



1717 BIBLE STUDIES

"Your Word Is Truth" (John 17:17)

OVERVIEW

Study: Miracles of Jesus, Part 2 Theme: The Son of God in Power

Overview: The miracles of Jesus were explosive displays of power that pointed beyond themselves to who he is. In this second series on the miracles, students will see Jesus' power over evil, his power to sustain, his power over death, and his power over all creation, and they will learn to contend with evil through his strength, to look to him to meet their needs, to triumph with him over death, and to face the future with confidence and hope.

HOW TO USE

Each week has a **lesson aim**, **lesson text**, and **supplemental text**.



Tabs indicate the week of each lesson.

Each week features three sections: **Study**, **Application**, and **Discovery**.



Use the **Discovery** questions to study, discuss, and apply the Scripture passages in a group or class.

INTRODUCTION

Author

The miracles in this study are recorded in the Gospels of Mark and John. Mark, also called John Mark, was a companion of Barnabas, Paul, and Peter (Acts 12:12, 25; 1 Peter 5:13), and early church tradition says his Gospel preserves Peter's preaching. John, the son of Zebedee, was one of the twelve apostles and "the disciple whom Jesus loved" (John 21:20, 24).

Audience

Mark wrote for a largely Gentile audience, likely believers in Rome, explaining Jewish customs and stressing Jesus' deeds of power. John wrote "that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name" (John 20:31), choosing a handful of miracles as "signs" for that purpose.

Date

The events took place during Jesus' ministry and after his resurrection, about AD 27–30. Mark's Gospel is usually dated in the late 50s or 60s. John's Gospel was likely written later, around AD 85–95.

Setting

The lessons move from the Gentile region of the Gerasenes on the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee, to a hillside near Bethsaida where Jesus fed the 5,000, to Bethany just outside Jerusalem where he raised Lazarus, and back to the shore of the Sea of Galilee, where the risen Lord met his disciples at daybreak.

Theme

Jesus' miracles reveal the Son of God in power. He defeated the forces of evil, sustained people physically and spiritually as the bread of life, broke the power of death as "the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25), and showed himself Lord over creation even after his resurrection.

Why Study the Miracles of Jesus?

The same Jesus who performed these signs still reigns with all authority in heaven and on earth (Matthew 28:18). This study calls believers to resist evil in his strength, to trust him for their daily and eternal needs, to face death with hope, and to tell others how much the Lord has done for them.

STUDY CONTENT

WEEK 1: Mark 5:1-20

WEEK 2: John 6:1-15, 25-29

WEEK 3: John 11:17-27, 32-44

WEEK 4: John 21:1-14, 24, 25

WEEK ONE

LESSON AIM: **Contend with evil in
this world and
overcome through
Jesus' power.**

STUDY: Miracles of Jesus, Part 2

THEME: The Son of God in Power

LESSON TEXT: Mark 5:1-20

SUPPLEMENTAL TEXT: 1 Peter 5:8-11; Psalm 23:4; 1 John 4:4;
Matthew 8:28-34; Luke 8:26-39

POWER OVER EVIL

BY MARK SCOTT

The miracles of Jesus have their own “power” vocabulary. Jesus’ power is explosive (the Greek word translated “miracle” is the English word “dynamite”). Jesus’ power creates wonder (the Greek word means something that shocks and terrifies). Jesus’ power points to him (the Greek word means a “sign” that points to something beyond the miracle itself). Jesus’ power confirms the work of God in Christ (in John 10:38, Jesus taught us to believe the works so we would understand that the Father was in him).

The first three Gospels have these miracles of power in the exact same order: the calming of the storm (power over creation), the restoration of the demon-possessed man (power over the spirit world), and the needy woman and dead girl (power over illness and death). Is there a progression to these miracle stories as there is in parable genre (e.g., Luke 15:1-32)? In other words, if Jesus is lord of creation and lord of the spirit world, can he be even lord over our illnesses?

Evil Described*Mark 5:1-5*

Jesus had been teaching all day in parables (Mark 4:1-34). He was bone tired. He got into a boat (4:35, 36) and sailed with the Twelve across the Sea of Galilee. They probably intended to cross just to the northeast side of the sea. But the storm blew them further south. By the time they got to the shore they were well into Gentile territory. Gadara is a town well south and east of the Sea of Galilee, but the whole area was called the area of the Gerasenes. This area was covered with caves and tombs.

Dripping wet from the storm, Jesus and the disciples stepped off the boat on to the land only to be met by a man with an impure spirit (unclean or demonic spirit) from the tombs (a word used three times in the story), and he ran at Jesus. (Matthew 8:28 said there were two demon-possessed men.) The condition of this man was deplorable. His strength, his environment, and his self-mutilating behavior (the man was a cutter) are mentioned. His demons had made him super strong. Even though his hands and feet were bound with chains, he tore the chains apart and broke the irons. His environment was a cemetery. The devil is all about death. This description of evil is hellish.

