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GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION

How can you know for sure you will spend eternity in heaven with God? Here's what the Bible says.

GOD'S POWER

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes." (Romans 1:16a) God is the power, source, and reward in salvation. Because we are powerless in our sin, God steps in to rescue us.

OUR PROBLEM

"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23) Sin means missing the mark and falling short of perfection. Because of our imperfection, we cannot stand before a holy God.

OUR PUNISHMENT

"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 6:23) Sin separates us from God and sentences us to death.

GOD'S PROVISION

"But God proves his own love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8) Though we deserve eternal death, God has made a way for us to be rescued through the sacrifice of His Son, Jesus.

GOD'S PROMISE

"If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." (Romans 10:9) To confess Jesus as Lord means we agree with God about our sin and need for salvation. We must repent and trust only in the work of Jesus to save us.

SESSION 1 TRUTH: JESUS CAME AS GOD PROMISED

Bible Passage: Jesus Was Born (Isaiah 7:14; Micah 5:2; Matthew 1:18-2:6)

Today's Point: Jesus is the Savior God Promised.

MEET THE ARCHAEOLOGISTS

Instructions: Go around the room and find one person who is able to write his or her name in one of the boxes. Get as many names as possible before the time is up!

has a shovel at home	has been on an archaeological expedition	has been to Israel	works in the garden at home
has found an artifact outside before	went to VBS as a child	has helped at VBS	serves on the worship team
has been Christmas caroling	came to know Jesus at VBS	has a Christmas tree	has someone else wrap Christmas presents for him
has been to a candlelight Christmas Eve service	plays a musical instrument	was born in another state	has grandchildren
was born in the same month as you	has traveled on an international mission trip	is left-handed	has ever been shopping for antiques

SESSION 1: Jesus Came As God Promised 3



JESUS WAS BORN BIBLE STUDY

INTRODUCTION

Since God is infinite in His knowledge, power, and love, He had a plan from the beginning to rescue every person who would respond to His plan! His Son, Jesus, came to pay for our sin. He is the Promised Messiah. Even in the garden of Eden. God promised that He would send a Savior to redeem us from sin. (See Genesis 3:15) When Jesus was born as a baby 2,000 years ago. He came as the Messiah. His birth was the fulfillment of God's promised to send a Savior redeem us of our sin. This week, we are going to unearth evidence that shows us how God's plan, including our salvation, has unfolded and will be completed according to His every purpose and timing.

THE MESSIAH PROMISED, "GOD WITH US" (ISAIAH 7:14)

God spoke throughout the Old Testament about the coming Messiah who would pay for our sins. Isaiah was used by God to foretell that Jesus would be born of a virgin. The virgin wasn't going to be someone who was divine; rather, she was to be a humble, obedient servant of God. Isaiah also foretold that Jesus' name would be *Immanuel*, meaning "God with us." God Himself would be in the form of a human baby when He was born. Jesus fulfilled every aspect of this prophetic promise when He was born to Mary.

THE PLACE OF JESUS' BIRTH FORETOLD (MICAH 5:2)

In Micah's prophecy, the place of Jesus' birth was foretold. God used Micah to point to Bethlehem. In Hebrew, Bethlehem means "house of bread." It was here that Ruth came with her mother-in-law Naomi and was married to Boaz. (Ruth 1) It was also the place where David was anointed Israel's king by Samuel. (1 Samuel 16) Throughout the Old Testament, we see the importance of this place that would ultimately serve as the place where God Himself came in human flesh as a virgin-born baby.

God gave Micah's prophecy specific detail to make it unmistakable that Jesus' birth in Bethlehem pointed to His deity. In this verse, God used Micah to help us understand that even though Jesus was born as a human baby in Bethlehem, He was also eternal and omnipotent. He has always been and will always be. (Revelation 22:13) He will also rule and reign forever. (Revelation 11:15)



(MATTHEW 1:18-25)

Jesus' birth occurred exactly as the Scripture foretold. It's easy for us to see Scripture's fulfillment 2,000 years later, but the experience of serving as Jesus' earthly father had to be challenging for Joseph. When his future wife became pregnant, he assumed that she had been with another man. However, God spoke to Joseph and explained what was happening. Joseph chose to believe God and wed Mary even though she was already pregnant. Joseph also obediently named this newborn baby Jesus. This took incredible faith, and it shows Joseph believed in God's Word and that it was important to him to obey God.

