

# The Obvious we Cannot Miss

*FOUR TEACHINGS OF JESUS*

## Growth Group Study Guide

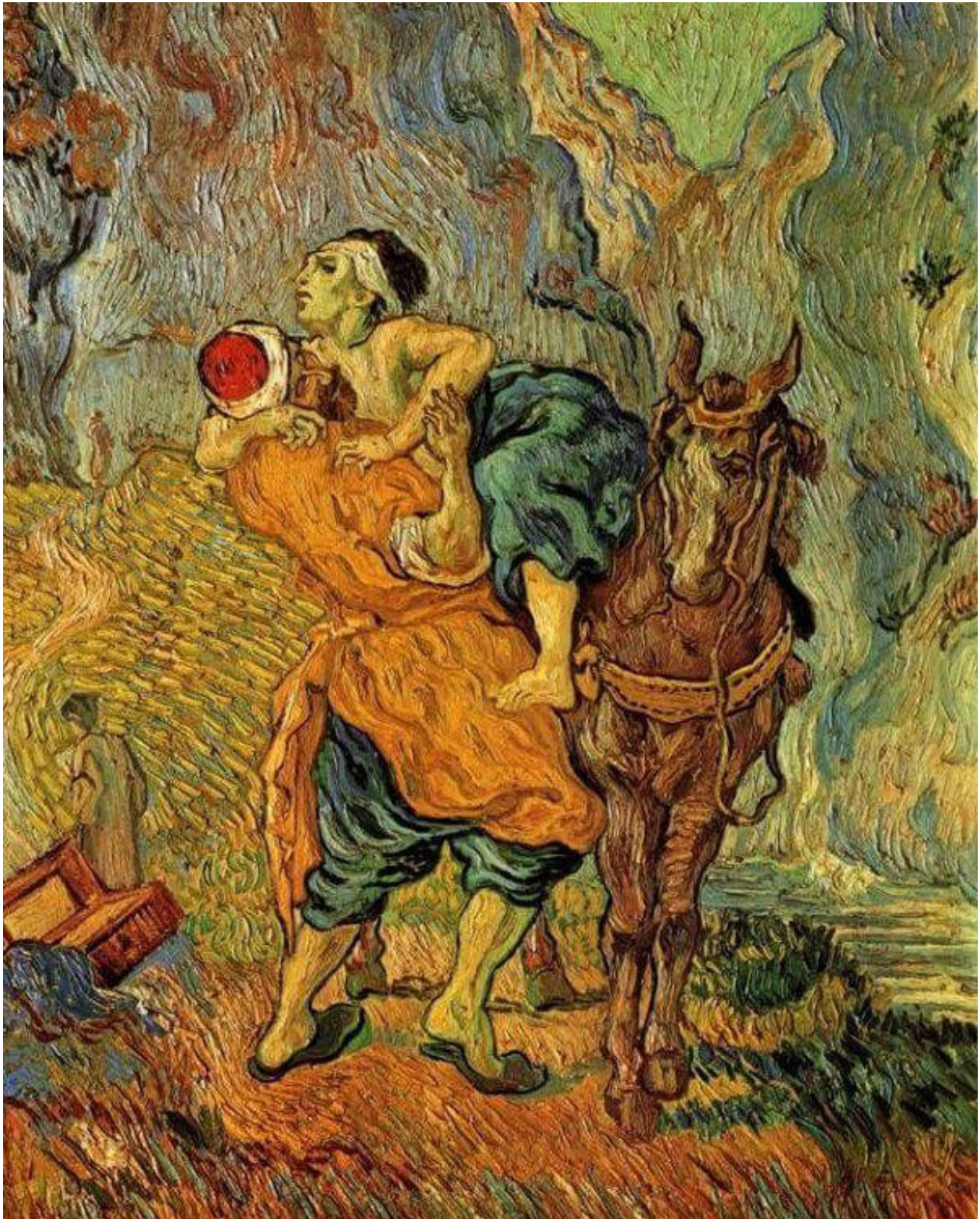




## **The Obvious We Cannot Miss: Four Teachings of Jesus**

Throughout Scripture God has put the knowledge of Himself inside every man and woman. Psalm 19:1 proclaims that creation itself reveals a Divine Creator: "*The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork.*" Science now even declares that the "God hypothesis" is the most reasonable theory of creation. Gods' presence and God's work is obvious and yet, millions across the globe in every generation miss the obvious.

*Psychology Today* calls the phenomenon of failing to perceive that which is "right in front of our eyes" inattentional blindness. Right in front of our eyes, God became incarnate in Jesus. It is obvious. He taught with clarity, specificity, and simplicity many things that we, as Christ followers, cannot miss.



