



**grow. pray. study.**

**April 28, 2024    *The Power of One***

Scripture: Acts 9:10-15, NRSV

**In one moment, Jesus changed four fishermen's lives**

**MONDAY 4.29.24    Matthew 4:18-22**

Jesus usually called people to follow him in a pivotal moment. He couched his call to Peter, Andrew, James, and John in language tied to their everyday work. Fish may be difficult to catch but are often nowhere near as tough to understand and draw in as people. Jesus' larger, more demanding call was for them to join in inviting others to follow him. (The Old Testament prophet Jeremiah used the image that God would send fishermen—and hunters—to bring back his exiled people—cf. [Jeremiah 16:14-16.](#))

- What do you think made Jesus and his invitation so compelling that, when he called, these four men promptly left the security and familiarity of their family fishing business to follow him? Have you thought and prayed at all about how you could use your influence (and maybe today's tech tools) to offer a compelling invitation to those you know to follow Jesus? In what ways, in person or electronically, can you share Jesus' story with others as a God-powered messenger?
- "In the ancient world, fisherfolk were peasants." \* Why might Jesus have walked along the shores of Galilee to find followers, instead of seeking out the day's best-known religious experts? Could it be that by going beyond his day's "system," Jesus found people more open to his radical ideas about what it meant to be the Messiah? What spiritual practices help you keep your heart and life open to hear and answer Jesus' call?

**Prayer:** God, give me opportunities to share your story with others. Show me where you are already at work around me so I can join in your work. Help me remember that my power comes from the Holy Spirit. Amen.

\* Eugene Eung-Chun Park and Joel B. Green, study note on Matthew 4:18-22 in *The CEB Study Bible*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2013, p. 11 NT.

## Jesus changed a Pharisee's life

### TUESDAY 4.30.24 John 3:1-13, 7:50-52, 19:38-41

We sometimes see Jesus as a rather “vanilla” figure, nice but innocuous. In fact, he often gave people astonishing, life-changing moments. He met with Nicodemus—a Pharisee whose authority came from religious status attained through strict visible piety. Jesus’ invitation to inner spiritual rebirth left the seminary-trained religious leader puzzled and amazed. The evidence of Nicodemus’ later behavior strongly suggests that their nighttime moment changed Nicodemus a lot.

- Just before the Nicodemus story, John told about Jesus driving out the Temple money changers (cf. [John 2:13-25](#)). That challenged the Pharisees’ economic power. Nicodemus may have come at night (John 3:2) so other Pharisees didn’t see him with Jesus. At night, Jesus invited the Pharisee to live in the light of God's kingdom, and that moment changed Nicodemus. Since you met Jesus, how has God brought you from the darkness into the light?
- Most Pharisees like Nicodemus did not believe God loved “the world”—only certain properly pious parts of it. Jesus' message in John 3:16 was news to Nicodemus, not yet flashed around on end zone signs to read on TV. It was also not the “mic drop” end of the passage—Jesus went right on to lay out its big results in the following verses. How do verses 17 and 18 speak to (and maybe shift) the mental images you learned about how God looks at you?

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, give me more of your willingness to understand and connect even with people like Nicodemus, who might at first seem like “enemies.” Amen.

## Jesus changed a woman, and her whole city

### WEDNESDAY 5.1.24 John 4:13-26, 39-42

([Click here](#) to see this story as presented in the masterful 2003 film “The Gospel of John,” in which every word spoken was from the *Good News Bible*’s translation of John’s gospel.)

John wrote about Jesus keeping a “divine appointment” to meet a woman even the Samaritans no doubt shunned. He offered her “living water” (in common usage, the term meant fresh, clean water, not stagnant water that had stood in a cistern. Her response made her the first witness to Jesus (and a very unexpected, unlikely one) in John’s story. What can this story teach us about Jesus’ way of transforming human lives?

- Jesus met the Samaritan woman at a well at midday. She must have been an outcast, not welcome by the socially acceptable women who collected water in the morning to avoid the desert heat. The woman had many regrets and poor decisions. Yet her past mistakes didn’t keep her from experiencing the transforming power of God’s grace. What do you regret in your past, big or small? No matter your past, thank God for the grace that can overcome and transform your future.
- Seeing someone else’s life transformed gives people hope for their own. The Samaritans saw the woman’s transformation, and then they went running for it themselves. Verse 42 says, “And they told the woman, ‘We no longer believe because of what you said, since we have heard for ourselves and know that this really is the Savior of the world.’” How has Jesus transformed your life? How might you bring hope to people in your life by sharing what Jesus has done in yours?

**Prayer:** Loving Lord, thank you for loving me regardless of how often I fall short. Thank you for transforming my life and give me the courage to share your transforming power with others. Amen.

## Jesus changed Mary, who never missed her moments

### THURSDAY 5.2.24 Luke 10:38-42, John 12:1-7

John reported that a grateful woman anointed Jesus with very expensive perfume in the last week of his life. Some criticized her striking act of gratitude, but Jesus staunchly defended her. He knew he was on his way to the cross, said she had anointed him in advance of his burial, and by her gift created a legacy of generosity that would echo all the way to 2024 and beyond.

- In first-century Palestine, “To ‘sit at someone’s feet’ meant to take instruction from them.” \*\* Jesus valued Mary listening to his teaching. Seem normal? In his day, it was most unusual. But Jesus regularly valued women (cf. [Luke 8:1-3](#), [Matthew 27:55-56](#), and women as the first resurrection witnesses, e.g. [Luke 24:10-11](#)). How does Jesus’ model differ from attitudes and actions that undervalue (and often underpay) women in homes, workplaces or other settings?
- What do you think moved the woman to offer Jesus this extravagant gift expressing deep love and gratitude? Jesus treated women as people worth respect and value. \*\*\* What does Jesus’ response tell you about how much her fervent love meant to him as he faced death? How can you show your love for Jesus, both in your inner “sacred space” and outwardly, with the same kind of spontaneity, generosity and urgency?