Evil Defeated*Mark 5:6-13*

No one on earth could bind this man, but Jesus could and did (cf. Mark 3:27; Revelation 20:2). All Jesus had to

do was show up and speak, and the man would be delivered. The man fell on his knees in front of (the Greek word is “worshipped”) Jesus. The demon within this man knew three things: who Jesus was (Son of the Most High God, as in superior God), what Jesus came to do (torture, which means to afflict with pain, vex, or harass, as in 1 John 3:8), and the path of their demise. In the process of defeating this evil spirit, Jesus engaged the demons in a conversation (something Jesus rarely did). Do demons have names (and thereby personalities)? Jesus asked the demon his name. The demon’s name was a number (Legion)—a Roman military term normally referring to thousands of men.

The demons begged (a key word in this story—the demons did it, the townspeople did it, and the delivered man did it) for a few more moments to inflict their destructive power. Since this was Gentile territory, they asked to be sent into a large herd of pigs. Interestingly enough, Jesus granted their request. The demons caused the pigs to rush down the steep bank and be drowned in the Sea of Galilee. Can you imagine the economic and ecological disaster this created?

Evil Leveraged*Mark 5:14-20*

Jesus is so powerful that he can defeat the devil at his own game. Jesus can actually leverage evil for good. Those tending the pigs ran and told everyone what had happened. Even though the people of the area witnessed Jesus’ power to deliver this man (he was dressed and in his right mind) they pleaded for Jesus to leave. Jesus began to leave, for he will not stay where he is not wanted.

As he was leaving, the delivered man begged to go with Jesus. But Jesus wanted the man to leverage his testimony. The man went and told people all over the Decapolis how Jesus had mercy on him. This made all the difference the next time Jesus came into this area (Mark 7:31-37).

Martin Luther wrote of this power, “One little word shall fell him” (Satan).

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IN OUR RIGHT MINDS

BY DAVID FAUST

Jesus' encounter with the man possessed by demons known as Legion is a strange-sounding story, but here are three practical lessons we can learn from it.

Satan is real; evil is devastating. The prince of darkness isn't a childish myth. We struggle "against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil" (Ephesians 6:12). Demonic forces nearly destroyed the man. He was violent, self-destructive, and anti-social, and he lived in a cemetery. It's naïve to deny Satan's influence. Science and education alone cannot resolve all of our social ills. Many deadly ideas and destructive deeds detailed in the daily news can only be described as evil.

Christ can transform cultures and individuals. He came to "break the power of him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil" (Hebrews 2:14). At the cosmic level, the Son of God appeared "to destroy the devil's work" (1 John 3:8), and this account demonstrates how Christ can change lives on an individual level. After encountering Christ, the man was "dressed and in his right mind." His remarkable and undeniable transformation amazed the locals who knew him well (Mark 5:15). Jesus changed a scary cemetery dweller into a calm, reasonable person of peace.

In the eyes of many, economics matter more than spiritual freedom. The man's neighbors were more concerned about their lost herd of swine than a lost soul's redemption. Upset by their economic loss and unnerved by the Lord's supernatural power, "the people began to plead with Jesus to leave their region" (Mark 5:17).

Clear Thinking Needed

What kindness Jesus showed to this desperate man! Freed from Satan's grip, the man begged to travel with Jesus, but instead the Lord urged him to go home and tell his own people "how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you" (vv. 18, 19). God's mercy changed the man's ghoulish misery into a good news ministry.

And notice: Jesus restored him to his right mind. The human mind has been a battleground ever since Satan attacked Adam and Eve by stirring confusion and doubt. Of course, this demon-possessed man was an extreme case, but on some level, conversion to Christ always involves being "transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Romans 12:2).

What does a renewed mind look like?

It seeks to take every thought captive to Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5).

It doesn't dumb down the gospel. Instead, a renewed mind hungers and thirsts for righteousness, growing in faith, goodness, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, mutual affection, and love (2 Peter 1:5-7).

A renewed mind holds firm convictions, yet is open and teachable, eager to adopt new insights gleaned from Scripture.

A renewed mind moves us to care for those with troubled minds who struggle with mental illness and emotional problems, providing prayer support, medical resources, spiritual shepherding, and counseling services to them and their families.

A renewed mind worships the Lord and continually discovers additional facets of God's glory that call forth praise. As the classic hymn, "Be Thou My Vision" reminds us, God is our "best thought, by day or by night."

It leads to clearer thinking, emotional healing, and deeper peace.

