



WELLS OF TRUTH

THE GOSPEL



Small Groups
facilitator guide

CONTENTS

1. Why Study the Gospel?
2. The Gospel in Context.
3. The Gospels tell the Gospel.
4. The Gospel Difference.
5. Couterfeit Gospels
6. Gospel Living.
7. The Good News is for Sharing.

INTRODUCTION TO THE SERIES

Welcome to this Wells of Truth series on the Gospel. We hope that drinking deeply from foundational Christian truths like these will refresh your spirit and strengthen you for a life full of joy and love in Christ. Once upon a time, about 2,000 years ago, Jesus of Nazareth launched his public ministry in the small towns of ancient Galilee with a profound message. He came on the scene with news, extremely good and mind-bending news. He announced the good news of God that the Kingdom of God had come near in him. And that good news message changed the world forever. In English, we call that message the "Gospel."

Almost certainly you've heard the term Gospel before. The word has become so common that it is in danger of losing all its meaning. Far too many of us miss the beauty and power of the Gospel. And we have little or no clarity about what it means - or what it means for us. And the loss of that good news is very bad news for us.

We created this series to help. We hope these videos and discussion materials will help you hear the good of Jesus with fresh clarity and transformational power.

We think you'll get the most out of this content if you engage it together with friends, but you're also welcome to use these materials for personal study. All the videos and supporting materials are available at www.wellsotruth.org.

The Gospel of Jesus changed my life over 30 years ago. And the best work of God in my life continues to happen when I hear and understand the good news of Jesus more and more deeply. I invite you to engage with this material, and I hope and pray that it will bless you as it has blessed me and millions of other Christians throughout history.

With joy in Christ,
Steve

HOW TO USE THE FACILITATOR GUIDE

This is meant to be a resource to help you guide your group through discussions based on our Wells of Truth video series and related Bible-passages, concluding with a time of prayer. You'll begin each week with a very brief introduction and by watching that session's video from wellsorturth.org. From there you may follow the guide by asking questions, reading Scripture, and reflecting on the material together in an open conversation (remembering to practice good listening and encourage dialogue). We end with prayer prompts that may help you tie these passages to the needs or desires of your group, and to bless what the Lord has done in your time together.

There are likely more questions and, at times, Scripture, than your group will have time for.

This is by design. We would rather you have more questions than you need than too few. We advise that the facilitator review the lesson ahead of the meeting and choose a few questions they'd most like to ask, so that you can skip over some questions for the sake of time. Remember, you're meeting routinely, so there will be time to circle back on these conversations again.

Please allot appropriate time for prayer at the end of your meeting. Prayer is an essential and irreplaceable part of small group. We'd rather you abbreviate the discussion and move on to prayer rather than have a long discussion and speed through prayer. That doesn't mean you can't pray efficiently (Mat 6:7), but we believe that God hears and responds to our prayers, and that we are knitted together when we pray with each other.

If you have any questions or comments, please contact Dan Kidd at dkidd@ualc.org. For more small group resources, including facilitator training, visit ualc.org/smallgroups

Special thanks to our authors: Katie Borden and Sarah Kidd.

WHY STUDY THE GOSPEL?

FACILITATORS

Throughout our Wells of Truth: The Gospel series, you will begin each session with a brief introduction followed by watching the video together. Many of our videos, including Session 1, have moments where a question will be asked on the screen. We have indicated those questions below as **IN-VIDEO REFLECTION QUESTIONS**. Take the opportunity to pause the video and engage with these reflections.

Consider asking your group members to read the Bible passages provided. Remember to thank them each for reading.

This session ends with a FOR DISCUSSION NEXT SESSION prompt. This will be the only time in the series that we assign “homework” like this.

INTRODUCTION FOR THE GROUP

Almost certainly you’ve heard the term Gospel before. The word has become so common that it is in danger of losing all its meaning. Far too many of us miss the beauty and power of the Gospel. And we have little or no clarity about what it means – or what it means for us. And the loss of that good news is very bad news for us.

In this first session, we will seek to answer together the question “Why Study the Gospel?” We will begin by watching a video together, followed by a discussion on the topic. We will read from the Bible together and we will close with a time of praying with and for one another.

