

The Adventures of Jesus Christ

Episodes from the Life of Jesus
for Young Readers

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Chapter I. Jesus and the Word

THERE'S ONLY THE FATHER, SON, AND THE HOLY SPIRIT

In the beginning, before the earth was created, before there were people, before there were angels, before there were trees, and rocks, and animals, there was the Word. The Word was with God, and the Word was God. This Word is Jesus, the Son of God, who existed from the very start of all things.

Imagine a vast and endless void, a space where nothing existed. There was no light, no sound, and no life. There was not a thing. In fact, even this space you imagine did not exist. Yet the Word was there. He was not lonely. He was not empty. He was there in perfect unity with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit.

The Word was full of power, and wisdom, and love. He was full of life, and he was creative. Everything that would come into being was created through him. The Bible says, "All things were made through him, and nothing was made except through him." Every planet and every star, including the sun and the moon, was created through the Word. Every land, every river, and every creature that would eventually roam the earth, all came into existence because of the Word's power and wisdom.

When God began to create, he spoke, and the Word was there to make it happen. God said, "Let there be light!" And there was light. The sun and the moon, the lands and the oceans, the trees, and animals, and insects, were all made this way by God through the Word.

Then God also made humanity in his own image. He created people as men and women. He took stuff from the earth and formed the body of man. He breathed life into this body and it came alive. This was the first man, Adam.

Then God took stuff from the man's body to make the woman. She was called Eve, the first woman. Together, they were the husband and wife, the first married couple. Later, they would become the first father and the first mother. God blessed them, and commanded them to multiply and to manage the Garden of Eden.

They were made with the ability to manage God's creation, including the lands, the plants and the trees, and the animals. Unlike the trees and the animals, they were made in God's image, so that they could also understand God. They could listen to God and speak with God.

God called all of this very good. And the Word was there.

At first, Adam and Eve lived in harmony with God. They had everything they wanted. They were surrounded by love and beauty. They had plenty of food and a big place to live in. And most importantly, they had God.

But one day, Satan came to the man and woman. He was the enemy of God and of humanity. He came as a serpent and deceived them, and led them to disobey God. When a person disobeys God in his thoughts and actions, this is called sin.

Everything changed in an instant. Sin entered their hearts and broke their relationship with God. You see, God made them good inside and out, but when they disobeyed God, they became bad inside and out. They were even embarrassed to be seen by God and tried to hide from him.

This was also how many other problems started. It is possible to become sick and to die because of this. Sin was how it started. Sin also caused problems with the earth, the animals, and other things God created.

But God did not give up on people! Right away, God made them clothes with the skin of an animal, and he promised that a future descendent of the woman, many generations later, will defeat the enemy, Satan.

God said that although the serpent would injure this man, the man would step on the serpent's head and crush it. He would defeat the enemy for humanity. This man would take back everything that was lost because of sin, and he would gain even more for humanity.

Who was this man that God was talking about? Where would this hero come from? Here is the wonderful thing. You see, the Word would become a man and do all of this to save people, to save you and me.

This is why I want to tell you about the Word. The adventures of Jesus Christ started long before he became a man.

Chapter 2. Jesus and the Hero

GOD WILL SEND SOMEONE TO FIX THIS

God not only created everything through the Word, but God also sustains and controls everything through the Word. So as the ages passed, the Word watched over creation and people.

God also talked to people through the Word. In different ways, God caused people to know about himself. He chose some people to receive the words that he spoke to them and to receive the visions that he showed them. Then they told others what they heard and what they saw from God. These people were called prophets. God even gave them power to work miracles.

God could talk to anyone he wanted, but he decided to talk to the prophets much more often. But it would not remain like this forever. Later, after Jesus Christ had come, anyone who follows God through Jesus Christ could become like the prophets. But it would be many centuries before this happened. Meanwhile, the prophets kept talking about the day when the Word would come to earth as a man.

Now the stage is set for the most amazing, the most interesting, and the most important story ever told. This is the story of God, of the Word, and of people like you and me. This is the story of creation, of sin, and of rescue and redemption. This is the story of love and faith. This is the story of what happened in the past, what is happening in the present, and what will happen in the future.

Remember that God told Adam and Eve that a hero would come and take back everything that they lost? God commanded the prophets to keep talking about this hero that would come. And God gave more and more information about him. People continued to hear about this promise for many years – thousands of years.

God kept telling them that a Savior was coming. After Adam and Eve disobeyed God, all of us fell into trouble and could not save ourselves. The hero that God predicted would be the one to save us. This is why he would be the ultimate Savior, someone who saves and rescues people from the worst trouble and bring them back to God again. This Savior would not be like one of the prophets, but he would be greater than all of the prophets. He was going to be God's own Son, the Word.

God knows all things. He is the ruler of all things, and he knows what he is going to do. So God knows the future. And he talked about the future with his prophets. One prophet was named Isaiah, and he lived hundreds of years before Jesus was born. Isaiah said, "A child will be born to us, a Son will be given, and He will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting

Father, Prince of Peace." God was telling everyone that his Son would come as a little baby and would grow up to be the Savior of the world.

Isaiah was not the only one. Another prophet named Micah said that this special baby would be born in a small town called Bethlehem. Many other prophets talked about the Word, or the Son of God, becoming a man to save God's people. And each prophet added more details in his predictions.

God always keeps his promises, and he always fulfills his predictions. Even though it took a long time for the Savior to come, the people knew that they could trust God. God never forgets what he said. When you read that God said something in the Bible, you can believe that it is true or that it will happen.

God knew everything that would happen even before he made Adam and Eve, and God knew everything that he was going to do to save people like you and me. So from the very beginning, God had a plan to send Jesus to earth.

Jesus, who had been with God as the Word since before time began, was going to come and rescue the people. He would show them how much God loved them and how they could live by trusting him. The world was about to witness the greatest promise ever made come true.

Chapter 3. Jesus and the Angel

LOOK, I BRING YOU GOOD NEWS!

In a small town called Nazareth, there was a young woman named Mary. She probably did not seem very important. There was nothing about her that would make people stop and think, "There is something special about her. Let's pay attention to her. She will become famous one day."

They never expected that, even hundreds of years later, people would still know about Mary. But God was about to change all that. In fact, he was not only about to change her life, but he was about to change the world. The thing that God talked about for hundreds of years was about to happen.

It began when God sent an angel to visit Mary. The angel was called Gabriel. Angels are God's servants and messengers. They work for God. People usually cannot see them, but when God wants them to appear to people, then they can become visible to people. They sometimes bring important announcements and instructions.

Gabriel appeared to Mary and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored. The Lord is with you!" Mary was surprised. She wondered why the angel would say something like this to her.

But the angel continued, "Mary, do not be afraid. God has decided to show you special favor. You will become pregnant and have a son, and his name will be Jesus. He will be a great man. He will be called the Son of the Most High God. And God will give him the throne of David, his ancestor, and his kingdom will never end."

Mary asked, "How can this happen? I am not married, and I am still a virgin." The angel assured her, "The Holy Spirit will come to you, and the child will be conceived by the power of God. So the baby will not be sinful like all the children of Adam and Eve. He will be the Son of God. For nothing is impossible with God."

An angel also appeared to Joseph, who would be Mary's husband. The angel said to him, "Mary is pregnant, but do not be afraid to make Mary your wife. The child inside her is conceived by the Holy Spirit. She will have a son, and you will call him Jesus. He will save his people from their sins."

Mary believed what God said to her through the angel. This is the difference between someone who can follow God and someone who cannot follow God. The angel said that God would cause a miracle to happen to Mary, and she believed it.

If God says in the Bible that a miracle will happen to you, will you believe it? Many people say that they follow God, but when God talks about miracles happening to them, they do not believe. But Mary believed, and she said, "I am God's servant. May everything God said about me come true."

God promised Adam and Eve that he would send a hero to take back everything that they lost, and to restore everything that they had broken. Then God told the prophets more and more details about this person who would come to save you and me.

This hero, this Savior, would fix everything that was wrong with the world and everything that was wrong with people, so that through him we can follow God again, to love God again, to talk to God again, and to live with God again. All of this was coming true!

Mary became important and special, but she became that way only because God connected her with the Word. She never did anything herself that made her special. Mary was special only because of Jesus. She remained special only because she stayed connected to Jesus. After all, these were not her adventures, but the adventures of Jesus Christ.

Chapter 4. Jesus and the Manger

THE HERO IS HERE, BUT HE'S A BABY

God had promised to send a hero, a Savior, to make everything right between himself and humanity. The time had finally come. The Word of God was going to be born into the world as a man, and his name would be Jesus. Although he was the Son of God, the Word who created everything, his birth would not happen in the temple. And although as Jesus he would become the king of all nations, he would not be born in a palace.