Christ releases us from Satan's grip so we can love the Lord with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength.

Personal Challenge: This week tell someone who is not following Christ how much the Lord has done for you and how he has had mercy on you.

David Faust serves as senior associate minister with East 91st Street Christian Church in Indianapolis.

QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

1. What was challenging for you this past week? (Be as specific as possible.)

Ask three people—two readers and one reteller—for their help. Ask the first reader to read **Mark 5:1-20** aloud. Then ask the second person to read it aloud again (it may be useful to read it from a different Bible version).

(Note: Ask everyone except the reader to set aside their Bible and simply listen and take in the story. The Scriptures were originally written to be read aloud and listened to. The group can open their Bibles starting with question 3 when you begin to study the passage in more detail.)

Ask the third person to retell (not interpret) the narrative in about 60 seconds. (Keep it simple!)

2. What in this passage captured your attention the most?
3. Using as many details as possible from the text, describe the demon-possessed man and his behavior. (Leader, don't rush this part, and encourage the group to respond only using the passage of Scripture under consideration, not other passages of Scripture, commentaries, sermons, or books.)
 - Describe how Jesus responded to the man at different points in the narrative.
 - How did people in that region respond to Jesus?
4. What do you learn about God's power from this story?
5. What does this passage reveal to you about how God views humankind?
 - What does it reveal about how God sees you?
6. Look again at verses 19 and 20. How can you obey God this week in the same way as this man?
 - Who are "your own people" where you live, work, and play?
 - In a sentence or two, describe what "the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you."
7. Based on this passage, complete this sentence: This week, I will . . . (Encourage people to respond in concrete, measurable terms. Will they be able to respond definitively to the questions, "Did you do it? How did it go?")
8. What challenge will you face this week?

For Next Week: Sometime this week, read and reflect on **John 6:1-15, 25-29**, as we continue to look at the miracles of Jesus. You are also encouraged to read next week's supplemental texts as well as the Study and Application sections as part of your personal study. (Note: We won't read or discuss any of these extra materials in our session next week, but they will help you grow in your own faith.)

WEEK TWO

LESSON AIM: **Let Jesus provide for
your personal and
spiritual needs.**

STUDY: Miracles of Jesus, Part 2

THEME: The Son of God in Power

LESSON TEXT: John 6:1-15, 25-29

SUPPLEMENTAL TEXT: John 1:1-4; John 3:16; Hebrews 1:3; Matthew
14:13-21; Mark 6:32-44; Luke 9:10-17

POWER TO SUSTAIN

BY MARK SCOTT

All four Gospels record the miracle of the feeding of the 5,000. It was Passover time when Jesus performed it. This was one Passover when Jesus did not go to Jerusalem; he had his own Passover meal in the wilderness with at least 5,000 of his “closest friends.” He sustained them with a wonderful fish dinner. What a contrast in the literary context to Herod’s drunken birthday party (Mark 6:14-29).

In his writings, John often mixed the physical and the spiritual. Fred Craddock called it “double talk.” There is physical water, and then there is symbolic water that refers to salvation (John 4:10). There is an earthly father, and then there is our heavenly Father (John 10:31-39). There is physical bread, and then there is bread from Heaven (John 6:35-40).

Food that Satisfies

John 6:1-15

People in the ancient near east knew little about three square meals in one day. If they had two meals in a day and were not hungry afterwards that would have been regarded as a good day. “Stuffed” was something only the rich knew.

Jesus had learned his cousin John the Baptist had been killed. It no doubt caused him to think of his own upcoming passion experience now only one year away. He desired to get away, so he and his disciples crossed the Sea of Galilee along the northern shore. His efforts to seclude himself failed. The people saw him leaving, forded the waters that fed the Sea of Galilee on the north shore, and were waiting for him when he disembarked from the boat. The selfless Savior set his desire for rest aside and taught and healed through the day.

When the crowd began to press their way to Christ toward day’s end, Jesus tested Philip by asking where they could get enough food (bread) to feed the thousands. John made it clear that Jesus knew what he was going to do. It must have stunned Philip and the other disciples when Jesus said, “You give them something to eat” (Mark 6:37). Andrew found a boy (in fact, Andrew customarily found people and brought them to Jesus—John 1:41) with a small lunch (five small pancake-like pieces of pan bread and two pickled fish). Andrew learned what all the disciples learned that day—that when they were at the end of their capacity, Christ was at the beginning of his sufficiency.

The Christ was not chaotic. This was a huge feeding, so it had to be organized. Jesus had the people sit down on

the green grass in groups of hundreds and fifties (Mark 6:39, 40). In language that echoes the Lord’s Supper (though no one would have thought of such a thing that day), Jesus gave thanks and began to multiply the bread and fish. It is unclear precisely how this miracle took place. But everyone had enough to eat. Twelve small baskets of leftovers were picked up—one for each of the disciples and, maybe symbolically, one for each tribe of Israel.

