

“FOR GOD SO LOVED. . .”

A Bible Study focused on Jesus and His Amazing Love – John 13 - 21

**“For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son,
that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.”** John 3: 16

Lesson 1 -	John 13 and 14	Final Hours with Jesus
Lesson 2	John 15: 1 – 16: 4	Final Words from Jesus
Lesson 3	John 16: 5 - 33	Final Comfort from Jesus
Lesson 4	John 17	Final Prayer of Jesus
Lesson 5	John 18: 1 – 20: 18	The Ultimate Sacrifice of Love
Lesson 6	John 20	The Power of the Resurrection
Lesson 7	John 21	The New Beginning
Lesson 8	Acts 1 and 2	The Rest of the Story

STUDY SUGGESTIONS for this series:

TIME TO FOCUS

As you begin your study time, it is always wise to quiet your heart and mind – to be still. Put aside the details and distractions of your life, so that you can begin to focus on your great God and His amazing grace and mercy. The suggested Psalm will remind you of His unfailing love for YOU. He is waiting to meet with you.

TIME TO READ

Read the Scripture passages carefully. You might want to have 2 or 3 different translations so that you can compare words and ideas. Take your time so that the Holy Spirit can begin to speak to you through the written Word of God. Writing down what you observe will help you to think clearly and to remember what you have read and thought about longer.

TIME TO PONDER

As you take time to meditate and to consider the questions, you will find that certain verses and phrases will catch your attention. Jot down some of your thoughts and ideas, so that you can refer to them again. Take your time and you will find that the Spirit of God will guide you and will reveal the truths to you that are most relevant at this time in your spiritual journey. Spend more time on the ones that seem more important or interesting to you. This is not a “school” assignment. This is the living Word of God!

TIME TO RESPOND

In the honesty and intimacy of this time, why don't you talk over your concerns and your questions with Jesus? You can tell Him exactly what you are thinking and He will meet you at that point and walk with you on your journey. Let Him show you what He wants you to confess, to change, to do, to accept from His hand. Then do not delay in following Him – whatever it means. He promises to bless you and keep you and strengthen you – every day and in every circumstance of life.

“FOR GOD SO LOVED . . .”

Lesson 2

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FINAL WORDS FROM JESUS

“As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love.”

John 15: 9 (NIV)

Jesus and His 11 disciples may still be in the Upper Room, getting ready to leave, or they may already be walking through a vineyard or by the temple gates on their way to the Garden of Gethsemane. Can you even begin to imagine the intensity of these moments for our Savior as He talks with them at this time? He wants them to grasp these concepts and to hold on to them throughout the next weekend and for the rest of their lives. He wants them to know that they have been chosen by Him for the single purpose of bearing fruit -- fruit that will last. He wants them to know that even as the world hated Him, they also can expect to be treated in the same way. Wow - the minds of the disciples must have been spinning as they listened to His every word, trying to understand the meaning of what they were hearing. They must have been intent on trying to remember every concept and detail - vine, branch, fruit, abide, friend, Counselor, and persecution. Imagine that you were there that night.

TIME TO FOCUS –

As you quiet your mind and your heart, take some time to read **Psalm 63: 1 – 8**.

Can you identify with the Psalmist as he expressed his longings and His praise to God?

In what ways has God recently shown you His power and glory, His love and His protection?

What are your longings? He waits for you to tell Him and to come close to Him.

TIME TO READ – Read John 15: 1 through 16: 4 (Use at least 2 translations.)

How would you summarize and title these 2 paragraphs?

1. John 15: 1 – 17 - It is all about bearing fruit – no fruit, some fruit, more fruit, much fruit! away”
(It may be helpful for you to remember that this was spoken to believers only. The words “cuts off” or “takes away” in verse 2 can also be translated “lifts up”. A vine dresser takes an unproductive branch from the dirt, lifts it up, washes it, and attaches it again to the trellis so that it can have sunlight and the opportunity to become fruit-bearing.)
2. John 15: 18 – 16: 4 – It is a serious warning about their future!