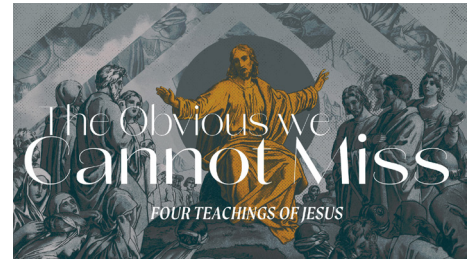
The Good Samaritan by Vincent Van Gogh

How does this painting compare to the mental image you have of the parable of the Good Samaritan? How many people do you see? Who is struggling? Do you see a celestial being in the painting (hint: look above the mare's head). Do you think this was intentional?

February 4, 2024

## Session 1 | My People Care for ALL Others

***Before you begin** this Growth Group session, read the summary found inside the cover of your Growth Group materials.*



### Background:

*This will help set the context of the session if someone from your group reads this aloud.*

The Good Samaritan is one of Christ's most familiar parables. The word "Samaritan" is used to refer to a person from Samaria, but the term has additional meaning in religious and cultural terms. Religiously, we need to understand that Samaritans shared their heritage with the Jews, but the Jews considered Samaritans as impure heretics. This caused conflict between the Jews and the Samaritans.

Merriam Webster defines Good Samaritan as "one who voluntarily renders aid to another in distress although under no duty to do so." Culturally we find many references to "Good Samaritan" throughout our society. For example, Good Samaritan Laws exist in all fifty states. These laws protect someone that is giving aid to an injured person in an emergency situation and provides legal protection by exempting these do-gooders from lawsuits and liability. The Good Samaritan Society, which is affiliated with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, is the largest not-for-profit provider of senior housing and services in the United States with 28,000 residents in 24 states. There are Good Samaritan hospitals all across the United States that provide high quality, compassionate health care. These centers treat a person's mind, body and spirit. Throughout our society someone who helps another in a dire situation is commonly referred to as a Good Samaritan.

With as common the term Good Samaritan has become, it seems obvious that Christ's parable has significant meaning in our lives. The parable identifies a Samaritan giving aid to a person in need, after a priest and a Levite ignored those needs. Christ had told people to "Love your neighbor as yourself." He tells this parable when He was questioned about "Who is my neighbor?" In this parable the Samaritan is showing empathy and compassion to a person who would normally look down on him and despise him. The Samaritan doesn't look at him as his oppressor, but as a fellow human-being in distress. Notice that the answer to the question of "Who is my neighbor?" is not the one who received love, but instead it is the one who demonstrated love. Jesus is telling us that, without exception, we are to show empathy and compassion to everyone, and has commanded us to "Go and do likewise."

*Who is my neighbor?*

*The one who demonstrated love.*

**Scripture:** Luke 10:25-37

*Before engaging in the questions, have someone in your group read the Scripture passages aloud.*

### Sermon Reflection:

1. What was something you want to make sure you remember that came from the sermon this week?
2. What challenged you about this sermon?

3. What do you think Jesus is trying to teach you through this sermon? How will this affect your daily life?

### Questions from the Bible:

1. Jesus tells the parable of The Good Samaritan after a law expert asks “*What must I do to inherit eternal life?*” By today’s standards, a law expert would have been knowledgeable in peoples’ laws, but in biblical times a law expert was knowledgeable in God’s laws (the first five books of the Bible). Why do you think that someone who was considered an expert on God’s laws would be asking Jesus how to have eternal life?
2. After Jesus answers “*What must I do to inherit eternal life?*” the law expert asks Jesus “*Who is my neighbor?*” Why did he ask this follow-up question?
3. How would you describe the law expert’s heart?
4. If the priest and Levite from the parable had been asked why they didn’t help the man in need, what answers do you think they would have given? Were there good reasons for not helping him?
5. In Chapter 25 of Matthew, Jesus is relaying the parable of The Sheep and the Goats. At the end of the parable He says, “*Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.*” If you measure this statement against today’s story on The Good Samaritan, what did the priest and the Levite not do for Jesus?
6. Why is it significant that it was a Samaritan who helped the Jewish man?

7. Colossians 3:23 reads, “*Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters.*” How might this instruction relate to Jesus’ teachings about the Good Samaritan?

## Questions for Application:

1. How are you like the injured man in the parable of The Good Samaritan? How are you like the Samaritan?
2. Why do you think Jesus felt it appropriate to include a priest, a Levite, and a Samaritan when telling this parable?
3. The lawyer asked “*What must I do to inherit eternal life?*” This seems to tell us that he is talking about a works based salvation? Do you believe in salvation by works? Did Jesus teach salvation by works? How would you answer the question “What must I do to inherit eternal life?”
4. In the parable of The Good Samaritan, Jesus is trying to tell us that the lawyer was asking the wrong question. He shouldn’t have been asking “*Who is my neighbor?*” but instead “How can I be a good neighbor?” When Jesus concludes the parable by saying “*Go and do likewise*”, He is telling us to go be a good neighbor. Jesus also wants us to ask ourselves this same question. How can you be a good neighbor? If your neighbors were asked if they felt you loved them, what would their answer be?
5. We know that Jesus wants us to consider everyone a neighbor, but do we know our actual neighbors? A Pew Research survey from 2018 revealed that only 26% of Americans said they knew most of their neighbors. How many of your neighbors are you able to name?

