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Senior Pastor

JULY  
2018

**TRANS***f***ORMED**2018  
MATTHEW 3:1-5:6  
TO FOLLOW



ADULT CONNECT  
CLASS CURRICULUM

The purpose of First Baptist Church of Fort Worth is to **introduce** people into a loving relationship with Jesus, **instruct** them in spiritual growth through God's Word, **inspire** them to serve for God's kingdom, and **incorporate** them in authentic worship to glorify God.

## *A Note From Our Pastor*

Dear FBC family and friends,

This month we embark on a new study through the Gospel of Matthew. Staying with our theme “Transformed”, Matthew highlights the fact that Jesus is Messiah and writes to convince his countrymen, often referencing Old Testament scriptures. It was one of Matthew’s objectives to show that Old Testament prophecy was fulfilled in Jesus – that He was indeed the Christ. It is this coming of Messiah that has afforded us a transformed life. This life is found in Jesus, the Christ who is the risen Savior.

As a reminder, the layout of this Curriculum begins with a 7-day approach for both the teacher and the members to get the most from each study. We also acknowledge that teachers may have their own methods for preparing the lessons and we encourage them to prepare in the way that makes them most effective in presenting God’s Word and the weekly lesson. We also encourage each teacher and member to use the suggested 7-day approach for their own personal study and encouragement.

As we study the Scriptures, let me challenge you to ask yourself: “How can I apply this in my life today?” It is important not only to study the Bible for more intellectual knowledge, but also to allow God to continue to mold us and shape us through the understanding and application of His word. May this study bless your life and strengthen your walk.

-Blessings  
Pastor Don



## *Suggested Plan for Using this Bible Study Guide Effectively*

### *Introduce*

**Day 1:** Read and meditate on the Scripture, asking God to guide you throughout the week as you study His Word and allowing Him to speak to you through the Spirit. Read the **INTRODUCE** portion of the lesson commentary.

### *Instruct*

**Day 2:** Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and read the **INSTRUCT** portion of the lesson commentary. Concentrate on memorizing the focal verse for that particular week.

**Day 3:** Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and answer the focal questions in the **INSTRUCT** portion of the lesson commentary.

### *Inspire*

**Day 4:** Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and begin thinking about tangible ways you can incorporate the principles you learned in your daily life. Read the **INSPIRE** portion of the lesson commentary.

### *Incorporate*

**Day 5:** Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and apply the theological principle that you learned from this week in a tangible way. Use the **INCORPORATE** portion of the lesson commentary to guide you.

**Day 6:** Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and in the journal section describe how God allowed you to apply this passage in a real and tangible way this week.

**Day 7:** Review the Scripture and share with others in your Connect Class on Sunday morning at 9:30am. Be ready to share your experience about how God allowed you to apply the lesson for that week.

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*July 1, 2018*



*Transformed  
by Repentance*  
*Matthew 3:1-12*

Focal Verse:

*"And saying, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!'"*

Matthew 3:2

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## Introduce

Having walked for hours on the streets of Itamarandiba, Brazil in search of an address for a family who had requested a visit, we stopped to ask directions once again in hope that this time the person could accurately direct us. In a divine encounter, we met a woman who didn't know the street, but she excitedly invited us into her home. After exchanging a few pleasantries and getting to know this woman and her family, we told her that we had come to share the love of Christ with the people in that

town. As we began to ask about her relationship with Christ, tears began to stream down her cheeks. Although now a proud grandmother, she admitted that she once had an abortion in her youth, but she despaired that she couldn't confess that sin to



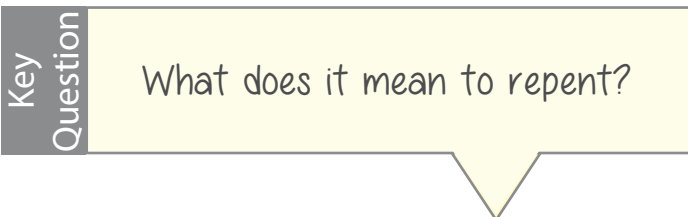
a Catholic priest to receive forgiveness; so, she had resigned her fate to be eternally separated from the Lord.

Before quoting Scripture, I asked her a simple question through a translator: "If you wronged someone here on earth, would you send someone else to say you're sorry or would you go and tell them yourself?" Looking up, she said, "I'd tell them sorry myself in person." I proceeded to explain that we can go directly to Christ through prayer and tell Him we're sorry for our sins; we don't need a mediator or priest to pray on our behalf because Jesus Christ is our High Priest through Whom we have forgiveness of our sins. Hebrews 4:14 states, "Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold

## Introduce

fast our confession.” Since we have sinned against Him, we ought to confess our sins directly to Him and receive forgiveness from Him. Reassuring her that she didn’t need to confess her sin to me or anyone else, I stressed that she could pray right there and ask Christ to forgive her sins. With a gleam of understanding in her eyes instead of tears, she excitedly prayed and invited Christ to come into her life, cleanse her, and transform her.

Although we talked about many other principles about salvation, I have chosen to focus on her understanding of repentance because it’s the central message of John the Baptist’s proclamation. After four centuries of silence between the Old Testament and the opening chapters of Matthew, the long-awaited prophet bursts on the scene to prepare the way for the Messiah. Despite his unique wardrobe (camel’s hair) and taste in food (locusts and honey), John’s message was consistent with Jesus’ teaching: “repent.” Having concluded our study of the book of Judges last week, we ended with the topic of repentance; the people needed to repent for their wickedness instead of trying to do things their own way according to their own perspective which seemed right in their eyes. In almost a millennium between Judges and John the Baptist, not much has changed however—people still do what is right in their own eyes and still need to repent because of their wickedness. Now, the ultimate Deliverer, Jesus the Christ, has appeared and through Him we can have forgiveness for our sins when we repent and turn to Him.





### Matthew 3:1-2

#### ***THE PROCLAMATION ABOUT REPENTANCE:***

After relating the events associated with the Messiah's long-anticipated birth, Matthew skips ahead nearly thirty years to the beginning of Jesus' earthly ministry by describing the proclamation of his forerunner, **John the Baptist** (v. 1). With a brief summary of John's ministry **in the Judean wilderness**, Matthew captures both the simplicity and urgency of his message. In this two-verse summary, we can observe two crucial principles concerning this proclamation: the *commitment* required and the *chronology* of the response. First, John portrays the commitment required with one word: **repent** (v. 2). At its center, the word **repent** means to turn from something toward something else; in this case, it means to turn from sin and disobedience to faith and righteousness found only in Jesus. In addition, repentance signifies that we change the way we think by acknowledging that we all have sinned and admitting we need a Savior who has the authority to provide forgiveness to us. Repentance, however, isn't merely a change in perspective, but it is accompanied by action whereby we confess our sin, cease from participating in it, and commit to serve the Lord wholly.

#### ***In-Depth Information***



*The fact that John preaches in the **wilderness** carries with it added symbolic significance because it would remind the Jewish audience of the years their ancestors spent wandering in the **wilderness** at the time of the exodus from Egypt. Just as the people during Moses' time were*

## In-Depth Information—continued



*ignorant and unbelieving, so also were the religious people of John's generation who regarded salvation as achieved through their heritage and works.*

Too often, we tend to make the gospel more complicated than it truly is. God has given us a simple message that even a child can understand and to which he can respond. As a child, I frequently heard the phrases “no” or “stop it” when doing something I shouldn’t. Despite my stubbornness, I got the message loud and clear! In my rebellion, however, I often persisted in the sin and eventually suffered the consequences. In his message, John warns Israel to “stop it” (i.e. **repent**) before they suffer the consequences for their sin and disobedience. As we will see in the rest of this lesson, Israel couldn’t rely on her heritage, religious rituals, or perceived righteousness for salvation, but they needed a relationship with Christ where they turned from their wicked ways to bear the fruit of righteousness by being transformed through Him.



How does the concept of repentance necessitate both a change in thought and deeds?

Question  
# 1

Second, John emphasizes the chronology of the response: **for the**

**kingdom of heaven is at hand.** John is not referring to the literal place we call heaven, but is talking about the opportunity the Lord has given us to have eternal life in the salvation that Jesus Christ offers in His death and resurrection. The day to confess and turn from our sins is today because we aren't guaranteed tomorrow. In James 4:14, he reminds us, "Whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away." Therefore, John urgently proclaims this message of repentance in hopes that people will respond before it's too late. The decision we make here on earth will affect where we spend the rest of eternity; once we take our last breath in this life, we have chosen our fate—there is no second chance at this point! Consequently, the opportunity to respond to God's offer to repent and be welcomed into His **kingdom** is *now*.

Why should every Christian share the gospel with a sense of urgency?

Question  
# 2

For those of us who have a relationship with Christ, we also have a responsibility to participate in this proclamation. If God has transformed us through His Son, we have a story to tell and a message to share. Although we certainly should study Scripture diligently, we don't need an advanced degree to share the gospel—its message is simple. We just have to share our own story: I'm a sinner, I asked God for forgiveness, I turned from constantly living in sin, and I surrendered my life to follow Christ—inviting others to do the same. If we have a relationship with Christ, we will have a burden for those who are disobedient and we should feel compelled with a sense of urgency to warn them out of love about the danger of rejecting Him. Therefore, like **John the Baptist**, let us commit to share the gospel

## Instruct

daily with people who are headed down a path of destruction apart from Jesus Christ.

When was the last time you shared the gospel with someone?

Question  
# 3

## Matthew 3:3

### **THE PREPARATION FOR THE PROCLAMATION:**

God's plan to save mankind from our own sin was not something thrown together on the spur of the moment, but something carefully choreographed from the beginning of time. Matthew quotes [Isaiah 40:3](#), written approximately 750 years before these events, to demonstrate the extent of God's preparation and show the significance of John the Baptist's proclamation. The references in this text from Isaiah are straightforward. **The voice crying in the wilderness** refers specifically to John the Baptist and relegates him to a preparatory role to announce the coming of the Messiah; thus, it makes clear that John is not the Messiah, but the one who precedes and prepares the way for Him (see also [John 1:6-8](#)). As a result, John prepares the way for **the Lord** who through His Son enters the world by becoming flesh in order that He may provide salvation to mankind through His sacrificial death on the cross.

The phrase **make His paths straight** refers to the message of repentance that John preaches. In other words, people should prepare to receive Christ into their hearts by confessing their sins and repenting of their wickedness. In its original context in Hebrew, the phrase means to repair or fix the roadway in prospect of receiving a visiting dignitary. In more

modern terms, we typically prepare to receive a visitor into our homes by cleaning and organizing things. Most of us wouldn't receive a guest into our home that was completely wrecked or in shambles, but we would spend time tidying it up and putting things in order. When we invite Christ into our lives, He will clean house—so to speak; to have that kind of relationship with Him requires that we turn from our sin and allow His blood to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. He will then direct our paths and make them straight according to His own righteousness ([Prov 3:5-6](#)). Although the sacrificial death of Christ graciously saves us, we are responsible for accepting it and applying it in our lives; therefore, we must prepare for it by repenting and submitting to Him.



What are the essential elements of John's message that we need to have in our presentation of the gospel?

Question  
# 4

### **Matthew 3:4-6**

#### **THE PRODUCT OF REPENTANCE:**

Although Matthew takes a short respite and describes John's appearance and diet, we shouldn't be overly concerned with his wardrobe of **camel's hair** and diet of **locusts and wild honey** (v. 4). It simply indicates that as a prophet announcing the coming of the Messiah John was more concerned about the proclamation of the gospel than modern goods

## Instruct

and services. John, therefore, had his priorities in the right place by concentrating on his specific call to serve the Lord by proclaiming the God-given message of repentance. Because he had the right priorities and God was ministering through him in a miraculous way, his ministry and message attracted people throughout **Jerusalem, Judea, and all the region surrounding the Jordan** (v. 5). Imagine how quickly the message would spread in our day and age given our technological advances if we had our priorities right and concentrated on sharing the gospel rather than on our materialistic desires. This does not intend to suggest that God does not want us to have any luxuries or wealth or to live comfortably, but it is intended to cause us to think about having the right priority and perspective. When we have a relationship with the Lord, the top priority besides spending time daily with Him in prayer and Bible study is to announce the hope of salvation in the Messiah and declare unto people how they might have eternal life through Him.