WISE MEN SOUGHT JESUS AND GOD STRENGTHENED THEIR FAITH THROUGH OBEDIENCE

(MATTHEW 2:1-6)

As chapter two begins, we see the timeline move forward to when wise men came from the east to worship Jesus as they saw a beautiful star guiding them. When these wise men went to Jerusalem, King Herod was highly interested. He knew that if God raised up someone to rule over Israel, it would threaten his political power. Feigning a desire to worship Jesus, Herod had a far more sinister purpose in mind.

When Herod asked the "chief priests and scribes" where Jesus would be born, they told him Bethlehem. The reason they could be so definitive about their answer was because the Old Testament is so direct and specific in its prophecy. Jesus' miraculous birth shows us that His Word is completely perfect!

One tragic aspect to the situation described in this passage was the opportunity Herod missed. As the wise men (most likely Gentiles who chose to believe in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) went to announce that they were coming to worship the Hebrew Messiah foretold in Scripture, the political leader of the Hebrews completely missed the blessing under his nose.

Herod was controlled by his selfish desire for control and luxury. Worried about losing his political power, He ordered the massacre of innocent male children age two and younger once the wise men from the east did not return to reveal Jesus' exact identity. (Matthew 2:16-18) Herod's tirade was evidence that someone can know (and even intellectually believe) the truths of Scripture but miss the blessing of being "born again." (John 3:3)

ACTIVITIES OUR PROBLEM

Instructions: Look up the following Scriptures. As you read each one, list problems that all people have in the space provided.

Jeremiah 17:9 _____

Romans 3:10 _____

Isaiah 64:6 _____

GOD'S PROMISED SOLUTION

Instructions: Look up the following Scriptures. As you read each one, list ways that God has provided a solution to our sin problem through Jesus.

Ephesians 1:7 _____

1 Peter 1:18-19 _____

Romans 5:8 _____

6 ADULT VBS LEARNER GU

DIG SITE DISCOVERIES

The Messiah Promised, "God With Us" (Isaiah 7:14)

What is the significance of the name Immanuel? What promise is God making in this verse?

Promises Fulfilled (Matthew 1:18-25)

What promises did God fulfill in these verses?

Prophecy Fulfilled (Matthew 2:1-6)

How was prophecy fulfilled in these verses? What does the fact that God fulfills His promises teach you about God—even when your circumstances don't always change immediately?

DIG SITE DEBRIEF

GOD'S PROMISES

Instructions: Check out these Scriptures and note God's promises beside each reference.

Scripture Reference	Promise
Exodus 14:14	
2 Chronicles 7:14	
Psalm 34:17	
Isaiah 41:10	
Jeremiah 29:11	
Philippians 4:19	
Psalm 145:9	
1 John 1:9	

THINGS TO PONDER

- When you look around the world, what evidence do you see that people have departed from God's design?
 - 2. How was Jesus' coming to the earth a literal fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecies that one of Jesus' names, "Immanuel," means "God with us"?
 - 3. Why is it significant that Jesus was born in Bethlehem, just like Micah predicted? What evidence does this provide about both the Old Testament and the New Testament?

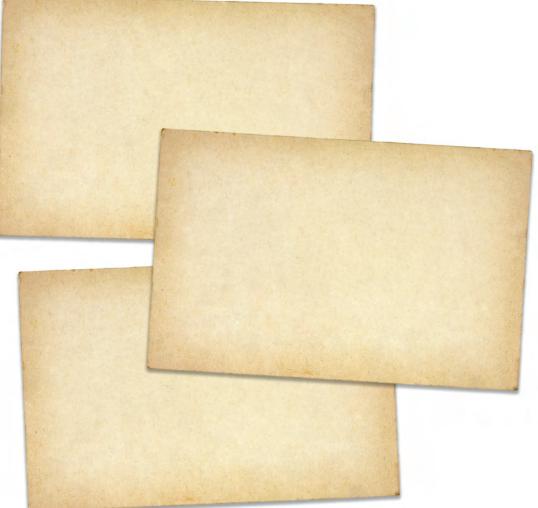
SESSION 2 TRUTH: JESUS DEMONSTRATED GOD'S POWER

Bible Passage: Jesus Healed a Blind Man (Psalm 146:8, Isaiah 35:5-6a, John 9:1-41)

Today's Point: Jesus has the power God promised.

IN YOUR MIND'S EYE

Instructions: Take a few minutes to think about the most beautiful scene you've ever witnessed. After writing down ways you would describe it, spend time talking with your group about how you would describe these things to them if they couldn't see.



