used to anoint Jesus, see the corresponding note in the [Expositor’s Bible Commentary \(Abridged Edition\): New Testament](#). The great value of the perfume suggests Mary’s offering was sacrificial. Purchasing the nard likely required a lifetime of savings. It may also have been her financial security for the present as well as the future. What does the costly nature of her act demonstrate about the true scope of what she sacrificed for her devotion to Christ?
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2. In his letter to the church at Philippi, the apostle Paul describes how “knowing Christ Jesus my Lord” led to a great reversal in his own life. Read the passage in [Philippians 3:4b–14 \(CEV\)](#).

- For background and insights into this significant passage, see the corresponding note “The Old Renounced; Paul’s New Ambitions” in the [New Bible Commentary](#). How does Paul use his own life to illustrate what it means to “know Christ”?
  - Paul stresses his desire to know Christ in both his power and his suffering ([v. 10](#)). Why is it significant that he includes both? In other words, what would be lost if Paul sought to know only Christ’s power, or only Christ’s suffering?
  - Paul imagines himself as an athlete running and struggling for a prize. For a fresh perspective on these verses, read [Philippians 3:12–14 in both the CEV and The Voice \(VOICE\)](#). What insights does reading the two Bible versions side by side provide about what it means to “run toward the goal”? What does “struggling to take hold of the prize” require?
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## Questions for Reflection

- Both Mary and the apostle Paul are examples of what it means to “prefer nothing whatever to Christ” (St. Benedict of Nursia). Few would have faulted them for “preferring” other things—their reputation, social norms, or their own security—but they considered such things “worthless.” In the past, what have you tended to prefer to Christ or been unwilling to sacrifice for love of Christ?
- What, if anything, do you tend to prefer to Christ in this season of life? How do you imagine your life might be different if, for love of Christ, you could release whatever you are withholding?
- In the days ahead, how might you be “scandalous” as Mary was, extravagant in expressing your love for Christ?

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# A Prayer for the Week Ahead

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Pray [Psalm 126:4–6](#).

## For Additional Study

- To learn more about Mary of Bethany, go to [John 12:1–8](#) and see the corresponding note “Mary” in the [New International Encyclopedia of Bible Characters](#).
- To learn more about Judas Iscariot, go to [John 12:1–8](#) and see the corresponding note “Personality Profiles: Judas Iscariot” in the [King James Study Bible Notes](#).
- The church at Philippi is one that was founded by Paul. For a comprehensive overview of his letter to the Philippian church, go to [Philippians 3:4–14](#) and see the corresponding note “Letter to the Philippians” in the [Encyclopedia of the Bible](#).



# Week 6

## The Cross

In this sixth week, we walk with Christ as he reaches his destination, the cross. Our study focuses on his crucifixion, death, and burial as recorded in [Luke 23](#). If you'd like to read through all the events leading to the crucifixion—from the Last Supper to Jesus' trial before Pilate—begin with the list of passages and resources included at the end of this study. By reading one to two passages a day, you will experience all the events of Holy Week.

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We invite you to read the three passages below slowly and prayerfully. Imagine yourself physically present as each event unfolds and use your senses to take in all the recorded details. What do you see, hear, smell, touch, or taste when the soldiers mock, the women weep, the skies grow dark, Jesus' body is taken down, and the women prepare spices for the tomb? Allow these sensory particulars to draw you more fully into Christ's Passion, and to help you reflect on what his suffering and death mean for you now.

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### 1. The Crucifixion ([Luke 23:26–43](#))

For insights into this passage, read the corresponding note “I. The Crucifixion (23:26–56)” in the [Asbury Bible Commentary](#).