6. What would be modern day examples of groups that are contentious toward each other like the Jews and the Samaritans? What groups do you personally tend to be contentious towards and why?
  
7. Are there “Samaritans” in your world (individuals or groups) that you feel are outside your definition of neighbor? What can you do to expand your understanding of “neighbor”?
  
8. Are you able to recall a time when people rallied around you to support you when you were having a difficult time? How did you feel to have your “neighbors” help?

**Resources:** Consider starting one of these Bible reading plans to go deeper on this topic

How to Neighbor – 10 day reading plan: <https://www.bible.com/reading-plans/2513-how-to-neighbor>

The Good Samaritan – 5 day devotional: <https://www.bible.com/reading-plans/1846-the-good-samaritan>



How to Neighbor



The Good Samaritan

### Questions for Discussion:

1. What are you reading in the Word this week?
  
2. How is your reading growing you in the Marks of Discipleship – prayers, presence, gifts, witness, service?

### Growth Challenge:

Loving our enemies can be challenging, but Christ has commanded us to do it. This week extend compassion and empathy to someone you have been in conflict with.



# NOTES

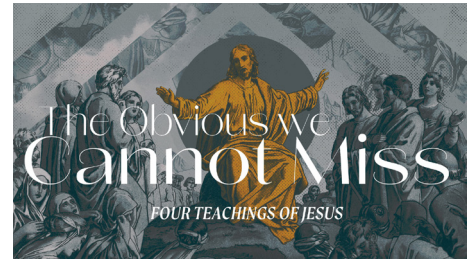


Parable of the Prodigal Son by Cornelis Massijs, 1538

When you look at this piece of art of the prodigal son, what do you see? Have you found the fattened calf? What do you think the son is feeling? What do you think the men behind the father are talking about?

# February 11, 2024

## Session 2 | He NEVER Gives Up On Us



***Before you begin*** this growth Group session, read the summary found inside the cover of your Growth Group materials.

### Background:

*This will help set the context of the session if someone from your group reads this aloud.*

There are many TV shows and movies that are about never giving up on your dreams, *Rocky*, *The Blind Side*, and *Forrest Gump* to name a few. Songs such as *Here Comes the Sun* and *I Will Survive* are songs that encourage us not to give up.

The story about the prodigal son is just such a story about never losing hope. It is a story about how love for a child does not change just because they do something wrong. An intriguing thing about this story is the father is going about his day but always looking around. Always checking his surroundings, but looking for what? Hoping and praying that his son will return. Oh sure, he has an obedient son who will be with him and, everything

*So he got up and went to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son and threw his arms around him and kissed him.*

Luke 15:20

that the father has is his, but this son who was gone, considered dead, had returned home, back in his arms.

When he saw him from a distance, the father did not just mosey over to him and say "Hi". No, he ran to him.

Now consider how God feels when we are lost and away from Him. He loves us so much more than our earthly father. He gave us His only Son Jesus, so that we could be with Him. Turn to Him. He is waiting with open arms. He will run to you to welcome you back.

*"But the father said to his servants, "Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found."*

Luke 15:22-24a

**Scripture:** Luke 15:11-32

*Before engaging in the questions, have someone in your group read the Scripture passages aloud.*

### Sermon Reflection:

1. What was something you want to make sure you remember that came from the sermon this week?
2. What challenged you about this sermon?

3. What do you think Jesus is trying to teach you through this sermon? How will this affect your daily life?

### Questions from the Bible:

1. What is the lesson Jesus wants us to learn from the younger son's perspective? What is the lesson Jesus wants us to learn from the older son's perspective?
2. How do you think the younger son was feeling as he returned home? How did his father make him feel upon his return?
3. Why did the youngest son want to leave home?
4. What causes the youngest son to come to his senses?
5. When the prodigal son left home, the circumstances surrounding his departure would have been hurtful to his father. What hurtful behaviors do you see in this story?
6. Name the commandment that deals with our relationship with our parents? (Exodus 20:12) How would you explain this commandment to someone? This is the only commandment that makes a promise. What is the promise?
7. In Luke 15:20, we read that the father, "*ran to his son.*" Why is this detail important to us today?

8. When the older son became aware of the celebration, he became angry and refused to join the festivities. Why was he angry and what assurances did his father give him?