The people were blown away. They had followed Jesus because of his signs. But this sign was over-the-top good—and nourishing. It made them wonder if Jesus were a prophet (1 Kings 17:14; 2 Kings 4:1-7; 38-44). In fact, they were so impressed that they wanted to make Jesus king by force. No wonder Jesus withdrew again to pray. This temptation for Jesus was every bit as challenging as the temptations in the wilderness and Gethsemane.

Food that Endures

John 6:25-29

Jesus sent the disciples across the lake and sent the crowds away. The disciples encountered a storm while some of the crowd bedded down for the night. After Jesus prayed, he came to the disciples walking on the water—yet another sign. The next day the crowds had returned to Capernaum and Jesus worked his way back up to the synagogue there. Supper from the night before was followed the next morning by one of his most famous discourses, the Sermon on the Bread of Life. Jesus acknowledged in a solemn way (“truly, truly,” v. 32) that the crowd was following him with impure motives. They were thinking only of the physical. Jesus wanted them to think on a higher plain. He told them to work for food that endures (continues to abide) to eternal life.

Some food leaves you empty after eating it (e.g., cotton candy). But the bread of Jesus lasts. The crowd was not willing to work for that food. But Jesus said that the main work to please God would be to believe in the one he has sent. Eat Jesus. Drink Jesus. That food will sustain.

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THE FEEDING OF THE FIVE

BY DAVID FAUST

The feeding of the 5,000 is one of my favorite biblical miracles. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John were fond of it, too. Other than the Lord's resurrection, it's the only miracle described in all four Gospels.

The multiplying of the bread and fish simultaneously demonstrates both Jesus' creativity and his compassion—his amazing power over material objects and his concern for hungry souls. John says of the Living Word, "Without him nothing was made that has been made" (John 1:3).

The all-powerful Lord who created the whole universe out of nothing has no trouble feeding a multitude with a little boy's lunch. This miracle undergirded Jesus' claim, "I am the bread of life" (John 6:35). Israel's renowned leader, Moses, fed the multitude with manna in the wilderness, but even though it came down from heaven, that bread couldn't sustain them forever. Jesus, on the other hand, is "the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats this bread will live forever" (v. 51).

There are still other ways to appreciate this miracle. Doesn't it paint a vivid picture in your mind when you read that the people sat "in groups on the green grass" (Mark 6:39)? The way Jesus had them sit "in groups of hundreds and fifties" (Mark 6:40) provided a lesson in crowd management—and made it easier for eyewitnesses to count the crowd of 5,000. Jesus' leading question in John 6:5, "Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?" demonstrated his skill as a teacher, and the way he gave thanks before multiplying the bread and fish (John 6:11) revealed his calm confidence about the outcome.

The feeding of the 5,000 encourages us to remember that God can provide even in the face of overwhelming odds. Jesus' instruction to gather up the leftovers and "Let nothing be wasted" (John 6:12) reminds us to be careful stewards of our resources. And the response of the carnal-minded crowd reveals something shallow and dark about human nature. "He filled our bellies, so let's make him king," they reasoned, "but we refuse to accept his deeper teaching."

Making It Personal

In addition to all of these biblical lessons, the feeding of the 5,000 has a personal application for me. I grew up in a family of five. My parents, my two older brothers, and I lived on a farm. We raised our own fruit and vegetables. The freezer contained sweet corn we carved off the cob in August, and jars of homegrown green beans filled the shelves in our cellar. Dad would smile and say, "No

matter what happens, we won't go hungry," and he was right.

My wife and I brought up three children of our own, and our little family of five went through lean seasons when money was tight. We learned why the wedding vows say, "for richer, for poorer," and why the apostle Paul said, "I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty" (Philippians 4:12). We relied on the promise that says, "And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19).

I can't explain how it happens, but I have seen firsthand how the Lord provides. He not only feeds the 5,000. He also feeds the five.

Personal Challenge: This week write a note to someone about how God has provided for you even in the face of overwhelming odds.

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QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

1. In what ways did you see Jesus' power work in and through you over the past week?
 - What else are you thankful for from the past week?

Ask three people—two readers and one reteller—for their help. Ask the first reader to read **John 6:1-15, 25-29** aloud. Then ask the second person to read it again, perhaps from a different version.

Ask the third person to retell (not interpret, just paraphrase) the narrative in about 60 seconds (as if telling the story to a 10-year-old).