God delights to use the small, weak, and unimportant to accomplish great things. People are often impressed with expensive things, big places, educated people and wealthy people. Of course, God can use them to do great things too! If you are educated and wealthy, and if you believe God and humble yourself, then your education and wealth will not be a problem. In the hands of God, these are good things, not bad things.

But God will often start something great with broken things and in unimportant places. He will often choose uneducated people and unwealthy people to speak truths and work miracles. As these people follow God, his teachings and his blessings can make them educated, wealthy, and successful in every way. There are many examples in the Bible.

One reason God does this is to surprise the people who are proud of what they have. But what do you have that does not come from God in the first place? No one should brag that his education or his wealth was the thing that helped God spread his message. No one should claim that he brought something to God that made God successful. Every person needs God, but God does not need any person. God wants to work with us because he loves us and honors us.

Mary would soon have her baby. Meanwhile, she had to take a long trip with her husband, Joseph. They traveled to a town called Bethlehem because the king wanted to count all the people in his kingdom. Bethlehem was far away, and it took them many days to get there.

When they reached Bethlehem, they needed a place to stay. But because so many people had come to the town for the counting, all the inns were full. Every place they went, there was no room.

Finally, they were told that there was a stable where they could stay. A stable is a place where animals like donkeys and cows are kept. It was not a fancy place, but it was warm and quiet.

Mary and Joseph settled down in the stable, and Jesus was born that night. The baby's first bed was a manger, a box that animals eat from. Mary wrapped him up in cloths and laid him there.

People would have expected the Word in human body to be born in a temple or a palace, but he was born in a stable. Jesus had arrived. God had sent his Son into the world, just as he promised.

In a nearby area, some shepherds were out in the fields, watching over their flocks of sheep. An angel appeared to them and the light of God shone all round them. The shepherds became very nervous, but the angel said, "Do not be afraid. I have come with good news that will bring joy to people everywhere! Today, the Savior has been born in Bethlehem. He is Christ the Lord. You will find him wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

"Christ" is the title for the hero that God promised to send. The word "Messiah" means the same thing. The word "Lord" means king and ruler, and in some situations, it means God. At this time, the people saw Jesus as only a human baby. But many people will see that he was much more. Soon, he would become the Lord Jesus Christ – the God-King Jesus Christ.

But let us not get too far ahead. After the shepherds were told to visit the baby in the manger, the sky was filled with a large group of angels, singing and praising God. They were celebrating the birth of Jesus. The angels knew that Jesus was the Word, the one who created them and rule over them. He was greater than all of them. They must have been in awe that the Word has come to earth as a baby.

The shepherds were probably filled with curiosity and excitement. They hurried to Bethlehem to see this baby the angels had spoken about. When they arrived, they found Mary, Joseph, and the newborn Jesus, just like the angel told them.

The shepherds were so happy that they ran to tell everyone about the wonderful thing God had done. Then they told many other people about what had happened and what the angel said about this child.

God always carries out his plans. He always keeps his promises. That night, what God said long ago, and what God repeated many times for hundreds of years, finally happened. And the world would never be the same.

Chapter 5. Jesus and the Star

WHERE'S THIS HUGE STAR TAKING US?

Far away to the east from the town of Bethlehem, a group of wise men had been studying the stars. These men were sometimes called Magi. They were scholars, knowledgeable in science, the stars, and ancient prophecies. One night, a bright and unusual star appeared in the sky, unlike anything they had seen before. This caught their attention.

The wise men had read ancient writings that spoke of a great king who would be born, one who would bring light to the world. They believed that this star was a sign that this king had arrived. Excited by the discovery, the wise men decided to set out on a long journey to find this king and honor him.

They gathered their supplies and brought many precious gifts. Then they set off toward the west in the direction of the bright star. After many days of travel, the wise men arrived in the city of Jerusalem, the capital of Israel. They began asking, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We have seen his star and have come to worship him."

This made a stir in Jerusalem, and Herod soon heard about it. At this time, Herod was the king of Judea, so this news was a direct threat to him. If a new king had been born according to prediction, so that even wise men from far away knew about it, did it not mean that this boy was destined to replace Herod?

King Herod became nervous about this. The wise men were looking for a newborn king, and this king was so important that even ancient prophets talked about him. Herod understood that these wise men were looking for the Christ, the Messiah. How could Herod compare to something like that? He wanted to find this boy and stop him from becoming king.

So Herod called together some priests and scholars. He asked them where the Christ was predicted to be born. They answered, "The prophet wrote that the ruler will be born in Bethlehem, in Judea."

Then Herod called the wise men and sent them to Bethlehem. He said to them, "Go search diligently for the child. When you have found him, make sure to let me know. I would also like to come and worship him." But it was a lie. Herod wanted the wise men to find the child for him, so that he could stop the child from becoming king.

After leaving Herod, the wise men continued their search. And look! The star that led them to Jerusalem went before them and stopped above the place where Jesus was. Going into the house, they found the child Jesus together with Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped

him. They opened their treasures and gave him the gifts that they had brought. These included gold and frankincense and myrrh, all valuable items.

The wise men had intended to return to Herod and tell him where they had found the child. But in a dream, they were warned not to do that. God did not want Herod to hurt Jesus. So the wise men returned to their own country by another route, and Herod did not find out the child's location.

Meanwhile, after the wise men had left, an angel appeared to Joseph in a dream. The angel warned him, "Get up! Take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, because Herod is going to search for the child to kill him." Joseph got up, and taking Jesus and Mary, they left in the middle of the night and fled to Egypt.

When Herod realized that the wise men had outsmarted him and did not return to tell him where Jesus was, he became furious. But by then, Jesus and his family had already escaped. Although it appeared that they were in danger, God knew about this long ago and had arranged for their safety. One of the prophets even predicted that God would later call his Son back out from Egypt.

Even though Jesus was born in humble circumstances, God honored and protected him. His importance could not be totally hidden. God made sure that some people knew who he was and came to worship him. He made sure that Jesus and his family received gifts and supplies. He used angels and dreams to arrange for their safety. It was not yet time for everyone to know about Jesus. He needed time to grow into a man, and when he was finally revealed, he would amaze the world and change it forever.

Chapter 6. Jesus and the Temple

OH NO, WE LOST THE SON OF GOD!

Jesus and his family had escaped to Egypt. After Herod died, an angel appeared to Joseph in a dream and told him to take his family back to Israel.

When Joseph learned that Archelaus was the new ruler of Judea, he did not want to go there. Archelaus was the son of Herod, the man who wanted to kill Jesus. Like his father, Archelaus was a cruel and dangerous man.

So Joseph went to the district of Galilee, a region in northern Israel. Then he and his family settled in the town of Nazareth. And Jesus grew up there. God also told the prophets about this, and they predicted that the Christ would be called a Nazarene.

Jesus appeared like other children, but he was special. He was super interested in thinking about God. He spent a lot of time studying the writings of the prophets, or what we would call the Bible. And he was good at it. He was a prodigy, a spiritual genius. But his wisdom did not come only from study. He was the Son of God. He was God himself. He was the Word.

Every year, Jesus and his family took a special trip to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover, an important holiday for the Jewish people. The Passover reminded them of how God rescued their ancestors from Egypt long ago. It was a time of celebration and remembrance.

When Jesus was 12 years old, his family made the trip to Jerusalem as usual. But this year, something unexpected happened. After the celebration was over, Mary and Joseph started the journey back home to Nazareth with a large group of family and friends. They assumed Jesus was walking among them, but he had stayed behind in Jerusalem, and his parents did not know it.

They traveled for a whole day before they realized that Jesus was not with them. Oh no, they lost the Son of God! They rushed back to Jerusalem to look for him. For three whole days, they looked everywhere for Jesus. Finally, they went to the temple, and there was Jesus sitting and talking with the teachers! The teachers were amazed at the things that Jesus said and the things that he understood.

Mary and Joseph were astonished. And Mary asked, "Son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been very worried. We went everywhere looking for you." But Jesus answered, "Why did you need to search? Did you not know that I must be in the Father's house?"

Jesus meant that his parents should have known that he was at the temple. They should not have searched for three days. Jesus knew that God was his Father, and the house of worship was where he belonged. He thought that Mary and Joseph should have known this too. But they did not know him well enough.

Even though the life of the boy had been surrounded with angels, prophets, and other special visitors and events, Mary and Joseph still did not know Jesus well enough. They did not learn from what they heard and what they experienced. They still treated him too much like any ordinary child.

There was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout, and who spoke by the power of the Holy Spirit. He took Jesus in his arms and called him the salvation that God had sent. Then Simeon said to Mary, "This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel." There was a prophet in the temple called Anna. She also confirmed what Simeon said.

However, even though the angels and prophets told them who Jesus was in such clear words, his parents still did not know him. They still failed to appreciate who he was. Just because they were the parents of Jesus, this did not make them special.