WATCH

Watch the Session 1 video titled “**Why Study the Gospel?**”

IN-VIDEO REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- What is your definition of the Gospel? (*Note: This appears as the Reflection Question 1 in the Discussion Guide*)
- When have you received some really good news about something?
- Why do you think some people don’t receive the Christian Gospel as good news?

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

2. In what ways might we be tempted to condense or minimize the Gospel? Why do you think we are tempted to do this?
3. Have you ever heard the Gospel describe in one of the narrow ways that Pastor Steve described?
4. How have you heard the word “Gospel” defined in the past?

READ

Read: *Mark 1:14-17 and Matthew 4:12-17*

READING QUESTIONS

- What is the good news (or “gospel”) Jesus proclaimed in these passages?
 - The same Greek word, *euangelion* (yoo-ang-ghel'-ee-on), is translated both “gospel” and “good news” in English.
- What do you imagine it might have been like for those who heard Jesus proclaim, “the Kingdom has come near?”
- What questions would you have asked Jesus about this “good news?”

Read: *Galatians 1:1-9*

Paul is clearly very concerned about the integrity of the Gospel; concerned for those turning from it and fervently opposed to those preaching “alternative” gospels, which are really no gospel at all.

Paul states he’s astonished that they (the Galatian church) quickly deserted *the one who called them to live in the grace of Christ* and turned to a different gospel.

READING QUESTIONS

- What does Paul’s description of their problem tell us about his view of the Gospel?
 - Receive all answers. Note that Paul accuses them of deserting the one who called them rather than a proclamation or Gospel words. Living in Christ’s grace is evidently a significant part of the good news.
- Why is Paul so adamant about the Gospel’s integrity?
- How might even well-intentioned people be tempted to distort the Gospel?

FOR DISCUSSION NEXT SESSION

In response to what we've heard and discussed today, take some time over the next week to write down your "first ideas" about how you would define the Gospel.

PRAYER

Over the weeks ahead we will hear again, or perhaps for the first time, the many ways that Jesus is good news for us and for the world. Invite your group members to take turns praying, in their own words, that the Lord would use the time together in this season to excite us, encourage us, and transform us. Ask that we would have ears to hear and eyes to see the full measure of Jesus' Gospel.

Additionally, if anyone in your group has come with something they would like specific prayer for, share this with the group and pray for one another.

THE GOSPEL IN CONTEXT

FACILITATORS

Begin this session with the brief introduction and inviting your group to share their “first ideas” of a definition of the Gospel. You will then watch the video for Session 2, titled “The Gospel in Context.” Note that there is an **IN-VIDEO REFLECTION QUESTION** which will appear on screen, and a follow up question (not on screen but in the discussion guide) that you can ask to further that conversation. We encourage you to close with time for prayer, and we’ve included a prayer prompt to help if you like.

INTRODUCTION FOR THE GROUP

In our last session we began reflecting on what the Gospel is. In today’s session of our Wells of Truth: The Gospel series, we will explore further the kind of Gospel Jesus proclaims, and went it meant for the world he was born into.

Share your “first ideas” of a definition of the word Gospel.

WATCH

Watch the Session 2 video titled “**The Gospel in Context.**”

IN-VIDEO REFLECTION QUESTION

- What’s your own closest experience to the story of Alexander—when you heard about someone or something that got you out of a problem and into a better future?

FOLLOW UP QUESTION

- What has changed in your life since that time?

In the parable we heard about Alexander, he experienced real change in his life because of the gospel news he received.

READ

Read: *Romans 1:1-17*

READING QUESTIONS

- What stands out to you from this passage?
- How might these proclamations about Jesus have sounded to those living in the Roman Empire under Caesar?
- If you were to ask the average person on the street “who is in charge of you?” or “who rules the world?” what do you think they might say?
- What problems or troubles do people look to leaders to solve, save or protect them from?
- What problems do you see around us that we need to be rescued or saved from?
 - Consider with your group the difference between a short list, such as “sin” or “the devil” vs. a longer list.

Read: *Isaiah 40:9-11*

READING QUESTIONS

- What did you hear in this passage? What stands out to you?

Read: *Isaiah 52:7-10*

READING QUESTIONS

- How do you notice these passages from Isaiah setting up their fulfillment in and through Jesus?