2. As this narrative was read and then retold, what parts stood out to you?
3. How would you characterize the reasons people were following Jesus?
 - What did they want from him?
4. What roles did various people play in the feeding of the 5,000?
5. What do you learn about God's generosity in this story?
 - What other characteristics of God do you see?
6. What does this passage reveal in general about human nature?
7. Consider an example of a current or past difficult or seemingly impossible life circumstance in which you needed to trust and obey God. What lessons does this passage give you for obeying in that situation?
 - In what ways do Jesus' words in verse 29 call you to obedience? (Be as specific as possible.)
8. Based on this passage and our discussion, complete this sentence: This week, I will . . . (Encourage people to respond in ways that are simple, concrete, measurable, and timely.)
9. With whom will you share Jesus' miracle of feeding the crowds this week?
10. What challenges will you be facing this week?

For Next Week: Sometime this week, read and reflect on **John 11:17-27, 32-44**, as we continue to look at the miracles of Jesus. You can also read next week's supplemental texts as well as the Study and Application sections as part of your personal study. (Again, we won't read or discuss these extra materials in our group session next week, but they will help you grow in your own faith.)

WEEK THREE

LESSON AIM: **Triumph with Jesus,
who has broken the
power of death.**

STUDY: Miracles of Jesus, Part 2

THEME: The Son of God in Power

LESSON TEXT: John 11:17-27, 32-44

SUPPLEMENTAL TEXT: John 20

POWER OVER DEATH

BY MARK SCOTT

Easter is all about life swallowing death (1 Corinthians 15:54; Isaiah 25:8). Both Old and New Testaments gave us some “warm-up resurrections” so people could anticipate and appreciate the resurrection of Jesus. Some of those are Isaac’s (in a manner of speaking, Hebrews 11:19), the widow of Zarephath’s son (1 Kings 17:17-24), the Shunammite’s son (2 Kings 4:18-37), the widow of Nain’s son (Luke 7:11-17), Jairus’s daughter (Mark 5:21-43), and Lazarus (John 11:1-44). But that last one was far and away the most famous resurrection, besides Jesus’ own.

The controversy concerning Jesus was heating up. Ever since the Feast of Dedication months earlier (John 10:22-39), Jesus’ true identity had become a lightning rod. Therefore Jesus purposely stayed away from the Jerusalem area (vv. 40-42). That was why when he learned Lazarus had died, Jesus stayed away for at least two more days. The disciples could pick up on the tension. That is why they were surprised when Jesus said, “Let us go back to Judea.” They tried to talk Jesus out of returning to Judea. But Jesus explained that Lazarus had actually died and that he intended to “wake him up.”

Claim of Life

John 11:17-27

The author of life arrived in Bethany and found that Lazarus had been in the tomb for four days. This fact lent credibility to the miracle. Since Bethany was within walking distance of Jerusalem, many Jews had come to comfort Mary and Martha.

When Martha learned Jesus had come, she went out to meet him. In some ways this was a role reversal from before (Luke 10:38-42). There was no rebuke in Martha’s greeting of Jesus. Maybe she simply meant that she (and the others, John 11:37) were surprised that Lazarus died from his sickness as it might not have seemed that serious. She had witnessed Jesus healing people who were much worse. She also expressed great faith by saying God would give Jesus whatever he asked—though we may not perfectly understand what she meant by this statement.

Jesus made Martha a promise and backed it up with a claim. He said, “Your brother will rise.” The word again at the end of that statement is not in the Greek text. Martha believed something about the afterlife and took that to mean what Jesus had said (Daniel 12:2). But then Jesus made one of his famous “I am” statements (“I am the resurrection and the life”). This is the fifth one in John’s Gospel. The power over death is located in a

person, not a thing. To believe (almost always a verb in John) in Jesus is to begin experiencing this resurrected life (John 5:24; 10:10). Jesus asked Martha if she believed this. She confessed her faith much as Peter and Thomas had (Matthew 16:16; John 20:28).

Comfort in Death

John 11:32-36

Martha went to tell Mary that Jesus had come. Mary abruptly got up to go greet Jesus. The Jews who had come to comfort her followed her. Jesus’ conversation with Mary mirrored the earlier one with Martha. Jesus was touched by her grief. The text says he was “deeply moved in spirit and troubled.” Moments later, he was again “deeply moved” (11:38). These words indicated deep agitation of the soul, and implied anger in the heart.

Jesus witnessed mourning and death all around him. It was time to reverse time. He asked where Lazarus had been laid to rest. Mary and Martha took him to the tomb. John 11:35 is a short verse with a towering significance. The word for “wept” is not the same one used when Jesus wept over Jerusalem (Luke 19:41). The word used here means “to shed a tear.” Jesus knew what he would do. But his tears were enough for people to conclude that the Son of God cared for people.