Jesus was a man, but he was not an ordinary man. He was the Word. He was sent by God to save the world. And he would become the hero of humanity. To appreciate who Jesus was, it was not enough to see that he was a clever boy or that he was a good man. You must see Jesus as the Word, the Son of God, who had come as a human person according to the promise of God.

Of course Jesus would be in his Father's house, but Mary did not understand this, although she should have known. We must never think that Mary was as great as Jesus. It would be silly to compare a tennis ball to the sun. But the distance between Mary and Jesus is far greater than even the difference between a tennis ball and the sun. It was a lesson that Mary herself had to learn.

When you see the greatness of Jesus, you will gain much more understanding of God and more understanding of everything in the world. If you will listen and believe when God tells you something in the Bible, then you will know the truth. But if you will not do this, then you will not know the truth even if God sends angels and prophets to speak to you.

It might surprise you when I tell you this. Many years later, when Jesus was teaching people everywhere, Mary still did not understand him. She appeared to have been part of a family group that thought Jesus was crazy and wanted to take him home! Jesus responded that his true family members were those who would hear the word of God and obey it, those who would do the will of God.

Yet Mary eventually admitted the truth, that Jesus was the Son of God who came to save her from sin, and she joined the hundreds of other people who were already following Jesus. God's kindness saved her. Do not be like Mary. It should not take this long for you to admit the truth. When God tells you something to your face over and over again, pay attention, and believe it. This will take you very far with God and in life.

Chapter 7. Jesus and the Voice

CLEAR THE ROAD FOR THE KING!

Jesus would eventually begin to speak about God to the world and perform many kinds of miracles. This would be his ministry. Before his ministry started, God sent a messenger to prepare the people and to announce the arrival of Jesus.

His name was John the Baptist. He was different from other people. He lived out in the wilderness, wore clothes made of camel's hair, and ate locusts and wild honey. He lived a rough life on purpose.

But that was not the thing that made him special. What made him special was the identity and the work that God gave him. Jesus was a king, and John was his herald. A herald is someone who speaks for the king and announces the king.

When some people asked John the Baptist how he would describe himself, he referred to the prophet Isaiah, who said, "He is a voice shouting in the wilderness, 'Prepare the way for the Lord! Clear the road for him!'" John said that Isaiah was talking about him.

John traveled through the countryside, telling people to turn away from their sins and get ready for the Christ, or the Messiah. He said, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near!" To repent means to admit your sins, to turn away from them, and turn to God with a heart of faith and sincerity.

John wanted the people to look at about how they had been thinking and living, and what they had been doing. People from all over the land came to listen to him, and he told them to turn away from their sins and to turn to God. As a sign of their repentance, John would baptize them with water in the river. He was called John the Baptist for this reason.

His ministry was good and effective. Many people listened to what he said and began to turn back to God. As you can imagine, they were thankful for him and respected him. However, John reminded the people that someone greater was coming, and all his work was meant to bring everyone to this person.

He explained, "I baptize you with water, but after me comes someone who is more powerful than I am. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit!" Baptism with water is only a ritual, a ceremony. Although God can do something in our lives whenever we obey and honor him, the water itself is only water. It is nothing more than a symbol for something that God does in our lives.

On the other hand, the Holy Spirit is God himself, just like God the Father and God the Son. There is only one God. This one God is God the Father, God the Son, or the Word, and the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is God, and the power of God. And John said that Jesus would baptize us, not with water, but with the Holy Spirit. Jesus would be someone who gives us the Holy Spirit, God's very power, to fill our beings and fill our lives.

The water in water baptism is only a symbol or a picture for something God does in our lives. But the Holy Spirit is not just a symbol – he is the real thing, the substance. By giving you the Holy Spirit, Jesus can give you real power, real wisdom, and real life. Jesus could cover you and fill you with the Holy Spirit. Someone who can do that is much greater than John the Baptist. And God's Spirit is much greater than water.

So John said that although he himself baptized people with water, someone greater was coming who would baptize people with the Holy Spirit. John was talking about Jesus. He wanted everyone to know that Jesus was the one who could truly change them and save them.

Chapter 8. Jesus and the Spirit

WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN FOR 30 YEARS?

After years of living a quiet life, as a person unknown to most people, Jesus was now about 30 years old. The time had finally come for him to begin his ministry, the special work that God had sent him to do. But before he started preaching, healing, and doing other things, he went to find John the Baptist.

John was still busy preaching and baptizing people by the Jordan River, telling them to turn from their sins and get ready for the Savior. One day, as John was baptizing people, Jesus came to the river. When John saw Him, he was surprised. Jesus did not need to repent because he had never sinned.

John said to Jesus, "I am the one who should be baptized by you, so why have you come to me instead?" Although John was baptizing anyone who came to him, he realized that Jesus did not need to be baptized. Jesus was more holy than John, so if anyone should be baptized, Jesus should have been the one to baptize John.

The people who came to John listened to John and were helped by him. But Jesus did not need John to remind him about God. Jesus had the most intimate relationship with God. He did not have any sin, and did not need to repent. John himself needed Jesus to help him and teach him. Naturally, John felt inferior and unworthy to baptize Jesus.

But Jesus answered, "Let it be this way for now. We should do everything the proper way." Even though Jesus was perfect, and he did not need the symbolic act of repentance and cleansing, he came as a man to identify with humanity, to be one with the people he came to save.

He came to join with humanity, to take the side of humanity, and to do things as the representative of humanity. So he willingly went through the same things that ordinary humans would need to do. John's ministry came from God and was designed by God. Jesus decided to follow along God's plan and way of doing things.

So John agreed, and he baptized Jesus in the river. When Jesus came up out of the water, something extraordinary happened. Heaven opened, and the Spirit of God came down on Jesus like a dove and stayed on him. At this moment a voice came from heaven and said, "This is my Son, whom I love. I am very pleased with him."

It was the voice of God the Father, telling the world that Jesus was his beloved Son and that the ministry of Jesus had God's stamp of approval. While Jesus was without sin, he chose to be baptized by John as a sign of his identification with sinners and his willingness to humble

himself before God. It was a public declaration of his obedience to the Father and his acceptance of the mission he had been given.

The baptism also marked the beginning of his ministry. It was a symbolic act of cleansing and renewal, signifying that Jesus was ready to fulfill his role as the Messiah and Savior of the world. After all these years, Jesus was moving into his role as the Christ. He was the hero that God promised long ago, the hero that the prophets predicted over and over again for hundreds of years.

Jesus was filled with the Holy Spirit, and he was about to begin teaching about God, healing the sick, and performing all kinds of miracles. He was about to lead people to God in a much more powerful way than any of the prophets in the past. The prophets talked about a hero that God promised to send, and Jesus was this hero. The prophets talked about the kingdom that God would bring to the earth, and Jesus would be the one who would bring this kingdom. He was the king, and John had just announced him to the world.

Chapter 9. Jesus and the Devil

IF I CAN STOP YOU RIGHT AT THE BEGINNING

Jesus was filled with the Holy Spirit, but there was one more thing he needed to do before he could fully enter his public ministry. He had to prepare himself before God and to face the temptations of Satan, the original serpent who ruined humanity.

After Jesus was baptized in the Jordan River, the Holy Spirit led him into the wilderness. For 40 days and 40 nights, Jesus stayed in the wilderness, and during that time, he did not eat anything. We assume that he was giving special attention to prayer, talking to God and thinking about his mission, and preparing himself for the work to come.

Notice that Jesus went into this special period of preparation and seeking God after he had received the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit will lead you to seek God and help you to seek God. You should not seek God in your own strength in order to receive the Holy Spirit. You should receive the Holy Spirit by faith in God, so that you can seek God better.

After going without food for 40 days and 40 nights, Jesus was very hungry. And Satan came to him at this time. Remember Satan? He is the devil, the enemy of God and of humanity. He was that original serpent who appeared to Adam and Eve. He deceived them and convinced them to sin, and ruined their relationship with God.

Satan had been watching Jesus, waiting for an opportunity to ruin him with temptations, just like he ruined Adam and Eve. A temptation is when Satan or our own evil desires try to convince us to do something wrong. It is wrong when we do something that God has said we should not do. And it is also wrong when we refuse to do something that God has said we must do. This includes what we think, what we say, and what we do in our actions.

Satan knew that Jesus was hungry, and he thought that the hunger might have made him weak. He said to Jesus, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread." Jesus could have done it. He was the Son of God, and even as a man, he was filled with the Holy Spirit. He had divine power to perform miracles.

Jesus answered him by repeating something from the Bible. He said, "It is written, 'People shall not live only on bread, but they need every word that comes from God.'" When someone tries to convince you to do something wrong, would you know how to answer? You would know if you will learn what the Bible says. You need to treasure every word that comes from God. Then you will stay close to God, and no one will be able to trick you.