What are some things that distract us from sharing the gospel? In what ways or through what means can we effectively make the gospel known today?

Question  
# 5

The result or product of John's proclamation is that many people from the area who came to hear the message responded by **confessing their sins**

and being **baptized in the Jordan** (v. 6). As we will see next week, baptism has no special power to save, but rather it is only a public declaration of the transformation that has already occurred in our lives. Therefore, it symbolizes the inward change whereby we die to our old way of life and have been raised to walk in the newness of life with Christ (see [Rom 6:4](#)). If the people did not truly repent and surrender to the Lord when immersed in the water, then nothing happened to them—except they merely got wet. Through John’s preaching and what we have learned so far, we can summarize the content of his message with three basic principles beginning with the letter A: first, we must *admit* that we need salvation, second, we must *acknowledge* (i.e. confess) that we have sinned, and third, we *announce* our decision through a public declaration symbolized by baptism.

Overall, the process of salvation is both logical and simple. First, we must *admit* we have a problem that we can’t resolve on our own and seek help from the only One who can transform us. If someone doesn’t first recognize that he has sinned and needs salvation, then logically he will not understand the danger of failing to repent (see [1 John 1:7, 10](#)). Therefore, to fix a problem we must first diagnose its root and then ascertain the proper solution ([Rom 3:23; 6:23](#)). To treat a medical condition, we must *admit* that we have a malady or illness that we cannot overcome on our own through home remedies, we visit a doctor, we describe our symptoms to him, and we endure some tests to isolate the



## Instruct

exact cause of the problem. Once we isolate the problem, we will treat it with proper procedures or through proper medication that alleviates it completely rather than simply masking the symptoms.

Second, to treat the problem we have in our lives we must *acknowledge* or confess our sins and repent or turn from our wicked ways to follow the Lord ([Matt 3:6](#); [1 John 1:9](#)). This is the only solution for our sin problem! Just as we wouldn't treat diabetes with medicine for high blood pressure, we can't treat sin through mere religion, philosophy, human determination, or even trial and error; we must turn to the only solution found in the sacrifice of Christ that will overcome our sin, cleanse us, and give us eternal life. Finally, after we have been forgiven in Christ, we will *announce* publicly through baptism that we have moved from death to life and as joint-heirs with Christ we will spend eternity with Him in heaven. Generally, the first thing that we do when we get over an illness is to announce to others that we are well. The announcement itself isn't what made us well, but rather following the course of treatment prescribed by the doctor enabled us to overcome our illness. In the Bible, the Lord has given us a specific prescription for dealing with sin through the death and resurrection of His Son—not human rituals, our “righteousness,” or even our physical heritage. Therefore, we must comprehend and follow the way God has prescribed in His Word to obtain salvation and have eternal life.

What biblical evidence do we have that baptism is symbolic and not a means of salvation?

Question  
# 6



**THE PROBLEM WITH UNREPENTANCE:**

Having heard that many people responded to John’s message, representatives from two of the leading religious parties of that day,

**the Pharisees and Sadducees**, traveled to the wilderness to see for themselves what had transpired (v. 7). Throughout the New Testament, we come to the realization that many members in these two groups were hypocrites who misled Israel rather than



pointing them to a true relationship with the Lord. Consequently, John speaks to these pseudo-religious leaders very harshly by calling them a **brood of vipers**. Like venomous snakes, they infected Israel with their toxic teaching; they subverted the truth and propagated false religion by failing to demonstrate true repentance and falsely depending upon their own works and physical heritage to save them. John, therefore, sarcastically mocks them by asking, “**Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?**” Based on their own errant teaching, **the Pharisees and Sadducees** wouldn’t have arrived at this conclusion on their own because they felt secure in their own religious standing—albeit false—which actually led them down a path of destruction.

Through the actions of **the Pharisees and Sadducees**, we can observe three areas in which their beliefs are misinformed and errant. First, rituals, such as baptism, cannot save us if we haven’t truly surrendered to Christ and repented of our sins as evidence by life change in which we **bear**

**fruits worthy of repentance** (v. 8). Salvation is always accompanied by transformation in our attitudes and actions. Thus, we will **bear fruit** according to the guiding principles in our lives. If the Holy Spirit indwells our lives because we have surrendered to Christ, then we will **bear fruit** which reflects the character of Christ. Conversely, if we don't have a relationship with Christ, our works will bear the marks of our sinful flesh—such as the hypocritical works of **the Pharisees and Sadducees**. Baptism cannot change our hearts or transform our lives; only a relationship with Christ can!

What are some other areas on which people falsely rely to have salvation or eternal life?

Question  
# 7

Second, our physical heritage cannot save us; **the Pharisees and Sadducees** championed their physical heritage as Jews as their security of salvation (v. 9). John warns them that they cannot merely have security because they say **Abraham** is their **father**. In the same way, we cannot have confidence in our own physical heritage apart from a relationship with Christ. We cannot say that we were “born” Christians because we had Christian parents or live in a “Christian” nation. We can't identify ourselves as followers of Christ simply because we are not Jews, Muslims, and any number of other religions that exist in the world. We are Christians or followers of Christ because we have a relationship with Him! We become children of God through a relationship with Christ whereby we repent and surrender to Him (see [John 1:12](#)). To emphasize the point that we are not born a follower of Christ, John says that **God is able to raise up children of Abraham from these stones**; in other words, God grants life and

salvation to both Jew and Gentile who believe, turn from their sin, and accept the sacrificial gift that Christ offers.

How would you witness to someone who claims to have been born a Christian? To what Scriptures would you point?

Question  
# 8

Finally, John warns the two groups against hypocrisy by stressing the judgment that awaits those who fail to repent. Just as a gardener prunes the unproductive branches from a tree and burns them; God will wield his

**ax** and strike down the **trees** which **do not bear good fruit** and **throw** them **into the fire** of judgment (v. 10). God gives us multiple chances to repent and turn to Him so that He might transform us from unrighteous to righteous, giving us life. On our own, our works cannot



guarantee salvation because even our best works amount to nothing in the eyes of Christ. Without Christ, therefore, we will always come up short of the finish line because we will be limited by our imperfection; in Christ, however, we can cross the finish line because we have a perfect Savior who has gone before us and paved the way for us to have eternal life (see [Heb 12:2](#)).

To what Scripture passages would you point others who believe that we can be saved by works or simply being a good person?

Question  
# 9

#### ***THE PERSON TO WHOM WE REPENT:***

Finally, John points the people to the only person who can both provide and guarantee salvation: Jesus (v. 11). The Greek construction of verse 11 should be translated: “**I indeed baptize you in water with respect to repentance.**” John, therefore, teaches that repentance comes before baptism and is a necessary part of salvation—which is also borne out in the summary of his sermon found earlier in this passage; the structure of verse 11 does not in any way imply that baptism is a *means* of salvation! To do so distorts the contextual meaning of the passage and the meaning of the Greek sentence structure. Rather, John clearly points to Christ as the true source of repentance and the means of our salvation; for this reason, he distinguishes between his baptism and that of Jesus. Jesus, not mere baptism **in water**, has the power to save, cleanse, and transform. As a result, He baptizes in **the Holy Spirit and fire**. Because of the Greek structure of this sentence, baptism in the Holy Spirit and fire are taken together to refer to one singular event: salvation. When we repent and surrender to Christ, He sends the **Holy Spirit** to dwell in our lives; at that moment, He purifies our hearts and cleanses us from all unrighteousness. In this single act at the moment of salvation, Christ transforms us from life to death and unrighteous to righteous—baptism **in water** cannot accomplish this at all!

John concludes his sermon in the wilderness with an ominous warning that Christ will judge unrepentant sinners and sentence them to eternal torment separated from the Father in heaven (v. 12). He illustrates this

by referring to Jesus as a farmer who uses a pitchfork (i.e. **winnowing fan**) to toss both **wheat** and useless **chaff** into the air; the wind separates the grain (i.e. the righteous in Christ) from the **chaff** (i.e. the unrepentant wicked). The **wheat** that falls to the threshing floor is gathered and stored in the barn (i.e. heaven) while the **chaff** that is dispersed is gathered and **burned** (i.e. hell). Therefore, the **unquenchable fire** is a picture of the judgment that awaits those who refuse to repent and have rejected the relationship that Christ has offered them. As a result, these people have chosen to condemn themselves to an eternity spent in the fiery pits of hell. On the contrary, those who have repented and surrendered to Christ will reside with Him forever in heaven. Therefore, we must ask ourselves, on what have we relied to have assurance of our salvation? Have we relied on good works, religious rituals (such as baptism), being a good person, or even our physical heritage? If we have relied on anything other than Jesus Christ and the salvation found in Him, then we will fall short of the requirement of eternal life. So, as we conclude this lesson, let us ask ourselves: do we have a relationship with Christ based on repentance and confession of our sin? If we have, then we are guaranteed to spend eternity with Him in heaven; if not, then we will be separated and sentenced to eternal judgment.



How can we have assurance of our salvation in Christ?

Question  
# 10

Many people and denominations have an erroneous understanding about both baptism and salvation. Denominations and church tradition can be errant when left to human wisdom and understanding, so we must rely on the Bible for proper interpretation. When we look at John's message here in [Matthew 3:1-12](#), we should notice the emphasis on repentance. Confession and repentance for our sins are necessary parts of salvation. Although we should obediently follow the example of Christ in baptism which we will study next week, it is not a means of salvation. It only points to the inner change that Christ has begun in our hearts when we surrender to Him. After surrendering to Him, the Holy Spirit immediately comes into our lives and will purify us so that we can be in right standing with the Father. Without this relationship with Christ, we can have no salvation or access to the Father. Praise be to the Lord, however, that He has offered salvation to all through the sacrificial death and the miraculous resurrection of His Son!

As we learned in the introduction with the understanding of the woman from Brazil, we have direct access to the Father so that we can seek forgiveness through His Son. We don't have to depend upon the church, a pastor, or any other ritual, but we depend only upon Jesus Christ; therefore, we must go directly to Him in order to seek forgiveness for our sins and allow Him to transform our way of life and conform us to His image. Therefore, as we begin our study of the book of Matthew, let us be aware of the life that we now have in Christ so that we can make wise decisions and live transformed lives that will bear the fruits of righteousness so that others may see Christ in us.

## ***Incorporate***

Why is baptism not a requirement or even a guarantee of salvation or eternal life?

Why should repentance always be accompanied by transformation or life-change?

Why is it important when sharing the gospel to phrase questions in such a way that they emphasize the role of Christ in salvation?

*July 8, 2018*



# *Transformed to Reflect*

## *Matthew 3:13-17*

Focal Verse:

“But Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.’ Then he allowed Him.”

Matthew 3:15

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## Introduce

Walter Dunn-Kidd excitedly hurried to church with a small suitcase filled with a towel and change of clothes because he was scheduled to be baptized that morning. The previous week he had confessed his sins and asked Christ to forgive him after someone from the church visited and shared the gospel with him in his home. Although he had read about the Ethiopian Eunuch who had the same eye-opening experience and was immediately baptized ([Acts 8:26-40](#)), Walter still did not fully understand everything about the ordinance of baptism—especially because denominations and people have so many opinions about it. However, one thing he *did* know was that what mattered most is what the Bible said—not church tradition or man’s opinion on the subject. So, in the coming weeks, he enrolled in a discipleship class at the church where the teacher took time to mentor him on the subject.



Walter had been exposed to many different views about baptism throughout his life. In the Methodist church he had visited, he saw the baptismal candidate splashed and sprinkled with little droplets of water. At the Catholic church where one of his relatives worshiped, he had attended a baptismal ceremony for an infant. Visiting with his friend at the Church of Christ, he heard the minister say that baptism was a requirement for salvation in order to gain access to heaven and one must be baptized again if he lost his salvation because he had sinned. After reading the

## Introduce

Bible carefully and attending this class at church, Walter realized that none of these views was correct and all strayed from the truth. He came to the realization that the Bible teaches that only believers who had confessed their sins, repented, and surrendered their lives to follow Christ should be baptized. Further, the Bible also relates that baptism is only a sign of one's salvation and not a requirement; because one can't lose his salvation even if he may err from time to time, baptism is only required once. When one is fully immersed under the water, it symbolizes death to an old way of life and how God has transformed us to walk in a new life according to the standards of Christ.