### Questions for Application:

1. It has been suggested that each of us can find ourselves somewhere in this parable. Has there been a time in your life that you were the obedient son, angry when someone else in the family was forgiven for the wrongs they committed?
2. Why is it important for us to pay attention to the full parable, including the scene with the angry older brother?
3. When the older son became angry, was it justified? What do you think God wants us to understand about the father's reaction? The oldest son's reaction?
4. What hope do you find in the story of the prodigal son?
5. Which son do you relate to? Why?
6. What do you believe about God's reaction to your mistakes, failures, and times of rebellion? Do you draw near to Him or stay away until you can clean up your act?

7. Does the parable that Jesus tells give us an indication of how the father felt when the younger son told his father to give him his share of the inheritance? If you had been the father, how would you have responded? As the parable unfolds, how do you think Jesus would want us to respond in this situation?

**Resources:** Consider starting one of these Bible reading plans to go deeper on this topic

Prodigal Son Transformation with Kyle Idleman-7-day plan: <https://www.bible.com/reading-plans/1321-prodigal-son-transformation-with-kyle-idleman>



Prodigal Son Transformation

The Prodigal Son by Matt Carter-8-day plan: <https://www.bible.com/reading-plans/18192-the-prodigal-son-by-matt-carter>



The Prodigal Son

Lessons from the Prodigal Son-3-day plan: <https://www.bible.com/reading-plans/41607-the-parable-of-the-prodigal-son>



Parable of Prodigal Son

[The Love of God] The Prodigal Son-5-day plan: <https://www.bible.com/reading-plans/16826-the-love-of-god-the-prodigal-son>



The Love of God

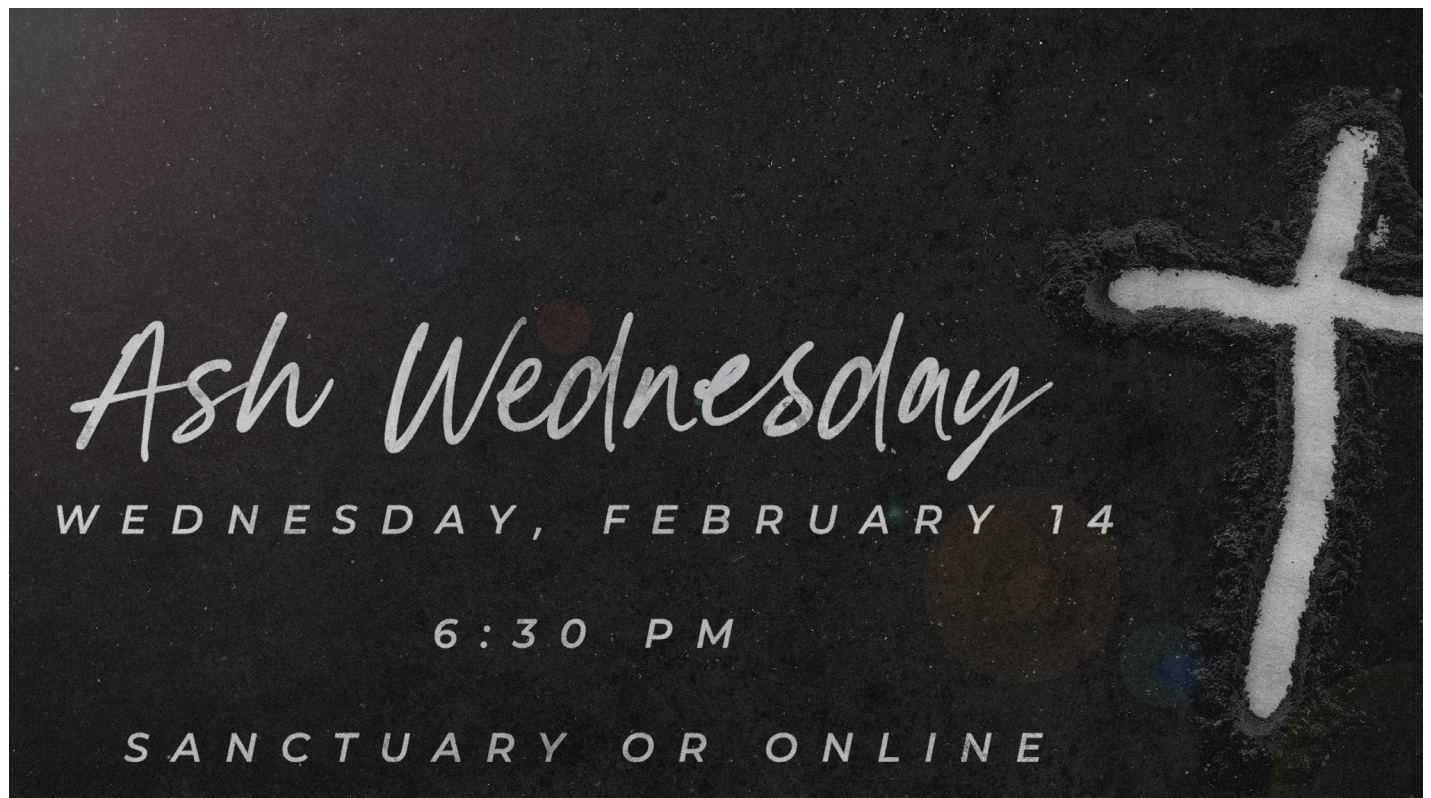
## Questions for Discussion:

1. What are you reading in the Word this week?
2. How is your reading growing you in the Marks of Discipleship – prayers, presence, gifts, witness, service?

