

Tuesday, November 10, 2020—Acts 1-2

Teachers explain their way through problems so their students can understand concepts and be able to reason their way through a variety of problems on a test and in life. Coaches walk their players through drills in practice so they are ready to perform without the coach during the game. Jesus taught for three years, died, and rose again so His disciples could see the realities of Kingdom life and then live that life without His presence.

Jesus promised something no teacher or coach can promise. He promised the Holy Spirit would be with His disciples as they lived out His calling on their lives. He prepared them, and He would be with them as they went to all the world. They simply had to wait in Jerusalem for the arrival of the third Person of the triune God (1:4). While they waited, they prayed and worshiped together for strength and wisdom.

On Pentecost, the day the Jews gathered in Jerusalem for one of the harvest festivals, the Holy Spirit fell on the believers, and their verbal proclamation of the gospel brought a harvest of more than 3,000 souls. People from all over the world heard the good news in their language. Peter proclaimed the truth of God's first covenant with His people and the way Jesus fulfilled the needs the first covenant exposed. Some jeered, not understanding at all the miracle God was doing (2:13).

Pray for a filling of the Holy Spirit that gives you the courage to speak and the words that world needs to hear as you follow Jesus' example.

Monday, November 9, 2020—John 18-21

Culture has developed in a direction where people have less tolerance for opposing ideas. Rather than patiently listening, offering countering viewpoints, and exploring similarities and differences, when people hear something they don't like, they cry out "fake news" or block those people from their news feed or suspend their accounts. People are either afraid of the truth,

unable to defend their positions, or too lazy to engage in civil conversation and have friends “across the aisle.”

Jesus faced this “cancel culture” on the night He was arrested. He was arrested under cover of darkness. He was questioned about what He really taught. When He told His accusers they could have asked the thousands He taught in the open, one of the accusers struck Him (18:22) and asked Him why He dared speak to an official this way. The accusers couldn’t handle the truth. Pilate, on the other hand, could not grasp what the truth truly was (18:38). He was troubled by the developments, but Jesus assured Pilate he had no power over Him and that Pilate’s guilt was less than that of those who handed Jesus over (19:11). Jesus spoke truth.

Jesus also lived truth. He spoke Scripture from the cross so that God’s words would be fulfilled (19:28). An eyewitness testified to truth after Jesus’ death so that everyone could believe (19:35). Jesus said those who believe the truth without having to see it are blessed (20:29), and John wrote his Gospel so the readers could do just that (20:31).

Thank God for truth that confronts sin and transforms lives.

Sunday, November 8, 2020—John 14-17

When preparing to leave, a person has much to consider. Is everything packed? Who will feed the dog? Did I turn off the iron? Proper preparation helps the one traveling and those left behind.

Jesus knew His time was short, so He needed to prepare His disciples for what was next. As they gathered for the Passover meal, He washed their feet and gave them instruction for the future without His bodily presence. The first thing He told them was not to worry (14:1). What God was doing would end with their blessing. His going to the Father would allow them to do even greater things than He had done (14:12).

God was going to send the Holy Spirit, the divine Counselor, to give wisdom and peace (14:15-31). He would allow them to remain connected to

Jesus, as a vine connects to a branch. God would nourish and strengthen them so they could bear much fruit (15:1-5). He would empower them to love God and others and obey God's calling no matter the circumstances and produce in them a joy that would be complete.

This strength, peace, and joy were vital because following Jesus was going to be difficult and life-threatening (16:1-4). The Spirit would guide them and do the work of convicting the world with Jesus' message. They could have peace because He had overcome the world (16:33).

Jesus finished His preparation by praying—for Himself, His disciples, and all who would believe. Pray today to trust in God's wisdom and will and to live in peaceful, joyful, Spirit-led obedience.

Saturday, November 7, 2020—John 11-13

"It's not what you know. It's who you know." The connection to a celebrity or a person of influence can provide certain privileges or remove obstacles. For Lazarus, knowing Jesus meant he was allowed to die.

Lazarus's sisters knew Jesus loved Lazarus, so when Lazarus became ill, they sent word to Jesus. They knew He was a healer. They knew He was compassionate. They knew He would come and fix the problem. He didn't. Jesus delayed, and Lazarus died. This wouldn't end this way.