As Walter Dunn-Kidd continued to study Scripture, the purpose of Jesus' baptism became clear. The only sinless man to walk the face of the earth set an example for us to follow in obedience. Jesus' baptism demonstrated His commitment to the Father and His willingness to follow Him in complete obedience—even if that meant a horrendous death upon the cross to pay the penalty for our sins. In itself, baptism cannot save or transform, but it does demonstrate our commitment to the Lord and willingness to follow Him publicly by acknowledging our sin and surrendering our lives to Him. Therefore, baptism illustrates our transformation to reflect the image of Christ by following the example that He set.

Key  
Question

Why should we be baptized by immersion?

## Matthew 3:13-14

### THE RELUCTANCE TO BAPTIZE:

This lesson will approach the topic of baptism more from a doctrinal position in terms of the biblical understanding which our church holds so that we can know why we conduct the ordinance the way we do. Despite its focus on doctrine, the lesson will also have many practical applications by helping us to correct any misunderstandings that we or other denominations may have as outlined in the introduction. The Bible, not tradition, is the sole source of our understanding for baptism because Jesus set the obedient example for us to follow through His own baptism. Although Jesus' baptism in [Matthew 3:13-17](#) will provide the basis for our discussion, we will address the subject as comprehensively as we can by citing other scriptural evidence for the position that our church holds.

What are some errors or misunderstandings about baptism that you've heard from others?

Question  
# 1

While John continued to preach his message of repentance in the wilderness, Jesus **came to the Jordan to be baptized by him** (v. 13). Before we look at the reason behind Jesus' baptism, we must first establish how the Bible states the ordinance should be conducted. The Greek word *baptizō* literally means to plunge under water violently; in various contexts, it almost has



## Instruct

the sense of drowning. Therefore, by the nature of the word itself, it means that Jesus would have been completely immersed under the water of the **Jordan** River. Even in an arid and dry region such as Israel, the **Jordan** would almost always have enough water to submerge the baptismal candidate. By virtue of the meaning of the Greek word and the underlying biblical evidence, we as a church fully immerse the baptismal candidate in water according to biblical practice.

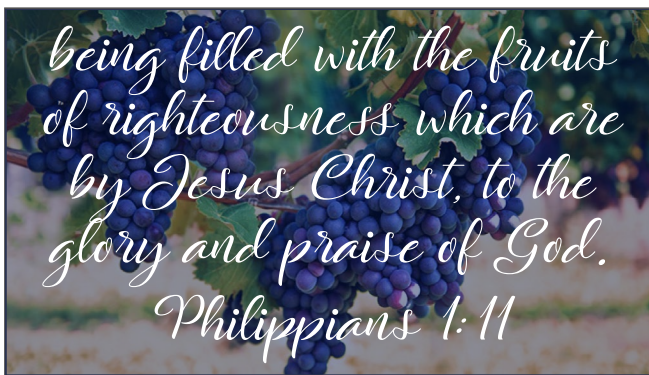
Moreover, to be fully immersed is important because of what it symbolizes. In [Romans 6:3-7](#), Paul explains the symbolism behind baptism in plain, ordinary terms. Just as the word baptism has the connotation of drowning in some contexts, throughout the New Testament it symbolizes our participation in the death of Christ whereby we die to our old carnal lifestyle. Thus, being immersed under water signifies being “crucified with” Christ by dying to sinfulness and unrighteousness ([Rom 6:6](#)). Like Christ, however, our story doesn’t end at death. Even though we may die physically, for those of us who have a relationship with Christ we have hope of eternal life. When we rise from the water, therefore, it symbolizes that we have been raised to a new life in Christ. We have died to our sin and have now been raised to “walk in newness of life” ([Rom 6:4](#)). In other words, baptism represents our spiritual in renewal Christ whereby He has transformed us from death to life and conformed us to His image or character. Sprinkling or any other form of baptism other than complete immersion obscures this symbolism which Scripture has made clear.

What does baptism by immersion symbolize?

Question  
# 2

When Jesus **came** to John **to be baptized**, the prophet was reluctant and **tried to prevent Him** (v. 14). Like any of us would have been, John was shocked to the core when Jesus presented Himself for baptism because He was the long-anticipated Messiah who would deliver the world through His perfect and sinless sacrificial death (see [John 1:19](#)). At the conclusion of his message which we studied last week, John refers to “He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I’m not worthy to carry” ([Matt 3:11](#)). He recognized that Jesus was without sin and had nothing for which He needed to repent (see [2 Cor 5:21](#); [Heb 4:15](#)). As God in the flesh, Jesus was superior to John in every way! Consequently, when he compared himself to Jesus, John recognized his own sinfulness and objected that he **needed to be baptized** by Him rather than Jesus being baptized by him. John’s objection once again underscores the central tenant of repentance within His message; therefore, we repent and are baptized to show outwardly the inner change that Christ has produced in us.

When we repent of our sins and surrender our lives to Christ, we will change in our actions, attitudes, perspectives, and character. If we have not experienced any change at all or we have not borne any fruit of righteousness produced by the Spirit in our lives, then we must ask whether



we truly have a relationship with Him (see [Gal 5:22-25](#); [Phil 1:11](#)). We cannot stay where we were in our sinful desires and have a relationship with the Lord, but we must allow Him to conform us to His character

## Instruct

(see [2 Cor 5:17](#)). This doesn't mean that we will be perfect and never err, but it does mean that we will seek His will and live habitually in His righteousness rather than in sin and lust. Therefore, this transformation begins when we seek forgiveness from Him and He cleanses us from all unrighteousness at the moment we invite Him into our hearts—this transformation does not wait until baptism, but begins immediately. We live in a society which desires instant gratification; only in Christ can we instantly be transformed from a vile sinner heading for death and destruction to a saint who has eternal life! Consequently, baptism symbolically reflects this inward change, but does not produce it.

How would you correct someone's understanding that baptism produces change? Cite biblical passages that support your claims.

Question  
# 3

## Matthew 3:15

### **A REFLECTION OF RIGHTEOUSNESS:**

Like John, we would naturally ask: if Jesus had nothing for which He needed to repent, then why did He come to be baptized? Jesus answers this question when He commands John to **permit it to be so** that He might **fulfill all righteousness** (v. 15). Through the act of baptism, therefore, Jesus set an example for all believers to follow by obeying the will of the Father. Jesus' baptism demonstrated His willingness to fulfill the role to which the Father had called Him; He was to fulfill the Old Testament by becoming the perfect sacrifice that once-and-for-all would take away the sin of the world. What makes Jesus' sacrifice more effective

is that He gave His life willingly and obediently; no one took His life from Him (see [John 10:18](#)). In His obedience, Jesus submitted to the will of the Father to pay the penalty of mankind's sin and redeem His wayward creation—something which the blood of bulls and goats could not do since they were unwilling participants in the sacrifice (see [Heb 10:9-10](#)).

Therefore, Jesus' baptism

demonstrated His submission to the Father by understanding the context and application for His Word which He was sent to fulfill by living in a manner consistent with it. Similarly, baptism demonstrates our obedience to the Lord and willingness to abide by or follow His Word. As a church, we will gladly accept members from other denominations who have a relationship with Jesus Christ into our fellowship as members, but they must be baptized scripturally through immersion if they have not already been immersed. Moreover, we believe that anyone coming from a denomination which has significant doctrinal differences must be baptized by immersion as a declaration that he or she will practice what Scripture says and not follow varied traditions established and held by mankind. When we have a relationship with Christ, we have a desire to obey our heavenly Father because we love Him and want to please Him by representing Him well to others.



How does baptism show our willingness to obey the Father?

Question  
# 4

### Matthew 3:16-17

#### ***THE RESPONSE OF THE FATHER:***

After He had been plunged under the water of the Jordan River, **Jesus came up immediately** and the Holy **Spirit** in the form of **a dove descended from heaven** and landed upon Him. Then **a voice came from heaven** citing Psalm 2:7: **“This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased”** (v. 17). Through baptism, Jesus makes a public declaration that



His God-given ministry has now started. Nothing changed at His baptism with His relationship to God the Father—He was still the only begotten Son of God—but it served to announce to the crowd the arrival of the Messiah. At one point, John the Baptist exclaims, “I did not know Him, but He who sent me to baptize with water said to me, ‘Upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining on Him, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit’” (see [John 1:33](#)). As God before the foundation of the world, Jesus did not “become” God or change His status at His baptism, but it did serve to demonstrate who He really was—God who became flesh and dwelt among us (see [John 1:14](#)).

Similarly, baptism doesn’t change our relationship status with the Lord; if we don’t have a relationship with the Lord by confessing and repenting of our sins before baptism, we don’t have a relationship afterwards either. Our relationship with the Lord begins immediately when we



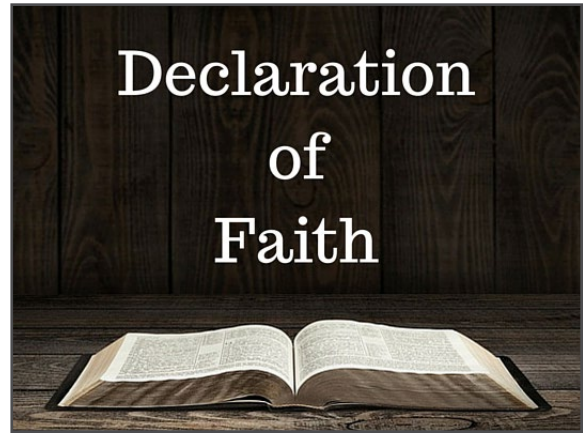
confess our sins, repent, and surrender to Him. Baptism, therefore, is a public declaration that we *already have* a relationship with Him through Jesus' sacrificial death; as a ritual, it alone cannot save us or transform us. Baptism is a public declaration of our faith in Christ and our willingness to follow Him. We ought to make our relationship public because Christ has set the precedent and it also helps us to remain accountable to mature in our faith by uniting with like-minded people. In fact, Jesus Himself acknowledges the importance of making our decision public when He declares, "Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven" ([Matt 10:32](#)). Although Jesus isn't specifically addressing baptism in this context, our public witness and declaration of the life-change that He has wrought in our lives certainly includes obediently following Him in baptism.

Why should we publicly declare our relationship and salvation in Christ?

Question  
# 5

As we have seen, baptism is a public declaration of our faith; it is not a requirement for salvation as some denominations, such as the Church of Christ, erroneously teach. Jesus **permitted Himself to be baptized** by John because it established an obedient example for us to follow when we begin our relationship with Him. Evidence exists within Scripture that demonstrates baptism is not a necessary part of salvation, but that it demonstrates our obedience and willingness to follow Christ. As Jesus hung on the cross between two thieves, one mocked Him while the other noted that Jesus hadn't done anything wrong, showed remorse for his sin, and asked for forgiveness. To which Jesus responded mercifully and graciously saying, "Today you will be with me in paradise" (see [Luke 23:39-](#)

[43](#)). Obviously, this now-forgiven man couldn't be baptized, showing that baptism has no power to save—that power comes from Christ alone who can forgive sins. If dire conditions don't exist in our lives that prevent us from being baptized, we should still obediently follow Christ and declare to the world the source of our salvation is in Him alone.



As we have proven, Jesus already had a relationship with the Father at the time of His baptism, so this suggests that baptism is only for “believers” who have already confessed and repented of their sins. Nowhere in the New Testament does it teach that we should baptize infants or children who cannot grasp these concepts or have not come to the realization that they need salvation through Christ. Certainly, God can save young children, but these children have a cognitive understanding of what they have done and in whom they have believed ([Matt 18:3](#)). The practice of infant baptism whether by the Catholic Church or other denominations has become a dangerous practice because it causes confusion amongst the membership who misunderstand it to be the means of salvation.

We can appeal to several biblical texts to show that baptism is only for those who have understood and responded to the gospel message. When John the Baptist preached the gospel, we saw that all the people who had come from throughout the region heard and understood the message because they responded by confessing and repenting ([Matt 3:6](#)).