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

- What is it that humanity needs to be saved from?
- What reality, present and future are we saved into? What purpose are we saved into?
 - God’s family; royal priesthood; fellowship of saints; Holy Spirit transformation (sanctification); citizens of the Kingdom; life in abundance; in-breaking Kingdom

- What lesser gospels have you seen prevalent in our world or even in your own life? Where do people turn to be rescued from the things that ail them in this life?
-

PRAYER:

In today's session we have heard how Jesus offers good news to the world that is distinct from the promises or solutions of others in the world, and we've reflected on the things Jesus has saved us into. Spend time sharing with each other how you've seen God at work in your life recently. What difference has the Lord been making in you or those around you in this season? Share these with the group. Thank God for his hand over your lives and pray that he would continue to bless you and keep you near him in the days and weeks to come.

Additionally, if anyone in your group has come with something they would like specific prayer for, share this with the group and pray for one another.

THE GOSPELS TELL THE GOSPEL

FACILITATORS

In today's session we will be reading several stories and parables from the Gospels of Mark and Matthew. You likely will not have enough time to read all the passages aloud together. Consider picking a few passages from each list ahead of time to read out loud. Or assign your group members 1 or 2 passages that they can read individually to themselves and have them summarize the passage for the group.

INTRODUCTION FOR THE GROUP

How can we know what the Gospel is? How can we appreciate the fullness of Jesus' good news? In this session we will explore how the books of the Bible we call the Gospels reveal the incredible news of God's work in Jesus, and how Jesus saves us *because* he is Lord.

WATCH

Watch the Session 3 video titled "[The Gospels Tell the Gospel.](#)"

IN-VIDEO REFLECTION QUESTION

- What's wrong with the world?
- What do we need to do to fix it?

READ

Select a few of the passages listed below and have your group members read them aloud. Or, have group members take 1 or 2 passages each, give them time to read them on their own, and then give a synopsis for the group. Answer the questions that follow.

Readings from Mark:

Chapter 1 – verses 16-20, vv. 21-28, vv. 29-34, vv. 35-39, vv. 40-45

Chapter 2 – verses 1-12, vv. 13-17, vv. 18-22, vv. 24-Ch.3:6

READING QUESTIONS

- Who are the people in this scene?
- What were their needs or conflicts?
- What did Jesus do?

- What did they learn about the Kingdom?

Now, select a few of the parables from the list below and have your group members read them aloud, or assign them individually with them giving a synopsis like before. Answer the questions that follow.

Readings from Matthew:
Chapter 13 – verses 1-9, vv. 21-30, vv. 31-33, vv. 44-46, vv. 47-50

READING QUESTIONS

- Is there a main character?
 - What does Jesus say about the Kingdom in this parable?
 - What is he answering or correcting?
 - After reading all of those passages, was there anything in them that surprised you, or stood out to you?
-

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

In the video, the discussion group explored the connection between the terms “Savior” and “Lord” as they are applied to Jesus.

- What difference does it make that Jesus is Savior *because* he is Lord (rather than the other way around)?
 - In what ways have you seen Jesus’ lordship in your life or the lives of those around you?
 - How has Jesus’ lordship saved or rescued you or someone you know?
 - You may want to prepare to have a story like this to set the tone for your group.
 - Note, in Week 7 we will spend some significant time sharing our own stories about what the Lord has done in our lives—that is, our testimonies—so in this question, aim for shorter, specific examples.
 - Why is Jesus’ lordship a significant part of part of the Gospel?
-

PRAYER

The Bible’s witness to Jesus reveals his Gospel to us. Share with one another how you’ve encountered the Gospel in new ways through Scripture lately. Pray that the Lord would continue to use your times in his Word, be it devotion, small group, or sermons, to reveal and remind you of the good news of Christ. Pray that God would continue to grow your appetite for the Bible and the One to whom it points.

THE GOSPEL DIFFERENCE

FACILITATORS

There are no [IN-VIDEO REFLECTION QUESTIONS](#) in Session 4.

INTRODUCTION FOR THE GROUP

In this session we will examine how Jesus' Gospel changes the whole world. In previous sessions we've considered how we can minimize or understate the Gospel. Today we will hear just how profound the good news about Jesus truly is.