Call to Life

John 11:38-44

Jesus arrived at this cave cut into the side of a hill with the stone rolled in front of it (cf. Mark 15:46; John 19:41). He asked for the burial stone to be removed. Martha objected based on the bad odor. But Jesus insisted so that God’s glory could be seen.

Jesus offered a short “teaching” prayer mainly for those overhearing. Then, with a loud voice, he called out, “Lazarus, come out!” The next phrase demands a drum roll, “The dead man came out.” Augustine said it was good Jesus called Lazarus by name. Otherwise Jesus would have emptied the cemetery. The sisters must have aided Lazarus in removing the shroud and sudarium (face cloth) and had not a little reunion.

Resurrection just ruins cemeteries.

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WHEN A FRIEND DIES

BY DAVID FAUST

What can ease the pain when someone close to you dies? There's no easy answer, but Jesus modeled three action steps that can help: (1) go and be with the grieving family, (2) offer emotional support, and (3) find hope in God's promises and power.

Lazarus lived in Bethany, a suburb of Jerusalem, along with his sisters Martha, the meticulous housekeeper, and Mary, who hungered for the deeper things of God. This little family of three showed hospitality to Jesus and his disciples, who occasionally ate and slept in their home. Trouble, however, comes to even the happiest homes, and Lazarus, whose name means "God is my help," became sick and died.

How should we respond when a close friend dies? According to John 11, Jesus went, Jesus wept, and Jesus won.

Jesus Went

. . . but not right away. Upon hearing about Lazarus's illness, Jesus waited two more days, and his friends were bewildered by the delay. Why didn't he rush to the bedside of his sick friend? Jesus reassured the disciples, "This sickness will not end in death" (John 11:4), so imagine how puzzled they felt when he told them later, "Lazarus is dead" (v. 14).

The Lord follows his own timetable. If you ever feel bewildered when his response is delayed, be assured: The Lord always shows up at just the right time and does the right thing.

Jesus Wept

. . . but why? Surely his tears flowed out of compassion for Mary and Martha. He may have been frustrated with the stubborn Jewish leaders who rejected him. It's possible Jesus saw the death of Lazarus as a precursor to his own suffering on the cross. The death of his personal friend underscored all the devastation and sorrow that sin and death have brought to earth. No wonder Jesus was "deeply moved in spirit and troubled" (John 11:33). Anyone who thinks a leader must always remain dispassionate and unemotional should consider the vulnerability Jesus showed here. But he did more than just cry.

Jesus Won

. . . by breaking the death grip that had entombed his friend for four days. Tears have their place, but in the face of death, we need more than sympathy. We need someone with the power to help. Jesus promised, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me

will live, even though they die" (John 11:25); then he backed up this bold claim by restoring Lazarus to life. Calmly Jesus prayed—not begging for a miracle, but simply praising the Father in advance for hearing his prayer. Loudly Jesus commanded, "Lazarus, come out!" (v. 43)—and brought victory to a hopeless-looking situation.

Ordinary people can move a stone, but only God can raise the dead. Jesus' prediction proved right after all. Lazarus's sickness did not end in death. Because of Christ, our stories don't have to end in death, either.

In times of grief, remember, the presence of a caring friend brings comfort. Scripture urges us to "mourn with those who mourn" (Romans 12:15) by sharing our tears and emotional support. But most of all, God's Word reminds us to rely on the risen Christ who defeated death not only for Lazarus, but for all who call him friend.

Personal Encouragement: Think of a friend who has experienced grief during the last year. Pick one way you can bring comfort: (1) go and be with them, (2) offer emotional support, (3) offer hope in God's promises and power.

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QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

1. If you had the opportunity this past week to share Jesus' miracle of feeding more than 5,000 people with someone, how did that go?
2. What challenges did you face last week? (Be specific!)

Ask three people—two readers and one reteller—for their help. Ask the first reader to read **John 11:17-27** aloud. Then ask the second person to read it again, perhaps from a different version.

Ask the third person to retell the narrative in about 60 seconds as if telling the story to a preteen.

3. What especially fascinated or intrigued you in this passage?
4. Let's look at more details in the narrative:
 - What different emotions do you notice?
 - How did the different people in the story—Martha, Mary, and the crowds—react to Jesus?
 - How did Jesus respond to them?
 - What statements of faith do you see?
 - What promises do you notice, and how would you describe them overall?
5. What does this passage teach you about God?
6. What do you learn about how people respond to God in different ways?
7. Share a time when you faced a “Lord, if you had been here . . .” moment in your life. How did you handle it at the time?
 - How could you respond to that kind of situation with an “I know” or “I believe” kind of faith?
8. Share a time when you sensed God telling you to do something, and you responded with a “But Lord . . .” line of reasoning.
9. With whom will you share the message and hope of Resurrection this week?
10. Based on this passage and our discussion, complete this sentence: This week, I will . . .
(Challenge responders to stay away from ideals or superlatives such as “I will be a better person,” “I will trust God more,” “I will pray more,” or “I will read my Bible more.” If you receive such responses, follow up with, “How specifically will you do that” or “Give us a concrete, measurable way you will do that.”)
11. What is one challenge you expect to face this week?