The text never indicates that anyone other than those who had genuinely responded by repenting were baptized. Likewise, in Acts the Ethiopian eunuch struggled to understand what He was reading from [Isa 53](#) until Philip came to explain it and preach to him. After the Ethiopian inquires about baptism, Philip explains the prerequisite: “‘If you believe with all your heart, you may.’ And he answered and said, ‘I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God’” (Acts 8:37). In another instance while jailed in Philippi, Paul and Silas had the opportunity to preach to the jailer and his entire family when they answered his question: “What must I do to be saved” (Acts 16:30). To which the missionary team responds succinctly, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved” (Acts 16:31). In all three of these instances, people heard the gospel, cognitively understood it, believed, and repented of their sins.

How is infant baptism different from a baby dedication?

Question  
# 6

When Jesus willingly and obediently fulfills God’s will through the example of baptism, the Father responds with joy and pleasure (v. 17). Like a proud Father, God finds joy in our obedience as well; He desires a relationship with us whereby we have been transformed completely. In Psalm 51:16-17, David writes, “For You do not desire sacrifice, or else I would give it; You do not delight in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart—These, O God, You will not despise.” Let us live our lives in complete surrender to Him by following Him in believer’s baptism so that we may reflect on the righteousness to which He has called us to live.

We met Walter Dunn-Kidd in the introduction; he had been exposed to almost every different opinion about baptism except for the truth contained in the Bible. Before he began a relationship with Christ, Walter was like almost every other person in today's society; he merely waffled back and forth between beliefs and really was unconcerned to research and learn the truth. He relied on "religious" tradition to dictate what he believed rather than what the Bible actually said. We live in a society of instant gratification in which people are gullible to believe false information simply because they don't take the time to do the research and know why they believe what they believe. Some Christians, unfortunately, don't care about the truth either and they blindly follow tradition without even knowing why. God doesn't want us to follow Him blindly, so He provided His Word so that we might know how and why He has commanded us to live a certain way.

In a secular short story by Shirley Jackson called *The Lottery*, the citizens of a small community gathered together each year to draw square slips from a black box. Some of those square pieces of paper would have a black dot on them; whoever got the pieces of paper with the black dot would be put to death. They blindly continued this tradition year after year, having forgotten even why it had started! In the end, it was revealed that the practice began during a famine so that some members in the community would give their lives so that they would the rest of them would have enough food on which to live. Even though the community hadn't had a famine in years, they still continued this sordid practice without even knowing why! God, however, has clearly revealed why He has given us the institution of baptism so that we might reflect

on the new life to which He has called us. We don't have to guess or rely on tradition, but we can find the meaning and application directly communicated in God's Word; therefore, we have no excuse for error or forgetting why we practice the ordinance and for what it stands. Therefore, let us understand the meaning of baptism so that we may understand how it symbolically reflects our transformed lives in Christ.

### ***In Reference***



*If you have further questions about baptism or church membership, please call the church office to schedule an appointment to meet with one of the pastoral staff.*

## *Incorporate*

Explain the significance of baptism. Have you followed Jesus' example in baptism? Why or why not?

How would you respond to the following conversation? You ask, "In your opinion, how do you get to heaven?" They respond, "I've been baptized at a local church?"

# ***Journal: Document God's Work***

*July 15, 2018*



*Transformed  
to Resist  
Matthew 4:1-11*

Focal Verse:

"Then Jesus said to him, 'Away with you, Satan!' For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve.'"

Matthew 4:10

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## Introduce

The camping adventure to Arches National Park in Utah began with great anticipation and excitement for three friends who had meticulously planned it for months. Though they had hoped their venture to the desert Southwest near the tiny town of Moab would be a time of relaxation and fellowship, the weeks that led up to the experience became a time of intense testing and temptation—such as that which Jesus faced when led into the wilderness by the Spirit. The yearning to enjoy nature and the wild outdoors runs deep in their veins, but so does the need to shop for gadgets and supplies to make the experience enjoyable and unforgettable. Camping and hiking in a remote region of the US requires certain things to make the trip safe, but none of them could have anticipated the temptation that they would face when shopping online or at the local sporting goods store.

Despite having a very specific list, the prospect of entering a sporting goods store was fraught with peril because the temptation would be to buy everything that looked awesome—instead of only the things that they actually needed. So, two of the friends decided to go into the store together to hold each other accountable and



hopefully reduce the risk of maxing out the credit card with gadgets that appealed to the eye. Danger, however, lurked around the corner of every aisle with each new turn. Even with list in hand and an accountability

## Introduce

partner in tow, the temptation became overwhelming and the itch to place items in the cart couldn't be resisted. After the damage had been done, the temptation didn't end as the pair exited the store, but in the secrecy of their homes the urge to log on to the computer and view more items at online stores became even greater. Each man thought, "No one will see what I view; nor will they see what I order and comes to my home. In truth, only the delivery man and eventually my wife—for two of them were married—would know." Late into the evening, "virtual" cash register bells dinged as the items were placed into a cart and purchased via credit card; the temptation to be well-equipped and prepared in every possible way was too great to resist! The accounts in this story are real, but the names have been omitted to protect the guilty.

No matter who we are, every one of us faces temptation; although we may struggle with different issues, none of these temptations is solely unique to us ([1 Cor 10:13](#)). Even Jesus faced temptation in the wilderness where He sought to pray and commune with the Father before He would embark on His mission. While praying and fasting for forty days, Jesus faced intense temptation, but never once did He succumb to sin. He resisted and remained steadfast in His relationship with the Father because He was prepared to respond when temptation came. Through Jesus' example, we can also be prepared to respond to temptation when it comes by appealing to Scripture, praying for strength, and focusing on our Savior. Therefore, like Christ, let us be transformed to resist rather than give in to the temptation that we face.

Key  
Question

In what ways can we prepare ourselves when temptation arises?

## Matthew 4:1-2

### THE SETTING FOR TEMPTATION:

After Jesus' baptism, **the Spirit led Him into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil**, but first He **fasted for forty days and forty nights** (vv. 1-2). The period of **forty days and nights** along with the location in the **wilderness** recalls the period of Israel's testing as they wandered in the desert after escaping from Egypt during the exodus. During the days of the exodus, the people tested the patience of the Lord through their constant grumbling and complaining as well as their frequent idolatry. Rather than relying on the Lord for the basic provision of food and water, the people consistently complained that He had brought them into the **wilderness** to die; they surmised it would have been better for them to remain enslaved in Egypt than to be forsaken there in the desert ([Exod 14:11; 16:3](#)). Even having seen the miraculous hand of the Lord guide them, the children led by Aaron formed a golden calf while Moses ascended to Mount Sinai to receive the Law; they committed idolatry at the drop of a hat despite seeing how God had already rescued and provided for them numerous times along their journey.



*The Judean Wilderness*

Whereas Israel repeatedly failed and sinned when facing challenges in the **wilderness**, Jesus overcame similar temptations and never once

sinned; in His humanity, He never complained, He never criticized the Father, and He never committed idolatry. Jesus set a perfect example for us to follow whenever temptation occurs; therefore, we have a Savior who knows what it's like to be tempted in every way we are so we can look to Him for guidance, strength, and perseverance when temptation arises in our own lives. For this reason, the author of Hebrews exclaims, "For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin" (Heb 4:15). Through this, we can see that temptation itself is not a sin; however, when we succumb to it by participating in the action or constantly entertaining fleshly thoughts, then it gives birth to sin (see [Jas 1:15](#)). Therefore, let us follow Jesus' example in transforming our hearts and minds to resist temptation and remain pure in our deeds and thoughts.

### In-Depth Information



*We mostly think of sin as doing something wrong, but sin can also occur in our minds when we dwell on ungodly thoughts. When addressing the hypocritical actions of the Pharisees, Jesus explains, "For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies" (Matt 15:19). In His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus had already taught that hate harbored in one's heart against a brother constitutes murder and lustful thoughts are tantamount to adultery ([Matt 5:21-22, 27-28](#)). When we constantly entertain these kinds of thoughts, it also greatly increases the*

## In-Depth Information—continued



chance that we will act upon them in some way—perhaps we won't physically “murder” someone, but we may seek revenge or assassinate their character through gossip or lies.

According to Scripture, at what point does temptation become a sin? Why is it especially important to guard our minds and thoughts from temptation?

Question  
# 1

In these opening two verses, we can also learn two other principles about the setting for temptation. First, temptation does not come from the Lord, but from **the devil**; Matthew states it explicitly that Jesus **was tempted by the devil** (see also [Jas 1:13](#)). Although **the devil** may present the opportunity to sin, we are the ones who choose to act according to our own evil desires; we are responsible and not merely caught in sin as innocent pawns, but it is a deliberate choice on our own part. In his letter, James writes, “But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by *his own desires* and enticed” (Jas 1:14). Although we may face temptation from the enemy, God will always provide a way to

I Can Resist  
Everything  
Except  
Temptation

Oscar Wilde



*This statement, from Oscar Wilde in his play Lady Windermere's Fan Act 1, represents the typical secular perspective about temptation--“I can't help it.”*

## Instruct

overcome it if only we would trust and seek Him. In 1 Corinthians 10:13, Paul reminds the church, “No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.” We ought not blame God for any temptation or testing which occurs in our lives, but instead we ought to submit to Him because He has promised to deliver us! As we continue to study Jesus’ response to the temptation He faced, we will learn several practical ways that God has given us to overcome the temptations that we also face.

Why is it important to see ourselves as responsible for the way that we respond to temptation and not “innocent victims” if we sin?

Question  
# 2

Second, through these verses we also see that temptation occurs when we are most vulnerable. Having not eaten for a period of **forty days**, Jesus **was hungry** and this was the situation in which He could have most easily sinned to satisfy His physical nature. This seemingly obvious declaration that Jesus **was hungry**, therefore, serves to underscore the shrewd tactics of the enemy because the very first temptation which Jesus endures deals with food. When most of us face hunger, we colloquially say, “I could eat a horse” or “I’d kill for [insert type of food here].” Usually, when we get to this point all self-control and moderation go out of the window and we excessively overeat. Because of our physical desires, we have come to a place of vulnerability which could end in sin if we don’t seek the Lord and allow Him to guide our paths. The enemy will always use the areas in which

we are most vulnerable to tempt us. We all have the propensity to commit certain types of sin based on our personality and interests; there is always some setting or vice that tempts us or that we struggle with the most. This doesn't mean that we can't control ourselves with the help of Christ, but it does mean that certain sinful activities or thoughts are more attractive to us than others. As a result, we need to avoid placing ourselves in situations in which we have vulnerability if at all possible; because we can't always avoid these situations entirely, we need to have a plan of action ready so that we run to God and not toward sin.

In what setting(s) are you most susceptible to succumb to temptation? How can you avoid putting yourself in these situations?

Question  
# 3

### Matthew 4:3-4

#### **AN APPEAL TO SCRIPTURE:**

After this period of **forty days and nights**, **the tempter came** to prey upon Jesus' physical weakness in His famished condition (v. 3). The devil begins by stating **if You are the Son of God**. In English, it may seem as if the devil wants Jesus to prove that He is **the Son of God**, but that's not the case in the Greek; he already knows who Jesus is and that He is God-in-the-flesh. The word literally translated **if** in this context has more of the force of *since* **You are the Son of God** You can **command these stones to become bread**. The real temptation, therefore, centers not around proof of Jesus' divinity, but around satisfying His **hunger**. In other words, **the tempter** wants Jesus to exploit and misuse His authority as God to meet His physical human needs. Instead of trusting in the sustenance and divine provision of the Father, Jesus could have instant gratification

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and get what He desires most immediately—just as Israel wanted

instant gratification by demanding food and water in the wilderness during the exodus instead of trusting the Lord. Sin always looks enticing when we are vulnerable and always



promises and even delivers instant gratification, but it will always lead to life-long problems with addiction, regret, physical, mental, and emotional distress and destruction when we succumb to our momentary yearning for satisfaction now.

How is sin always centered around instant gratification of our desires?

Question  
# 4

With a plan in place, Jesus doesn't hesitate, but responds to **the tempter** with Scripture. He appeals to Deuteronomy 8:3: "So He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that **man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of** the Lord." Through this reference, Jesus recalls the stubbornness and unfaithfulness of Israel as they wandered in the wilderness; however, He would not make the same mistake as they did. Instead of following God's directives and commands, Israel repeatedly rebelled against Him and miserably failed their test by incurring God's



wrath (see [Deut 8:2](#)). Moreover, God repeatedly provided for the people, but even His provision wasn't enough to satisfy them; they always wanted more! Jesus, on the other hand, didn't seek mere physical satisfaction which lasts only temporarily, but He sought in obedience to do the will of the Father—to live by that which He has commanded in His Word as an example to all who would follow. Certainly, God will meet our physical needs as He has indeed promised; yet, we ought to concentrate on obeying His Word and living obediently according to the character in Christ to which He has called us.