JESUS HEALED A BLIND MAN BIBLE STUDY

INTRODUCTION

As Jesus ministered on the earth, He performed many miracles. He healed the sick, made the lame walk, made the blind see, and even brought people back to life. Jesus demonstrated His power so that people could have real evidence of His identity and believe in Him. The miracles that Jesus performed were incredible, but even more amazing is the fact that what Jesus did had been foretold hundreds of years in advance.

THE OMNIPOTENCE AND COMPASSION OF GOD (PSALM 146:8)

God made three major statements through the psalmist that reveal His character and heart. First, God said that He "opens the eyes of the blind." As He convicts people of their sin, God opens the eyes of the spiritually blind to see their need for salvation. God also said in this verse that He "raises up those who are oppressed." The Lord's ultimate demonstration of His desire to raise up the oppressed was His sending Jesus to free people from the bondage of sin. When God said, "the LORD loves the righteous," He is not saying that humans are able to attain a state of perfection this side of heaven. Instead, He is expressing His desire to provide forgiveness through Jesus to people and to

give them a righteous standing before Himself. As we follow Jesus, He desires to help us live in a way that is more like His righteous nature.

PHYSICAL MIRACLES AND SPIRITUAL HEALING FORETOLD (ISAIAH 35:5-6A)

Through the prophet Isaiah, God said that He would open the eyes of the blind, make the deaf hear, cause the paralyzed to leap like an agile deer, and make the tongue of someone who couldn't speak to suddenly sing for joy. These are all direct prophecies of Jesus' ministry on earth, one of which has a direct fulfillment in today's Bible passage.

There is also great spiritual application to be gleaned from Isaiah's prophecy. When the Holy Spirit illuminates our mind and heart to the truth of the gospel, we suddenly hear and see our need for Christ. Those who have been in spiritual bondage can live with immense joy once they discover Jesus. Knowing Jesus gives us beautiful songs to sing and a way to live that brings glory to God. Also, as we share the joy of knowing Christ with others, we can point people to Jesus, the "living water" who can give anyone eternal life. (John 4:10)



THE REASON FOR EARTHLY MIRACLES REVEALED (JOHN 9:3-5)

Jesus told His disciples that during His public ministry, He and His disciples were to "do the works of him who sent me while it is day" (John 9:4). Jesus then said that the night was on its way. He was most likely referring to the time for His arrest and execution on the cross. When God gives us opportunities to reach people with His love, we need to take advantage of those moments. Jesus referred to Himself as the "light of the world" as He prepared to heal the blind man. This reminds us that, as His followers, we are to reflect His light as we lead others to Christ.

JESUS HEALED THE BLIND MAN (JOHN 9:6-12)

After Jesus declared Himself as the Light of the world, He spat on the ground, made some mud, put it on the blind man's eyes, and then told him to go wash in the Pool of Siloam. As Jesus performed this miracle. He revealed that He is the One who made Adam and Eve. Just like He made humans from the dust of the ground (see Genesis 2:7), He made eyes for this man so that he and others would know that Jesus was indeed the Messiah. Only He could save them from their sin. After the blind man was able to see, he began to testify that it was indeed him who

had been blind from birth and that Jesus was his healer.

CONTROVERSY AND TESTIMONY (JOHN 9:13-34)

When the Jewish leaders heard about Jesus' miracle, they chose indignation over joy. They were so caught up in the ritual of the law that they decided to deny that Jesus' miracle was from God. As they questioned the healed man and his parents, they were looking for anything they could to disprove the miracle or that it was an act of God. Instead, even the healed man adamantly insisted that Jesus must be from God because of the plain demonstration of God's power and that he could now see. This angered the Jewish leaders and they cast him out of the temple.

JESUS' IDENTITY CONFIRMED

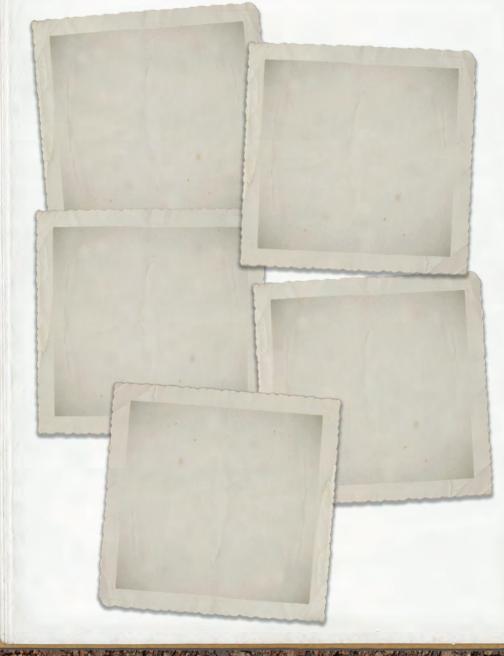
(JOHN 9:35-41)