Jesus went to Bethany and spoke truth to Martha and shared emotion with Mary, and then He called Lazarus from the tomb. Jesus displayed His glory through the sickness and death of His close friend. Many believed in Jesus because of what they saw, and Mary responded sometime later by anointing Jesus' feet in worship. He had wept with her, and she wiped his feet with her hair (12:1-11).

People are not pawns in a game, but people are vessels in whom God can place His Spirit and through whom God can display His power. Those who believe in Him will never die. Through Lazarus's death and resurrection, Jesus was glorified. Jesus, in turn, said the time had come for Him to be glorified

(12:23) and for His death to glorify His Father (12:28).

Jesus' love for God and His disciples moved Him to serve them. He washed their feet—even the one who would betray Him—and called them to love. Pray for a faith that is willing to serve and suffer likewise.

Friday, November 6, 2020—John 7-10

Jesus did not want to be famous. He wanted to be faithful. His power and character had the potential to draw all kinds of attention to Him, but He wanted to draw attention to the Father and the corrupting sin that separated the world from Him (7:7). He lived with this tension every day and called the people to discern by God's truth and not mere appearances.

His ability to teach made even the elders and legal experts pause and think. When they tried to trap Him in His acts of grace and mercy, He forced them to confront their own imperfections. He wanted everyone to confess the flaws within, walk away from those sins, have faith in Him, and live in the freedom of being His disciple (8:1-32).

The people were walking in darkness, and He was the light dawning in their world (8:12, 9:5). Light can be uncomfortable as it reveals what has been concealed, yet light brings life, cleansing, and direction. The change He brings is evident, and the blind gladly proclaim they can see (9:25). His transformative power testifies to His faithfulness (9:33, 10:21).

Jesus is the good shepherd who leads His sheep and willingly lays His life down—putting Himself in harm's way for their protection. Everything He promises He delivers. He leads His sheep to eternal life, and nothing can snatch them out of His protective hand (10:30).

Praise God for the faithfulness of Jesus. Pray for deepening faith in the One He sent and the opportunity to lead others into this belief.

Thursday, November 5, 2020—John 4-6

Jesus was God, and Jesus was human. He had divine power, but He had human limitations. He was tired when He went through Samaria, so He had

to take a break while His disciples went into town to get some food. While He sat by the well, He had a transformative conversation with a woman from the town. She was an outcast, but Jesus treated her with honor. He confronted her weakness, and she put her trust in Him. In time, many in the town came to trust the life-changing truth Jesus taught.

Some time later, Jesus came to a lame man and asked, “Do you want to get well?” (5:6). Why would He ask that? Wouldn’t everyone want to get better? Like the woman at the well, this man had been weakened for so long he may have decided it would never get better. He may have—consciously or subconsciously—settled for weakness as a condition and an identity. This man confessed his desire to be better, and Jesus healed him and urged him to live in holiness in his new-found freedom.

One day Jesus and the disciples found themselves before a hungry crowd. The simple offering of a young boy became lunch for more than 5,000 people. Jesus challenged the crowd to trust in Him and not the signs they saw Him performing. His teaching is challenging, and many walk away from it (6:66), but in Him and Him alone are the words of life (6:68)

Thank God for the Bread of Life who satisfies our hunger.

Wednesday, November 4, 2020—John 1-3

John spent three formative years walking with Jesus. Over those three years, Jesus and John developed a brotherhood that was remarkable. John loved Jesus. Jesus loved John. From the cross, Jesus would charge John with caring for His mother. Theirs was a special bond.

Because John knew Jesus so well, he wanted to tell the good news about Him. When he started his Gospel, John began with familiar words, “In the beginning . . .” (1:1). What God had done through Jesus was similar to His creating the world. He was opening a new chapter of human history.

Jesus was God in the flesh, and belief in Him gave one the right to become a child of God (1:12). John the Baptist was Jesus’ forerunner,

preparing the way for Jesus' ministry and calling people to recognize the Lamb of God who would take away their sin (1:29). The disciples realized He was the Chosen One God had foretold through the prophets.

To take away sin, Jesus had to drink a cup of death so those who believe would be able to drink the water of life. His first miracle, at the wedding in Cana, foreshadowed this (2:1-11). In being lifted up on the cross, He became the symbol of death that would lead to life (3:1-18). John loved Jesus, and he knew men loved darkness (3:19). He wanted to make the story of Jesus clear so men could choose to love the One who loved them with an everlasting love and receive eternal life (3:36).

Thank God for His never-ending, sacrificial love.