Why is it important to memorize Scripture to be prepared to face temptation?

Question  
# 5

Through this first temptation, we see the importance of both knowing and applying Scripture; we must spend time daily in God's Word in order to prepare for the temptations that will inevitably come. We ought to meditate on His Word and memorize it so we're not caught off guard and we will have a foundation on which we can confidently stand (see [Psalm 119:11, 105](#)). Scripture gives us a battle plan for dealing with temptation and sin; therefore, we need to know what God's Word says and the way we ought to respond to temptation before we even face it! In severe weather season here in North Texas, the media constantly reminds us to have a plan if an emergency arises. When a severe storm or tornado is occurring, it's too late to formulate a plan on the spot; we need to know what to do before it happens lest we become gripped with indecisiveness and fear. If we have no plan and are merely reacting to the situation, many times it turns out badly and perhaps could end in our death.

When I first moved to Fort Worth eighteen years ago this month to attend

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seminary, I had a rather unusual roommate who panicked over everything and really had no a plan to deal with anything. During the Fall, we had a tornado warning for Tarrant County while I was working in the computer lab at the library, but the campus decided to close the building and send



everyone home. Upon hearing that the “possible” tornado was located over Joe Pool Lake, I jogged to my apartment to avoid the rain only to find my roommate running around the house with his arms waving wildly over his head screaming, “Emergency, emergency, we’re

gonna die.” Trying to reassure him, I finally got him calmed down and focused on playing a video game.

A little while after I turned off his weather radio, the alarm began blaring again with another tornado warning. My roommate didn’t wait to hear the information, but threw down the controller and started yelling, but this time he ran outside and started running up and down the street screaming. Fortunately, the warning was for the eastern part of the county and posed no imminent danger for our area. Because he wasn’t in any imminent danger, I let him run up and down the street, but when he finally came back inside I asked, “What did you hope to resolve by reacting that way? You were in even more danger had there been a tornado.”

When temptation comes, we can’t act like this gentleman and have no plan for dealing with it. It will ultimately end in disaster. We need to recognize our weaknesses and areas of vulnerability and constantly prepare ourselves

by praying and reading Scripture. God has given us clear instructions in His Word and through prayer and memorization we can recall them at the moment we face temptation; God will help us to overcome it. As you read Scripture, pray and ask the Lord to guide you in formulating a plan for temptation. Use the concordance and other tools to read about temptation and sin in the areas in which you are most vulnerable. Memorize what God's Word says about those areas and then when faced with those

## WHAT IS SIN?

### Sin – Strong's Concordance - Hebrew

- H817** – (46) asham – guilt, a fault, a sin offering, guiltiness, trespass offering
- H819** – (19) ashmah – feminine of H817, guiltiness, fault, presentation of sin offering, offend, sin
- H2398** – (238) chata – to miss, to forfeit, to bear the blame, to commit sin, to offend, to offer for sin, trespass, make reconciliation, to offer for sin, purge, purify
- H2399** – (33) chet – a crime or its penalty, fault, offence, punishment of sin
- H2400** – (18) chatta – a criminal or one accounted guilty
- H2401** – (8) chataah – feminine form of H2399 – an offence or a sacrifice for it

### Sin – Strong's Concordance – Hebrew

- H2402** – (1) chattaah – an offence and the penalty or sacrifice for it – sin offering
- H2403** – (296) chattath – an offence (sometimes habitual sinfulness) and its penalty, occasion, sacrifice or expiation, an offender, punishment of sin, purifying (edification for sin), sin, condition of sin, guilt of sin
- H5771** – (230) avon – perversity or moral evil, fault, iniquity, mischief, punishment of iniquity, sin
- H7686** – (21) shagah – to stray, mislead, to mistake, to transgress morally, to reel, deceive, err, ravished, sin through ignorance, to wander

temptations claim those promises in Christ's name which will help you to overcome them. At that time, God will help you recall those Scriptures which you have studied and will give you the strength to resist. If Jesus uses this technique to deal successfully with temptation, we ought to apply it in our lives too.

What are some promises in Scripture to which you can appeal when faced with temptation?

Question  
# 6

### *Matthew 4:5-7*

#### **A PLEA FOR STRENGTH:**

Next, **the devil** takes Jesus to the highest point of the **temple** in Jerusalem (i.e. **the holy city**) and urges Him to jump as a way to test God's faithfulness to keep His promises (vv.5-6a). Then, **the devil** proceeds to quote, but misapply, [Psalm 91:11-12](#) which speaks about

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how God will protect His people who abide in Him. The psalm promises that **angels** will take care of God's people and not even **let them dash their foot against a stone** (v. 6b). The psalm, however, does not promise safety and security to those who intentionally put themselves in harmful situations and test the patience of the Lord, but it refers the security

of those who walk faithfully in obedience with the Lord. To **throw** Himself from the temple, therefore, wouldn't be a sign that Jesus trusts the Father to fulfill His promises, but it actually becomes a way of



testing Him. We can see how Satan has misapplied [Psalm 91](#) in this way by Jesus' response from [Deuteronomy 6:16](#) whereby He demands he should **not tempt the Lord your God** (v. 7).

We can learn two principles from this passage which will help us deal with temptation. First, we must understand the significance of our purpose in representing the Lord and ask Him for strength to fulfill it. In addition, we must also understand how our sinfulness has an adverse effect on that purpose and causes us to become sidetracked and ineffective when we deviate from our course in life. As hard as we may try, we can't stay on course without strength from the Lord because on our own we have the propensity to sin. To reassure us of the promises of the Lord, the author of Hebrews writes, "This hope we have as an anchor

of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil, where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek” ([Heb 6:19-20](#)). Our strength to resist temptation, therefore, comes from Christ who



**And do not lead us  
into temptation,  
But deliver us from the evil one.  
For Yours is the kingdom and  
the power and the glory forever.  
Amen.  
Matthew 6:13**

has endured the same and provides a way for us to withstand the storm and fulfill the God-given purpose to which we have been called: to love God through our obedience and testify of His goodness to others by imparting the gospel to the world!

During the exodus, the people constantly tested the Lord by failing to trust Him and walking obediently in the manner to which He had called them. Jesus, however, had an even higher purpose and calling to fulfill as the perfect, unblemished sacrifice that would take away the sin of the world. Never once did He become distracted from His primary purpose by putting God to the test; He remained focus by appealing to the Father and Scripture as His source of strength. Israel, like us, often put the Lord to the test by following their own desires and taking their own path. Instead of appealing to God for strength and trusting Him to help them overcome obstacles in their path, they merely looked at what they could do humanly speaking—the greatest example being the lack of trust in the Lord from ten of the twelve spies who did not believe Israel could defeat the strong people and fortified cities in the Promised Land. When

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they saw the situation from a human perspective, they failed to trust God and acted upon their own strength which often led to utter disaster.

Why is it important to appeal to God for strength when we face temptation?

Question  
# 7

Second, we must be able to detect the subtle trickery of the devil to avoid succumbing to temptation. The way the enemy packages sin appeals to the senses; it also promises to satisfy our longings. It looks fun and fulfilling, but in reality it is empty and destructive. Overall, we must know how sinful desires appeal to our physical senses and take steps to avoid them. For some, the lust of the eyes carries one to immorality, the love of money causes one to steal, and the thrill and excitement of disobedience causes people to lie. Consequently, we must be aware of the subtle ways that the enemy distracts us from our purpose. Specifically, in this context, the devil distorts the true meaning of Scripture—just like he did with Eve in the Garden of Eden when he told her “surely you will not die” (Gen 3:4). Therefore, we must know and apply Scripture within its rightful context. As a cunning and crafty individual (see [Gen 3:1](#)), the devil misused Scripture and distorted its original context; however, Jesus saw through his tricks and corrected the misinterpretation.

What are some of the deceptive techniques that the enemy uses to tempt us?

Question  
# 8

**FOCUS ON OUR SAVIOR:**

In the third and final **temptation, the devil** takes Jesus to a **high mountain** and shows **Him all the kingdoms of the world** (v. 8). In an ironic statement which would test Jesus' loyalty to the Father, Satan promises to **give** Jesus **all these** kingdoms if only He would **fall down** and **worship him** (v. 9). Although Satan is referred to as the god of this age who has blinded the minds of mankind through his deceitfulness ([2 Cor 4:4](#)), the Lord still remains sovereign and in control over all the kingdoms of the world ([Rom 13:1](#)). The devil ironically promises Jesus something which already belongs to Him! Even though people may still rebel against Him, the ultimate victory has already been won by the Lord and there is nothing that the enemy can do to thwart that victory. Therefore, the test in this temptation comes in the form of idolatry; would Jesus fail as the children of Israel had repeatedly in the past so that He could achieve instant gratification and "success" instead of the mockery and torture which He must endure as the sacrificial lamb Who would save the world?

Jesus does not fail, but rather focuses on His relationship with the Father whereby He remembers to Whom worship is truly due; therefore, He sets an example for us to follow through which we should not engage in idolatry, but worship the Lord alone. Consequently, Jesus strongly commands **Satan** to go **away** and cites [Deut 6:13](#) based on the first of the Ten Commandments to remind him that **we** should **worship the Lord** our **God, and Him only** should we **serve**. When Jesus speaks, Satan can only do what the Sovereign Lord has commanded; he departs immediately in defeat. In a fitting end to the episode, God fulfills [Psalm](#)

## *Instruct*

[91:11-12](#) which Satan had distorted and as soon as he **left angels came and ministered to** Jesus (v. 11). Because God is faithful to His promises, we ought to trust Him and worship Him alone; we shouldn't seek immediate gratification for our desires, but we should seek to glorify the Lord and honor Him in everything that we say and do. When we face temptation, we must call upon the name of the Lord who will fight on our behalf and render Satan powerless to proceed.

## *Inspire*

In order to battle temptation effectively, we must remember the three principles Jesus Himself used: resist temptation by appealing to Scripture in its correct context, praying for supernatural strength, and calling upon the name of our Savior and Lord for deliverance. We can't overcome sin on our own; we need the help of our Lord to overcome these areas in our lives. Even the Apostle Paul struggled with temptation and sin. In [Rom 7:19](#) he admits, "For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice." In more modern English, Paul states, "I don't do the things I should, but instead I do the bad things that I shouldn't." If Paul, who suffered tremendous persecution for the gospel, experienced this type of temptation and at times found himself caught in sin, we should expect no less for our own lives; we too will inevitably struggle with temptation and sin as long as we continue on this earth before Christ returns or calls us home.

Therefore, let us prepare ourselves to resist temptation and represent the character of Christ to the world around us. Jesus has sent the Holy Spirit to instruct, remind, and guide us in all situations. He didn't leave us



defenseless, but sent an Advocate who will defend us from the onslaught of the enemy if only we would submit to His leadership. We can't remain passive in the fight against temptation, but we must actively prepare ourselves by guarding our hearts and minds. We must exercise caution in what we consume (i.e. what we see, hear, and experience through our senses), we must be selective in where we go (whether physically or mentally), and we must choose our close relationships wisely. We need mature followers of Christ in our lives who will hold us accountable in love for our actions and gently correct us when we stray. Even more important than having accountability partners, we need to have a daily relationship with the Lord by reading and applying His Word and praying for His guidance so that we might not give in to temptation. Only a relationship with Christ that is cultivated daily can truly keep us from temptation and sin. Therefore, let us be transformed to resist the enemy and flee to the Lord so that we might reflect His character in all we do.

## ***Incorporate***

What are some tempting situations which you have encountered in the past? How has the Lord helped you to overcome those tempting situations?

How does succumbing to temptation misdirect our focus and thwart our calling and service to the Lord?

For the love of God and the sake of the world, why must we be consistent in our walk and ask the Lord to help us to avoid temptation? When we sin, although God forgives us, what effect does that have on the world around us?