At the end of this passage, Jesus said that He came so that "those who do not see will see and those who do see will become blind." This is a reference to our need to understand how helpless we are in our sin before we can come to Christ. The first step in coming to know Jesus is to "see" by understanding and admitting that we are sinners that deserve death. If we think we are righteous and we can "see" without Christ, then we are actually spiritually blind.

ACTIVITIES

EXCAVATING FOR CLUES

Instructions: With your small group, discuss and write down some of the ways life might have been challenging for the man who was blind from birth.



DIG SITE DISCOVERIES

Surprise Interruptions (John 9:1-12)

What interruption did Jesus and His disciples encounter in this passage?

Unexpected Healing (John 9:13-34)

Describe how Jesus healed the man and how people reacted to this miracle.

Jesus' Purpose (John 9:35-41)

What was Jesus' purpose for coming into this world?

Prophecies (Psalm 146:8; Isaiah 35:5-6)

Record the three prophecies found in Psalm 146:8.

Record what physical healings were foretold in Isaiah 35:5-6.

DIG SITE DEBRIEF

LIGHT OF THE WORLD

Jesus referred to Himself as the Light of the world in verse 5 of John 9. If we are Christ followers, we are also to be light in our dark world.

Use this grid as a way to be light in the lives of those you come into contact with. Print their initials in the column, "Initials of Person." Identify their need in the next column and how you can help in the last column.

Physical Needs		
Initials of Person	His/Her Need	How you can help
Spiritual Needs		
Initials of Person	His/Her Need	How you can help

THINGS TO PONDER

- The blind man faced tremendous challenges in his life.
 What kind of challenges do you face? How has God already helped you overcome challenges in your life?
- 2. Do you share the good news of God's blessings in your life? How can you begin to share your testimony like the blind man in today's story?
- 3. Take a moment to list people who you know are still trapped in the blindness of not knowing Christ. Pray for them and commit to share the gospel with them as God gives you the opportunity.

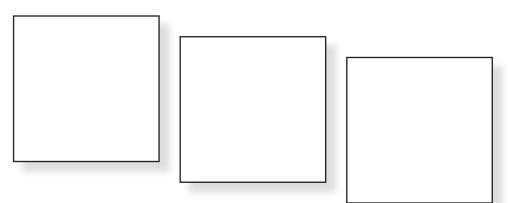
SESSION 3 TRUTH: JESUS WAS BETRAYED AND REJECTED

Bible Passage: Jesus Experienced Betrayal and Rejection (Psalm 41:9; Isaiah 53:3,7; John 13; 18:1–19:16)

Today's Point: Jesus knew what would happen and still followed God's plan.

DIGGING FOR STEPS IN THE PROCESS

Instructions: Think of a task in your life that has multiple steps (like preparing your favorite recipe, engaging in a hobby activity, or doing something else you enjoy). Think about the multiple tasks involved in the process of doing this activity. List each task in a space provided. Be ready to share your task and its steps with others in your group as if you were helping them do it for the first time.



JESUS EXPERIENCED BETRAYAL AND REJECTION BIBLE STUDY

INTRODUCTION

Even before humanity sinned, Jesus was prepared to redeem us. His desire to free us from the bondage of sin and its resulting death would mean that He would have to sacrifice Himself: still. that did not deter Him. From the beginning, Jesus knew what He would do in His perfect timing to purchase our salvation. From creation until the moment of His sacrifice on the cross. Jesus was in control. He was allowing everything in history to unfold according to God's plan. History is HIS story!

OLD TESTAMENT PROPHECIES POINT TO JESUS' BETRAYAL AND REJECTION

(PSALM 41:9; ISAIAH 53:3,7)

Psalm 41:9 contains a gripping prophecy that finds its exact fulfillment in Judas' betrayal. The psalmist, inspired by the Holy Spirit, foretold that a friend close to Jesus would betray Him after dining with Him. This unmistakably points to Judas.