TIME TO PONDER –

1. What do you think “fruit-bearing” means?
Galatians 5: 22 -23
Ephesians 5: 8 - 10
Philippians 1: 9 - 11
Colossians 1:10,
2. What is the process of moving from “no fruit” to being a very productive branch?
What are the responsibilities of the gardener, the vine, and finally, the branch?
3. How do you “abide” or “remain” or “live” in Jesus? What does this mean?
What is involved? What are the results for the branch?
4. Love has been a major theme through John’s Gospel, hasn’t it? Go back and think about everything that Jesus said about His love and their love for Him and for each other, starting in chapter 13. Notice whether love is a noun or a verb - an emotion or an action.
5. Jesus is very concerned about their future. What are His concerns and His recommendations?

TIME TO RESPOND -

1. What are the words that you need to hear from Jesus today?
As you review John 15, let His love for you soak into your soul. How does He feel about you?
2. Just as He wanted His disciples to be prepared for the unexpected and the persecution that would they would experience, He wants to prepare you. Will you continue to trust Him?

“FOR GOD SO LOVED . . .”

Lesson 3

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Final Comfort from Jesus

“The Father Himself loves you because you have loved Me and have believed that I came from God.”

John 16: 27 (NIV)

Jesus has some final words of comfort and instruction for His disciples. Following that conversation, He prayed with them, and on His own, in that olive grove. Then suddenly Judas and the soldiers were there. Jesus was preparing Himself and His friends for this moment in time, for He had come to do His Father's will and to do all that the Father had commanded Him to do. As He encouraged the disciples with the illustration of the temporary but incredible pain of a mother in labor, so He must have been reminding Himself that His unlimited anguish would be forgotten when the joy of the Father's resurrection power was revealed. It is almost impossible to think about, much less believe, words about joy when you are in the midst of pain and sorrow, isn't it? But that doesn't change the reality of it. Do you think there are some valuable lessons for us from these final words?

TIME TO FOCUS –

As you quiet your heart and your mind, read about God's love for you - **Psalm 86: 11 – 15**.
Join the Psalmist in praising the Lord, your God, and in bringing your own longings to Him.

TIME TO READ – Read John 16: 5 - 33 Why not read this out loud as well as quietly?

1. John 16: 5 – 16 – What did Jesus want them to know about the Holy Spirit?
2. John 16: 17 – 30 – What are the disciples' concerns and how does Jesus explain Himself?
3. John 16: 31 – 33 – A final word of comfort –

TIME TO PONDER –

1. Once again Jesus explains His relationship to the Father and the Holy Spirit. How would you explain it? What are some of the other names for the Holy Spirit? What is His work?
2. The disciples are filled with grief as they hear what Jesus is saying to them. These final words were meant to encourage them and to give them both a short term (for the coming weekend) and a long term perspective on life. What did they finally understand and believe? What do you think they will remember?
3. John 16: 23 – 24 are verses which are often used when we talk about prayer. What do you think these words meant to the disciples? What do you believe they mean to us today?
4. It's an amazing promise – John 16: 27. Have you memorized the whole verse?
I Corinthians 15: 56 – 58
Philippians 4: 6 - 7
I John 5: 4 - 5

TIME TO RESPOND –

1. There is no way to adequate way to explain or understand the indwelling presence of Jesus, is there? What are the truths that He wants you to make your own today? Read the Scriptures again and then listen to Him as He comes to you to make His presence known. Believe Him!
2. Need some joy? You can ask!
Want some clarification? You can seek!
Looking for peace? Take heart! He has an ample supply for you!

There is no way to adequate way to explain or understand the indwelling presence of Jesus, is there? What are the truths that He wants you to make your own today? Read the Scriptures again and again. What is your conclusion?