*July 22, 2018*



*Transformed  
to Respond  
Matthew 4:12-25*

Focal Verse:

*"Then He said to them, 'Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.'"*

Matthew 4:19

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## Introduce

A group of excited and eager fishermen launched their boats early from the ramp on Lake Texoma for a two-day extravaganza called “Catch and Eat.” Although the wind churned the water of the lake as if it were the ocean, nothing could dampen the spirit of the men who were thoroughly prepared. Yet, no matter how much they had prepared in theory they still had to locate



the fish and navigate their boats to that spot in the lake. They had to go where the fish were; they couldn't merely sit in their boat at the dock with the hope of catching a bounty of fish—after all, fish don't just jump into the boat! Using the modern technology of sonar, the boats crisscrossed the lake multiple times. At times, they even tried covertly to follow experienced guides who hopefully would lead them to the fish. For hours they searched, only to bring in a paltry number of fish.

Fishing requires patience and persistence; some days like on Texoma only a few may be caught while on other days a bountiful harvest may be reaped. The next day on Lake Grapevine was that day for three seasoned fishermen! These men located where the fish were schooling and began to pull one fish after another from the water. Eventually, other boats began circling the area and anchoring their boats because they had seen the large number of fish that this one boat had accumulated. While the men on these boats watched and even attempted to cast their own lines with their baits attached, they could not even get one fish to bite. They

## Introduce

had the wrong bait and engaged in the wrong technique because they were attempting to fish on the top of the water rather than the bottom of the lake where the fish were. Eventually, the other boats gave up the search and left—leaving the one boat to accumulate twenty-five fish on the day. It wasn't a large haul, but it was satisfying and rewarding to have at least something to show for the effort—besides the rather large tree stump that was caught by one of them, twice!

Fishing can be a long, tiring process during which fish may not be caught at all. Upon returning from this two-day excursion, one of the fishermen in the boat that caught twenty-five fish could barely walk or even sit because of the bone-jarring ride to and fro on the lake. At one point when the boat hit a massive wave and became airborne, he nearly flew out of the boat before being pulled back by the skipper and landing with a thud on the boat deck. Despite all these obstacles, the trip was still a success because they went! In [Matthew 4:12-25](#), Jesus calls His disciples to be “fishers of men” by taking the gospel into all the world. Like fishermen, the disciples needed a specific guide, Christ, who would lead them to the fish. Moreover, they couldn't sit where they were and catch the fish. They also needed the right kind of bait, Scripture, along with patience and persistence because many would reject the gospel and few would respond. Let us be like these disciples and be transformed to respond to the call of Christ to share the gospel with all the world.

Key  
Question

What does it mean to be fishers of men?

### Matthew 4:12-17

#### A CALL TO FAITH:

After having **heard** that **John** the Baptist **had been** imprisoned, Jesus strategically **departed** the wilderness for **Galilee** where He would begin His ministry of calling and training disciples to follow Him (v. 12). Matthew briefly summarizes Jesus' itinerary in **Galilee** to emphasize the significance and purpose of His ministry as foreshadowed and described **by the prophet Isaiah** (v. 14). Upon **leaving** His hometown of **Nazareth**, Jesus spent time in **Capernaum** on the northwestern shore of the Sea of Galilee in the territory that belong to the tribes of **Zebulun and Naphtali** (v. 13). In this area during the eighth century BC, Isaiah proclaimed the Word of the Lord both to warn and encourage the people to turn to the Lord who would rescue them from a brutal war and an eventual occupation by the Assyrians. In [Isaiah chapters 7-11](#), God gives King Ahaz an ominous warning that the Assyrians would capture and destroy the Northern Kingdom of Israel; however, implicit within this message of doom was a message of hope of One who would come to deliver not only Israel, but also the entire world, from spiritual **darkness** and destruction.

In his characteristic style, Matthew demonstrates how Jesus fulfilled [Isaiah 9:1-2](#) (vv. 14-15). In the original context, Isaiah directed his message toward the people in **Zebulun and Naphtali** because they **sat in darkness**. **Darkness** here doesn't symbolize ignorance as if the people had no warning or didn't understand; instead, it symbolizes their spiritual wickedness (see [John 3:19](#)). Because of their own sinfulness and

## Instruct

willful disobedience to the Lord, they had brought upon themselves punishment in the form of being attacked and defeated by the nation of Assyria. The **darkness** so pervasive in the land would lead only to **death** (v. 14b). However, even in the midst of this spiritual **darkness** and **death**, the Lord offers hope and life, for **a great light has now dawned** to rescue them from their own destruction!



If you were Isaiah or Matthew, how would you describe the spiritual darkness in our day?

Question  
# 1

The inclusion of this prophecy is significant because it summarizes the purpose of Jesus' entire life and ministry. He has come into the world to rescue us from the mess that we have made by deliberately choosing to sin and rebel. When we sin, we don't do it ignorantly, as some people may claim, but we intentionally live in **darkness** to obscure our evil deeds. Even a young child to some extent knows right from wrong because after he has been repeatedly warned he will look to see if his parents are watching before participating in the activity again; he knows enough to avoid the inevitable punishment if caught. Despite our disobedience, Jesus came as the perfect sacrifice Who would pay the debt of **death** we owe for our sin and be an example for us to follow in how we ought to live in righteousness. In John 8:12, Jesus declares, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life." To have that life, we must have a relationship with the true **Light** through His



grace and mercy and our repentance from sin. Just as John had preached in the wilderness earlier, Jesus now takes up this same message: **repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand**. Above all, this call to faith in Christ leads to complete transformation and surrender not only for the disciples whom Jesus will call in these next verses, but to all who will follow Him in future generations.

In what ways has Christ called us to be transformed from darkness to light? What Scripture passages illustrate how this transformation looks?

Question  
# 2

### ***Matthew 4:18-22***

#### ***A CALL TO FOLLOW:***

Continuing to engage in ministry, Jesus shifts from mass evangelism and preaching to one-on-one discipleship. Still in **Capernaum**, Jesus was **walking by the Sea of Galilee** when He **saw two brothers** who were commercial **fishermen** (v. 18). **Simon**, also **called Peter**, and **Andrew** were actively engaged in their profession, **casting** their **net** into the lake. Approaching them, Jesus made a somewhat peculiar statement that caught their attention. In the form of a command, Jesus bids them to **follow** Him so that He could **make** them **fishers of men** (v. 19). Without questioning or hesitating, the pair **immediately** left everything and **followed Him** (v. 20).

Although Jesus doesn't explain it in this setting, we can know what it means to be **fishers of men** from the overarching context of both Matthew and the New Testament as a whole. Just before His ascension into heaven after His resurrection, Jesus commands His disciples,

## Instruct

including us, to “go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” ([Matt 28:19-20](#)). Therefore, to be **fishers of men** means that we verbally share the gospel by telling people how to have eternal life in Christ as well as training them how to live righteously, how to imitate Christ, how to continue to mature in their faith, and how to become productive followers who serve. Thus, it constitutes a comprehensive program for discipleship and mentorship in which we must engage daily both as the church and as individuals.

What does it mean to make a disciple? What is the danger if we stop after having *only* shared the gospel?

Question  
# 3

After calling Peter and Andrew, Jesus doesn't stop there, but finds **two** other **brothers** who were also commercial **fishermen** (v. 21). These **two brothers, James and John**, were in their **boat** along with their **father Zebedee**, repairing **their nets**. (Apparently, they had gone on the “Catch and Eat” outing with the men from FBCFW; they had holes in their nets.) Like the **two** others before them, they **immediately** exited the **boat** and **left their father to follow** Jesus (v. 22). With four disciples, Jesus now has the beginning of the team which He would invest over three years to train and prepare them for the ministry of proclaiming the Word of life. From these few verses, we can learn several valuable principles which we can apply in our lives. First, when Christ clearly calls, we ought to respond

**immediately!** When the Bible has clearly given us directives, such as evangelism, we shouldn't hesitate; we should go **immediately**. We should pray that God will give us opportunities to share, guide our conversations, give us the words to say, and prepare the hearts of individuals whom we meet, but we do not need to pray whether we should go or participate in evangelism. We've already been called and commanded to go if we have a relationship with Christ; therefore, let us put off anything that hinders and **immediately** respond to His call.

TOMORROW IS TOO LATE  
YESTERDAY IS OVER

AND

NOW

IS EXACTLY THE RIGHT MOMENT.

SO

START

Why should we respond immediately to the call to share the gospel or make disciples?

Question  
# 4

Second, we can observe that these four men made no excuses when Jesus called them. They were ordinary men, blue-collar workers, whom Jesus had called; they weren't the elite religious and political leaders of their day. Most likely they had received typical training as Jewish men of that day and had learned the promises of the Lord from Scripture; they probably observed the Law as best they could and participated festivals and attended meetings at the temple. In many ways, they were like most of us. Yet, why do we make so many excuses when Jesus calls us to serve Him in the church and proclaim the gospel? None of these men said: "I'm self-employed and have overhead costs that I must recoup; I don't have time"; "I've never been trained to be a **fisher of men**; I just don't think I have the skills"; "That's the job of the Levites in the temple. They're paid

## Instruct

through tithes and offerings to do those things; go and ask them”; or “I’m afraid it’s going to be too hard and too much work. We’ll face too much opposition from the religious and political leaders; people won’t respond to this message and may even threaten us or carry out persecution against us.” Instead of making excuses, let us follow the example of these men and respond **immediately** without excuse!

What types of excuses have you heard or even given for either sharing the gospel or serving in the church? How can we overcome these excuses?

Question  
# 5

Third, these men made Jesus the priority of their focus and completely surrendered to His call by leaving everything familiar behind and pursuing a relationship with Him. Jesus became the number-one priority in their lives above their careers, their



possessions, and their families; they left their job as **fishermen** and to a certain extent risked everything—their livelihoods, their ambitions, and even their security—to follow Christ. Although they followed Jesus and made Him the priority in their lives, it doesn’t mean that they abandoned their families; they simply had a different focus in leading them to Christ. They still had contact with their families (see [Matt 20:20-28](#)) and still cared

for their extended family when they became ill (see [Luke 4:38-40](#)). Like these disciples, therefore, we ought to make Christ the priority in our lives above everything else. We won't necessarily have a trouble-free life, but God will always make provision for us and we will always have contentment when we place Him first. When we make Him priority and seek Him first, everything else will fall into place ([Matt 6:33-34](#)).

What are the priorities in your life? How would these things be different if or when Christ is the priority?

Question  
# 6

Fourth, they learned to rely on Christ in every facet. When He calls them, Jesus doesn't simply say: "go and become **fishers of men**"; on the contrary, the command to **follow** Him means that He will be with them every step of the way. Just as God promised in Joshua 1:5, "As I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you nor forsake you," He would also be with the disciples whom He calls here. Moreover, Jesus doesn't call them and set them free to do whatever they want, but He trains and equips them. For this reason, He tells them **I will make you fishers of men**; therefore, the emphasis here lies with Jesus equipping them to become fishermen. Indeed, He spends a little over three years with them, teaching them Scripture and showing them how to engage in ministry. Likewise, we can rely on Jesus in the very same way; when He calls us, He equips us through the study of Scripture, through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, and through the mentorship of the local church. Jesus will never ask us to do something for which He has not prepared or equipped us and He will be with us every step of the way through the presence of His Spirit. Therefore, let us respond with trust and allow Him to guide our lives, helping us to

## Instruct

mature in Him to fulfill that to which He has called us.

How does Jesus equip us today to accomplish the tasks to which He has called us? How does God use the church in this equipping process?

Question  
# 7

Before we examine how Jesus fulfilled His call to reach the world, we must make a few remarks about sharing the gospel in comparison to fishing. First, we must go where the “fish” or people are; we can’t sit in the church and merely wait for them to come and hear the gospel. We need to be prepared to invite them to church as well as to share the gospel with them! Throughout the New Testament, we can observe how the disciples, the church, and missionaries like Paul went into the communities and the marketplaces to share the gospel. Second, we need to be equipped and trained to share the gospel. One could perhaps get lucky by just casting a hook into the water without being intentional by using the right bait and the correct technique to catch specific types of fish. Although Christ has indeed equipped us through Scripture, sometimes we need a seasoned veteran to take us and provide a model for us to follow—Christ did that for His disciples and Paul did that for his counterparts like Timothy and Titus. God has placed us in a local church so that we can equip and encourage one another, providing examples so that we can mature in our faith and become functioning disciples who can share the gospel.