Jesus had the ability to turn stones into bread, but since the Bible describes this as a temptation, it means that it would have been the wrong thing to do. But why? Why not make food if you could make food? After all, food is not evil, and eating is not wrong.

Let me remind you that even if we do not know why it was the wrong thing to do, we can still know that it was wrong because the Bible describes it as the wrong thing to do at the time. Once we accept this, we cannot go very wrong in what we think, and we are in a better position to receive even more understanding.

Even if we do not have a full understanding about all the reasons it was the wrong thing to do, we can think of several possible reasons.

Jesus was in a special situation, and in this situation, he had to endure hunger until the end of this period. He had come to be the hero of humanity, and not to live only for himself. He had to experience things, to suffer things, and to overcome things for our benefit.

Adam and Eve were tempted with food that God told them not to eat, even while they had plenty of other foods to eat. They did not overcome the temptation, and they disobeyed the word of God. Jesus was different. He showed that he could refuse food even when he was hungry, in order to focus on the word of God.

Israel was the nation that God had chosen to first receive his teachings and promises. God wanted to make a people and a place where Jesus could be born into the earth. But when God brought Israel out of Egypt into the wilderness, Israel did not treasure the word of God. The people did not love God first and then trust him to satisfy them, but they demanded their own satisfaction first.

When they were not immediately satisfied, instead of talking to God with faith and respect, they complained against God. They even threatened Moses, the leader that God had chosen for them, and they clamored to return to their former life, where they were bullied and oppressed. They never thought of God as the most important. The problem of food was something that sparked their rebellion, uncovering what was really in their hearts.

Jesus was different. By refusing Satan's temptation and declaring that he would live by every word from God, he showed that he was different. Later, he would teach his followers to ask God to give them bread and other things that would satisfy them. Therefore, we know it is right to ask God for these things, but Jesus was able to show that he cared more about God than other things. The temptation uncovered what was really in his heart. It was a total love for God and his words.

Starting from himself, Jesus was changing the story of humanity. Adam drove humanity into the wrong direction, and Israel had also made many mistakes. But Jesus would take his followers toward the right direction, a direction that is in line with the will of God, in a direction of faith,

love, and obedience. He would show his followers how to live a life that clings to every word that comes from God. And he would show them what can happen when we live such a life.

Satan was not finished. He wanted to tempt Jesus again. He took Jesus to the top of the temple in Jerusalem. And he said to Jesus, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down. After all, the Bible says that God will command his angels to watch over you, so that you will not even hurt your foot on a stone." Satan knew Jesus believed the Bible, so he took some words from the Bible and misused them as he tried to trick Jesus into doing something wrong.

Imagine if your dad said, "Son, I love you very much. If you ever need my help, call out to me, and I will save you from any trouble you face." And then one of your friends say to you, "I heard what your dad said. You should jump into the river and cry out. After all, he said that he would save you." You would think that is ridiculous. You trust that your dad would indeed save you, but you would be a bad son to jump into the river for no reason. You would be playing with your dad's love. Instead of letting his love and your trust bring the two of you closer, you would be using his love against him.

Jesus could see the trick. And he answered, "The Bible also says, 'Do you put the Lord your God to the test.'" He knew that God would save him if he fell off a building, because the Bible indeed said that God would protect him. But he also knew that another part of the Bible said that people should not play tricks on God.

All the parts of the Bible agree with one another, and we will understand the truth correctly when we take all these parts together, rather than taking only one sentence here and another sentence there.

Here is another simple illustration. Suppose Tom once said to everybody, "I like all kinds of cheesecakes. They are delicious. The only exception is pumpkin cheesecake." Now Tom's birthday is coming up, and Amy suggests, "Let us buy him a pumpkin cheesecake. He said, 'I like all kinds of cheesecakes.'" You would answer, "But he also said, 'The only exception is pumpkin cheesecake.'"

Tom said both of these things, but you will understand what Tom really said about cheesecakes only if you put together everything he said about cheesecakes. You can see that you cannot take only the first thing he said about cheesecakes, since he added that he did not like pumpkin cheesecakes. But can you see that you cannot only take the second thing he said either? I mean, you cannot assume that just because Tom said he did not like pumpkin cheesecakes, then he does not like all kinds of cheesecakes.

Why is this important? It is because some people would say, "Ah, Jesus said we should not put God to the test, so we should not expect God to give us what he promised." This is just as wrong as how Satan misused the Bible. In fact, this is exactly what Satan often says to tempt people to doubt God's promises. And many people still fall for this trick.

It is true that God promises to protect and to prosper his people, but it is also true that we should not play tricks on him. We should say it the other way too. It is true that we should not play tricks on God, but it is also true that God promises to protect and to prosper his people. Satan will try to trick you by reminding you of one thing that God said, but covering up two or three other things that God said. Sometimes he will even use Bible teachers to trick you! But if you will remember all the things God said, you will not be tricked.

Finally, Satan took Jesus to a very high mountain. From there, he showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And Satan said, "I will give you all of this, if you will bow down and worship me." He wanted the chosen hero to betray God and worship the devil instead. It was Satan's boldest temptation yet. But why was it a temptation? Who would do something so foolish and outrageous?

You see, Jesus was destined to become king. But God's plan was that on the way to become king, Jesus would join with sinners and suffer in their place, so that they can join him when he wins his throne. Jesus would have had to fight through evil spirits and evil people to reach the place God planned for him. It would involve a lot of effort and pain.

Satan made it look like he was offering Jesus the chance to skip all of that. He suggested that if Jesus would only betray God and follow Satan, then he could reach his destiny without all the suffering.

But it was a lie. Jesus had been the Word since the beginning. He did not need to become a man and earn a kingdom in the first place. The reason he came as a man was to join with humanity and save people, not just to become king by himself. And anyone who betrays God to serve Satan would lose much more than what Satan promises to give him. It is never worth it. Adam and Eve learned this the hard way.

So Jesus answered, "Get away from me, Satan! For it is written, "Worship the Lord your God and serve him only." Once again, Jesus defeated the temptation with the words of the Bible. After that, Satan left him. Jesus had won.

This is also how we can defeat any temptation. Learn what the Bible teaches. Then, when a temptation comes, you will know to say, "Get away from me, evil desires! The Bible says, 'You should not covet other people's things,'" and you will know to say, "Get away from me, sicknesses and demons! The Bible says, 'He took our infirmities, and carried out sicknesses.'"

Jesus faced temptations for us. It was part of what he needed to do to save humanity. And after this, he would face many other difficult situations. But by now he had already succeeded where Adam and Eve failed, and where Israel failed. He proved that he was different. He was stronger and better. He was like no one else who came before him. He could not be deceived by tricks. He could not be convinced by evil. He could not be threatened by suffering. His wisdom and strength, and his love for God and for people, would lead all of us to victory and salvation.

Chapter 10. Jesus and the Disciples

HEY, LET'S FISH FOR PEOPLE INSTEAD

After Jesus came back from the wilderness, he began to travel around teaching people about God and the kingdom of heaven. He said that the hero God promised had come, and Jesus himself was that person. He said that he was God's chosen one and that God had given him the Holy Spirit, just like the prophets predicted. He declared that it was time to turn away from sin and to trust in God. Crowds of people gathered to listen to him.

Jesus wanted a group of people to travel with him, to learn from him, and assist him in his ministry. Later, these people would also continue his work and spread his message to the rest of the world.

So Jesus began to choose his first disciples. A disciple is a student and a learner. A disciple is a follower of the teacher, but he does not merely listen to the teacher and admire the teacher. He does more than that. A disciple would also want to become like the teacher, to think like the teacher thinks, to behave like the teacher behaves, and to do what the teacher does. This is the kind of followers that Jesus wanted. Later, these people would be called Christians, because they followed the Christ. They are also called believers, because they have faith in Jesus.

One day, Jesus was walking by the Sea of Galilee, and he saw two brothers. One brother was Simon, who was also called Peter, and the other one was Andrew. They were fishermen, and they were out on the water, throwing their nets into the sea to catch fish.

Jesus called out to them, saying, "Come, follow me, and I will teach you how to fish for people." They made their living by catching fish and selling them for food. But Jesus upgraded their career to catching people for God. Jesus would teach them about God, about people, about doctrines, and about miracles. Jesus would train them to do the same things that he was going to do.

Peter and Andrew did not hesitate. God was at work in their hearts. They left their nets right away and followed Jesus. They had a strong trust and respect for him. They were ready to follow him wherever he went.

As Jesus walked a little farther, he saw two more brothers, James and John. They were in a boat with their father, Zebedee, fixing their nets. Jesus called them too, and right away, James and John left their boat and their father and followed Jesus.

Jesus was putting a team together for his ministry, and God was working with him. These fishermen became his first disciples. They left their old jobs and lives behind to be with him and to learn how to share God's message with the world.