WATCH

Watch the Session 4 video titled "[The Gospel Difference.](#)"

REFLECTION QUESTION

- Who is Jesus' Kingdom for?
 - The only criteria are a need and desire to be forgiven and rescued by Jesus.

There are several ways that Jesus' Gospel is distinct from other types of promises of good news. Let's spend some time looking at the following passages that help us explore these differences.

READ

You might note for your group that this conversation between Jesus and Pilate took place after Jesus was betrayed and arrested and he is now on trial before being sentenced to death by crucifixion.

Read: [John 18:28-40](#)

READING QUESTIONS

- Why do you think Jesus responded to Pilate saying, "My kingdom is not of this world?"
- How is Jesus' Gospel about more than earthly authority?

Read: *Ephesians 6:10-13*

READING QUESTIONS

- How might we be tempted to make the Gospel about one group of people against another group of people? How do we see this happening in the world around us?
- What would it be like for Christians to embrace that our battle is not against flesh and blood, but against “spiritual forces of evil?”

Read: *Luke 5:17-26*

READING QUESTIONS

In v. 20, we hear, “When Jesus saw their faith, he said, ‘Friend, your sins are forgiven.’”

- What do you find interesting about Jesus’ response here?
 - Jesus responded to the faith of the paralytic man’s *friends*.
 - He called the paralytic man “friend.”
 - In response to his friends seeking healing for this man, Jesus proclaimed that his sins were forgiven.
- What does this passage show us about Jesus’ ministry?
 - It seeks to save people from their physical and social ailments.
 - Jesus’ ministry, even in physical healing, has to do with forgiveness of sin.
 - You might note that we’re not told anything about the heart posture, words, or actions of the paralyzed man before Jesus addresses and heals him.

Read: *Luke 7:36-50*

READING QUESTIONS

- Why do you think Simon the Pharisee responded the way he did to the woman washing Jesus’ feet?
- What stands out to you about the behavior of the woman towards Jesus?
 - She is incredibly reverent, appreciative, and affectionate towards Jesus – kissing his feet as she washes them with her own hair.
 - She is weeping.
 - She washes his feet with perfume she brought to him.

In v. 46, Jesus says to Simon, “Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven—as her great love has shown.”

- What does this response tell us about Jesus' Gospel as it relates to this woman?
 - Notice that her expressions of great love are not the reason she was forgiven, but rather the response.
-

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

In the video, we hear that Jesus' Gospel has individual, communal, and cosmic implications.

- How do you see Jesus' Gospel making a communal impact and transformation?
 - How is Jesus' Gospel good news for the cosmos?
 - The good news of Jesus is that the whole world will be made new and right again. The curses of the earth will end, the world will live in peace and abundant provision, and death and the devil are defeated.
-

PRAYER

In this session we have heard how Jesus' Gospel changes the whole world. Spend time in prayer thanking the Lord for all the ways Jesus has changed things and for the things that he will change things. Pray that the God would meet you in your present needs and struggles, and that his Kingdom would break into earth as it is in Heaven. If someone in your group is in need of healing, pray for them specifically.

COUNTERFEIT GOSPELS, BANKRUPT HOPE

FACILITATORS

In this session we will be discussing how we are tempted to look to people or things in this world, other than Jesus, to solve our problems and needs. We encourage you as facilitators to be honest and authentic in sharing ways you've looked elsewhere for solutions, or how you're tempted to do so. How you share with your group will set the tone of the discussion. Honest sharing creates a context of safety in your group, and that is exactly what we want as we share together in Christian community.

INTRODUCTION FOR THE GROUP

In this session of our Wells of Truth: The Gospel series we are exploring the numerous ways we are offered solutions to the many problems of the world. In the deserts of this world, there are mirages that offer false hope, but these are only illusions. The only true Oasis for us is Jesus' Gospel.