## Growth Challenge:

When you feel lost in this world, turn to the Father who is waiting for you. He will run to you with open arms. He is ready for you. What are you waiting for?

# NOTES





The Rich Man and Lazarus from the Golden Gospels of Echternach

What do you see when you look at the above image? Can you see the story of the Rich Man and Lazarus unfolding?



February 18, 2024

## Session 3 | There are Plenty of WARNINGS

***Before you begin** this Growth Group session, read the summary found inside the cover of your Growth Group materials.*



### Background:

*This will help set the context of the session if someone from your group reads this aloud.*

Warnings are all around us; Beware of Dog, Caution – Wet Floor, and the ever-popular Wet Paint. We choose to ignore some warnings, while we are totally oblivious to other warning signs. In the introduction to this series, we read that the latter is called inattentional blindness. Scholarpedia.org defines this as: “Failure to notice a fully-visible, but unexpected object because attention was engaged on another task, event, or object”. We are so focused on one thing, that we totally miss something else. Like the car that stopped in front of us while we were texting and driving. While that distraction is a recent development, the ability to miss the obvious is not a new phenomenon.

The Bible is full of warnings, but for this week we will focus on warnings that Jesus gave regarding heaven and

*“And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”  
Matthew 25:30*

hell. In Matthew 25, Jesus tells the parables of the 10 Virgins, the Bags of Gold and the Sheep and the Goats. In each of these parables Jesus tells us that those who did right were welcomed, while those who did not do right were rejected. In this week’s scripture (Luke 16:19-31), Jesus tells the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus. The picture to the left illustrates three scenes from this parable. In the first frame, the rich man is so focused on living the good life that he is oblivious to the need at his door. In the other frames, Lazarus

dies and is welcomed into heaven, while the rich man dies and is in torment in hell. In the parable, Jesus tells us that the rich man sees Lazarus in the company of Abraham and begs Abraham to send Lazarus to warn his brothers. Abraham’s response to the rich man is that the same signs that he ignored are there for them to see. If they choose to ignore the warnings of Moses and the prophets, why would they listen to someone who returned from the dead?

This question is ours to answer as well. The words of Jesus make it very clear that our eternal destination is ours to choose. If we heed the warnings and do what is right, we will be welcomed into heaven. If not, the alternative is an eternity of suffering and torment. What about you? Are you so focused on the things of this world that you are missing God’s warnings?

*The words of Jesus make it very clear that our eternal destination is ours to choose.*

**Scripture:** Luke 16:19-31

*Before engaging in the questions, have someone in your group read the Scripture passages aloud.*

### Sermon Reflection:

1. What was something you want to make sure you remember that came from the sermon this week?

2. What challenged you about this sermon?
3. What do you think Jesus is trying to teach you through this sermon? How will this affect your daily life?

### Questions from the Bible:

1. The rich man was not tormented for being rich, nor was Lazarus rewarded for being poor. What do you think were the reasons behind where each man ended up after death?
2. In the close of the parable, what is the response that Abraham gives the rich man when asked to send Lazarus to warn his brothers? What can we learn from this response?
3. To whom do you think Jesus was telling this parable? Who do you think the rich man represents? Who do you think Lazarus represents?
4. The Word of God is filled with many warnings and cautions. One such warning is found in Luke 12:15, in which Jesus said: "*Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions.*" Why do you think Jesus has issued this warning?
5. Read John 14:6. What is the warning that Jesus gives us in the verse? What do you understand this to mean? Do you believe this?

6. What was the initial request that the rich man made to Abraham? What was the response?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
7. As Jesus tells this story, do you think the outcome for the rich man aligns with how common people of the day felt about those who were rich?

### **Questions for Application:**

1. In this parable, where are we told to look for guidance on righteous living?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What do the rich man's words in the afterlife communicate about how he views Lazarus? What might this suggest about the rich man's views about himself and God?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. When Jesus told parables, He was teaching important lessons. What do you think He was teaching us with this parable?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. Based on this parable of the rich man and Lazarus, what changes do you think Jesus wants us to make in our lives?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. Why do you think so many people are willing to risk receiving the same fate as the rich man?

6. Do a quick skim of a couple of chapters of Proverbs. What cautions and warning did you notice? Jot down a couple. If doing this with a group, share what you found with the group.
  