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, we’re “enlightened,” but we still too often hear jokes about women’s driving or emotionalism. Guide me to discern and live beyond any gender or other labels that hurt others. Amen.

\* “It must always remain a most interesting question whether the story Luke tells is, in fact, the same story as is told by Matthew and Mark and John.” From William Barclay, *The Gospel of Matthew—Volume 2 Chapters 11–28* (Revised Edition). Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1976, p. 329.

\*\* Richard B. Vinson, study note on Luke 10:39 in *The CEB Study Bible*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2013, p. 133 NT.

\*\*\* Dorothy Sayers, first woman to earn an Oxford degree (with highest honors) and a devoted Christ follower, called Jesus “a prophet and teacher who never nagged at [women]; never flattered or coaxed or patronized... who rebuked without [demeaning] and praised without condescension; who took their questions and arguments seriously; who never mapped out their sphere for them, never urged them to be feminine or jeered at them... who had no axe to grind and no uneasy male dignity to defend.” From Dorothy Sayers, *Are Women Human? Penetrating, Sensible, and Witty Essays on the Role of Women in Society*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005, p. 68.

## Jesus gave Peter a moment to undo his worst moment

### FRIDAY 5.3.24 John 21:9-13, 15-19

Peter's faith "crashed" around a fire (cf. [John 18:15-18, 25-27](#)). He denied knowing Jesus three times. How could he possibly ever overcome that shame and regret? Jesus, a master psychologist, asked Peter to affirm his love three times, deeper because Jesus forgave his failure. Then Jesus said he would be able to carry out his pledge that "I'll give up my life for you" (John 13:37). With the cost of his choice clear Jesus repeated the same call Peter heard first (cf. [Matthew 4:18-19](#)): "Follow me."

- Scholar N. T. Wright said, "The three questions correspond to Peter's three denials. Three for completeness, yes, but three also for reminder. The smell of the charcoal fire lingers. Peter's night of agony—and Jesus' own night of agony—returns. But because of the latter, the former can be dealt with." \* What failures (if any) haunt your connection with Jesus? Imagine yourself with him, by that fire. Hear Jesus ask you, "\_\_\_\_\_, do you love me?" Answer, three times, and know Jesus has dealt with any barriers between you.
- The fish and bread were ready, yet Jesus said, "Bring some of the fish you've just caught." Why doesn't Jesus just do everything for us, changing us into the people he wants us to be, but instead ask us to join our efforts with his spiritual power? In what ways does his call for you to work with him to grow spiritually offer the best path to character development, so that you are still "you," but a new you?

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, "Put me to doing, put me to suffering. Let me be employed by thee or laid aside for thee, exalted for thee or brought low for thee." I recite John Wesley's words at church. Please help me to mean them. Amen.

\* N. T. Wright, *John for Everyone, part 2*. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004, p. 164.)

## Jesus turned murderous Saul's life around in a moment

### SATURDAY 5.4.24 Acts 9:1-9, 20-22

An energetic, brilliant young Pharisee in Jerusalem named Saul hated the new Jesus faith. Eager to stamp out any hint that Jesus was the promised Messiah, he went as far away as Damascus in Syria. Then, in one stunning moment, the risen Christ himself changed everything. Acts told that pivotal story three times (cf. [Acts 22:1-16](#) and [Acts 26:12-20](#) as well as today's passage). As this week's worship Scripture reading noted, in another crucial moment a Christian named Ananias bravely went to the man who'd come to town to arrest and maybe kill him, restored his sight, and likely baptized him (cf. [Acts 9:10-19](#)). Acts said Saul began preaching about Jesus "right away," and soon shifted to using his Roman name, Paul (cf. [Acts 13:9](#)) to better reach Gentile hearers. He was now passionate and driven to share persuasively that Jesus was, in fact, the long-awaited Messiah.

- Saul set out for Damascus intending to arrest "persons who belonged to the Way" (i.e. believers in Jesus). Yet as the light shone around him, Jesus' voice asked, "Why are you harassing ME?" As a Christ-follower, have you realized that Jesus identifies himself that closely with you—that anything that hurts or harasses you also hurts Jesus? How can it give you strength each day to trust that Jesus faces all life's joys and sorrows right along with you (cf. [Hebrews 2:14-18](#))? Saul met Jesus in a dramatic, forceful way (perhaps because he had resisted many chances to respond to the message delivered in other ways, as [Acts 26:14](#) hints). How did you meet Jesus? Was it a one-time moment, or were there multiple movements toward (and maybe away from) Jesus as Lord of your life? What does it tell you about "the wideness in God's mercy" that God seems to meet each person in a way that fits their life and personality?

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, when you met Saul and then worked through Ananias to open his eyes and his heart, he went on to change millions of lives by his preaching and writing. Give me a listening heart open to meet you as you reach out to my heart. Amen.

**Prayer Requests** – [cor.org/prayer](https://cor.org/prayer) *Prayers of peace and comfort for:*

To **Jackie Rector** following the death of **Eric Curl** (Brother), who died 4/1/2024.

To **Don Carrel** following the death of **Winton "Keith" Carrel** (Father), who died 4/2/2024.

To **Ron & Michelle Graham** following the death of **Vada Joy Graham Skinner** (Mother), who died 4/11/2024.

To **Larry Staples III** following the death of **Laurence Staples, Jr.** (Father), who died 4/17/2024.

To **Doug Spencer** following the death of **Wayne Spencer** (Father), who died 4/20/2024.