Who in our church can you help train to become a fisher of men or if you need training who can you ask to help train you?

Question  
# 8

Finally, we must realize that every time that we share the gospel we may not see someone accept Christ as Savior—just like when we go fishing sometimes we get a few strikes while at other times we land one on the hook. Therefore, we must exercise patience and perseverance because we won't always see numerical results. Even some of the people to whom Jesus ministered face to face rejected Him! Yet, we must remember that the Holy Spirit does the convicting and draws people unto Him; we are the mere messengers whom Christ has equipped to share the good news. Regardless of whatever the results may be, we are successful when we go! As a result, let us be faithful and undaunted in our task to share the good news and allow the Holy Spirit to work through us to transform lives and change the world.

Why does success in sharing the gospel not necessarily depend upon the number of salvations we may observe?

Question  
# 9

### **Matthew 4:23-25**

#### **A CALL TO FULFILL:**

At the close of this chapter, Jesus begins modeling ministry for His disciples; this would be the same type of ministry to which He would call His disciples to fulfill. Jesus continued traveling throughout **Galilee teaching and preaching the gospel** (v. 23). He went to where the people were gathered in the **synagogues** to share the good news and meet their physical needs by **healing all kinds of sickness and disease**. Even though Jesus did meet their physical needs, the emphasis was on the **gospel** because it has eternal consequences. For this reason, Matthew puts emphasis on **preaching the gospel** by placing it first

## Instruct

in this list. The **healing of the sick** and the meeting of physical needs served to prove who Jesus was as well as showed His compassion for humanity.

However, Jesus realized the importance of meeting the spiritual needs of the people above all. What good would it have done if someone who was **sick, paralytic, epileptic**, or even **demon-possessed** were **healed** only to die without a relationship with the Savior because they never heard the gospel (v. 24)? Because Jesus performed these great signs and miracles, **a great multitude followed Him** throughout the region (v. 25). Some were simply attracted out of curiosity because of what they could get physically (see [John 6:26, 66](#)) while others like these four disciples surrendered everything and responded wholly to the call which Jesus had given to them. Therefore, let us be like these four men and respond faithfully to the call, having a relationship with Christ through which we become productive followers who take the gospel into all the earth—beginning right here in Fort Worth!

Why should we always present the gospel even when meeting basic physical needs? Why should the gospel be the priority and not the physical need?

Question  
# 11

## Inspire

For every one of us who has a relationship with Christ we have a call to fulfill and a responsibility to share the gospel. We are without excuse if we don't share the gospel because God has equipped us with His Word and



has placed us in a great church with mature believers who would gladly come alongside and mentor us. We don't have to fear sharing the gospel because God has given us everything we need and has empowered us with His Holy Spirit to enable us to speak on His behalf ([Acts 1:8](#)). In addition to God's Word, we have other resources and courses like F.A.I.T.H. and *Share Jesus without Fear* which can help us mature in our witness. These things supplement the Bible, but don't replace it! For those of us who haven't shared the gospel much, we can write Scripture references in the front of our Bible or even carry a card with the plan of salvation on it. There is no shame in being prepared and having references! There is shame when we let it prevent us from sharing the gospel. Therefore, let us be faithful to respond the call to which Christ has given us and take the gospel into all the world.

### EXAMPLE CHEAT SHEET

*We have a Problem: Sin*

([Rom 3:23](#))

*There is a Penalty: Death*

([Rom 6:23](#))

*God has a Plan: Jesus Christ*

([John 3:16](#); [1 Cor 15:3-4](#); [Eph 2:8-9](#))

*We Participate in God's Plan:*

*Confession and Repentance*

([Rom 10:8-9](#); [1 John 1:9](#); [Matt 4:17](#))

*God has a Promise: Eternal Life*

([Rom 6:23](#))

### In Prayer



*Spend time in prayer and ask God to give you divine appointments with people with whom you can share the gospel. Pray for those whom you know don't have a relationship with Christ specifically by name. As you pray, then be faithful to go and fulfill that to which Christ has called you!*

## *Incorporate*

What are you personally doing to share the gospel here in Fort Worth?  
What is your connect class as a group doing?

How can we more effectively equip others in our church to share the gospel daily?

Why is it important that when we see people accept Christ that we continue to follow up and get them plugged in to church?

*July 29, 2018*



# *Transformed to Righteousness*

## *Matthew 5:1-6*

Focal Verse:

*"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled."*

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Matthew 5:6

## Introduce

The world is constantly on a quest to find contentment and happiness in life, but that quest is like driving on an oval racetrack without a finish line; for most, it only ends when they run out of gas, realizing it's impossible to have contentment in this life apart from Christ. A sampling of advertisements will prove that contentment without Christ is a mere allusion. The candy bar, Snickers, promises to “Satisfy your Hunger” which is generally untrue because a few hours after waking from your sugar coma the unceasing pangs of hunger usually persist and cause you to overeat. Similarly, the frozen dinner brand Hungry-Man bids us to “Satisfy your Craving.” Although you may momentarily satisfy your longing, at some point it will generally return with vengeance and you will “crave” more and more—perhaps not a frozen dinner, but something even more costly and yet still not satisfying. We see all these advertisements while watching television on our couch with our favorite bag of Lays potato chips in hand. Their slogan accurately reflects their product—“Bet you can’t eat just one”—because when we look down we realize that we’ve eaten almost the whole bag.

Although we primarily discussed the lack of contentment with food, people still try to fill their lives with many other things which promise satisfaction. People attempt to find contentment in their relationships, in their careers, through money and possessions, through travel and



## Introduce

recreation, and in their hobbies. Temporary happiness may be obtained in some of these areas, but they almost always leave us wanting more. We're not satisfied with the length of our vacation, but always wish we could extend it. We never have enough money, but must work harder to afford the things we desire. Anything in this world will always leave a void in our lives because it doesn't have the power to transform and satisfy. Only Christ has that ability when we surrender our lives to Him. In Jesus' first extended opportunity to teach which we often refer to as the Sermon on the Mount, He reveals the keys to a content or blessed life. The primary key begins with having a relationship with Him in which we express remorse for our sin and are transformed to righteousness in Him. In this lesson, we will learn about the first four Beatitudes which describe how to have a content life in Christ and outline our call to be regenerated, remorseful, reverent, and righteous. Not only do these Beatitudes show us how to have contentment, but they also show how we ought to be conformed to the image of our Savior so that our transformation through Him may be evident to the world. Therefore, let us be transformed to righteousness as a testimony to our Savior who alone has the power to change us and grant us contentment.

### Key Question

What does it mean to be transformed into the righteousness of Christ?

### Matthew 5:1-3

#### ***A CALL TO BE REGENERATED:***

At the close of [chapter 4](#), Jesus' "fame" had spread throughout the region because of the miracles that He had performed, so a "great multitude" began to follow Him ([Matt 4:23-25](#)). As these **multitudes** gathered, Jesus recognized (i.e. "**seeing**") the opportunity to teach them what a transformed life looks like. Likely for better acoustics, Jesus ascended **a mountain** and sat **when His disciples came** so He might teach them the principles for having a content life (vv. 1-2). Moreover, the setting on **a mountain** would symbolically have great significance because One greater than Moses had now come; unlike Moses who had no power to transform the hearts of the people to follow the Law no matter how hard he tried, Christ can transform our hearts so radically that we desire to participate in His righteousness and no longer walk in the darkness of sin which leads to destruction.

With the crowds assembled, Jesus seized the opportunity to engage in a teachable moment. We too ought to look for teachable moments both to share the gospel and to instruct others to follow the pattern presented in Scripture for living. We must be sensitive to take advantage of these teachable moments because the opportunity may pass quickly and be much less effective. For example, the moment to deal with a wayward child is *now* because he will soon forget the incident and the lesson will be much less effective. Teachable moments can also be positive, not just for punishment, when someone is engaged and willing to learn. No matter how inconvenient or time-consuming it may appear, we need to

## Instruct

be aware of these moments so we can stop and teach.

Years ago, I had to observe an elementary school class as a requirement for an education course in college. In that class, the children were learning to count change; however, one girl was having a terribly hard time, so the teacher asked me to assist her. After watching her struggle, I noticed that she had the money disorganized in a pile which caused her great consternation. She could distinguish between the different denominations (5¢, 10¢, and 25¢) and she knew how to add, but she couldn't fathom how to organize the pile, so I showed her how to place all the same types of coins in one pile and then asked her to add them. By the end of the lesson, she could organize and count the money easily. At that time, I had seized the moment to teach her the principle and benefits of organization which would be a skill that she could use the rest of her life in other areas.



What teachable moments have you had in your life?

Question  
# 1

Jesus begins His lesson by declaring **blessed are the poor in spirit** (v. 3). To be **blessed** means to find favor with the Lord; some translations and interpreters will say "happy," but the Greek word means so much more than "happy." When God "blesses" us, we find our self-worth and contentment in Him alone. Certainly, God's blessings will make us happy



or joyous, but they also provide overwhelming peace and satisfaction because we depend wholly upon Him. For this reason, Jesus continues to say that we find blessing and favor with God when we **are poor in spirit**. Consequently, these first four Beatitudes deal with our relationship with the Lord through our regeneration or salvation whereas the latter ones concentrate more on the results of our salvation by revealing the transformation in our actions and responses toward other people.

Because these first four Beatitudes focus on having a proper relationship with the Lord, we must understand the phrase **poor in spirit** according to this context. The word **poor** doesn't mean impoverished—lacking money or worldly goods—but it means “humble.” Therefore, when we humble ourselves before the Lord, we will recognize our total dependence upon Him in every area of our lives, especially for salvation! Thus, to be **poor in spirit** means that we recognize our utter sinfulness and inability to rescue ourselves; we depend upon Him for our salvation. For us to have a place in **the kingdom of heaven**, we must swallow our pride, acknowledge our sinfulness, and declare our dependence upon the sacrificial death and glorious resurrection of Jesus Christ. Only through Christ can we have this hope of eternal life!

Why must we be “poor in spirit” to participate in the kingdom of heaven?

Question  
# 2

After we humble ourselves and depend upon the Lord for our salvation, we must learn to submit and depend upon Him in every area of our lives. For most of us, this type of dependence doesn't come naturally because we want to be in control of our own lives. As children, but particularly teenagers, most of us desperately wanted freedom from the constraints of

## Instruct

parental control. We wanted to make our own decisions regardless of the sound advice that our parents gave often based on their own experiences. Too many times, we had to learn the hard way that the advice they gave and the boundaries they set were actually meant for our own benefit. Hopefully, as adults, most of us can look back in our lives and see these times positively and recognize the benefits of depending upon someone who has experience to help make an informed decision.



In the same way, we must learn to depend upon our heavenly Father who wants us to live an abundant life in Him. God has promised to meet all our needs if only we would seek Him first and abide by His boundaries ([Matt 6:33-34](#)). As we learned last week, we need to depend upon the Lord and His Word to deliver us from temptation so that we don't sin against Him. When we sin, we don't lose our salvation or sever our relationship with Him; however, it does strain our fellowship and like Adam and Eve we try to hide from Him and justify our actions by making excuses. On the other hand, when we live righteously and are in right standing with Him, we will trust Him to supply all our needs and be content and find blessing in every area of our lives. Even if times get tough in life, God will never forsake us; He will always be there to meet our needs no matter what they are and help us to endure these times of difficulty: in times of lack or financial stress, God will provide; in times of emotional distress, God will offer comfort and peace; in times of decision-making, God will give wisdom generously;

and in times when we face problems in our relationships, God will grant patience, reconciliation, and healing if only we would seek Him first and depend upon Him alone!

In what ways have you learned to depend upon God? How has depending upon Him daily helped you to mature in your faith?

Question  
# 3

### Matthew 5:4

#### ***A CALL TO BE REMORSEFUL:***

The second Beatitude in this list pronounces a blessing upon **those who mourn** because **they shall be comforted** (v. 4). Like being **poor in spirit**, this act of mourning centers upon our relationship with the Lord. In this context, Jesus is not primarily talking about offering **comfort** to someone who's experienced a tragedy or hardship in life—although He does promise **comfort** and mercy in these circumstances ([2 Cor 1:3-11](#)). Instead, the mourning to which He refers here is a call to be remorseful for sin. In [2 Corinthians 7:9-10](#), Paul captures this idea by showing that remorse for sin leads to true repentance: “Now I rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that your sorrow led to repentance. For you were made sorry in a godly manner, that you might suffer loss from us in nothing. For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death.” Paul isn't gloating or taking joy in their situation, but he does rejoice that in the midst of this situation that they have come into true repentance which leads to life rather than destruction.