7. Proverbs 30:5 reads, “*Every word of God is flawless, He is a shield to those who take refuge in Him.*” What is your understanding of the meaning of this verse?
  
8. What has God given you personally to steward, and are you using His blessings to bless others?

**Resources:** Consider starting one of these Bible reading plans to go deeper on this topic.

7 Days to Becoming a More Generous Person – 7 day reading plan: <https://www.bible.com/reading-plans/16441-7-days-to-becoming-a-more-generous-person>



Generous Person

What It Means to be Rich – 5 day video plan: <https://www.bible.com/reading-plans/4220-what-it-means-to-be-rich>



What it means to be rich

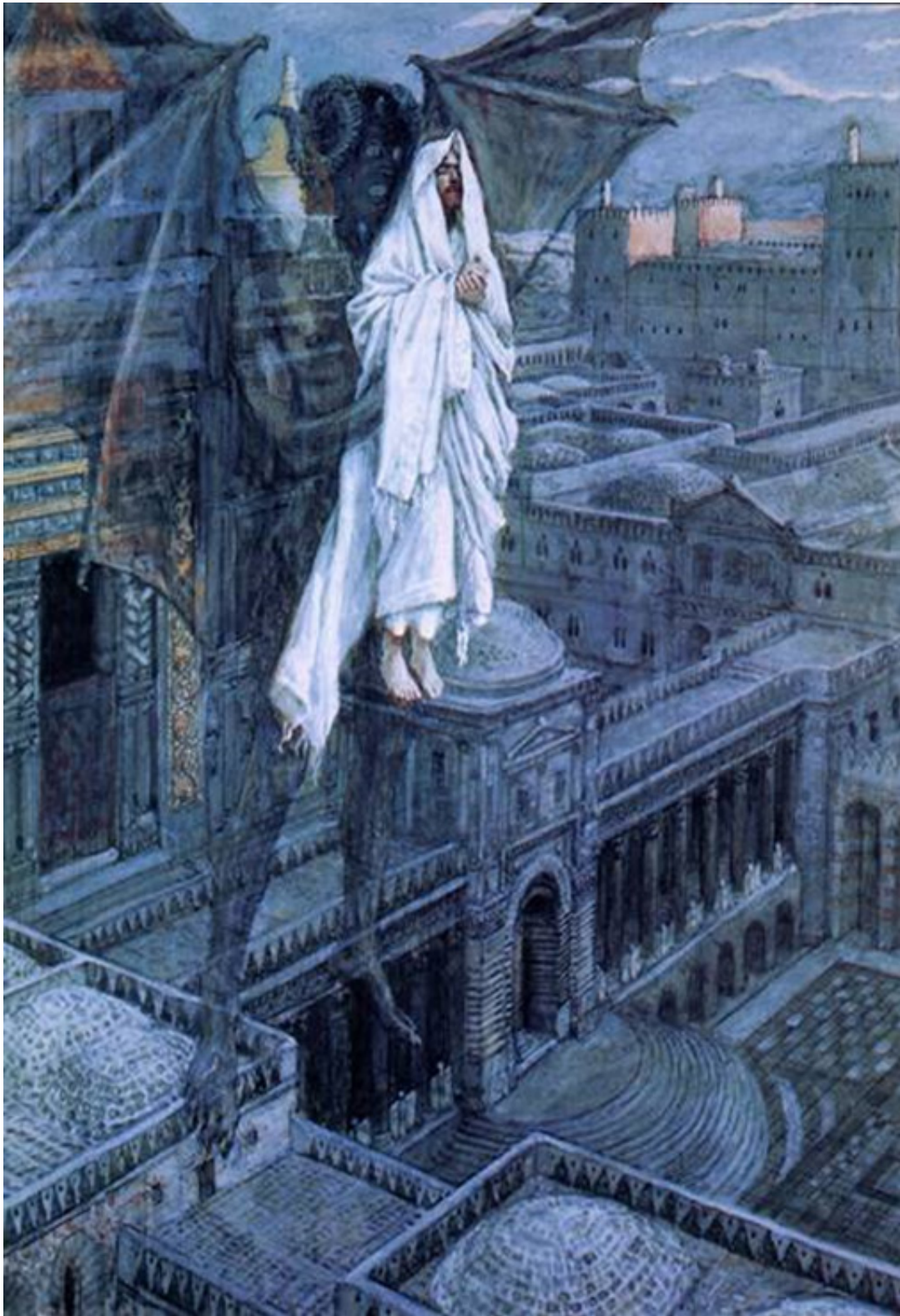
### Question for Discussion:

1. What are you reading in the Word this week?
  
2. How is your reading growing you in the Marks of Discipleship - prayers, presence, gifts, witness, and service?

### Growth Challenge:

As you listened to this week’s sermon and reviewed this study guide, was there a warning that became clear to you? If so, what actions will you be taking in response to that warning?