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Lesson 4

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FINAL PRAYER of JESUS

“May they (all believers) be brought to complete unity to let the world know that You sent Me and have loved them even as You have loved Me.” John 17: 23b (NIV)

Don't you love to hear some people pray? It almost feels as if you are in the presence of God Himself as you listen to them talk to Him. What would it have been like to see Jesus look toward heaven and then to hear Him pray to His Father? This must have been the most intimate moment for those disciples, and yet the most unnerving as they realized what Jesus was asking His Father to do. It is no wonder that when they got to the Garden of Gethsemane they were exhausted, and still unprepared for the events that they were to observe. Jesus had one thing on His mind, however, and nothing would deter Him from completing that work. What gave Him His strength and courage?

TIME TO FOCUS – Did you realize that your songs bring joy to the Lord? Take some time to worship the Lord through the thoughts that are in **Psalms 89: 1 – 8**. Verses 3 and 4 were fulfilled in Jesus! It is amazing.

TIME TO READ – Read **John 17** -

1. As Jesus prayed to His Father for Himself, what were His heart's desires?
2. As Jesus prayed for His followers, what were His requests?
3. As Jesus prayed for all those who would believe in Him, what did He ask of His Father?

TIME TO PONDER –

1. What do you think Jesus was requesting when He said, “Glorify Your Son, that Your Son may glorify You”? What was His request?
2. How does Jesus describe those who belong to Him as He prays? Why does He do this?
3. The disciples were clearly going to be sent into the world, and eventually around the world, and so Jesus prays for them and for future believers. What are his heart's concerns for them?
4. Can you use Jesus' prayer as a model for praying today? What would that look like? For whom would you pray? What would be your concerns for yourself and for others?

TIME TO RESPOND –

1. As you listen to Jesus express His deep desires for the ones He loved so much, what do you hear Him asking the Father to do for you? How do your longings match up with His? God is waiting to hear you express them to Him right now.
2. Even in His prayers you can sense how much Jesus wanted everyone everywhere to hear the truth about His identity and His love. How are you participating in this? Would you be willing to do more?

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Lesson 5

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THE ULTIMATE SACRIFICE of LOVE

**For God SO LOVED the world that He gave His one and only Son,
that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.” John 3: 16 (NIV)**

The antagonism and threats had been building for many months. The jealousy of the religious leaders was driving them to make irrational and violent decisions. The leaders of the law were agitated and angry. The crowds were in Jerusalem for the Passover Feast. Judas had heard about the scandal and willingly went to cooperate with chief priests. The soldiers were eager to make the arrest. The excited crowd eagerly followed. However, the strength of their numbers with their lanterns and torches and weapons could never have overpowered Him. He willingly chose to go with them. He had decided long ago that He would become the “Son of Man” so that those whom he loved could become “sons of God”. The price He paid to redeem us is beyond our human comprehension and yet through His blood our ransom has been paid. Jesus conquered both sin and death through His resurrection. The gift of eternal life is ours through faith in Him.

TIME TO FOCUS – The prophets foretold what the Messiah would do when He came, but few people were ready when it really happened. Are you ready? Read **Isaiah 53** and give thanks. It was for YOU He came.

TIME TO READ – Read John 18 – 20:18

As you read these chapters, take your time. Read each section and think carefully about the event that is being described. Experience the whole weekend with Jesus, with His disciples, with Mary, with the crowds and believers.

John 18: 1 – 11 - The Arrest

John 18: 12 – 40 - Before Caiaphas and Pilate

Peter’s Denials

John 19: 1 – 16 – The Crucifixion Sentence

John 19: 17 – 42 - The Crucifixion, Death and Burial of Jesus

John 20: 1 – 9 – The BIG SURPRISE

TIME TO PONDER –

1. Why do you think the chief priests felt it was necessary to bring soldiers and a whole delegation of people to make the arrest of one man at night in a garden?
2. What happened to Peter in those moments in the garden and in the courtyard? What was the result?
John 13: 31 – 38 and John 18: 15 – 18, 25 - 27
3. Where were the followers of Jesus when the crowds were responding to Pilate’s question?
4. What was the weekend like for the disciples of Jesus? What do you think they remembered?
5. Resurrection Morning – How many times had Jesus told them what would happen and yet they “still did not understand”. But when John went in to the tomb, “he saw and he believed”. What message is there in this simple fact for you?