God, through the prophet Isaiah, also pointed to the fact that as Jesus was crucified, He was bloodied and disfigured to the point of being almost unrecognizable. Isaiah's prophecy also speaks to the fact that when the Messiah was betrayed, arrested, and crucified, He would not resist. Therefore, God chose the innocent lamb that Jewish priests sacrificed according to His command as a symbolic picture of Christ. Just like a lamb did not resist its slayer, Jesus would not resist those who conspired against Him. He acted in this way so that His redemptive plan could be accomplished.

BETRAYAL FORETOLD AT THE LAST SUPPER (JOHN 13)

On the night Jesus was betrayed, He provided His perfect example of servant-leadership by washing His disciples' feet. As Jesus stated that not every one of His disciples would remain faithful to Him. He referred to Psalm 41:9's prophecy that one who eats bread with Him would be His betraver. When Jesus gave Judas the bread, He also sent Judas out to accomplish his terrible deed. The disciples did not grasp the weight of what was about to happen and assumed that Judas, as the treasurer for the group, was going to take care of some business for them.

After Judas left, Jesus continued telling the disciples that He faced a difficult road ahead. Jesus was about to take a lonely path as humanity's only worthy Redeemer. Even though the disciples didn't fully grasp what was about to take place, they listened to Jesus. He encouraged them to follow Him, to love one another, and to continue obeying Him.

BETRAYAL IN THE GARDEN (JOHN 18:1-14)

After Jesus had dinner with His disciples, sent Judas out, and continued teaching them that evening, He led His disciples to the garden of Gethsemane. There are other Gospel accounts of Jesus' prayers there and the agony He experienced as He began to bear the weight of humanity's sin. Even though Jesus knew what Judas would do, He allowed him to go because Jesus' betrayal was part of God's plan to go to the cross. While it may have seemed that events were spiraling out of God's control. He was still sovereign: events were unfolding according to His perfect plan. We must remember that Jesus could have stopped the events leading up to the cross at any moment, but He chose to allow them to proceed. We have the opportunity to be redeemed because Jesus went through with His sacrifice.

PETER BETRAYED JESUS

(JOHN 18:15-27) Exactly according to Jesus' prophecy, Peter denied Jesus three times the night of His betrayal. While it had to be chilling for Peter to realize what he had done, Jesus foretold it to show Peter that His love for him (and anyone who follows Christ) is unconditional. Even though we will fail Jesus at times, He remains faithful to us.

JESUS REJECTED BY THE PEOPLE (JOHN 18:28–19:16)

Jesus then told Pilate that the only reason for his authority or what the Jewish leadership had been allowed to do was because of the will and purpose of God. Pilate had to know in his spirit that Jesus was being wrongly accused. This is evidenced by his continued efforts to convince the Jewish leadership to exonerate Jesus. Tragically, the Jewish leadership accused Pilate of subverting Caesar if he didn't crucify Jesus. This exposed the Jewish leaders' depraved state; they were willing to go to any length to see Jesus killed. What Satan appeared to instigate was in God's sovereign control and permissive will as part of His redemptive plan.

ACTIVITIES CRUCIFIXION EXPEDITION

Instructions: Match the event in the grid with the reason for its happening.

1A Jesus	1B Jesus	1C Jesus sent
washed the	instituted the	Judas out to
disciples' feet.	Lord's Supper.	betray Him.
2A Jesus was arrested and unfairly treated.	2B Jesus told Peter he would deny Him three times.	2C Jesus allowed Himself to be crucified, even though He could have stopped it at any moment.

- ____ Jesus wanted to carry through with His plan to save us from our sin.
- Jesus knew He had to be wrongfully tried and convicted so that He could go to the cross.
 - ____ Jesus wanted us to know that He knows we're not perfect, but He loves us anyway.
- ____ Jesus provided us with an important symbol of His sacrifice for us.
 - _ Jesus needed to be betrayed so that He could carry out His plan to pay for our sins.
 - _ Jesus was showing the disciples how they should serve each other.

DIG SITE DISCOVERIES

Prophecies About Jesus' Sacrifice (Psalm 41:9 and Isaiah 53:3,7) Record the prophecies foretold about Jesus.

Jesus' Betrayal (John 13; 18:1-14)

Record your answers from the handout provided.

Jesus Rejected (John 18:15-40)

Record your reaction to the rejection and betrayal Jesus faced in these verses.

Jesus' Sacrifice (John 19:1-16) Record your thoughts about Jesus' sacrifice for you.

DIG SITE DEBRIEF

List ways you can follow Jesus' example to serve others. Circle one or two that you can commit to completing in the next week.