WATCH

Watch the Session 5 video titled "[Counterfeit Gospels, Bankrupt Hope.](#)"

IN-VIDEO REFLECTION QUESTION

- Innocence, significance, and security are things that all people need. Where do people look for these things?
-

REFLECTION QUESTION

- What is something that makes you feel safe and secure?
 - Share with the group a time when you felt truly significant.
-

READ

Read: *Ephesians 1:3-8a and Romans 8:1-4*

READING QUESTIONS

- For whom might this be good news?
- What problems or circumstances do these passages offer a solution?
 - In v. 7, we hear that we have been gifted redemption and full forgiveness for our sins. This is great news for all of us, but it will particularly be good news to those who are racked with the shame of their mistakes, rebellion, and sinfulness. For those who feel lost to their guilt or irreparably evil, Jesus washes us clean, *as far as the east is from the west he has removed our transgressions*. (Psalm 103:12)
 - This is the fulfillment of innocence we hope for.

Read: *Ephesians 2:17-21 and Romans 8:14-17*

READING QUESTIONS

- Why might this news of being made part of God's family, knitted together with God's-self and the whole Church, be good news?
 - For anyone who has ever felt abandoned, unseen, unloved, worthless, and hated, Christ's Gospel offers full adoption into the Father's beloved family.
- Who around us might be desperate to hear that they are loved, profoundly valuable, and have been invited to sit at the table along with everyone else in the presence of the Lord?

Read: *John 16:33*

READING QUESTIONS

- How does Jesus' promise here differ from all the other sources that offer to solve our problems?
 - Jesus begins with honesty; *"you will have trouble."* Too often those who promise us security will claim that they can protect us from the sorrows and harms of the world. Jesus knows that isn't the way life goes, and he doesn't pretend otherwise. But Christ promised us what no one and nothing else can: He has overcome the world! Whatever troubles we face, whatever hurt we feel, however bad it gets, this is temporary, and he will make all things well again; in part now, and in full later.

Read: *Matthew 11:28-30*

READING QUESTIONS

- How does Jesus' invitation sound unlike other people or methods that seek to solve our problems?
-

PRAYER

We clearly need God's help in the world and in our own lives. There are problems and situations in our lives right now where we need the Lord's help. Prayerfully reflect on the things we might be tempted to put our trust and hope in instead of Jesus. Pray together that the Lord would save us from seeking counterfeit gospels. Share with one another the ways you need God's help today. Pray for each other, that the Lord would hear your prayers and be your helper and rescuer.

GOSPEL LIVING

FACILITATORS

Note that this session's **IN-VIDEO REFLECTION QUESTION** is similar to the first reflection following the video. You may want to take the time to ask this question to allow the group a little more time to consider the idea asked differently, or you can proceed ahead to the **READ** section.

INTRODUCTION FOR THE GROUP

In today's session, we will hear and reflect on how Jesus' Gospel saves us into a new way of life—walking in the Spirit and allowing Jesus to be the Lord of our whole lives.

WATCH

Watch the Session 6 video titled "**Gospel Living.**"

IN-VIDEO REFLECTION QUESTION

- The Gospel sets us free to live by the Spirit and follow the way of Jesus. Can you imagine how this might guide you in some area of your life, such as at work or in your relationships with family or friends?
-

REFLECTION QUESTION

- If the Gospel reveals the Christ-like life, how then might we use it to guide the way we live?
-

READ

Read: *Galatians 2:14-21*

READING QUESTIONS

- What do you think caused Peter to begin insisting that Gentile Christians take on Jewish tradition?
 - Receive all answers, keeping in mind that this is all imaginative speculation.
 - In v.11 (prior to our passage) we're told that some "friends of James" came to Antioch, and after that Peter began to not eat alongside Gentiles for.

- Perhaps he encountered something in the Gentiles' behavior that made him feel uncomfortable and he looked to his former, familiar traditions for security. Or, maybe he was finding it difficult to describe to Gentile or Jewish Christians how they ought to live good lives without relying entirely on the traditional Law.
- How might we be tempted to replace the written Law we have been freed from with another set of written laws?
 - We might be tempted to read the New Testament looking for a new set of laws and rituals that would replace Old Testament laws. Or we might think we are still bound by the OT laws except in cases where the NT explicitly overrides the previous law. We may try to distinguish ritual laws from moral laws and set out to obey moral laws.

This does not mean that we are now to behave lawlessly, or that Jesus' Gospel does not have any claim over how we should live.