- How does Luke demonstrate Jesus' innocence and righteousness?
- In what ways is Jesus' compassion and love evident even as he is being put to death?
- Luke spares his readers details of the act of crucifixion, writing only, “they nailed him to a cross” ([v. 33](#)). To learn more about the Roman practice of execution, see the corresponding note “Crucifixion” in [Easton's Bible Dictionary](#). Jesus, the sinless son of God, experienced the most shameful and excruciating form of death. In addition to prolonged physical torture and violence, he was mocked, cursed, and profoundly shamed. What does the brutality of Jesus' suffering and death reveal about his humility and obedience ([Philippians 2:8](#))? About the depths of his trust in God?
- Luke records a remarkable conversation among Jesus and the criminals who were crucified with him. For additional insights, read the corresponding note “Luke 23:32–43. The Penitent Criminal” in [Halley's Bible Handbook Notes](#). The two criminals had committed the same crimes and received the same death sentence but had radically different responses to Jesus. What do their words suggest about what was different between them? How would you describe the fundamental condition of each man's heart?

- In an effort to prepare his disciples for his impending death, Jesus had previously said, “No one can take my life from me. I sacrifice it voluntarily. For I have the authority to lay it down when I want to and also to take it up again” ([John 10:18 NLT](#)). Jesus makes it clear that he is not a victim. Instead, his death is a sacrifice, an empowered choice made from a position of authority. Why is it so important that the disciples understand this distinction? What insights does it provide about how Jesus responds to the people and events in this passage?
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## 2. The Death of Jesus ([Luke 23:44–49](#))

For insights into this passage, read the corresponding verse-by-verse notes in the [Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary of the New Testament](#).

- This passage includes important symbolism. The supernatural noontime darkness conveys judgment. The sudden tearing of the temple curtain conveys new and direct access to God. Why might it be important to Luke to note these two details together ([vv. 44–45](#))?
  - “Jesus dies uttering words from a Psalm of confidence, [Psalm 31:5](#),” notes the author of *The IVP New Testament Commentary Series*. “The righteous sufferer has suffered and won by trusting God every step of the way” (“[The Crucifixion \(23:26–49\)](#)” in *The IVP New Testament Commentary Series*). What significance might there be in the fact that Jesus utters these last words not as a feeble whisper, but as a shout ([v. 46](#))?
  - Luke notes three responses among those who witnessed Jesus’ death: the centurion worships God ([v. 47](#)), the crowds go home in deep sorrow ([v. 48](#)), and Jesus’ friends stand at a distance watching ([v. 49](#)). Imagine witnessing Jesus’ death from all three perspectives. What do you see that leads you to worship? To experience deep sorrow? To stand at a distance and watch?
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## 3. The Burial of Jesus ([Luke 23:50–56](#))

For insights into this passage, read the corresponding note “The Burial of Jesus (23:50–56)” in [The IVP New Testament Commentary Series](#).

- Jesus has died a shameful death at the hands of enemies, but is buried with honor by devout and faithful friends. How do the details of his burial begin to point to what his death has accomplished?
  - Joseph of [Arimathea](#), a wealthy and devout religious leader, had already purchased a tomb for his own burial. How would you describe the significance of the fact that he gives his grave to Christ?
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# Questions for Reflection

- How does understanding more about the brutality of Jesus' suffering and death impact you and your relationship with Christ?
- How does the way Jesus' suffered and died demonstrate what it means to live "cruciform," to allow our lives to be shaped by a cross of sacrificial love? In what circumstances or relationships do you sense God may be inviting you to live cruciform—to make an empowered choice to love sacrificially?

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## A Prayer for the Week Ahead

Pray [Psalm 31:9, 12–16 \(EHV\)](#).

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## For Additional Study

- For a day-by-day chart of events in Jesus' final week as recorded in [the four Gospels](#), go to Luke 22 and see the corresponding note "The Last Week" in the [NIV Quest Study Bible Notes](#). For a narrative summary and illustrations of Jerusalem, see the corresponding note for "Passion Week" in the [NIV First-Century Study Bible](#). Also see the Bible Gateway Blog post, [Infographic: What Happened During Holy Week Day-By-Day](#).

