

CHRIST IN THE CELLBLOCK

A Bible Study for Jail Ministry



Created by The Prison Ministry Task Force of the Indiana District—Lutheran Church Missouri Synod (LCMS)

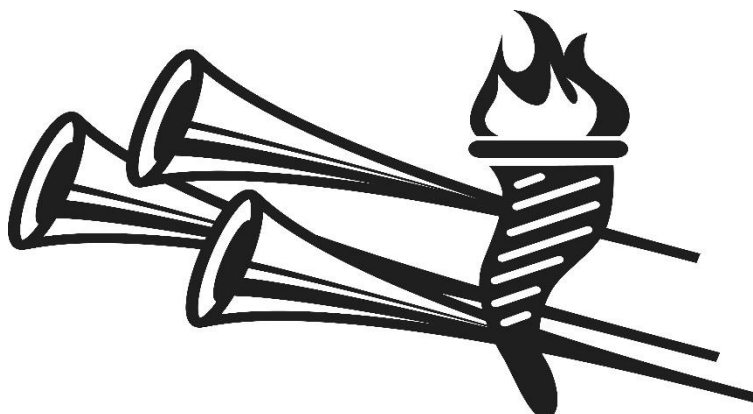
Members of The Prison Ministry Task Force of the Indiana District—LCMS, 2017-2018

Pat Kyler	Member, St. John's Lutheran Church, Columbia City, IN
Rev. David Mommens	Pastor, St. John's Lutheran Church, Columbia City, IN
Katherine Rittner	Deaconess Intern, Zion Lutheran Church, Columbia City, IN
Rev. Phil Rittner, II	Pastor, Zion Lutheran Church, Columbia City, IN
Rev. Geoff Robinson	Director of Congregational Outreach/Human Care, IN District
Carole Terkula	Deaconess Intern, St. John's Lutheran Church, Columbia City, IN
Michael Terkula	Vicar, St. John's Lutheran Church, Columbia City, IN
Rev. Dr. Jerry Winegarden	Pastor, Shepherd by the Lakes Lutheran Church, Syracuse, IN

Table of Contents

Preface.....	1
Introduction: Who God Is, Who We Are, and Why We Need Jesus.....	3
Lesson One: Jesus Teaches Nicodemus What it Means to be Begotten from Above.....	7
Lesson Two: Jesus Speaks with the Woman at the Well.....	9
Lesson Three: Jesus Anointed By a Sinful Woman.....	11
Lesson Four: Jesus Seeks Zacchaeus the Tax Collector.....	13
Lesson Five: Jesus Speaks with the Woman Who was Caught in Adultery.....	15
Lesson Six: Jesus Teaches Martha and Mary What is Better.....	17
Lesson Seven: Jesus is the Good Shepherd.....	20
Poem “Jesus Help Me”	23
Poem “Lonely Prison”	24
Bibliography.....	25

Preface



This book of Bible studies for use in jails came about when the members of The Prison Ministry Task Force of the Indiana District—Lutheran Church Missouri Synod (LCMS) discovered that there were not many readily available resources for congregations to use for outreach to the incarcerated in local jails. Jail ministry is different from prison ministry in that the pastor or layperson leading the Bible study may only have contact once with a jail inmate because of the shorter duration of sentences than those in prison where Bible studies can go on for years. Thus, it was necessary to create stand-alone Bible studies which present the Gospel message clearly and succinctly in each individual lesson.

This book has been designed specifically for pastors/laypeople to lead the Bible studies in a small group setting with the inmates of the jail. It is not intended for an individual inmate to use as a personal Bible study, although he/she could still learn much that way. Ideally, the pastor/layperson would lead each Bible study, guiding the inmates through the study, answering specific questions as they arise, and facilitating group discussion. It is best for each inmate to have his/her own book, but if that is not possible, then the lessons have been designed so that the Bible study leader can go through the lessons orally with the inmates with the same impact. Each lesson is designed to take about one hour.

If a layperson is leading these Bible studies, it is recommended that he/she go through the Bible studies first with the pastor before presenting them to the inmates so that his/her answers are doctrinally sound. Ideally, the pastor would lead a congregation's jail ministry team in these studies prior to use in the jail setting, teaching the jail ministry team before they teach others. We recommend that the Bible study leader use the Leader's Guide which contains the explanation of the verses and the answers to the questions.