THINGS TO PONDER

- If Jesus hadn't gone to the cross, would mankind have any hope? What does the need for Jesus to go through His betrayal, beating, and crucifixion teach us about our need to be rescued and how Jesus provided it for us?
- 2. Pilate listened to Jesus and even seemed to show some sympathy for Him, but in the end he sent Him to be crucified. Why is it important for every person to not just hear the gospel, but to make a decision to receive Christ?
- Take some time to list the ways Jesus suffered for you. We read the account of Jesus' sacrifice, but we take it for granted far too often. Ask God to help you be more deeply grateful for what Jesus experienced for you.

SESSION 4 TRUTH: JESUS DIED AND ROSE AGAIN

Bible Passage: Jesus Is Alive (Isaiah 53:5,9-11; John 19:17–20:18)

Today's Point: Jesus fulfilled God's plan to be our Savior.

HIDDEN TRUTHS

Instructions: Write two facts and one untrue statement about yourself in the space provided.

STATEMENT 1_____

STATEMENT 2 _____

STATEMENT 3	
	in the second se

JESUS IS ALIVE BIBLE STUDY

INTRODUCTION

As Jesus went to the cross, He was preparing to fulfill the promise God the Father made all the way back in the garden of Eden to Satan. God told Satan that He would crush his head, but Satan would bruise His heel. (Genesis 3:15) While the disciples had to struggle to understand why God was allowing His Son to suffer like He did, the Lord was accomplishing His divine purpose to redeem every person who would receive Him. (John 3:16-17) What began at Jesus' birth was now culminating in the sacrifice that would secure eternal life for every human who believes in Jesus. (Acts 2:21)

In today's Bible passage, we are not only going to see the sacrifice of Christ; we are also going to see His eternal victory over sin and death. Again, according to God's perfect design, Jesus emerged victorious from the grave on the third day exactly as God had foretold. Jesus is, indeed, the Living One! Not only did He come back miraculously from the grave, He spent time demonstrating to hundreds of witnesses that He was indeed alive before His heavenly return. Take joy and encouragement as you read and consider this passage.

ISAIAH EXPLAINED WHY JESUS DIED (ISAIAH 53:5)

In Isaiah 53:5. God worked through Isaiah to explain the "why" behind Jesus' crucifixion when he says that Jesus was "pierced because of our rebellion." The sins of humanity resulted in our deserving both physical and spiritual death. God is perfect and holy. For humanity to have any hope, there had to be some kind of sacrifice from the only One who is worthy to pay for our sin. Jesus, being God Himself, was the only suitable sacrifice. This prophesy reveals that every event in Jesus' life, including His sacrificial death. occurred because of His divine choice and plan.

ISAIAH FORETOLD DETAILS OF JESUS' DEATH (ISAIAH 53:9-11)

To strengthen people's faith and to help them understand that Jesus truly is God, the Lord provided Isaiah with specific details of Jesus' death and resurrection before they happened. Here, we find that Jesus was "with a rich man at His death." This points to the fact that Jesus was buried in the grave of the wealthy man. (John 19:38-42.) In addition. the fact that Jesus would do no violence to His captors and executors is predicted. Everything in the crucifixion account confirms the accuracy of these prophecies.



Jesus was the perfect and only worthy offering to pay for the sins of humanity. His atonement satisfied the wrath of God for the sins of the human race. The most amazing display of God's love took place when Jesus died on the cross. The fact that Jesus was willing to endure this sacrifice reveals His perfect glory in another captivating way.

JESUS ENDURED THE CROSS (JOHN 19:17-42)

In this passage, we have a graphic perspective written by one of Jesus' disciples of the experience He endured on the cross. The God of the universe submitted Himself to a terrible beating; He even humbly had to depend on others to carry His cross. The depth of God's love was also on full display as Jesus was crucified. Jesus made provision for His earthly mother's care before His death by ensuring that John would provide for her in the future as He suffered. As Jesus hung on the cross of calvary, Roman guards played a game that caused them to cast lots for His clothing. This was a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy about Jesus that points people to His divine nature. (Psalm 22:18)

Other prophecies from the Old Testament were fulfilled in the way Jesus was crucified, such as the fact that not one of His bones would be broken (Psalm 34:20) and they will look on the one they pierced. (Zechariah 12:10) The Old Testament prophecies and their New Testament fulfillment are additional blessings provided by God to help those searching for God to identify Him. These truths are also a blessing for believers seeking to grow in their faith.