Jesus did not choose only fishermen. He called all kinds of people to follow him and to learn from him. Soon after, he met a man named Matthew, who worked as a tax collector. People did not like tax collectors because they often took more money than they should. But Jesus knew that Matthew could be a disciple too.

It does not matter what a person is like before he knows Jesus. If God puts the desire in his heart to follow Jesus, and if God puts the faith in his heart to believe Jesus, then this person can follow Jesus and be transformed. Jesus even said that this person is "born again." So Jesus said to Matthew, "Follow me," and Matthew left his job and everything he had to follow Jesus. He became one of his closest disciples.

After Jesus called Peter and Andrew to follow Him, he found another disciple named Philip. Philip was eager to tell others about Jesus. He remembered his friend Nathanael and hurried to find him.

Philip said to Nathanael, "We have found the person Moses and the prophets predicted. He is Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph!" But Nathanael was skeptical and answered, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" He did not think much of the place where Jesus grew up, and doubted that someone so great – the greatest person in history – could come from such a town.

Philip did not give up. He invited Nathanael to come and see for himself. "Come and see!" he urged. He believed that if Nathanael met Jesus, he would understand. This is an important lesson for us. It is the largest part of what we do in ministry as the followers of Jesus. After all, in telling you about the adventures of Jesus Christ, this is what I am doing right now! I am telling you, "Come, see Jesus for yourself."

As they approached, Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said, "Look! A true man of Israel – there is nothing false in him." Jesus recognized that Nathanael was not a cunning or deceptive person.

Nathanael was taken aback. "How do You know me?" he asked. Jesus answered, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you." He had supernatural knowledge about the exact situation. He saw where Nathanael was and how Philip went to tell him about Jesus.

Nathanael's realized that Jesus was the real deal. He exclaimed, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" Jesus was probably amused. He answered, "You believe this just because I said, 'I saw you under the fig tree'? You will see greater things than these. To tell you the truth, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on me."

It was a simple thing for Jesus to see the personalities and circumstances of people. If something like this was enough to convince Nathanael, he was about to be more amazed at the

things he would witness as he followed Jesus. He would see that Jesus had a direct line to heaven.

Jesus lived a supernatural life, a life of miracles, because he was a man in touch with God and full of the Holy Spirit. He would teach that all his disciples could also fellowship with God and receive the Holy Spirit, and live a life that is beyond what human power can produce.

A person without God is dull. He can pursue many activities to distract him, but deep down he knows that he is dead on the inside. But a person who follows Jesus Christ and believes in God is alive on the inside. His life is full of purpose not because of many activities and noises, but because he is full of the love of God and the power of God. And this makes him the most helpful kind of person in the world.

Jesus was confident. He did not beg people to follow him. He chose people to follow him. He was not desperate for more followers. He did not say to people, "Please choose me. Please choose me." He would tell his disciples, "You did not choose me, but I chose you." And he did not beg people to stay. Later he even told people that if they did not like what he was teaching, they could leave.

If you are confident in God, and if you are not desperate, then you will not change your beliefs to make people like you. Jesus always said what was true. When a person followed Jesus, the follower was the one who had something to gain. Jesus did not need people to support him or to make him feel important. God was enough for him. But together with God, he wanted to bless people and teach people.

As Jesus traveled, he called more and more people to follow him, and his group of disciples grew. These men were not perfect, but they were willing to learn, and they trusted Jesus. They tried to stay loyal to him even in the face of danger, but sometimes they made mistakes or became fearful, and they needed God to forgive them. They knew that being close to Jesus was the most important thing they could do.

Chapter 11. Jesus Turned Water into Wine

HE SAVED THE BEST FOR LAST

One day, Jesus and his disciples were invited to a wedding in a town called Cana. A wedding is a special celebration where a man and a woman get married, and families and friends come together to have fun, share a meal, and celebrate. Mary was also at the wedding.

As the party continued, a problem arose. The wine ran out! This was a big deal because it was important for the hosts to have enough wine for their guests. People would be very disappointed, and it could bring shame to the family.

Mary noticed the problem and went to Jesus. She assumed that he could help, even if she did not know how. "They have no more wine," she told him. At first, Jesus answered, "Why do you involve me? My time has not yet come." Mary decided to trust Jesus with the matter and said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you."

Nearby stood six large stone jars that were used for washing. Each jar could hold about 20 to 30 gallons of water. Jesus told the servants, "Fill the jars with water." Then Jesus said, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet." That was the person in charge of making sure everything at the feast went well.

When the master of the banquet tasted it, he was shocked. What had started as ordinary water was now the best wine. It was a miracle. The master of the banquet called over the man who was getting married. He said to him, "Everyone brings out the best wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink. But you have saved the best until now!"

The miracle saved the wedding celebration. Later, one of the disciples called John said that it was the first sign through which Jesus showed his glory, and his disciples believed in him. This miracle was just the beginning of many amazing things Jesus would do.

The miracles of Jesus really happened. They were not stories or fables to teach us spiritual lessons, but real events that took place at specific times and places. When we read about Jesus healing people, those people really were sick, and Jesus truly made them better. When Jesus stopped a storm, there really were winds and waves, and Jesus made them stop.

These miracles were real, and they show us the power of God. Anyone who uses these miracles mainly as symbols or pictures to teach spiritual lessons is not respecting what Jesus did. Such a person is not a good follower of Jesus Christ.

It is true that when God does something, it can teach us a lesson on what God is like. But we must remember that he still did that thing. Strange people sometimes focus only on the lesson and throw out what God actually did, saying that it is not important or that we cannot expect to experience the same thing. We should indeed make lessons out of God's actions, but never forget that God can do those actions in our lives too.

Jesus really turned water into wine. It was a miracle. A miracle is something that God can do and that humans cannot do without God. It is something more than our normal experience. Notice that Jesus did not do a miracle only to show people his power, and he did not do a miracle only to help people in a life-or-death emergency. He did a miracle to help the people avoid embarrassment and to help the celebration continue. Many people might think it was not important enough for God to do a miracle. Jesus did not agree with this.

The miracle of turning water into wine also has a deeper meaning. It was a sign that Jesus was bringing something new and wonderful. The religious leaders at that time had added many rules and traditions that did not come from what God said. They had made their religion about following teachings made by people instead of God.

Their way of life was about pretending to love God, but in reality, it was about following their rules and feeling good about themselves. Jesus came to change that. He wanted people to love God in a real way, not just follow empty rules and doctrines made by people. He came to turn people's faith into something powerful and flavorful, something real and exciting.

Doctrines are teachings and ideas. Good doctrines come from God. Bad doctrines come from people who invented them to make them feel good about their own ideas and actions, and to make other people follow their wrong ideas and actions.

Even today, you will hear many people teach doctrines that they invented. They do not follow Jesus or obey him, but they want to convince themselves and other people that they are the best followers of Jesus, so they invent their own doctrines and follow them instead. Make sure the doctrines that you learn is really what the Bible teaches.

Jesus was not afraid to stand up to people who were doing wrong, even if they were religious leaders. He once went to the temple and saw people selling things and making money in God's house. Jesus was angry because they were disrespecting God, so he made them leave, even using a whip to drive out the animals they were selling. Jesus showed that God's house should be a place of worship, not a marketplace.

This shows us who Jesus really is. He was not always gentle. Sometimes he needed to be strong to do what was right. He stood up for what was right, and he wants us to do the same. Jesus came to set people free from empty religion and to bring them closer to God. He wants us to have a real relationship with him, not just follow a bunch of rules.

Jesus showed that he always knew what he was doing. He never panicked or got scared. All the prophets before Jesus made mistakes – Abraham, Moses, Samson, and David all had flaws. But Jesus was perfect. He was holy, not just like a prophet, but like God himself.

Today, many churches have also lost their way. They have run out of wine. They have lost the real joy and power of following Jesus. Some churches focus more on pleasing people and following traditions than loving and obeying God.

But Jesus can still bring new life to the church, just like he turned water into wine. He wants us to learn true teachings and have faith for miracles. He wants us to come back to a simple and true devotion to him, without all the extra rules and traditions that people have added.

Chapter 12. Jesus Healed from a Distance

I WILL BELIEVE IT BEFORE I SEE IT

After the celebration at the wedding in Cana, where Jesus first showed his glory and power, he continued to travel through the towns and villages, teaching and performing miracles. Many people were starting to know about Jesus, and they were eager to hear his teachings and see his power for themselves.

Jesus made teaching a very important part of his ministry. Never think that teaching is boring or less important. In fact, teaching is important even if a ministry does not do anything else. But if the teaching is done diligently and correctly, then many other wonderful things can happen.

Teaching is the foundation for miracles. It is the starting point for healing and prophecy. It explains the truth about God. If you know the truth about God, then your beliefs will be correct. If your beliefs are correct, then you have a good foundation for faith, including faith for miracles. You will know how to pray. You will be hard to deceive. You will know what to think and what to do much more often.