The book begins by introducing who we are in relation to God and why we need a Savior from our sin. Especially for those inmates who come from a non-Christian background, this introductory lesson is essential for laying the groundwork for the lessons that follow. Lessons

One through Seven deal with Jesus' personal interaction with individual men and women in the Gospels and how His words to them are speaking to us today.

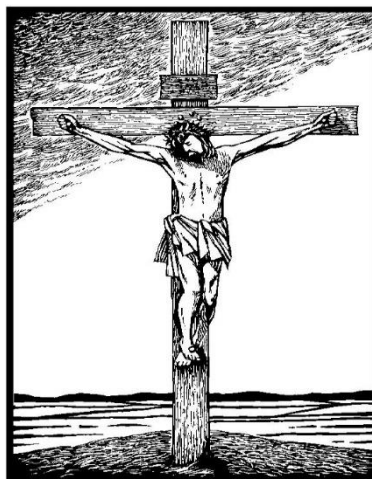
The lessons begin with delving into the text first and pointing out what is going on verse by verse. Several Biblical commentaries (see the bibliography) were consulted with care to assist in the unpacking of the meaning of each Bible story presented. After the discussion of the Biblical text, there are a series of questions related to the Bible story and its application. Bible study leaders are encouraged to go through the studies in the order presented so that the inmates will get the most out of each lesson.

We recommend using Zondervan's paperback NIV Giant Print Reference Bible with each Bible study for several reasons. First, it is paperback, which is usually the only kind of book permitted in jails (please check with your local jail before taking anything in). Second, the font is large enough for older inmates to read easily in the possible dim light of the cell block. Third, there are maps and a glossary available in the back of the Bible for quick reference. And finally, it is helpful because many inmates are not familiar with the location of specific books of the Bible and a common page number can be given so everyone stays together and the Bible study can run in an efficient manner.

We pray this Bible study book will be a blessing to all who use it by its clear message of Jesus Christ and Him crucified (1 Corinthians 2:2) We rest on God's promise that His Word will not return to Him empty, but will accomplish what He desires and achieve the purpose for which He sent it (Isaiah 55:11). God wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth; for there is one mediator between God and men, the man Jesus Christ, who gave himself as a ransom for all men—the testimony given in its proper time (1 Timothy 2:3-6).

Lift High the Cross!

The Prison Ministry Task Force of the Indiana District—LCMS, February 2018



Introduction: Who God Is, Who We Are, and Why We Need Jesus

Opening Prayer: Heavenly Father, You are holy and we are not. Yet in Your mercy You desire to be in a close, loving relationship with us despite our sinful condition. We admit we cannot do anything on our own to earn Your love or favor because of our sin. Thank You for sending Your Son Jesus Christ into the world to rescue us from sin, death, and the power of the devil. Such amazing grace deserves nothing but our thanks and praise now and forever, Amen.

Who Is God?

Let's explore some Bible passages which answer this question:

- Genesis 1:1
- Deuteronomy 32:6
- Deuteronomy 32:4
- Deuteronomy 6:4
- Numbers 23:19
- John 4:24
- 1 John 4:16
- Revelation 4:8

Who Are We?

Let's find out what the Bible has to say:

- Genesis 1:26-28

Note that God says, "Let **us** make man in **our** image. . ." We read in Deuteronomy that God is One, yet He uses the plural "us" and "our" when speaking of the creation of mankind. God is three persons (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) in one divine being. Let's look at some verses which describe our Triune God:

- Matthew 3:16-17
- Matthew 28:19
- John 17:21

- John 14:23 and 14:26

So, we are created in the image of the Triune God (not that we look like Him physically, but that we reflect His character). The Holy Trinity is a great mystery; yet we can confidently state that God is Three in One based on what He has revealed about Himself in Scripture.

1. What is the important role of mankind according to God in Genesis 1:26-28 and Genesis 2:15?
2. How did God view all of creation, including mankind, according to Genesis 1:31?