TIME TO RESPOND – Kneel at the cross:

It was for you that Jesus came from heaven.

It was for you that He came to demonstrate “the full extent of His Father’s love”.

It was for you that He suffered and bled and died.

It was for you that God demonstrated His mercy and power through the resurrection.

Stand up and shout for joy! Will you share the Good News everywhere and every day!

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Lesson 6

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THE POWER OF HIS RESURRECTION

**But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ,
The Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name.**

John 20: 31 NIV

Two men, Joseph and Nicodemus, had lovingly prepared the body of Jesus and laid it in the new tomb. He was gone. The crowds had dispersed. Most of the Jews no doubt continued their celebration of the Passover. But where were the disciples? Most of them had stood at a distance from the cross. Only John had come near enough, along with Mary and some other women, to hear some final words from the One they loved so much. How could this have happened to Jesus, their teacher and friend, the Son of God? They must have been frightened, confused, fearful and very disheartened as their grief consumed them. The women, however, had a plan. They prepared some spices and set off to visit the tomb just as soon as their Sabbath day had ended. Little did they realize the surprise that was awaiting them . . .

TIME TO FOCUS – Read **Psalm 103: 8 – 18**. Jesus came to bring us face to face with the love of God.

“The Word became flesh and lived for awhile among us.” John 1: 14

Take some time to express what this means to you personally.

TIME TO READ – Read John 20 –

As you read this incredible story, try to identify the emotions and the response of those who encountered The Risen Christ.

Mary of Magdala

Peter

John

The disciples

Thomas

TIME TO PONDER –

1. Imagine what the Peter and John might have told the rest of the disciples and others when they got to their homes after being in the empty tomb – John 20: 1 – 10. Would their stories be similar or different?
2. Mary had been at the cross with the other women and now she lingers at the tomb. The empty tomb! What strikes you about her first encounter with Jesus?
3. We do not know too much about Thomas except that:
 - He was chosen by Jesus to be one of his 12 disciples – Matthew 10: 2 - 3
 - He was most likely a fisherman – John 21: 2.
 - He was confident enough to ask Jesus a question – John 14: 1 – 7
 - His doubts were holding him back from believing the reality of the resurrection.How did Jesus’ response to Thomas dramatically change his skepticism? How did it affect the disciples? How does it influence your thinking about doubt and faith?
4. In Jesus’ own words, what is necessary to do to receive the gift of life? - John 20: 31
What does this mean to you? How do these verses confirm this idea?

John 1: 12	Romans 3: 21 - 26
John 3: 16 – 18	Romans 4: 18 - 25
John 8: 21 – 30	Romans 10: 9 - 13

TIME TO RESPOND –

There is really only one question? Do you believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God?
It makes all the difference in life – now and for eternity!

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Lesson 7

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THE NEW BEGINNING

“When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, ‘Simon son of John, do you truly love me more than these?’” John 21: 15

Some of the disciples had been fisherman. Others had had a variety of occupations. That all changed the day that Jesus came along and invited them to follow Him. So, for the last 3 years they had traveled the length of the land watching and listening to Jesus show His love to all kinds of people. Then just as suddenly as the first time, they had no idea what their future might be. It had all happened so quickly during that Passover week. What did it all mean for them? Jesus was alive, but they knew that everything was somehow different. When would they see Him next? What would He say? Questions must have filled their minds. So, they did what they knew how to do. They went fishing!

TIME TO FOCUS – As you come to learn from God’s Word today, take some minutes to think about the ways that you have experienced the “forever love of God”. Read Psalm 136. How many ways can you add to this thanksgiving list?

TIME TO READ – Read John 21 and Luke 24: 33 - 49

Give a creative title to these two events and summarize them in your own words.