## Events Leading to the Crucifixion

Use the following list of passages and resources to walk with Christ through the events leading to the crucifixion, as told in Luke [22](#) and [23](#).

- The Last Supper (Luke 22:14–28 • See the [\*Asbury Bible Commentary\*](#), “D. The Last Supper (22:1–38)”
- Jesus Predicts Peter’s Denial (Luke 22:31–38) • See the note in the [\*NKJV Charles F. Stanley Life Principles Bible\*](#).
- Jesus Prays on the Mount of Olives (Luke 22:39–46) • See [\*The IVP New Testament Commentary Series\*](#), “Preparation Through Prayer (22:39–46)”
- Jesus Is Betrayed and Arrested (Luke 22:47–53) • See the [\*Expositor’s Bible Commentary\*](#), corresponding verse-by-verse notes
- Peter Denies Jesus (Luke 22:54–63) • See the [\*Expositor’s Bible Commentary\*](#), corresponding verse-by-verse notes
- Jesus before the Council (Luke 22:66–71) • See the [\*Zondervan Bible Commentary\*](#), “The Trial before Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin (22:66–71)”
- Jesus’ Trial before Pilate (Luke 23:1–25) • See the [\*Zondervan Bible Commentary\*](#), “The First Trial before Pilate (23:1–7),” “The Trial before Herod (23:8–12),” and “The Second Trial before Pilate (23:13–25)”



# Week 7

## He Has Risen!

Through this Bible study we've seen that our wholehearted seeking of the Lord includes taking "a good look at the way we're living and reorder our lives under God" ([Lamentations 3:40 MSG](#)). During our six-week journey through Scripture, we've walked with Christ to the cross by reflecting on our need for repentance and God's lavish grace for all who seek him. With Jesus' disciples, we've witnessed his crucifixion, death, and burial. And now our journey brings us at last to the joyous conclusion of the gospel story, to those first moments of the first Resurrection Sunday morning.

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1. Having witnessed Jesus' crucifixion, death, and burial, the women who had traveled with him to Jerusalem from Galilee ([Luke 23:55](#)) arrive at the tomb to perform a final act of devotion by anointing his body. As you read the story in [Luke 24:1–12 \(NIV\)](#), pay particular attention to how the women, the apostles, and Peter respond when nothing is as they expected.

For insights into the setting and characters of this story, see the note "The Resurrection Discovered (24:1–12)" in [The IVP New Testament Commentary Series](#).

- How would you characterize the initial responses of the women to the empty tomb and the angels' proclamation? The response of the apostles to the women? Of Peter when he heard the news and then saw the empty tomb?
  - All of Jesus' followers loved him and believed him to be the Messiah, but everyone in this story responds differently to the unexpected good news of his resurrection. The women believe ([v. 8](#)), the apostles do not believe ([v. 11](#)), and Peter appears to fall somewhere between the two. Given that this should have been astonishingly good news for all of them, how do you account for their differing responses?
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- What might their differing responses suggest about their expectations for who Jesus was as the Messiah?
  - How do the angels' words to the women demonstrate God's plan and providence?
  - What is it that ultimately convinces the women of the resurrection?
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2. [Acts 10:34–43 \(NLT\)](#) is one of several sermons by Peter recorded in [Acts](#). The setting is the house of Cornelius, a Roman centurion who became one of the first Gentile converts. In anticipation of Peter’s arrival, Cornelius has assembled a large gathering of his relatives and close friends ([Acts 10:24, 27](#)). As you read the passage, note how Peter appeals to his Gentile listeners in presenting the gospel.

For insights into this passage, read the note “Acts 10. The Gospel Also for the Gentiles” in [Halley’s Bible Handbook Notes](#).