JESUS DEFEATED DEATH (JOHN 19:17–20:18)

God worked through John to provide a compelling account of Jesus defeating death once and for all through His resurrection. The stone was removed not to allow Jesus out, but to allow people in to observe that He was alive.

As Jesus revealed Himself to Mary Magdalene, her response was to worship Him. As Jesus talked of ascending to His Father, He also instructed her to go to His disciples to tell them what He had said. Mary Magdalene demonstrated how we should proclaim Jesus to others. Her statement. "I have seen the Lord," models how we should live. We should be more willing and faithful to tell others that we have experienced the power and saving faith that only Jesus can provide. As we continue to serve Him, we should grow more mature and fervent in our gospel conversations with those around us.

ACTIVITIES

AN AMAZING DISCOVERY

Very few round tomb stones have been found in Israel. Because of the identity of those buried in some of these graves, archaeologists have concluded that only the very wealthy received a burial behind a round tomb stone.

How would you have responded if you arrived at Jesus' tomb to find it empty?



DIG SITE DISCOVERIES

Why Jesus Faced Death (Isaiah 53:5, 9-11)

Record what Isaiah has to say about why Jesus' death was necessary.

The Reality of Jesus' Death and Burial (John 19:17-42)

Record the attitudes or feelings of the following people about the reality of Jesus' death and burial.

Jewish Leaders

Pilate

Disciples

God the Father

Jesus Rejected (John 20:1-18)

Record the events that happened at the tomb on that early morning when Mary arrived.

DIG SITE DEBRIEF

SHARE JESUS

When Mary Magdalene found the tomb empty, she encountered Jesus and then went and told others. Draw a box around the best answer to these questions.

How many people have you told about Jesus?

None

Less than 5

Between 5-10

Over 10

What is keeping you from sharing more often?

Afraid of rejection

Don't know what to say

Don't want to take the time

Never really thought about it

THINGS TO PONDER

- If you had been Peter or John, what thoughts would have been running through your mind as you witnessed the empty tomb?
- 2. Mary Magdalene was quick to go to the other disciples to tell them that Jesus was alive and that she had seen Him. Who in your life needs to hear about Jesus that you can go and tell today?
- 3. God wants us to live anchored in the fact that Jesus has won the final victory. When we remember this fact, it gives us eternal optimism. We see our challenges as opportunities to grow and to learn about God. Ask God to give you a perpetual sense of gratefulness and trust in His victorious life being lived through you.

SESSION 5 TRUTH: THE BIBLE IS TRUE

Bible Passage: Philip Told the Good News (Isaiah 53:7-8; Acts 8:26-40)

Today's Point: The Bible is true and helps us tell others about Jesus.

AN INCREDIBLE FIND

Instructions: Imagine you've just found a key artifact that will be priceless. What feelings would you have? What steps would you need to take to protect your finding and to announce it to the world? Use the space below to write down your thoughts.



PHILIP TOLD THE GOOD NEWS BIBLE STUDY

INTRODUCTION

After Jesus died for our sin and rose from the grave, He appeared to hundreds of witnesses to provide evidence of His being alive and that He is God. (John 20) Then, He ascended to heaven and sat down at the right hand of God the Father. (Acts 1) The disciples waited, as Jesus instructed, for Him to send the Holy Spirit who would live inside them, guide them in His truth, and empower them as they shared His loved with others. (Acts 1–2)

It is interesting to note that as Peter preached His Pentecost sermon, he preached from the Old Testament, calling on its prophecies and their fulfillment to prove Jesus' identity as the perfect God-Man. Like Peter, Philip showed how Jesus perfectly fulfilled Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah when he encountered an inquisitive official from Ethiopia reading Isaiah.

As we will see in today's New Testament passage, the Word of God has the power to change the course of lives and entire nations. Every follower of Christ is charged with the exciting task to proclaim it to others with love.

ISAIAH FORETOLD JESUS' DEATH (ISAIAH 53:7-8)

Isaiah foretold that Jesus would go to the cross without a fight. He could have stopped the events of His crucifixion at any moment by many different means. However, nothing would deter Jesus from completing His plan to redeem humanity. By comparing Jesus' death to that of a helpless lamb. God used Isaiah to show that Jesus' sacrificial death was a fulfillment of every lamb sacrificed according to God's command to Israel. (Leviticus 23) When one connects Jesus' ministry and crucifixion with the Old Testament prophecies, it becomes clear that God Himself is the author of Scripture.