By this time, Jesus already had a reputation for healing the sick. One day, an official from a nearby town named Capernaum came to Jesus. Capernaum was a town located on the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee. His son was very sick and close to death. He had heard about the amazing things Jesus could do, and he believed that Jesus was his only hope.

When the official received news that Jesus had come from Judea to Galilee, he found Jesus and begged him to come and heal his son. He said to Jesus, "Sir, please come before my child dies!" He had faith that if Jesus came to his house, he could heal his son.

Jesus answered, "Go, your son will live." When people asked Jesus to come with them and heal the sick, he would often go with them. But his power was greater than what was asked of him. Jesus did not need to go with the official. He did not even need to see the child or touch him. He only spoke the words, and that was enough to cause a miracle, even at a distance.

When Jesus said, "Your son will live," the official believed Jesus and started to return home. Slow down and think about this. Jesus was the one who could heal his son, and the official had found him to ask for help. He had expected Jesus to return home with him to heal his son. But now Jesus told him to go home without first seeing his son recover. It required real trust for the official to go home like this without bringing Jesus with him.

You will not see this kind of faith in many people who have been Christians for a long time. You will not see this kind of faith even in most pastors. But they will often tell you that they have faith, and they will also want you to admire them and to think like them. They do not have

faith, but they do not want you to know that, and so they will try to convince you that faith is something else, or that faith does not believe God will do miracles today.

They pretend to have faith, and they want you to pretend with them. If you follow them, you will miss out on all the things that God can do for you and the things that God can do together with you. Do not follow faithless people. Do not agree with faithless people.

When God tells you that a miracle will happen, believe it. When God promises to do a thing for you, accept that he will do it. God speaks to you in the Bible. Read it, and find out what God says to you. Some people will read it and say, "Well, he will do it if he wants to. He will do what he said, if it is his will." But this is an excuse for not believing God at all.

Imagine if I say to you, "I promise to help you study for the exam" or "I promise to bring you to the park." And then you say, "Well, you will do it if you want to." That would not make sense, would it? I just promised you I would do it, and if you answer this way, it would be like I have not said anything. In fact, it is like you are calling me a liar.

But it is even worse than this. The Bible says many things that are more than promises, but it tells you that something is already done. Imagine if I say to you, "I have put a present in your room." And you answer, "Well, you will do it if you want to." Would that not be silly? I told you that I have already done it, and that the present is already in your room, but you answer as if it is not yet done, and that you are not sure if it would happen at all. Again, it is like you think I have not said anything. It is like you are calling me a liar.

When someone treats God this way, they are pretending to respect him, because they are saying God can do whatever he wants. But the truth is that they refuse to believe what God has said and what God has done. Jesus was usually gentle to people, but he reacted with great anger when people behaved this way. He scolded such people with harsh tones and strong words.

If you call Jesus a liar, how can he accept someone like you? But if you admit that you need help to grow stronger in faith, and if you are willing to learn, then he will help you.

The official was better than many disciples and preachers. He believed what Jesus said before he saw the miracle he wanted. When Jesus said, "Go, your son will live," the official accepted that and started to go home.

On the way, he met some of his servants who were rushing to tell him the good news. They told him that his son was alive and that he was recovering. The official asked them what hour his son started to get better, and his servants told him the time.

Then the official realized that his son started to get better at the same time that Jesus said, "Go, your son will live." After this, not only did this man believe in Jesus, but his whole household also believed.

A miracle of healing is a good thing even if it does not produce any other effect. After all, if a person is sick, suffering, or even dying, it is much better for the sickness to leave him and for him to recover.

But a miracle of healing can do even more than that. In this case, the official's entire family believed in Jesus because a miracle of healing happened. Jesus considered healing the sick by miracle power one of the most important things he did in his ministry, and he spent a lot of time doing it.

Chapter 13. Jesus Healed a Paralyzed Man

IF YOU CAN HAVE ONE, YOU CAN HAVE THE OTHER

As Jesus continued his journey, news about him spread quickly. People were eager to hear him teach and witness his amazing miracles. Many wanted to be near him, believing that he could teach them about God and to help them in their time of need.

One day, Jesus was teaching in a crowded house in Capernaum. The place was filled with people, and a number of them could not even get inside.

Outside the house, a group of friends carried a man on a mat. This man was paralyzed and could not walk. His friends cared about him, and they had heard that Jesus could heal him. They wanted to get their friend to Jesus, but when they arrived, the crowd was too big for them to get inside.

They were determined to get help for their paralyzed friend, and so they came up with a bold plan. They climbed up to the roof of the house! Then they made an opening in the roof and lowered their friend down right in front of Jesus.

Jesus was not upset by this bold action and the interruption. He saw their faith. What they did showed Jesus that these people believed he could heal the paralyzed man. They believed that Jesus could do a miracle, and they took action to put their friend in a position where he could receive from Jesus.

So rather than getting angry, Jesus said to the man, "My son, your sins are forgiven." What a relief this must have been. The man had experienced much suffering, humiliation, and inconvenience. Now at least he knew that he could be on the right terms with God. Whatever people thought of him, he knew that God forgave him and God did not hate him. This is often the beginning of healing in other areas of our lives.

However, some people in the crowd were offended. They were angry that Jesus said this. They had assumed that only God could forgive sins, and since they did not think of Jesus as God, they did not think he had the authority to declare someone's sins as forgiven. But we understand that Jesus was indeed God. He was the Word made flesh. In any case, they complained, "Who does he think he is? He speaks blasphemy. Only God can forgive sins."

They thought Jesus said something very wrong and disrespectful toward God. But it was not that they respected God very much themselves. It was only that they thought of themselves as very spiritual, and so whenever someone did something that disagreed with their doctrines and traditions, they became angry. They were not interested in protecting God, but in protecting themselves.

Jesus knew their thoughts and answered, "Why are you thinking these things? Which is easier: to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up and walk?'" He claimed that he had authority to both forgive the sinful and heal the sick. He continued, "But to show you that I have the power to forgive sins," he turned to the paralyzed man and said, "Get up, take up your mat and go home."

Then the man did what he could not do before. He immediately picked up his mat and walked out in front of everybody. The people were amazed and praised God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this!" Again, a healing miracle caused people to praise God. When God causes physical blessings, it also brings spiritual benefits.

Never hesitate to ask God for physical things. Some people will separate the physical and the spiritual, and they will tell you that you should ask God only for spiritual things, or they will say that God will give you only spiritual things.

This is obviously false. These people do not know God at all. Which is easier for God: the spiritual or the physical? God can do both spiritual and physical things, and he is interested in doing both spiritual and physical things in our lives.

The spiritual and physical are related. We can even say that spiritual forgiveness and physical healing are two sides of the same coin. If you have one, you can have the other. If you cannot have one, you cannot have the other. God is the author of them both. They come from the same source, and God gives them as one blessing.

Do not forget the important role the friends had in this miracle of healing. Many people might tell a sick man not to expect a miracle, and that he should not even try. But these friends joined together to bring the man to Jesus, and then they even carried him to the top of the house and broke a hole in the roof. Get friends like these for yourself, and be a friend like this to someone else. Be someone who brings people to Jesus.

Chapter 14. Jesus Healed on the Sabbath

ANY DAY IS THE RIGHT DAY FOR A MIRACLE

Jesus was teaching in the synagogue. A synagogue was like a church where people went to learn about God. Among the people were some Pharisees. They were religious leaders who were strict about following rules. However, these rules did not come from God but from their own opinions and traditions. They would become angry and hostile whenever someone broke their rules.

It was a Sabbath day. The Sabbath day was a special day that happened once a week. Although the Sabbath was God's idea, the religious leaders added their rules about what you could do or could not do on the Sabbath. God commanded it to be a day of rest, but the religious leaders made it a dangerous and stressful day.

On this day, there was a man with a withered hand in the synagogue. There was something wrong with his hand so that he could not use it properly. The religious leaders watched Jesus to see if he would heal this man. According to their rules, Jesus would have broken the Sabbath if he had healed him. And once he did it, these leaders would accuse him and cause trouble for him.

Why did the leaders hate Jesus? One reason was because Jesus followed the Bible as it was written without respecting the doctrines and traditions that the leaders added to it. And Jesus taught this truth to the people, so that many people were no longer afraid of the religious leaders and stopped respecting them. Jesus also performed many miracles and encouraged people to have faith to receive good things from God.

Although the religious leaders wanted the people to believe that they were the most spiritual, in fact they did not have faith at all. And when Jesus came teaching the truth and working miracles, they could no longer hide the fact that they had no faith and no relationship with God. Any ordinary person who listened to Jesus now had more faith than any faithless religious leader. So the leaders hated Jesus and wanted to destroy him.