The Problem:

3. What does God tell Adam and Eve in Genesis 2:16-17?

Read Genesis 3:1-7

4. In Genesis 3:1, who raises doubt about what God has said?
5. With what does Satan tempt Eve in Genesis 3:5?
6. How is this breaking the first commandment (see Exodus 20:3)?

By not trusting in God completely and by desiring to make themselves gods, Adam and Eve sinned and were thrown out of the Garden of Eden by God so that they would not eat from the Tree of Life and live eternally in their sinful condition. That would be a fate worse than physical death: eternal life without God. Sin separates us from God--sinful man cannot be in the presence of Holy God. The close, intimate relationship which Adam and Eve originally enjoyed with God is broken because of sin.

As descendants of Adam and Eve, we have inherited their sinful nature. Let's look at some Bible passages which speak of this:

- Genesis 5:3
- Romans 5:12
- Ecclesiastes 7:20
- 1 John 1:8
- Galatians 3:22

To make atonement/payment for the sins of the ancient Israelites, God commanded the priests to sacrifice animals, such as sheep, goats, and bulls and place their blood on the altar to the LORD. Forgiveness received through such sacrifices was won by Christ on the cross.

Who is Jesus Christ?

Let's examine Scripture to answer this question:

- Matthew 1:21
- Matthew 1:23
- Matthew 3:17
- John 3:36
- Romans 3:21-25
- 1 John 2:2
- John 3:16-18

What Does Jesus' Death on the Cross and Resurrection Mean for Those Who Believe in Him?

Let's look at what Scripture has to say about it.

- Romans 5:6-11 and 5:1-2
- John 11:25
- Galatians 4:4-7

How Does God See Christians Because of Jesus' Sacrifice?

- Hebrews 10:10
- 1 Peter 2:9-10
- 1 John 3:1
- Galatians 3:26

That's right, when God looks at Christians, he does not see our sin—He sees His Son, Jesus Christ whose blood covers all our sin and washes it away!

In Isaiah 43:4, God says that His children are precious and honored in His sight.

So when we are feeling dirty, guilty, ashamed, or worthless because of sin, we, His children can turn to God's Word to rest secure in our identity in Him and how He sees us. Our identity is not wrapped up in what we have done or in how we feel about ourselves or how others see us—our identity is bestowed on us by God through Jesus Christ. And God's Word is truth. May you find peace and comfort in this fact.

The remaining lessons in this book center on Jesus' interaction with various people in the Bible, where He reveals Himself to them and to us. Let's find out more about Jesus and how much He loves us.

Finish with a closing prayer that includes the prayer requests of those in your group.



**Lesson One: Jesus Teaches Nicodemus What It Means to Be Begotten
From Above
John 3:1-21**



Opening Prayer: Heavenly Father, you have created all people and desire to be in a close, loving relationship with us. Thank you for the gift of Baptism in which You claim us as Your children and heirs of eternal life. Help us to live out our Baptismal life each day as we become more conformed to the likeness of Your dear Son Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Read John 3:1-21 with your Bible study leader and listen as he/she explains several key points in the text. Feel free to ask questions as you follow along. Then answer the following questions.

Digging Deeper:

1. Nicodemus receives a lesson in who Jesus really is. Who is Jesus to you? A teacher? A wise man? An example to follow? God in the flesh?
2. Just as Jesus reveals Himself to Nicodemus, He reveals His true identity to us. How does He do that with people today?
3. Just as Nicodemus does not fully grasp what Jesus is telling him, we too often do not understand what Jesus says in the Bible. Is there something in the Bible that you've often wondered about or were wanting someone to explain more fully to you? If so, what is it?

4. What is Baptism? Are you Baptized? If so, when and where? If you are not yet Baptized, do you have a desire to be Baptized?