THE HOLY SPIRIT LED PHILIP (ACTS 8:26-29)

As Philip followed the Lord, He was told by the Holy Spirit to go south of Jerusalem on the desert road that goes toward Gaza. There, Philip encountered a chariot that was carrying one of the leading officials serving the queen of Ethiopia. The man was reading the Book of Isaiah out loud. The Holy Spirit told Philip to go and to join the chariot right away.



Philip had a heart that sought after the Lord and wanted to follow Him. Because of this, he was uniquely prepared to minister to the man. God also saw that the man was seeking after Him with a sincere desire to discover the one true God. God provided an experience that would lead the Ethiopian official to receive Christ.

PHILIP OBEYED (ACTS 8:30-33)

As Philip obeyed the Lord, he overheard the man reading out loud from the Book of Isaiah. When Philip asked the man if he understood what he was reading. the man offered a question that was also an invitation. He said. "How can I, unless someone guides me?" This reminds us of the importance of being ready to explain Scripture to people and to give them an opportunity to receive Christ. Philip's willingness to share with the Ethiopian official is an example to us today. Philip recognized God's invitation for him to join His work and Philip answered the Lord's call.

The official also modeled how God wants all people to be in regard to seeking Him. God promises that if we seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, He will bless us abundantly. (Matthew 6:33) This is why the Lord sent Philip as a teacher of God's Word and as a provider of God's invitation for this man to receive Christ.

PHILIP SHARED THE GOOD NEWS (ACTS 8:34-35)

Beginning with the Scripture in Isaiah, Philip began to share with the man the story of Jesus. Perhaps Philip started with the cross, but then provided the Ethiopian official with the perspective of Jesus presented in Scripture as the spotless Lamb of God who was also the creator and sustainer of life. Perhaps Philip walked through the events of Jesus' ministry, including the cross and the empty tomb. However Philip shared, we know that he rooted his conversation with the man in the fact that Jesus perfectly fulfilled every Old Testament prophecy that foretold the coming Messiah, Because of Jesus' sacrifice and resurrection, Philip shared, this man could be saved.

THE OFFICIAL RESPONDED

(ACTS 8:36-40)

As Philip shared the gospel with the official, it is evident that he received it with great joy. He chose to receive Christ. After Philip baptized him, the Holy Spirit took Philip away, leaving the Ethiopian official rejoicing in God. We can only imagine that this influential person in Ethiopia carried the good news of Christ with him to his homeland, causing many to have the opportunity to receive Christ.

ACTIVITIES TRUTH SIFTER

Instructions: Write Truth or Opinion next to each statement.

- 1. _____ 2 + 2 = 4
- Event Fried chicken is the best food to bring to a church fellowship.
- 3. _____ The sun is approximately 93,000,000 miles from Earth.
- 4. _____ Fishing is the best outdoor hobby that someone can enjoy.
- 5. _____ The Bible's being true is supported by a multitude of fulfilled prophecies and archaeological evidence.
- 6. _____ Fish must dwell in water to survive.
- 7. _____ The only kind of ice cream that is worth eating is chocolate.
- Someone must have a big breakfast in order to have a good day.

DIG SITE DISCOVERIES

Philip Responds to the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:26-29)

Record how Philip responded to the instructions from the angel of the Lord and the Holy Spirit.

An Open Door to Share the Good News (Acts 8:30-35; Isaiah 53:7-8)

Compare the verses in Acts to the verses in Isaiah.

An Expression of Belief (Acts 8:36-40) Record your understanding of baptism.

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DIG SITE DEBRIEF STUDY GOD'S WORD

What excuses do you use for skipping time in God's Word?

How might you benefit from spending time studying God's Word?

What needs to change in your schedule to prioritize spending time in God's Word?

To gain more knowledge of the Bible, we need to do more than hear it. Check out these levels of Bible intake.

> Hear—Romans 10:17 Read—Deuteronomy 17:19 Study—Acts 17:11 Memorize—Colossians 3:16 Meditate—Psalm 1:2-3

THINGS TO PONDER

- 1. Philip was both humble and obedient as he served the Lord. He had diligently listened to the other early church leaders as they taught the Word of God. He joyfully received God's instruction and desired to share it with others. He was willing to say, "Yes," to God when He prompted him to go. We can all learn from Philip's sincere obedience and desire to see lives changed. Ask God to help you say, "Yes," to Him when He invites you to join in His plan to reach people.
 - 2. Who has God placed around you that may be searching for the truth about God? Think about your family, friends, co-workers, and neighbors. How can you be like Philip to them? Ask God to give you perception to see where He's working and inviting you to get involved in His plan.