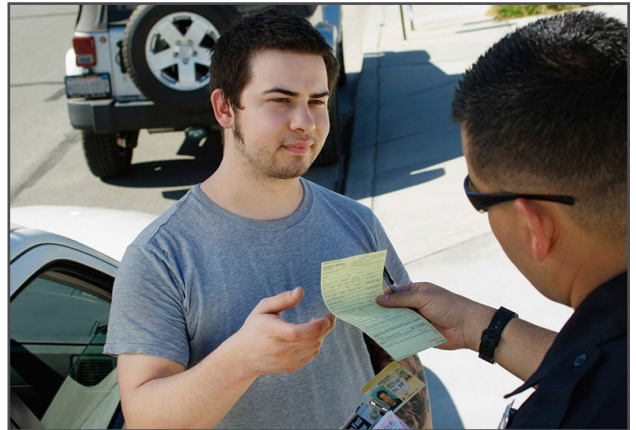
Why should we mourn over sin?

Question  
# 4

## Instruct

Unfortunately, we live in a world in which many people feign sorrow over sin. They aren't truly sorry for their egregious actions and heinous crimes; they are only sorry that they got caught. In order to elicit a favorable response from a person whom they've offended, they pretend to be remorseful for what they have done in hopes of reducing the amount of punishment that they receive or the friction caused in a relationship. When we aren't truly sorry for our sin, it won't produce lasting life-change; it may alter the behavior momentarily, but those who aren't truly repentant will continue to make the same mistakes because they seem to get away with it. It's like standing before a judge in a traffic court for a speeding violation. Perhaps most of us would feel some regret or remorse over the action and plead for leniency to avoid the fine or ask for deferred adjudication. If the judge grants deferred adjudication, most of us have the day marked on our calendars when the ticket is expunged from our record and we no longer have to be careful about obeying all the traffic laws!

Today, many people are not only defiant when it comes to true repentance and brokenness, but they actually boast in sin. The immoral actions over which people should have shame are in many cases celebrated by both secular society and the church! This isn't a new problem, but it arose even during the time of Jeremiah. The prophet writes, "Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination?"



No! They were not at all ashamed; Nor did they know how to blush. 'Therefore they shall fall among those who fall; at the time I punish them, they shall be cast down,' says the Lord" (Jer 6:15). The people had become so oblivious and desensitized to sin that they weren't even ashamed over their actions. In the New Testament, Paul faced this same problem with the church in Corinth. Instead of dealing with sin in their congregation appropriately, they actually celebrated it! Paul strongly condemns them, "And you are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he who has done this deed might be taken away from among you" (1 Cor 5:2).

In what ways do you see a lack of sorrow over sin in our society and even within the "church?"

Question  
# 5

Sin, whether in our own lives or in the world around us, should cause us to **mourn**; this sorrow should then lead to true repentance through which we attain peace with God (see [Rom 5:1](#)). We have a God who wants a relationship with us and has offered it to us through His Son through our faith which leads to true repentance in grieving for our sin. Although we should **mourn** for our sin which causes us to repent, we shouldn't dwell or become stuck on mourning for our past sins that have already been forgiven by Christ. God gives us **comfort** in knowing that He has dealt with our sin once and for all and when we repent we can have a relationship with Him because He has canceled our sin debt. Therefore, we can have **comfort** in knowing that our sins have been forgiven, forgotten, and removed as far as the east is from the west ([Psalm 103:12](#); [Heb 8:12](#)). We should learn from our past mistakes and seek guidance from the Holy Spirit to avoid repeating them, but we must take **comfort** in the fact that

## Instruct

the Lord remembers them no more and doesn't hold them against us.

How does God offer us comfort in knowing our sins have been forgiven once-and-for-all in Christ?

Question  
# 6

In addition, when we have a relationship with the Lord and depend upon Him for everything, He will offer us **comfort** during difficult times of affliction in our lives. The enemy often attacks most fiercely when we have a healthy relationship with the Lord so that he can get us off track and focused on our own selfish desires rather than the desire to glorify the Lord. God never promises us a trouble-free



life, but He does promise that He will help us through times of distress in our lives. In [Daniel 12:1](#), speaking of the last days, the Lord states to His spokesman, "And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time. And at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone who is found written in the book." No matter what stressful times we may endure, God has promised to deliver those of us who have repented and have a relationship with Him. Both hope and certainty are found in this promise of the Lord!

In what ways does God provide comfort during times of stress, difficulty, or even persecution?

Question  
# 7

### A CALL TO BE REVERENT:

In the third Beatitude, Jesus announces **blessed are the meek** because **they will inherit the earth** (v. 5). Today, people often misunderstand the concept of meekness because some see it as a gentle person who doesn't stand or fight for anything; **meek** people are often characterized as soften-spoken, passive, non-confrontational, and unassuming in appearance. However, in this context, **meek** means that one exercises humility by waiting upon the Lord and serving Him with patient endurance in a fallen world; it doesn't mean that we allow people to walk over us and trample our rights and knowledge in the Word of God. Instead, we find security in our relationship with the Lord to endure the trials and storms of life. In this Beatitude, Jesus actually appeals to Psalm 37:9 and 11: "For evildoers shall be cut off; but those who wait on the Lord, they shall inherit the earth . . . But the meek shall inherit the earth, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace." Again, in the context of these verses, being **meek** refers to submitting to the Lord and His guidance because we have a relationship with Him; thus, it becomes an extension of the transformation that has occurred in our lives: 1) we are regenerated (v. 3), we truly repent (v. 4), and we surrender control to Him (v. 5).

What does true meekness in our lives look like in Christ?

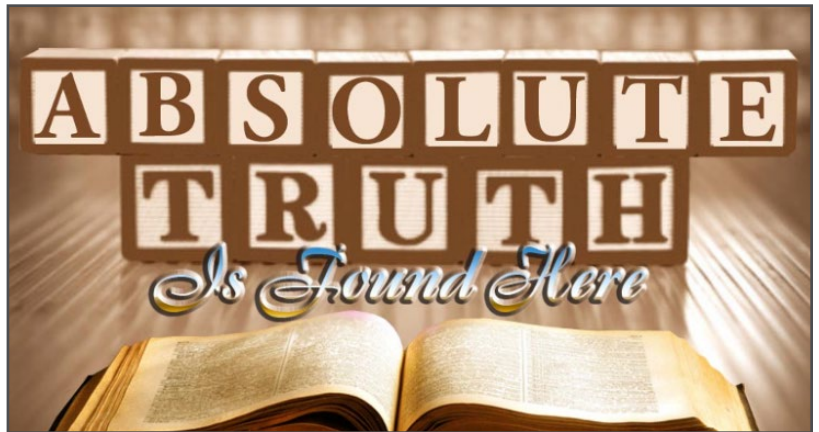
Question  
# 8

Although meekness or humility can be exercised in many ways, here it means to have the right perspective of ourselves, our Savior, and the world in which we live. When we have the right perspective, we will see ourselves

## Instruct

and the world around us as Christ does; evil will not be victorious in the end, so we don't have to fear persecution, but we can stand boldly on the principles of God's Word. To be **meek**, therefore, doesn't mean that we can't stand for what is true and right according to Scripture. Instead, we must follow Jesus' example in battling with wayward-thinking people. He interacted with the religious elite with compassion, conviction, and strength; Jesus stood for what was right and condemned that which was wrong! For example, we wouldn't consider Jesus **meek** according to the world's standards when He cleansed the temple with authority and interpreted Scripture with conviction in describing how it had become a den of thieves. Yet, He had the right perspective and acted with humility by following the lead of the Father to condemn the false religiosity of the day.

In the same way, we are **meek** when we surrender to the Lord and wait upon Him to guide our lives and instruct us how to live and act according to the plan which He has for us. Although we shouldn't be intentionally offensive when we speak the truth or share the gospel, we can't let the world via political correctness



dictate the content of what we share. Instead, we must remain vocal about God's truth in Scripture and defend it with humility and meekness when it is attacked or questioned. Just as Jesus did, we can act with boldness to



stand for what is right and reject what is wrong when we live in a fallen world. When we stand for the truth and for what is right, we can expect flack and even persecution (see [Matt 5:10](#)); however, we must not be dissuaded in our pursuit of the Lord and to stand on His side in matters of doctrine, truth, and morality no matter what the world may say.

Even though we are called to be meek, why should we stand against sin in the world and stand for the principles in God's Word?

Question  
# 9

### Matthew 5:6

#### ***A CALL TO BE RIGHTEOUS:***

In the fourth Beatitude of this series, Jesus promises that **those who hunger and thirst for righteousness will be filled** (v. 6). In the Greek, the words **hunger** and **thirst** are intensive and mean famished and parched. In other words, it's not an ordinary **hunger** and **thirst**, but it constitutes an insatiable appetite or desire **for righteousness**. In other words, we long **for righteousness** in Christ above anything else in our lives; we want to please and glorify Him with our actions, attitudes, and thoughts! When we have a relationship with Christ, our behavior will be transformed according to His **righteousness**. Our desires will change and it will satisfy our longings when we do what is right according to His standards. In Psalm 107:9, the psalmist exclaims, "For He satisfies the longing soul and fills the hungry soul with goodness." Only Christ can satisfy because only He can transform us and instill within us the intended purpose for which we were created—to worship the Lord fully and faultlessly.

Without Christ, the world can never achieve satisfaction because people

## Instruct

wander aimlessly and seek to fill the void in their lives with material things that last only temporarily. For this reason, Isaiah asks the people, “Why do you spend money for what is not bread, and your wages for what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, and let your soul delight itself in abundance.” The only satisfaction that lasts is when we have a relationship with Christ and we seek to live righteously. Although we may err from time to time, we don’t habitually live in sin. Consequently, we seek to glorify the Lord with our lives and point others into a relationship with Him. Like the food listed in the introduction which promises to satisfy, anything other than Christ will always leave us hungry and thirsty and wanting more; therefore, let us be transformed in Christ through regeneration, remorse for our sin, reverence for our Savior by allowing Him to lead, and righteous living which represents Him well to others.

Why can only righteousness in Christ satisfy us?

Question  
# 10

## Inspire

Although the Lord had commanded Israel not to eat shrimp as the refuse scavenger of the sea ([Lev 11:9-12](#)), the taste of this delicacy has always been a weakness of mine. In Kentucky, we had a low-class steakhouse called Ponderosa and as a child I remember a time when they had all-you-could-eat popcorn shrimp. I was in heaven when my parents announced that they would take us to this extravaganza. My first plate of shrimp couldn’t arrive fast enough, but when it did arrive it wasn’t

enough to satisfy my craving. I would order another plate, and another, and another—until eventually my mother informed the waitress not to bring anymore because I had had enough. I vociferously objected and declared, “But I’m still hungry!” Although I don’t remember the exact number of shrimp that I had consumed, it had to be well over 100 pieces. Yet, I could have continued to eat because I longed for those crusty crustaceans and wasn’t remotely satisfied.

Life without Christ will never satisfy—just as these small, insignificant pieces of shrimp couldn’t satisfy me. When we have a relationship with Him, we should long to live righteously; only then can we be satisfied with His presence and provision in our lives. Even though life with Christ may be hard at times and difficulties may arise, serving Him faithfully each day is ultimately satisfying. As tough as ministry may be and as long as it sometimes takes to see results, we know that God is faithful and He will draw people unto Himself through us when we submit to His leadership. Therefore, our reward in ministry comes when we see people begin a relationship with Christ and mature in their faith with Him! Let us evaluate our own relationship with Him. Are we content in Christ or do we have areas in which we need to surrender to Him so that He can give us satisfaction as only He can?

## ***Incorporate***

In what ways does the world try to find contentment? Why do they always fail?

What does true contentment in our lives look like in Christ?

How can you find contentment in serving the Lord in a local church?

# ***Journal: Document God's Work***

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July 2018

Written and Published by  
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