Read: *Galatians 5:13-25*

READING QUESTIONS

- According to Paul, how are we meant to respond to our Christian freedom?
 - vv.13a-14 *"But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love. For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"*
 - How are we able to do this? v.16 *"So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh."*
- How is the instruction to *"walk in the Spirit"* and descriptions of *"fleshly acts"* vs. *"Spiritual fruit"* different from list laws?
 - Note that instead of particularized penalties for *"acts of the flesh"* Paul simply warns that *"those who live like this will not inherit the Kingdom of God."*
 - *It's important that the results of walking in the Spirit is Spiritual fruit. This identifies that these are things that come from the Spirit and, like fruit, they are grown over time with care and cultivation.*

Read: *Galatians 6:1-2*

READING QUESTIONS

- In this passage, how does Paul write that we fulfill the *"Law of Christ?"*
 - Consider how we practically carry each other's burdens, and how carrying burdens relates to v.1.

- How can we as Christians help one another walk according to the Spirit and obey the “law of Christ?”
 - We can encourage each other by noticing and sharing with each other when we see Spiritual fruit in their lives and look for this fruit in our own lives.
 - We can observe our own fleshy behaviors and seek the Lord’s help, and by hearing and grasping the Lord’s forgiveness and pardon.
 - We can *gently*, and lovingly *restore* our fellow Christians when we notice them snared in the briars of sin.

We not only have the benefit of the Holy Spirit to guide our path—transforming us into the people we were always created to be—we also have the example of Jesus himself. We can gain insight into how we are supposed to live as we were intended by looking at how Jesus lived as he was meant to live.

Read: *Ephesians 4:20-25 and 1 Corinthians 10:31-11:1*

READING QUESTIONS

- How do these passages address the question, “how are we to live as Christians?”
 - Ephesians 4 speaks of these disciples hearing of Christ and being taught in Christ, in according to the truth in Christ.
 - There is a former self that is to be put to death and a self being “made new in the attitude” of the mind. This new self to be put on is “created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.”
 - In 1 Corinthians 10-11, Paul instructs them to do everything aiming to glorify God; that is rather than asking “what am I allowed to do?” our question might be “what would most please the Lord?”
 - Paul notes that he’s seeking the good of the many rather than the good of himself, so that they may be saved.
 - He then invites the Corinthian church to follow his example as he follows the example of Jesus.
- Given what we’ve discussed, how can we tell the difference between law-making and the Gospel?

PRAYER

In this session we’ve discussed how we live because of the Gospel. But we know that living as we were created to live depends entirely on the transforming work of the Lord in and over us. Spend time prayerfully remembering and thanking God for how he has been at work in your life lately. Conclude with prayers of yielding to God’s will, that he would continue to shape you into who you were created to be.

GOOD NEWS IS FOR SHARING

FACILITATORS

In this session we have included a variety of stories from the Gospels and Acts along with some corresponding questions. You will want to choose only a few of them so that you will have plenty of time to discuss them well. Encourage your group to read the stories you don't get to in your time together and reflect on the questions individually.

This session's discussion is broken into 2 portions. First is the reading and response described above. The second is a reflection on our own experience with the Gospel and how this series has helped us in our thinking about the Gospel. Plan to transition to the second portion in a timely way so that you can conclude with a discussion about our individual stories. This will lead you into your final prayer time for the series.

INTRODUCTION FOR THE GROUP

In our final session of in this Wells of Truth: The Gospel series, we hear more stories about how the Gospel has changed the world and the lives of the several individuals. We will also spend time sharing our own stories about Jesus' Gospel with one another.

WATCH

Watch the Session 7 video titled *"Good News is for Sharing."*

IN-VIDEO REFLECTION QUESTION

- How has Jesus been good news for you?

READ

We have included several stories of different individuals encountering and receiving Jesus' Gospel. Select and read some of the stories below and answer the related questions.

Read: *Luke 19:1-10 (The Story of Zacchaeus)*

READING QUESTIONS

- How did Jesus encounter and respond to Zacchaeus?
 - Jesus "arrived" and spot Zacchaeus in the tree and beckoned him down and told Zacchaeus that he must come to his home.

- **What was Zacchaeus saved from?**
 - Not only was he saved from a life of lying and stealing from his neighbors, he was saved from the isolation of being as social pariah as a Jewish tax collector for Rome.
- **What was he saved into?**
 - Zacchaeus was saved into a life of following devotion to Jesus, a life reconciled with God and his neighbors by unwinding his sinfulness of theft, deceit, and stinginess. Out of isolation, he was invited into the family of God.