In one book I read a while ago, one Christian teacher seriously discussed whether we should go to the market or read the newspaper on Sunday. Like the Pharisees, he did not heal the sick on Sunday, or on any day. He did not believe in healing the sick at all.

Instead of worshiping God with faith and love, he focused his attention on rules that he himself invented, so that when he obeyed his own rules, he could feel good about himself. He could feel that he was better than other people and he could judge other people. By obeying his own rules, he would convince himself that he was better than those who obeyed the true commands of God.

Jesus knew what they were planning, but he was not afraid. He asked the man with the withered hand to stand up in front of everyone. Then he looked at the people and asked, "What is the right thing to do on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save a life or to destroy it?" But they remained silent, because they wanted Jesus to get himself into trouble.

Jesus looked around at them in anger. He was upset that their hearts were so hard. They had no love toward God and no love for sick people. Then Jesus said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." The man stretched it out, and his hand was healed. It was a miracle. Jesus did a good thing, but the religious leaders were furious. They left the place and discussed how they could destroy Jesus.

Jesus asked, in other words, "So the Sabbath is a day of rest. But are we allowed to do a good thing on the Sabbath? Are we allowed to save a life? Or are we allowed to do a bad thing and destroy a life?" Then Jesus did a good thing and healed a man. But the Pharisees did an evil thing and wanted to trap Jesus! They did not allow Jesus to do a good thing on this day, but they themselves did something evil. They could not even rest and wait until the next day!

Notice how different Jesus was. The religious leaders could not wait to perform evil, but Jesus could not wait to perform good. He was eager to heal the sick and to perform miracles. If he had waited one more day to heal the man, the leaders would not have had this excuse to accuse him. Of course, they would have tried to find another reason to attack him. But Jesus could have reduced his troubles by not healing the sick on the Sabbath.

However, healing the sick was so holy and important that Jesus did not wait even one more day, and he was not satisfied with healing the sick only six days a week. He wanted to heal the sick every day of the week, and in every place, whether at home, the market, or the church.

He also took it upon himself to face the hate of religious leaders as he defied their rules and ideas. He set an example for us, so that we do not have to respect religious leaders that teach their own doctrines and traditions, instead of the teachings that come from God.

Think about it. Is it right to help people or to hurt people? The religious people were hurting the man by not helping him receive healing. The man had suffered enough, but the religious people did not care about him. They could have said, "We do not want this man to suffer. Jesus, we know that you can heal him. We pray to God that this man will be healed." But they did not do that. They only wanted to hurt Jesus.

Today, when people resist the ministry of healing, they are also trying to hurt Jesus. If you are someone who prays for sick people, then they will also try to hurt you. Sick people will always get hurt in the process. However, religious people do not care about that. They only want to protect their faithless religion and their way of life.

Why must we keep talking about this? Because it was what Jesus experienced. He kept trying to help people, but those who were set in their own faithless religious opinions kept trying to stop him. If you follow Jesus, then you might experience this too. But you do not need to be afraid. God is stronger than these people. You do not need these people to like you or to agree with you. If God likes you and if God agrees with you, that is more than enough.

On another Sabbath, Jesus was teaching in the synagogue again. As he spoke, he noticed a woman who was bent over and could not stand up straight. This was caused by a spirit of infirmity, an evil spirit that caused sickness and disability. And she had been like this for 18 years.

Later, one of the disciples called Peter would say, "You know that God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. And he went around doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him." Satan caused this woman to be sick, but Jesus caused this woman to be well. Sickness is evil. Healing is good.

Jesus called the woman over and said, "Woman, you are free from your sickness." Then he put his hands on her, and immediately she stood up straight for the first time in many years. She was so happy and began praising God right there in the synagogue.

Healing comes from God. Healing leads to true worship. Healing brings joy and faith, and love for God. Sickness tries to destroy all these good things. Therefore, anyone who tries to make sickness sound like it can be a good thing is a bad person, an evil person.

The leader of the synagogue was upset. He said, "There are six days to work. Come and be healed on those days, not on the Sabbath." He thought that Jesus was breaking their rules by performing a miracle on this day. The Sabbath was supposed to be a day of rest, but instead of bringing rest and healing to people on this day, he tried to use it as a weapon to attack Jesus.

But Jesus answered, "You take care of your animals on the Sabbath. If your donkey is thirsty, you untie it and lead it to water. Is this woman not worth much more than an animal? Should she not be set free on the Sabbath?"

Faithless people are hypocrites. They say one thing but do something else. They put their rules on you, but they break their own rules. They claim that they follow their rules the most, but they do not. They did not want Jesus to heal the sick on the Sabbath, but they would work to take care of their animals on the Sabbath.

The people who were against Jesus felt embarrassed because he was right. The other people who were there rejoiced because they were excited at the wonderful things that they saw. You will see that although religious leaders who have no faith will try to protect their own opinions and positions, the ordinary people who want to follow God are happy when miracles happen and when people receive help.

The man complained that there were six days to work, and people should have come to receive healing on those days. It was a lie and an excuse. The woman had been sick for 18 years. Why did none of them pray to God for her healing? Like the man admitted, there were six other days each week to do it. None of them did anything to help her.

They were using respect for God as an excuse to hide their unbelief. They were supposed to worship God in their religion, but they used their religion to attack God and his miracles. Many people do this today. But as Jesus showed us, respect for God means healing the sick. Healing is holy work.

Faithless religion is cruel. Jesus reminded the religious leader that he would have taken care of his animal even on the same day that he refused to allow healing for the woman. The religious people treated this woman worse than an animal. No wonder Jesus was most angry with such people.

Jesus said that we should have faith for miracles, but they dislike this. Jesus said that we should experience more and more miracles as his disciples, and the power of God will expand among his people in various ways, but they dislike this. If you repeat what Jesus taught, they will argue with you, but they are really fighting God, and they do not care about the people they will hurt in the process.

When you try to convince these people, they might remain stubborn, and they might even try to embarrass you. Do not worry. Do not spend too much time with them if they will not listen to you. You could be spending this time learning from God, talking to other people who have faith, and helping people who are willing to listen. Just continue to believe what God teaches. Just continue to obey what God commands. There is no need to keep arguing with faithless people. God sees them, and he will deal with them.

Chapter 15. Jesus Praised a Centurion

I HAVE NEVER SEEN FAITH LIKE THIS

One day, Jesus went to the town of Capernaum. As he entered the town, a Roman centurion came to him. At the time, the Jewish people were under Roman rule. A centurion was an officer in the Roman army who was in charge of many soldiers. This centurion was a good man. Even though he was not Jewish, he cared about the people and helped them build a synagogue.

The centurion had a servant that he valued very much. The servant had become so sick that he could not even move, and he was in terrible suffering. So the centurion pleaded with Jesus to heal his servant. And Jesus decided, "I will come and heal him."

As Jesus went toward his home, the centurion said, "Lord, you do not need to come to my place. Just say the word, and my servant will be healed. Like you, I am a man who has authority. I have soldiers under me. I tell one to go, and he goes. I tell one to come, and he comes. I tell another to do something, and he does it."

It was as if the centurion thought, "I believe that this is also how your authority works. You can say something should be done, and it will happen. But your authority is beyond mine. It is like God's authority that can command diseases and nature."

Jesus had demonstrated that he could heal at a distance by speaking the word. He would dismiss someone who came for help, and the person would believe what he said. This time, however, the centurion actively said that Jesus did not need to come.

He showed that his faith was based on more than an acceptance of what Jesus said, which would be admirable enough. His faith was also based on an actual understanding of what position Jesus had before God and the world. This kind of faith is likely to be stronger and unshakable.

Jesus was amazed when he heard this. He turned to those who followed him and said, "I tell you the truth, I have not found great faith like this in Israel." Then he added something that ought to make us stop and think.

He said, "Many people will come from all over the world and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, but those who are assumed to be in the kingdom will be thrown out into the darkness."

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were people of faith in the past, and the Jews were their children and descendants. The Jews assumed that they had naturally inherited the spiritual blessings of

their ancestors, and they belonged in the kingdom of heaven. Jesus denied this. Just because Abraham was their relative did not guarantee them anything with God.

The only thing that matters to God is individual faith. It does not matter who your parents are or whether they believe God. Do you believe? Do you have faith? If you have faith, then you will join the people of faith like Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The centurion was not a Jew, but he was more like Abraham than any Jew that Jesus had met. He belonged in the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus said to the centurion, "Go! Let it be done just as you believed it would." The centurion's faith even decided how the miracle happened. And at that very moment, the centurion's servant was healed.

People want to say that everything is God's decision so they do not have to believe. But with God, what you believe is what you will get. These people do not believe anything, so they get nothing. And then they say that is God's decision. Do you see how silly this is?