Martin Luther, the great leader of the Reformation, said that Baptism is a great treasure. No matter what our circumstances are, we can find comfort in our Baptism because it delivers the benefits of Jesus' cross. Luther says we confess our sins daily and cling to God's promises in our Baptism. In his Large Catechism Luther states, "Thus, we must regard baptism and put it to use in such a way that we may draw strength and comfort from it when our sins or conscience oppress us, and say: 'But I am baptized! And if I have been baptized, I have the promise that I shall be saved and have eternal life, both in body and soul.'"¹ And "Thus we see what a great and excellent thing baptism is, which snatches us from the jaws of the devil and makes us God's own, overcomes and takes away sin and daily strengthens the new person, and always endures and remains until we pass out of this misery into eternal glory."²

5. At some point after his conversation with Jesus, Nicodemus defends Him against the attacks of some of the other Pharisees (see John 7:48-51). Nicodemus is also one of the men who takes Jesus' body down from the cross and buries it reverently, showing his devotion and love (see John 19:38-42). Is there someone you know who was in the dark about Jesus but now is a Christian? Share what you know about their experience.
6. In John 7 we discover that Nicodemus boldly speaks up on behalf of Jesus in the midst of his peers, the Pharisees. Have you ever had to stand up for Jesus? If so, describe that instance. How do we get the courage to confess Christ? (Ref. 1 Corinthians 12:3).

Jesus tells us that the Holy Spirit will remind us of what Jesus says in the Bible (ref. John 14:26). Jesus also states that the Holy Spirit also gives us the right words to say when we are under attack for our faith (ref. Mark 13:11). That is why it is so important to be in God's Word regularly and to learn verses by heart so that the Holy Spirit can help us readily pull those verses to mind in times of need. What are some Bible verses which you know by heart and have been an encouragement to you, especially during your incarceration?

If you don't have any Bible verses memorized yet, then make an effort to memorize John 3:16 from today's lesson so that you can "Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have" (1 Peter 3:15).

Finish by reciting John 3:16 together out loud. Then have a closing prayer that includes the prayer requests of those in your group.

¹ *The Book of Concord*, Ed. Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 462.

² *The Book of Concord*, 466.

Lesson Two: Jesus Speaks with the Woman at the Well

John 4:1-30, 4:39-42



Opening Prayer: Gracious Father, You desire that all people on earth be restored to a right relationship with You through the precious blood of Your Son Jesus Christ. Thank you for searching out sinners like the woman at the well and me. Your gift of the forgiveness of sins, the indwelling of Your Holy Spirit, and eternal life which You give us in our Baptism are our greatest treasure. Help us cling to these Your faithful promises in our Baptism. In the name of Your dear Son Jesus Christ we pray, Amen.

Fun Fact: John 4:1-42 contains the longest recorded conversation between Jesus and any person in the Bible!

Read verses : Read John 4:1-30 and 4:39-42 with your Bible study leader and listen as he/she explains several key points in the text. Feel free to ask questions as you follow along. Then answer the following questions.

Digging Deeper:

1. The Samaritan woman comes to the well looking for water but finds Jesus. Is their meeting a coincidence? Read Jeremiah 10:23. Who's in control? How is this a comfort to us?
2. Jesus initiates the conversation with the woman at the well. How does Jesus speak to us today?
3. The woman at the well is thirstier than she realizes. What are you thirsting for spiritually? Have you been reaching for something other than the living water Christ offers? Has it quenched and completely satisfied your thirst?
4. There are two important points from this passage about the woman at the well:

- A. When we encounter Christ, our sins cannot remain hidden-- we need to confess our sins openly to Him. Are there any sins which are troubling you that you would like to confess in prayer today?
- B. The Good News is that we have the forgiveness of sins through Jesus Christ's death on the cross (ref. Matthew 26:28). The woman at the well cannot keep the excitement of meeting the Messiah to herself—she has to go and tell others about Him. Who are some people you know (even in jail) with whom you can share Jesus?
5. Are you Baptized? What is Baptism? How can our Baptism be a comfort to us?
6. Although the name of the Samaritan woman at the well is never revealed, be assured that God knows your name. Read Isaiah 43:1 and Luke 10:20.



Fun Fact: The image of the woman at the well was used by the early Christian Church as a symbol for Baptism.

Finish with a closing prayer that includes the prayer requests of those in your group.

Lesson Three: Jesus Anointed By A Sinful Woman

Luke 7:36-50



Opening Prayer: Holy Father, You know our innermost thoughts and hidden sins. By Your Holy Spirit active in Your Word, help us confess our sins to you openly, trusting fully that You forgive all our sins through the blood of Your dear Son Jesus Christ. In Jesus's name we pray, Amen.