- How does Peter stress the universality of the gospel? Consider his choice of words and phrases as well as his statements.
  - First-century Jews, including Jewish Christians, believed that only those who lived by the law of [Moses](#) and abided by Jewish rites and customs could find favor with God. They considered Gentiles unclean and avoided contact with them, which Peter acknowledges when he says to Cornelius, “You know it is against our laws for a Jewish man to enter a Gentile home like this or to associate with you” ([Acts 10:28 NLT](#)). With this as background, how do you understand the significance of Peter’s statements in [verses 34–35](#)? How do you imagine these statements might have impacted his Gentile listeners?
  - Why might Peter choose to describe the Good News as peace with God? What would his listeners likely have expected from God instead?
  - In telling the gospel story, Peter could have chosen to share the things that Jesus taught, but he doesn’t. What does he focus on instead?
  - How does Peter acknowledge Jesus’ humanity as well as his divinity?
  - How does Peter demonstrate God’s plan and providence?
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# Questions for Reflection

- The resurrection was something no one, not even Jesus' closest followers, expected. Out of suffering, humiliation, and death, God brought something mind-blowingly unexpected—new life! The challenge for Jesus' followers was to be open to it, to believe that the impossible was possible.

What current circumstances in your life would you describe as impossible? It might be a situation in which you feel trapped, defeated, cold to God, or stuck in self-defeating or sinful patterns. What thoughts or emotions arise when you consider being open to the possibility that God might have something unexpected for you? How might you follow the example of Peter and run toward your questions or whatever you don't yet understand but hope to be true?

- It is in remembering the words of Jesus that the women are convinced of the resurrection. As you look back on your relationship with Christ, what do you remember of him? What truths has he spoken? When has he brought new life from suffering or anything that felt like a death? If you could give these memories a voice, what would they say? How might they speak resurrection hope into your life now?
- In presenting the Good News, Peter stresses God's acceptance, peace, goodness, healing, power, and forgiveness. As you read his presentation of the gospel story in [Acts 10](#), what stood out most to you? Which of these aspects of Good News do you need most right now?
- The writer of Lamentations tells us to "take a good look at the way we're living and reorder our lives under God" ([Lamentations 3:40 MSG](#)). What did you discover about your life and your relationship with God during this Bible study? In what ways, if any, has it helped you to personally experience the joy of the Resurrection?

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## A Prayer for the Week Ahead

Pray [Psalm 118:1–2, 14–24 NRSV](#).

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## For Additional Study

- Read [Isaiah 65:17–25](#), [John 20:1–18](#), and [1 Corinthians 15:19–26](#). For insights into the Isaiah 65 passage and its connection to Jesus and the plan of salvation, see the corresponding note, “Universal applicability of justification (5:12–21),” in the [Asbury Bible Commentary](#). For insights into the John 20 passage, see the corresponding note, “Resurrection Appearances” in the [Zondervan Bible Commentary](#). For insights into the 1 Corinthians 15 passage, see these notes from the *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary*.
- For a comprehensive study of Jesus’ resurrection, go to Luke 24:1–12 and see the corresponding note, “Resurrection of Jesus Christ,” in the [Encyclopedia of the Bible](#).
- In [Luke 24:1–12 \(NLT\)](#), the good news of Jesus’ resurrection is announced by angels, whom Luke describes as “two men in clothes that gleamed like lightening” (v. 4). For a comprehensive overview of angels in the Bible, see the corresponding note for this passage, “Angels,” in the [New International Encyclopedia of Bible Characters](#).
- Following his resurrection, Jesus appeared not to the masses but to “witnesses whom God had already chosen” ([Acts 10:41 NLT](#)). To learn more about these appearances, go to Acts 10:34–43 and see the corresponding note, “Why did the risen Jesus appear only to those already convinced of his resurrection? (10:41),” in the [NIV Quest Study Bible Notes](#).
- Peter’s message recorded in [Acts 10:34–43](#) was delivered in the house of Cornelius, one of the first Gentile converts. To learn more about Cornelius, see the corresponding note for this passage, “Cornelius,” in the [Encyclopedia of the Bible](#). See also “The Conversion of Cornelius (10:1–48)” in the [Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary of the New Testament](#).

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