Read: *John 4:1-30 (The Story of the Samaritan Woman)*

READING QUESTIONS

- How did Jesus encounter and respond to the Samaritan woman?
- What news did Jesus share with her?
 - That he is the Messiah, the Christ on whom the world was waiting, and that water he offered would “become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”
- What was her response to Jesus’ news?
 - By returning to town and telling everyone about the Gospel of the Messiah, Jesus.

Read: *Matthew 26:31-35; Luke 22:54-62; John 21:15-19; Acts 4:4-20 (The Story of Peter)*

READING QUESTIONS

- How is Peter transformed over the course of this story?
 - Jesus called a fisherman who didn’t know Jesus or his Way to be his disciple. Over time, the Gospel took hold of Peter and he was saved into a life of devotion to Jesus, reconciled after his rebellion, and eventually empowered to preach over the Church on the day of Pentecost.
- What is Peter saved from and what is he saved into?
 - Receive all answers. Among them you might note that Peter was saved from a life of waywardness, pride, and self-preservation into a life of being Spirit-led, sacrificial, and devoted to Christ.
- How might this story be similar to other Christians’ stories today?
 - Notice how Peter’s gradual transformation, his growing relationship with Jesus, his reconciliation with Jesus, and his response to the call of God’s vocation for him might be familiar to our lives.

Read: *Read Acts 8:26-39 (The Story of the Ethiopian, Eunuch, Court treasurer)*

READING QUESTIONS

- What led Philip to share the Gospel with this man in his chariot?
 - The prompting of the Lord—first by way of an angel appearing to him and setting him on the route to Gaza and then the Holy Spirit told him to approach the chariot.

- The man then sought Philip’s guidance in understanding the Scriptures.
- What practical obstacles were overcome in order for this Ethiopian treasurer to hear and receive the Gospel?
 - He was a Gentile (Philip likely was a Jewish Christian)
 - He clearly was a man of wealth and influence (which may well have intimidated a traveling disciple)
 - Philip (as far as we know) was not necessarily headed in that direction
 - Though he was reading Scripture, the Ethiopian treasurer did not understand it without the help of Philip

Read: *Read Acts 16:24-34 (The Story of the Jailer)*

READING QUESTIONS

- How did this jailer receive the Gospel news?
 - By receiving God’s forgiveness and devoting himself and his family to Jesus and being baptized.

Take some time to reflect on these stories as they relate to one another.

- What are some of the commonalities between these stories?
- What are some features that make these stories distinct?

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

In 1 Peter 3:15, we hear “But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.” Peter encourages disciples to always be available and ready to do what the Bible does and bear witness to the Lord. And one of the best ways we can do that is to share about how Jesus’ Gospel has taken hold of us.

(Facilitator, if your group has not yet had the opportunity to share their own testimonies of Jesus’ Gospel in their lives, this would be a great time to do so. Ask the question below. If your group is familiar with one another and you’ve shared these stories with each other before, consider inviting the group to share any updates in their story as they feel led.)

- How has Jesus’ Gospel been good news to you? How is the Gospel alive and active for you even now?
 - Facilitator, you may want to lead with your own story, setting the tone, pace, and general context. You may want to guide your group to be efficient in their storytelling, as we don’t want anyone left out because of time, and our hope is that you will each get to share even more of your stories in the

weeks and seasons ahead as a small group.

- Based on what we've learned and discussed in this series, how might you share your story differently than you would have before this series?
 - How does telling our own stories about Jesus' Gospel relate to living according to the Spirit?
 - Part of living in the Kingdom of God is being ambassadors of the King, inviting others into the family, the refuge, and saving graces of the Lord. Consider that the Ethiopian treasurer's story depended on Philip hearing and responding to the Holy Spirit and being willing to sit with the treasurer.
-

PRAYER

In our last discussion, we considered how Jesus' Gospel has been good news in our lives and how we can use our own stories to share this good news with those around us. Begin by praying out your thankfulness for the Lord's Gospel in your life. Then, spend time praying for opportunities to share your story with others. Invite the Holy Spirit to give you clarity on how you will share your story and to whom he might have you share it with.