Read Luke 7:36-50 with your Bible study leader and listen as he/she explains several key points in the text. Feel free to ask questions as you follow along. Then answer the following questions.

Digging Deeper:

1. Do you think the sinful woman went and spread the good news about Jesus to others like the woman at the well did?
2. We have learned in this lesson that there is no one without sin. There is also not a ranking of condemning sin by God—all sin separates us from Him. Read Matthew 5:21-22 and 5:27-28. How is God's view of sin different from the way many people see sin? The Good News is that Jesus died for **all** sins.
3. How can we know as surely as this woman that our sins are forgiven? Look up the following Bible passages which tell us so:
 - Matthew 26:27-28

- John 3:16-17
- Acts 10:43
- Romans 5:8-11
- Colossians 2:13-14

4. What is your response to Jesus' forgiving all your sin and removing your guilt?
5. The sinful woman in this Bible passage does not speak at all, yet her faith in Jesus as her Savior from sin is evident to everyone by her actions at the banquet. What does 1 Peter 3:1-2 suggest as a powerful way to witness to our Christian faith to those closest to us?
6. When we experience God's amazing grace towards us in His forgiveness of our sins through Jesus Christ in His Word and Sacrament (Baptism and the Lord's Supper), we are then able to extend forgiveness to others who have sinned against us.

Is there someone whom you need to forgive?

If you are having difficulty forgiving someone who has wronged you, do not become discouraged. In fact, it is good to acknowledge that you cannot do it on your own. You can pray openly and honestly to God about it like this: "Lord, thank You for your undeserved love and forgiveness which You have given me, a sinner, through the death of Your Son Jesus Christ on the cross. You know that I am struggling to forgive _____ for what they did to me. I want to forgive them as You have forgiven me, but I am having a difficult time of it. I cannot do this on my own—please help me. By the power of your Holy Spirit, remove all bitterness, resentment, and anger from me and enable me to forgive _____ as You have forgiven me, to the glory of Your holy name. Amen."

Depending on the severity of the hurt you have experienced, reconciliation may take months or years because of our human nature. Continue to pray to God for help in this area, just as King David did in Psalm 51:10:

"Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me."

God is faithful. He will do it.

Finish the lesson with a closing prayer that includes the prayer requests of those in your group.

Lesson Four: Jesus Seeks Zacchaeus the Tax Collector

Luke 19:1-10



Jesus Visits Zacchaeus

Opening Prayer: Merciful Father, You seek to have a relationship with us even when we have gone astray. Thank You for never giving up on us and for relentlessly pursuing us in love with the free gift of salvation through Your Son Jesus Christ. By the power of Your Holy Spirit enable Your abounding love for us and in us to overflow to others so that they too may come to faith in Christ and enjoy the fullest measure of life with You now and forever. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Read Luke 19:1-10 with your Bible study leader and listen as he/she explains several key points in the text. Feel free to ask questions as you follow along. Then answer the following questions.

Digging Deeper:

1. Zacchaeus had heard about Jesus and was curious about Him. What have you heard about Jesus? What do you know about Him? How can you satisfy your curiosity about Him? Do you know Jesus as your personal Lord and Savior as Zacchaeus did?
2. In verse 5 Jesus calls Zacchaeus by name, and He knows your name too and is seeking and calling you! (Ref. John 10:11 and 10:2-4). How can we hear Jesus' voice today?
3. In verse 5 Jesus says he must "stay"/ "abide"/ "remain" with Zacchaeus. How does Jesus abide with us today?

