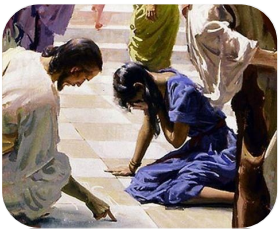


Jesus – “The Truth will set you Free”

In each of the different studies, we will be looking at a story from the Gospels where Jesus meets one or more people. We will explore the story, and what we can learn from it.

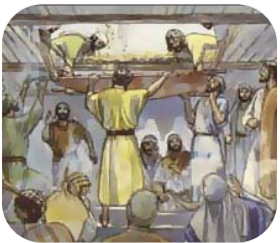
The theme running through this month is forgiveness. As Jesus reaches out in situations that are impossible, his words bring liberation.

We will think about whether there is a challenge in the story for us today, and how we can respond to what we have been reading.



The woman caught in adultery
John 8:1 - 11

The Miracles of Jesus make us wonder at all that Jesus is able to do. We are reminded that Jesus is the creator and sustainer of all things.



The man lowered through the roof
Luke 5: 17 - 26

It is wonderfully re-assuring to know that Jesus is with us and understands our needs. Yet Jesus had to humble himself, coming from heaven to earth.



The man from Gerasene
Luke 8: 26 - 40

Jesus was able to overcome all the rules of his day to bring healing and hope. His authority is something that continues to challenge us today.

BIBLE STUDY QUESTIONS



February 2013

“the Truth will set you free”

Read John Chapter 8: 1 - 11

This encounter provokes so many questions. Were they trying to kill the woman, or was she simply bait to try and catch Jesus? Was this a desperate attempt to see whether Jesus would keep to the Jewish Law and so be implicated against the Roman Law?

- **Whatever the circumstances, the woman had broken the Law. Why do you think Jesus stopped her being punished?**
- **Many who end up in prostitution have no choice and are trapped. Do we see our own sins as traps or can we escape?**
- **We read that it is the older ones who were the first to leave. Why do you think this was?**

When the crowd looked upon the woman, she was nothing more than a law breaker. What Jesus saw was a child of God needing to be set free. He saw what others could not or would not see.

- **When we encounter people, what do we see? What they do? What they are? What they could become? What would enable us to see people as Jesus sees them?**
- **Jesus taught us to pray “forgive us as we forgive others.” How seriously do we take our need to be forgiving people?**
- **Does our need to forgive others mean that we are too accepting of the wrong things people do?**

Read Hebrews Chapter 4: 14 to 5:10 & Romans Chapter 6:1 - 14

This wonderful section in Hebrews reminds us that Jesus fully understands our human condition, yet through his sinless life and subsequent death, we can truly hope and trust in his forgiveness. Romans teaches that if we are truly forgiven then we are set free to live for God.

- **How reassuring is it to know how Jesus will treat us when we come to him asking him to set us free?**
- **Jesus said “Go and sin no more.” What will enable us to live the life that Jesus expects of those he has set free?**
- **Many Christians have been outspoken for the need to preserve a traditional understanding of marriage. Should the church try and give moral guidelines, or simply be there to pick up those who struggle and fall?**

THE WOMAN CAUGHT IN ADULTERY

In addition to the study questions opposite you might want to think or read more about some of the issues that the readings raise:

- Nelson Mandela entitled his autobiography “Struggling to Forgive.” Is forgiveness appropriate in such circumstances or should people have been made to pay for what they did?
- Sport now regularly argues for “Truth and Reconciliation” as the way to address past wrongs. What kind of forgiveness is offered or sought as part of these processes? Is the forgiveness of any other than God actually worth having?



Here are some suggestions of things you could be praying for, on your own, or as part of a group:

- There are many people who think or feel that the church has rejected them, that they were not worthy. Pray for them that they may know that Jesus welcomes all who come to him with grace and forgiveness.
- Jesus showed courage to speak words of gentleness and wisdom. Pray for the New Archbishop of Canterbury, that when called upon to speak in the name of the church, that he will have words of gentleness, wisdom and conviction.

Read Luke 5: 17 - 26

This is another story in which we see Jesus reaching out in an unusual way, to the surprise of his listeners. He responds to the faith shown by friends. Most clearly though, Jesus understands that our biggest need is for forgiveness and a relationship with our heavenly father.