# NOTES



Satan Tried To Tempt Jesus by James Jacques Joseph Tissot, painted 1895

When you consider this image, what do you find the most surprising? What reaction do you have to the artist's rendering of the devil? What does Jesus' reaction to the devil seem to be in this image?

February 25, 2024

## Session 4 | Temptations Can GROW Our Connection With God



***Before you begin** this Growth Group session, read the summary found inside the cover of your Growth Group materials.*

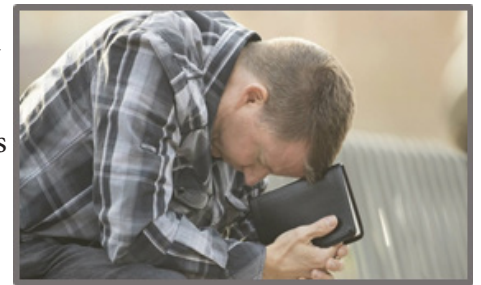
### Background:

*This will help set the context of the session if someone from your group reads this aloud.*

In today's scripture reading, Jesus has been led into the wilderness by the Spirit, where He experienced tempting by the devil for forty days. This wilderness time of testing and trial marks a particularly rough start to Jesus' ministry. Which raises the question, why did God allow His Son to be tempted? For that matter, why do we experience temptation?

We know that Jesus was the sinless, spotless Lamb of God (1 Peter 1:19) who came to take away the sin of the world (John 1:29). As one-third of the Trinity, Jesus' faith did not require testing. Instead, Christ's wilderness experience and His response to the temptations of the devil help us better understand our adversary, and how we as Christians may choose to respond when we experience temptation.

After tempting Jesus for 40 days, the devil brings out his big guns. He tempts Jesus with three of the sins most common to the world; sins he has used effectively to separate mankind from God since the beginning. Perhaps you have heard these sins referred to as the lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. (1 John 2:16) No matter the categorization of sin, the underlying motivator for many of the sins most common to mankind, is our fear of missing out on something good. The devil knows this, and uses this; he tried with Jesus. After forty days without eating, the devil tempted Jesus to make food for Himself. As a humble carpenter beginning a big ministry, the devil tempted Jesus with authority and power. Finally, the devil tried to push the "pride" button to provoke Jesus into proving He was who He said He was. Jesus was having none of it. With each temptation, He strengthened Himself, and answered the devil with the power of the Word of God.



We are a culture that likes "more power." Many hand mixers have a "burst" button to handle the batter that becomes too much. We drive four-wheel drive vehicles in order to power through Iowa snow. And we have generators that will keep the power on when ours fails. The temptation of Jesus demonstrates for us that we have access to "more power" to help us successfully overcome any temptation. Temptation itself is not a sin. The devil may tempt us to sin, he may pressure us mercilessly, but, just as he could not make Jesus sin, he cannot make us sin. When we sin, it is because we have chosen to sin. We always have a choice.

*We always have a choice.*

God's Word promises us that He will not let us be tempted beyond what we can bear, and that He will provide a way for us to endure every temptation. (1 Corinthians 10:13) The devil uses temptation in an effort to take us down; his goal is our destruction. God allows temptation to draw us closer to Him; His goal is to strengthen us and GROW our faith. When temptation knocks at our door, God wants us to send our faith to answer.

Whether we use the Word of God, as Jesus did, to answer the devil's taunts, call on the Holy Spirit who dwells within us for the strength we need to resist him, or remind God of His promise to provide a way out, "more power" to battle temptations is available to us whenever we will choose Him.

**Scripture:** Luke 4:1-13

*Before engaging in the questions, have someone in your group read the Scripture passage aloud.*

**Sermon Reflection:**

1. What was something you want to make sure you remember that came from the sermon this week?
2. What challenged you about this sermon?
3. What do you think Jesus is trying to teach you through this sermon? How will this affect your daily life?

**Questions from the Bible:**

1. What can we learn from how Jesus dealt with being tempted in the wilderness?
2. This week's Scripture is not a parable, but an account of the start of the earthly ministry of Jesus. Why do you think this account is recorded by Luke?
3. When he is tempting Jesus from the top of the temple, the devil quotes Scripture. Why do we need to be knowledgeable about what the Scriptures say? (See 2 Timothy 3:16-17)
4. How did Jesus and the devil use Scripture differently? How does a person become skillful at using Scripture?



5. Read Luke 22:31-32. As Jesus is addressing Simon (Peter) in this passage, He reveals several important things. What does Jesus reveal? Do these things relate to us today?
  
6. *“Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God and he will come near to you. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.”* James 4:7-8, 10 What do these verses tell us about how we should respond to temptation?
  
7. In Luke 4:13, it states that the devil left Jesus “until an opportune time”. What do you think Luke meant by an “opportune time”?