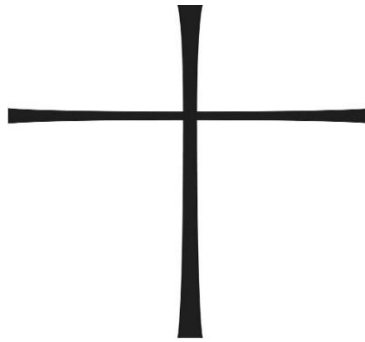
4. How is the muttering of the people in verse 7 like the muttering thought of the Pharisee in Luke 7:39 (in LessonThree: Jesus Anointed By A Sinful Woman)? Have people looked down on you because of your past deeds and incarceration? How does the fact that Jesus seeks you, wants to associate with you, and desires to be in a relationship with you despite your misdeeds make you feel?
5. A. We are all "lost" like Zacchaeus was because of sin. What have you put first in Your life in place of God?
- B. The Good News is that if we repent of our sins and trust in Jesus Christ for salvation, we are forgiven/saved just like Zacchaeus. If you are truly sorry for your sins and desire forgiveness in Christ, your Bible Study leader can guide you and announce to you forgiveness now. Offer this confession to the Lord: "I confess that I have sinned. Some of these sins I know - the thoughts and words and deeds of which I am ashamed; but some of my sins are known only to You, God. For the sake of Your Son Jesus Christ, forgive me of them all." To such a heartfelt confession, your leader will announce, "By the mercy of God you are redeemed by Jesus Christ, and in Him you are forgiven. You are at peace with God and live to serve Him."

Close with the prayer requests of those in your group.



Lesson Five: Jesus Speaks with the Woman Who was Caught in Adultery

John 8:1-11



Happy are those whose
transgression
is forgiven,
whose sin
is covered.

PSALM 32:1, NRSV

Opening Prayer: Merciful Father, out of your great love for us You instruct us how to live in a right relationship with you and others in Your Holy Word, especially in the Ten Commandments. Thank you for forgiving us through Your Son Jesus Christ when we go astray. By the power of Your Holy Spirit, keep us from giving in to temptation and strengthen our trust in You in all circumstances. In Jesus' name we ask it, Amen.

Read John 8:1-11 with your Bible study leader and listen as he/she explains several key points in the text. Feel free to ask questions as you follow along. Then answer the following questions.

Digging Deeper:

1. Do you think the woman caught in adultery continued to lead her sinful life after meeting Jesus? Why or why not?
2. Why do you think the older men left first in verse 9?
3. Have you ever encountered anyone who sees your sin as greater than their own? How can we as Christians handle such a situation?

A Point to Ponder: Today's lesson has taught us that when others are quick to point out our sin, we draw their attention to Jesus and what Jesus has done for us on the cross!

4. Be assured that God grants forgiveness of your sins through faith in Jesus Christ as your personal Savior. Let's read:
 - Acts 13:38
 - Ephesians 1:3-8
5. As a follower of Christ, you cannot return to the life you were leading before you landed in jail. How can you remove yourself from the temptation to sin once you are back on the outside? Discuss your plan of action with your group.
6. We don't know what sort of support network of family and friends the adulterous woman in this Bible passage had. What sort of support do you have once you are released? How can the church be a support for you and your family?
7. In John 8:11, Jesus sends the woman on her way. As we are going on our way, The Lord God promises to always be with those who believe in His Son Jesus Christ to be their Savior. Let's look at some verses that may be particularly comforting to you upon your release:
 - Psalm 27:10
 - Deuteronomy 31:8
 - John 14:15-18

Finish the lesson with the prayer requests of those in your group.



Lesson Six: Jesus Teaches Martha and Mary What is Better

Luke 10:38-42



Opening Prayer: Lord Jesus, even though you are God Almighty, You come as a servant to us, feeding us with Your Holy Word and Sacrament. By the power of Your Holy Spirit create in us a yearning to be in Your presence in Your Word so that we may be refreshed to go out and serve others in Your Name joyfully. Amen.

Before reading the text, look up the village of Bethany on the map entitled “Jesus Ministry” so you can see where Martha and Mary lived.

Read Luke 10:38-42 with your Bible study leader and then discuss the following:

Note: Usually it was the men who invited Jesus into their homes, such as Peter, Simon the Pharisee, Zacchaeus, etc. Women were allowed to learn in the synagogue but it was very unusual for a rabbi (teacher) to come to a woman’s home to teach her. So Jesus is really honoring these two sisters.

1. Who do you think is older, Martha or Mary? Why?
2. List at least two things you learn about Martha from this passage and two things you learn about Mary from this passage.
3. Which woman do you relate to more? Explain your answer.
4. What sort of preparations do you think Martha is making?