For Next Week: Read and reflect on **John 21:1-14, 24, 25** this upcoming week, as we continue to look at the miracles of Jesus. You can also read next week's supplemental Bible texts as well as the Study and Application sections as part of your personal study.

WEEK FOUR

LESSON AIM: **Let the knowledge of Jesus' power over all give you confidence and hope.**

STUDY: Miracles of Jesus, Part 2

THEME: The Son of God in Power

LESSON TEXT: John 21:1-14, 24, 25

SUPPLEMENTAL TEXT: Matthew 28:18; Ephesians 1:18-22; 2 Peter 1:16, 17

POWER OVER ALL OF CREATION

BY MARK SCOTT

To ensure the disciples had a convinced and informed faith, Jesus appeared to them over a period of 40 days following his resurrection from the dead (Acts 1:1-5). During these appearances, Jesus gave many “convincing proofs” of his resurrection by, among other things, eating in front of them (Luke 24:41, 42) and asking them to touch him (John 20:27). The numerous, collaborated, and varied eyewitness accounts serve to verify Jesus’ resurrection while undermining theories that allege hallucinations or hoaxes.

Besides sudden appearances during these 40 days, Jesus also performed certain miracles. Such is the case with our text today. Jesus had an affinity for fish. He illustrated his teaching with fish and told stories about fishing (Matthew 7:10; 13:47-50). He called people who fished for a living to be his disciples (Mark 1:16-20). He knew of a fish with a coin in its mouth (Matthew 17:27). He multiplied fish on two separate occasions (Matthew 14:13-21; 15:32-39; 16:9, 10).

The Last Fishing Expedition*John 21:1-3*

The angel at the empty tomb told the women to “come and see,” and “go quickly and tell” the disciples that Jesus would meet them in Galilee (Matthew 28:6, 7). Forty days would certainly have been enough time for Jesus to be resurrected in Jerusalem, make a trip to Galilee (and give the Great Commission, Matthew 28:18-20), and then return to Jerusalem to the Mount of Olives to ascend into Heaven (Luke 24:50-53).

Seven disciples went out to fish. Three of them were named (Peter, Thomas, and Nathanael), two were designated (sons of Zebedee—James and John), and two were unnamed. Scholars debate what was implied by, “I’m going out to fish.” Was Peter returning to his former occupation? Was he contemplating his recent denial of Jesus and feeling ashamed and wanting to get away? Was he just in need of some rest and relaxation? Or was he trying to provide for his family, with whom he probably had not spent much time during the last three years (1 Corinthians 9:5)? No matter, as the fishing expedition was unsuccessful. Maybe the disciples still had to learn that apart from Jesus they could do nothing (John 15:5). This was the final time Scripture mentions the disciples fishing for fish.

The Last Breakfast*John 21:4-14*

The disciples had fished during the night. As day broke, someone stood on the shore and yelled to the disciples,

“Friends [a term of endearment in John 15:15], haven’t you any fish?” Perhaps due to darkness or distance, the disciples did not discern the man’s identity. When the disciples answered in the negative, Jesus urged them to fish on the right side of the boat and said they would be ensured a catch. They probably thought, Why not?

Wonder of wonders, they caught large and numerous fish. Ever perceptive, John said, “It is the Lord!” That was all Peter needed to hear. After all, he had been in this situation once before (Luke 5:1-11). He was stripped to the waist, so he wrapped his outer garment around him, and evidently swam to shore. The other disciples rowed the hundred yards to shore with a boatload of fish. Peter climbed back into the boat and dragged the net ashore—quite a task for one person. Because this was a boatload of preachers, one of them counted the fish—153. All kinds of fanciful interpretations have been given to this number, but it probably just means they had 153 fish.

The fire had to spark in Peter a memory of denying Jesus (John 18:18), and the significance of it would feature momentarily in his restoration (John 21:15-23). Jesus had already started the breakfast, and the disciples added to it from the miraculous catch of fish. When Jesus took the bread and fish and gave it to the disciples, there was no question about who he was. They knew it was the Lord. John wrote that this was the third appearance of Jesus to the disciples (and if the appearances to the ten and then to the eleven are viewed as one—John 20:19-29—that is certainly correct).