### Questions for Application:

1. Jesus was fasting for 40 days while He was in the wilderness. Lent is sometimes seen as a form of fasting (giving up something). Why fast during Lent? What should we learn from fasting?
  
2. What does it mean to you, knowing that Jesus was tempted by some of the same things we face in our lives?
  
3. Dr. Charles Stanley has said, “God does not test us to reveal our faith to Him; He tests us to reveal our faith to us.” Do you agree with Dr. Stanley? What has your most recent test of faith revealed to you?
  
4. In what situations are you tempted to put the Lord to the test? Should you put the Lord to the test?

5. It has been said, temptations lead to death, while tests lead to life. Who is the source of temptations, and what is his goal? Who is the source of tests, and what is His goal?
  
6. Tara Leigh Cobble writes, “Avoiding sin involves careful attention and thoughtful planning; it doesn’t happen on accident.” How does one prepare to avoid sin? Do you anticipate any tempting situations this week? How can you prepare for them?
  
7. Have you ever heard someone say something like “God put this temptation in my path”? Do you believe that God will ever “tempt” us? Look at James 1:13 for guidance.
  
8. In 1 Corinthians 10:13, Paul tells us “*And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear.*” How would you explain this passage to someone struggling with temptation?
  
9. Read Ephesians 6:10-18. What pieces of armor do you find easiest to put on and use, and which pieces do you find most difficult, and why? What can you start doing today to ensure that you are always going into battle wearing your armor

**Resources:** Consider starting one of these Bible reading plans to go deeper on this topic

Three Sources of Temptations – 3 day reading plan: <https://www.bible.com/reading-plans/31324-three-sources-of-temptation/day/1>



3 Sources of Temptation

40: The Temptation of Christ – 5 day reading plan: <https://www.bible.com/reading-plans/19165-40-the-temptation-of-christ/day/1>



The Temptation of Christ

## Questions for Discussion:

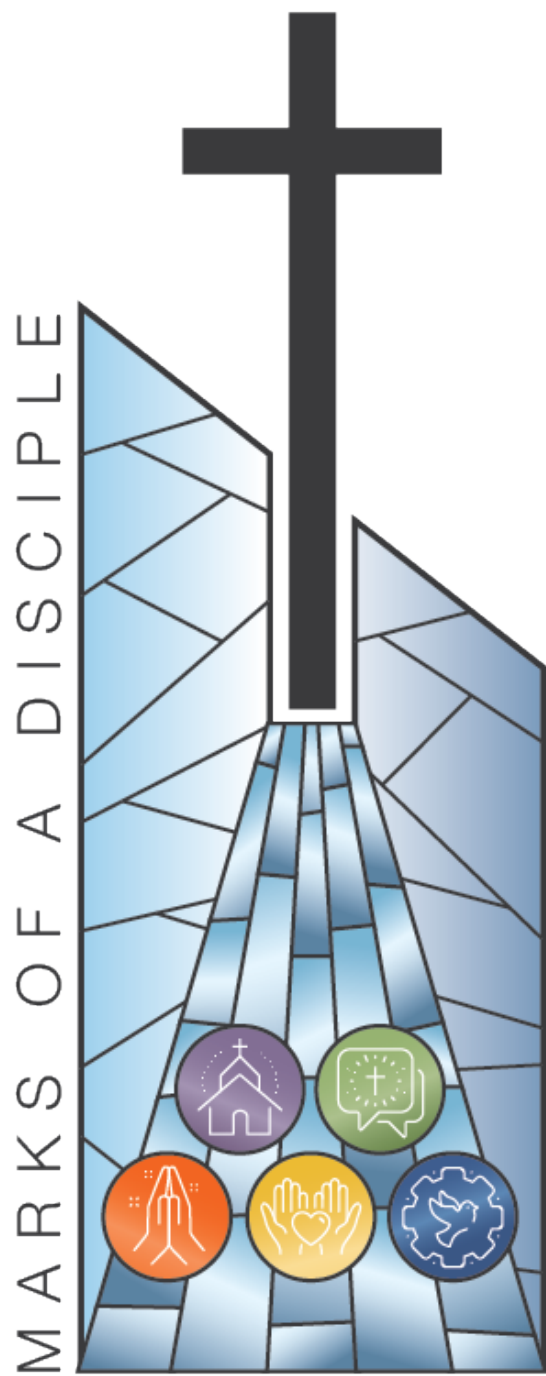
1. What are you reading in the Word this week?
  
2. How is your reading growing you in the Marks of Discipleship - prayers, presence, gifts, witness, service?

## Growth Challenge:

When Jesus was tempted, He refuted the devil by speaking out against him using the Word of God. When you find yourself being tempted to do something that would not be in God's will for you, call the devil out on his efforts. Refute him with the Word of God, just as Jesus did. Memorize a couple of verses to have ready for this purpose.

# NOTES





[www.MarionMethodist.org](http://www.MarionMethodist.org)