5. Why do you think Martha involves Jesus? Why doesn't she just ask Mary to help her directly?
6. What do you think is "the one thing needful?"
7. Jesus tells Martha that what Mary is doing is better. This implies that Martha's service is basically good, but Mary's type of service is better. We typically don't think of listening as serving, but actually Martha and Mary are both showing two kinds of hospitality to Jesus. Martha is receiving Jesus as a guest into her home and serving Him with a meal; and Mary is receiving the Word of God. Make time each day this week to receive Jesus as a guest by being in His Word.
8. The key point here is whether one is first to serve the Lord or first be served by Him.³ Instead of trying to serve Jesus first, Mary allows Jesus to serve her first with the gift of His Word. Let's read **Matthew 20:25-28** to better understand Jesus' purpose in coming to earth.
9. People rarely take the time to truly listen to another person, especially another person's troubles. Read **Galatians 6:2**. Is there someone you can think of in your cell block to whom you can give the gift of listening this week?
10. In verse 40, "distracted" in the original language is "dragged around." It's as if Martha has a great weight upon her.
 - What are some things that distract you away from the Word of God? What types of simple changes can you make to make God a priority in your daily life?
 - Let's read **Matthew 11:28-30**. What does Jesus say to us here?
11. What is worship in church all about? How does God serve us in our worship in church?

³ Arthur A. Just, Jr., *Concordia Commentary: Luke 9:51-24:53* (St Louis: Concordia Publishing House), 459.

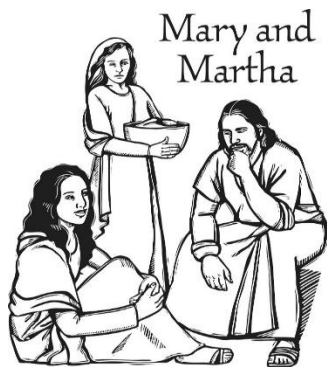
12. Martha cries out, “Lord, don’t you *care*. . .” Let’s look at some passages in the Bible that remind us that God does indeed care for each and every one of us:

- 1 Peter 5:7
- Nahum 1:7
- John 3:16-17
- Romans 5:8
- 2 Peter 3:9

13. Let’s also read **Psalm 103** together. According to this Psalm, what are 5 ways that God shows His love for us?

14. How does God demonstrate His great love for us according to **1 John 3:1**?

Finish the lesson with the prayer requests of those in your group

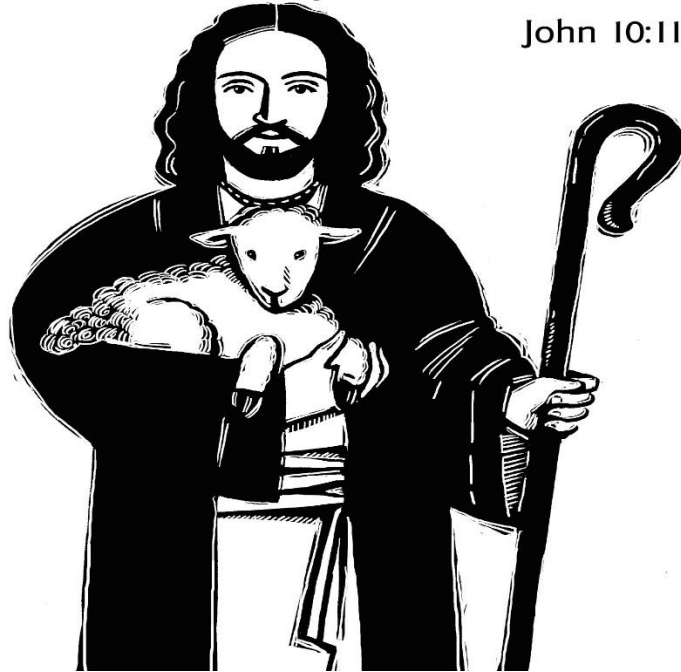


Lesson Seven: Jesus is the Good Shepherd

John: 10:1-18

“I am the **good shepherd**. The **good shepherd** lays down his life for the sheep.”