1. John 21: 1 – 14
2. John 21: 15 - 25
3. Luke 24: 36 – 49 – John’s story ended there, but the other 3 Gospels give us insight into some additional conversations that Jesus had with His disciples. This is one of them.

TIME TO PONDER –

1. How do you think Peter was feeling that morning as he and his friends went out fishing?
2. What motivated Peter to do the things that he did?
3. Why did Jesus choose to meet His disciples in this way? How did His actions show His love and power to them? Do you think this miracle felt different in some way to the disciples?
4. In a semi-private conversation Jesus said the same words, “Follow me!” to Peter. What did Peter know this time that He did not know the first time?
5. Imagine what Peter might have said to his friends as he told them about His conversation with Jesus.

TIME TO RESPOND –

As Jesus comes to us today, He is still giving to you and to me an incredible invitation, isn’t He? What is it that He is saying to you through His Word and His Spirit? Tell Him what He already knows about your fears and your hesitation and your concerns. Let Him meet you right where you are so that He can take your hand and guide you. He loves you with an everlasting love.

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Lesson 8

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THE REST OF THE STORY

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

Acts 1: 8 (NIV)

It would be easy to wonder why John did not tell us more about what happened to the disciples and to Jesus after His resurrection. Only Mark and Luke even mention His ascension. That is exactly why we desperately need the entire book of The Acts of the Apostles. Only Luke gave to us a sequel to his Gospel. He documented carefully the coming of the Holy Spirit and the amazing results that came as those early disciples carried out the great commission which Jesus had given to them. Miracles happened. The Good News of Jesus was shared. Churches were established. People were filled with awe. The wildfire of the spread of the Gospel had begun. The love of God spread throughout Jerusalem and it has continued to infiltrate the world to this very day – through those who live by the power of Jesus Christ.

TIME TO FOCUS –There are 9 Acrostic Poems in the Book of Psalms. In these special poems, each verse or section begins with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet. As you read **Psalm 145**, you will discover an amazing list of the characteristics of God for which David is very grateful. Why not start your own “acrostic list” and express your praise to God in a meaningful and ever-expanding way? You can start with “L” for His unfailing LOVE. This Psalm will help generate ideas for you in making your own list.

TIME TO READ – “The Rest of the Story”

As you read these accounts of Jesus life after His resurrection, what does each passage add to your understanding? What happened to the followers of Jesus? What impresses you the most?

Read Matthew 28: 16 – 20

Mark 16: 9 – 20

Luke 24: 13 – 50

John 20: 29 – 30 and 21: 25

Acts 1 and 2

TIME TO PONDER – Acts 1 and 2

1. What were the final instructions that Jesus gave to His disciples?
2. How had Jesus prepared them for the coming of the Holy Spirit? (Review John 14 – 16)
3. Pentecost was one of the 3 major Jewish festivals. It was a harvest celebration of thanksgiving, celebrated on the fiftieth day after the Passover Sabbath. Describe the setting that day.
4. Think about Peter’s life. How had God prepared him for this day and the ministry that he was to have as he was empowered by the Holy Spirit? The results of his message were amazing. Can you learn something from his presentation to the crowd – Acts 2: 14 - 41? In what ways would His defense of Jesus been effective?
5. Do you think that Peter meant that both repentance and baptism were necessary in order to be forgiven of sin? Explain or defend your position on the basis of other Scripture verses.
John 3: 16 – 18
Acts 10: 34 – 48
Acts 16: 31 – 34
Romans 4: 1 - 8
Romans 10: 9 - 10
Ephesians 2: 8 - 9
6. The gift of the Holy Spirit – Acts 2: 38 – 39. What does this mean to you? Try to summarize Romans 8: 1 – 12. What other Scripture is helpful to you in understanding the indwelling Spirit of God?

TIME TO RESPOND –

What is it that God has placed on your heart and mind through this study? Go back and review this amazing story, focusing on Acts 2: 37 – 47. Let the Spirit of God be your teacher, your counselor, your comfort, your guide. Listen for His quiet reassurance and perhaps His challenge to you personally.