The Last Word*John 21:24, 25*

The disciple whom Jesus loved signed off by claiming the truthfulness of what he wrote with a postscript intended as hyperbole. It is referred to as a colophon. Jesus accomplished so much in his three-year ministry that if everything he did had been written down, then the world could not contain the books. Of the making of the books about Jesus today, there seems to be no end.

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NET RESULTS

BY DAVID FAUST

First-century fishermen relied on their nets like carpenters rely on their hammers and farmers count on their plows. It took fishermen considerable skill, time, and effort to clean, dry, and mend their linen nets to keep them from rotting and wearing out. A seine net might be several hundred feet long and 20 feet deep, with cork or wood floats to keep the top of the net on the water's surface and stone weights to pull the rest down into the water, capturing any fish in its path. After dragging the net onto the shore, the fishermen would sort out their catch and throw back anything not useful for food or for sale. In one of his parables, Jesus used this process to illustrate God's judgment (Matthew 13:47-50).

Several of Jesus' apostles were fishermen before he made them fishers of men. Peter and Andrew were casting a net onto the lake, and James and John were mending or preparing their nets, when Jesus first called them to follow him (Matthew 4:18-22).

The Empty Net

After Jesus rose from the dead, several of his disciples went fishing again, and "that night they caught nothing" (John 21:3). Good intentions don't guarantee success. Even hard work and dedication don't always produce the desired results. Another time, Peter and his companions fished all night without catching anything, but when they obeyed Jesus' instruction to venture back out and let down their nets, their boats could barely contain the catch (Luke 5:1-11).

The Full Net

Jesus said a lot of things that stretched his disciples' faith. It was another strange-sounding command when the risen Lord spoke from the shore and told them to cast their net off "the right side of the boat" (John 21:6). How could anyone know that a large number of fish were gathered underwater just off the boat's right side? Once again, the disciples found success by following Jesus' instructions. Their once-empty net quickly filled up.

The Untorn Net

As any good fisherman would do, John carefully observed the size of the fish ("large") and the number of fish caught ("153"), and he noted that "even with so many the net was not torn" (John 21:11). The Lord accomplished this miracle without being on the boat and without harming the fishermen's valuable equipment. After eating breakfast with his disciples that morning on the shore, Jesus informed Peter about a coming change

of occupation. Instead of being a fisherman, Peter was going to be a spiritual shepherd who would feed God's sheep.

The Discarded Net

Three years earlier the disciples started their journey with Jesus when "they left their nets and followed him" (Mark 1:18). With three years of the Lord's basic training under their belts and his resurrection a certainty in their minds, they would follow him wherever he led, no matter how much commitment and sacrifice he required.

What can we learn from these hardy fishermen and their encounters with Jesus? In life, sometimes you come up empty. Sometimes it looks like God gives you more than you can handle. At times he will ask you to leave behind familiar things. Do you trust him more than your own experience and skill? Do you love him above all else? Is it time for you to let go of the net?

Personal Challenge: What does it look like for you to "let go of the net"? Call a friend—perhaps from your church, class, or group—to discuss your responses to that question.

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QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

1. With whom did you share the message and hope of Resurrection last week?
2. From this past week, what are you thankful for? (Be specific . . . more than, “I’m thankful for a good day” or “a great family.”)

Ask three people—two readers and one reteller—for their help. Ask the first reader to read **John 21:1-14, 24, 25** aloud. Then ask the second person to read it again, perhaps from a different version.

Ask the third person to retell the narrative in about 60 seconds. Remind them to keep it simple, focusing on the essence of the narrative.

3. What is a highlight in this narrative for you?
4. Imagine you are one of the disciples. Describe the scene using as many sensory details as you can. Discuss each of the following, one at a time, for the whole narrative:
 - What do you see?
 - What do you feel with your sense of touch?
 - What do you hear?
 - What do you smell?
 - What do you taste?
 - What thoughts and feelings did the disciples experience at different times?
5. As you look at Jesus’ interactions with the disciples, what do you learn about God?
6. Again imagine you were in the boat with your companions and then on the shore with Jesus. What do you learn about yourself as you hear Jesus’ words?
7. What does it look like for you to “throw your net on the right side of the boat”—in other words, to do something that doesn’t seem logical at first?
 - In what area do you need to obey God, even though it will take hard work and you can’t see how it will succeed?
8. In what situation this week can you testify about the things Jesus has done in your life?
9. Based on the passage and our discussion, complete this sentence: This week, I will . . .
10. What one big challenge are you facing this week?

For Next Week: This week’s lesson brings this unit of study to a conclusion. Look for additional “1717: Your Word Is Truth” studies, for use with your Sunday School classes, small groups, or personal studies, at ChristianStandard.com.