John 10:11



Opening Prayer: Loving Father, You have created us and claim us as Your own in Holy Baptism. Thank you for sending your Son Jesus Christ as the Good Shepherd who laid down His life on the cross for us. Forgive us when we, like lost sheep, go astray. By the power of Your Holy Spirit help us to hear Your voice and follow You so that we may have abundant life now and in eternity with You. Amen.

Listen as your Bible study leader explains the significance of the image of the shepherd. Then read John 10:1-18 with your Bible study leader and listen as he/she explains several key points in the text. Feel free to ask questions as you follow along. Finally, answer the following questions.

Digging Deeper:

1. How can we hear the voice of our Good Shepherd Jesus calling us today?

2. When we were children our parents often told us to not to talk to strangers. According to verse 5, what are God's children to do when we encounter a stranger's voice (someone telling us something different from what we know to be true in God's Word)? Let's see what St. Paul says about this in Galatians 1:6-9.
3. Can you think of some modern day "thieves and robbers" who are trying to steal away, kill and destroy God's children (sheep)? How might they be doing that?
4. How do we "find pasture" in Christ? That is, how does He nourish us and enable us to rest in peace?
5. In Christ we have our fulfillment (verse 10). In today's culture, however, many people do not know Jesus and end up trying to find fulfillment ("life to the full") in other various things or people. Can you think of some of them? What are some things you have tried in the past to "fill you up?"
6. Who are some of the "other sheep" that you can think of that need to hear Jesus' voice? How can you help them hear Him? Refer to Romans 10:14-15.
7. How is it a comfort to know that Jesus has not only authority but also the power to resurrect from the dead?
8. Let's read Luke 15:1-7, where the imagery of Jesus the Good Shepherd is also beautifully pictured.
 - A. Who is seeking whom in this parable? How is this a comfort to us when we have wandered off from God's path and gotten "lost?"

- B. What do you think it means when it says “He puts it (the lost sheep) on his shoulders and goes home?” (In other words, is the sheep capable of finding the Shepherd and going home on his own?)



Finish the lesson with the prayer requests of those in your group.

Jesus Help Me

Lord Jesus, help me,
I'm on the wrong path,
Lord Jesus, help me—
Save me from God's wrath.

Lord Jesus, help me,
For I am really weak,
Lord Jesus help me—
It's you I now seek.

Lord Jesus, help me,
I need your embrace,
Lord Jesus, help me—
It's sin that I face.

Lord Jesus, help me,
Wash away my sin,
Lord Jesus, help me—
Cleanse me from within.

Lord Jesus, help me,
It's You that I need,
Lord Jesus, help me—
On the cross you did bleed.

Lord Jesus, you did help me,
Now I walk in Your light.
Thank You, Lord Jesus—
You are the truth, way and life.

By: Deborah L. Tait, former jail inmate

Written during incarceration September 26, 2016; Used with permission.

Lonely Prison

I feel so broken,
I need a healing hand,
Hanging my head low—
Jesus, I can barely stand.

I'm stuck in this prison,
Feeling so far astray,
Lost in much confusion
It's here I have to stay.

I feel oh so lonely,
My heart has an ache
As I look up to You, Jesus,
Feeling as if it will break.

Jesus come to me now,
Only You can set me free,
I long for your presence+
In Your loving grace I want to be.

Come sit with me Jesus,
Give me Your loving embrace,
I so need You now—
Fill my heart's empty space.

By: Deborah L. Tait, former jail inmate

Written during incarceration, October 12, 2016; Used with permission.

Bibliography

Concordia Self-Study Bible: NIV. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1986.

Higgs, Liz Curtis. *Bad Girls of the Bible*. Colorado Springs: Waterbrook Press, 1999.

Hoskins, Edwyn Clement. *The Fourth Gospel*. London: Faber and Faber, 1940.

Just, Arthur A. *Concordia Commentary: Luke 9:51-24:53*. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1997.

Ridderbos, Herman. *The Gospel of John*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1997.

Ryker, Leland. *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*. Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1998.

The Book of Concord. Ed. Kolb and Wengert. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000.

Weinrich, William C. *Concordia Commentary: John 1:1-7:1*. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2015.

*All images from ChurchArt Online by Communication Resources, Inc.