- The friends of the man demonstrate their faith by taking him to Jesus. How could we enable our friends in need to have an encounter with Jesus?
- Jesus' actions make it clear that he wants the people to understand that he is God. They clearly struggled with the idea that God would come to meet them. Do people today?
- Jesus challenges people to think about what is most important. Do we pray for what is most important?

Many have argued that Jesus came to do good, and that his death was a tragic end to a good life. Yet we see here that Jesus is clear that his ministry is about restoring broken relationships with the Father, something that requires him to go to the cross.

- As Christians, we want to be people who are doing good things for others. Do we give enough attention to helping people understand their need for a relationship with God?
- Jesus' claims made him unpopular with many of the religious people of his day. Should we do the same today?

Read Isaiah 52: 13 to 53:12

Isaiah reminds us that Jesus doesn't just offer words of forgiveness, he will carry with his own body the brokenness, rejection and pain of humanity. It is because he will be so wounded that he is a caring and insightful healer.

- Theologians speak of Jesus as the wounded healer. How does Jesus' example help us in sharing his love, words of wisdom and comfort, and healing?
- Paul prays that he will share in the fellowship of Christ's sufferings. Should Christians be more willing to embrace suffering for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven?
- What part does our faith play in the healing of those we pray for?

THE MAN LOWERED THROUGH THE ROOF

In addition to the study questions opposite you might want to think or read more about some of the issues that the readings raise:

- Last month we saw that the Kingdom of Heaven was described as a place of abundance and wealth. This week we see that it is also built on suffering. Where should the balance lie today?
- In an age when NHS staff are prosecuted for wearing crosses at work, should Christians in the caring professions (doctors, nurses, carers) offer to pray with people they meet in their work?



Here are some suggestions of things you could be praying for, on your own, or as part of a group:

- The faith of friends is so important in this reading. Ask God to increase your faith so that you can pray and act more effectively in response to the needs you see around you.
- Pray for those who care for people in need, in particular for those who are suffering long term illness or are approaching death.
- Many of the ethical and medical debates today lack Christian input or understanding. Pray for wisdom and care for those in government and seeking to influence government on medical ethics.

Read Luke chapter 8: 26 - 40

Stories of demon possession are very common in the New Testament. Whilst it makes many of us uncomfortable today, this is a fantastic example of how Jesus can transform a life that is totally out of control and broken. There is much that we can learn.

- The huge profile that betting has today is coupled with tales of huge losses and debts incurred. What other examples are there of things that enslave people today?
- Jesus has complete authority over the demons. Modern Christian writers like Nicky Cruz testify to the power of Jesus in healing them from addiction. Do we really believe them?
- Often people say “it’s just the way I am” when talking about their struggles. How can we help people see what they could become with Jesus?

Running through this section of Luke is the idea of “freed from” and “freed for.” We see this here in the commissioning of the healed man. Earlier in the chapter we are told to be like lamps lit and placed upon a stand for all to see.

- The man returned to his community to be a visible sign of the difference God made in his life. Could we do the same? What are the things that might stop us shining brightly?

Read Galatians, chapter 3 verse 23 to chapter 4 verse 7

Paul makes it clear here that we were once enslaved, yet through Jesus have been set free and made children of God. Yet when he wrote there were still masters and slaves, still distinctions between male and female, rich and poor.

- Some theologians have argued that Jesus as liberator is the model we must follow, and so we must seek to establish equality, political freedom, and eradicate poverty. To what extent do you think this is what the church should be doing?
- Paul describes people as being “locked up” without Jesus. Most people today would say the opposite. Why?
- Rick Warren has made popular the idea of “A purpose driven life.” What might some of our priorities be from what you have read in today’s study?

THE MAN FROM GERAENE

In addition to the study questions opposite you might want to think or read more about some of the issues that the readings raise:

- Liberation Theology argued that the only way to help Latin America was by fighting to change the politics of the country. Why has political upheaval failed to transform the life of so many of Latin America’s poor communities and slums?
- Addressing Mental Health issues is extremely complex. How can the idea of demon possession be destructive, and how might it be helpful in some cases?



Here are some suggestions of things you could be praying for, on your own, or as part of a group:

- Jesus was not afraid to go to a man who was kept chained. Pray for the Christians who God has called to go in to our prisons, to work at rehabilitation, restoration and reconciliation.
- It is very easy by the things that we say or do, to trap people in a pattern of behaviour. pray that you may be someone who helps to set people free, that you are someone they could trust.
- Ask the Lord to help you with areas of your life that you really struggle with and feel as if you are not in control of.