God welcomes anyone who has faith. It does not matter where you are from, whether you are male or female, or who your friends and relative are. If your parents believe, it does not mean that God favors you. And if your parents do not believe, it does not mean that God rejects you. If you believe, then you are in direct contact with God, and you belong in the kingdom of heaven.

The ones who have faith might not be the ones you expect. You might assume that the people at your church have great faith, but perhaps most of them do not have any faith. They might think that they are very spiritual, but if they do not in fact have faith, then Jesus said they will be thrown out into the darkness.

You might assume that the pastor is the most spiritual person you know, but if you listen closely, you might find out that he is teaching everybody to be faithless like him. You will discover that some of the most religious people are also the most faithless. Someone might know more Bible verses. He might have read more books. He might have been to seminary, or Bible school. None of that matters if they do not believe God.

Then you see someone who does not come from a church, or at least not from your church, but whatever he learns from the Bible, he believes and obeys. He is better than those faithless people in your church, and he belongs in the kingdom of heaven.

Of course, some people in the church have true faith, but the point is that you cannot assume what a person is like until you talk to him and find out if he believes God. A person might not look like you or speak like you. He might not be from where you are from, and he might not belong to your church or tradition. None of that matters. If he has faith, even if he is not someone like you in other ways, God welcomes him.

Chapter 16. Jesus Stopped a Storm

YOU WOKE ME UP FOR THIS?

One evening, after a long day of teaching and performing miracles, Jesus and his disciples decided to cross the Sea of Galilee in a boat. The sun was setting, and the water was calm as they set sail. The disciples were tired but excited to be with Jesus.

As they traveled across the sea, a sudden storm arose. Dark clouds filled the sky, and strong winds began to blow. The waves grew bigger and bigger, crashing against the boat. The disciples were terrified!

Among the disciples were experienced fishermen. Although they knew how to navigate the waters, they also realized how dangerous such a storm could be. They struggled to keep the boat steady, but the wind howled, and the waves tossed the boat around like a toy. The waves were breaking into the boat, so that it was filling with water. They shouted to one another, "We are going to drown!" Fear filled their hearts.

But where was Jesus? He was in the back part of the boat, sleeping on a cushion! The disciples were distraught. How could he sleep at a time like this? They hurried to wake him up. "Teacher! Teacher! Wake up! Don't you care if we drown?" they cried.

Jesus opened his eyes and saw the storm raging. He stood up and looked at the wind and the waves. And he rebuked the sea: "Shut up! Be quiet!" The wind stopped quicker than it started, and the waves ceased with a whimper, like a puppy that had been scolded by its owner.

Then Jesus turned to the disciples. He did not comfort them. He did not say that he understood their fear, but that the danger had passed. He did not say that the storm was the will of God, and they should have accepted the will of God. But he said to them, "Why are you so afraid? Where is your faith?" Jesus was not afraid. He was annoyed that they woke him up because of such a small problem.

He thought that his disciples could have done better. Jesus said to them, "Where is your faith?" He was not amazed by the storm, but he was amazed that his followers still had so little faith after following him all this time.

But what did it have to do with their faith? What good would it have done if they had faith? Did Jesus think that if they had faith, they would not have reacted like they did even in the face of a deadly storm? Exactly. If they had faith, they would not have been afraid.

They should have been confident because Jesus was on the boat. They should have been confident because Jesus had taught them about faith and miracles. Based on the other

teachings of Jesus recorded in the Bible, if they had faith, they could have stopped the storm themselves without bothering Jesus about it. By faith, all the followers of Jesus have power from him to perform miracles.

The disciples were shocked at what happened. The winds and waves were so strong, and the water was filling the boat. What could stop nature? But Jesus scolded nature, and it obeyed him. They said to one another, "What kind of man is this? Even the winds and waves obey him." He was indeed a special man, the very Son of God himself. But he came to teach his disciples to follow his example – his thinking, his character, and also his power.

There are many people who call themselves followers of Jesus who think that they can never reach this level. Instead of continuing to learn and to grow as much as possible, they pretend that Jesus never taught faith like this. They teach people a different doctrine. They try to stop other people from reaching for this kind of faith before they can even begin. This is very sad. If you never begin, you will never arrive.

They are dishonest with God and with themselves, and they are dishonest with you. They will never become good followers of Jesus Christ. They will always be a nuisance and burden to humanity instead of a solution.

Jesus Christ has high expectations for his disciples. He refuses to think that we can never learn and grow. He refuses to think that we must remain weak. He refuses to treat us like we are useless.

Faithless people dislike this. When they cannot seem to live up to these expectations, instead of admitting this in humility, they pretend they are already the best, and they claim that Jesus never had those high expectations. People like them are not good disciples. They are not good people, but evil people. Make sure you never become like them. Continue to learn and grow. Then encourage others to do the same.

Chapter 17. Jesus Healed a Bleeding Woman

I WILL REACH JESUS ALL BY MYSELF

As Jesus traveled from town to town, everyone wanted to see him. They had heard amazing stories about how he healed sick people and performed miracles. Sometimes crowds of people would follow Jesus as he walked, pressing tightly together around him. People were eager to be close to him, to hear his words, or just to catch a glimpse of him. Of course, not everyone had faith. Some people were only curious.

On this day, the crowd moved like a wave, with everyone trying to get as near to Jesus as possible. The air was filled with the sounds of people calling out to him, asking for help, and murmuring about what he might do next. The crowd was so thick that it was hard for anyone to move freely, and Jesus was surrounded on all sides.

Among the crowd was a woman who had been sick for 12 years. She had a disease that made her bleed. She had suffered under many doctors and spent all her money on them. But the doctors could not cure her.

Sickness does not affect only a person's health, which is bad enough, but it might also destroy a person's savings and life plans. It can place a burden on relatives and friends, and affect other people's lives too. Sickness is evil. It is not a gift.

Then she heard about Jesus. It is wonderful when people who are heading toward a wrong direction in life or who are in trouble and distress hear about Jesus, and their lives are totally changed. This woman heard reports about Jesus, including how he healed the sick everywhere he went, and hope was renewed in her heart.

Very long sickness has a way of destroying hope in people, but one of the first things that happen in people when they hear about Jesus is that they begin to have hope. They begin to think that Jesus can change them as people and also change their situations.

Hope is the beginning of positive change. It is the realization that what appeared impossible is in fact possible. And this woman started to have hope. She began to think that Jesus could heal her. And this became a determined faith. She was sure that she would be healed! She said, "If I can only touch his clothes, I will be healed."

She had faith. She put her faith into words. And then she put this faith into action. She found out where Jesus was and went to find him. She had been sick for 12 years, and she had spent all her money. She probably felt weak, alone, and desperate. Although she was in this condition, she bravely went outside and pushed through all the people so that she could touch Jesus. That was her faith in action.

It would have been difficult to reach Jesus even if she was healthy and strong, but she persisted. She did not give up. Finally, she got close. Jesus was in reach! She stretched out her hand and touched the edge of his robe.

As soon as she made contact, something amazing happened. She had been bleeding even as she was pressing through the people. Until that time, she had no special feelings of God's power or healing in her body.

Yet the moment she touched Jesus, she immediately felt that the bleeding had stopped. And she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease. She believed in Jesus before there was any change in her feelings, but because she had faith and acted on her faith, her feelings followed her faith, and she was healed.

Jesus suddenly stopped walking. He sensed that power had flowed out from him! He swung around and said, "Who was it? Who touched my clothes?" His disciples were puzzled. They answered him, "You see all these people all around you. Everybody has been touching you. How could you ask, 'Who touched me?'" But there was one touch that was different. It was the touch of faith.

This was a problem for the woman. Because of the kind of sickness she had, she was not supposed to be out in public like this according to the rules at that time. She was hoping to receive her healing in secret.

However, even in this great crowd Jesus noticed one touch that was different, and she realized that she could not hide anymore. She was nervous, but she stepped forward and admitted everything. She told him the whole story. Would Jesus scold her? Would she be in trouble?

After 12 long years with this disease, after suffering the treatment of many doctors, and after spending all her money, she never wondered if it was the will of God to heal her. The story never mentioned the will of God. The woman never asked for permission. She never talked to the disciples about it. She never approached Jesus and asked if he was willing to heal her. She knew what she wanted and she had the faith to get it. So she went to Jesus and took it!

Faith is always right. Faith is God's permission in your heart. And Jesus never rebuked anyone for having faith. How did he react? He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace. Your suffering is over." Pay attention! This is what God is like. Never allow anyone to tell you something different. And let us tell people that this is how Jesus treats people.

This woman was a hero of faith. Many people will tell you that to stay strong in faith, you need a group of people who believe like you to encourage you. Remember the friends who brought the paralyzed man and broke the roof to let him down in front of Jesus?

The woman had none of that. This story does not mention friends who helped her pay for her doctors. It does not mention friends who protected her while they pushed through the crowd together. She appeared alone, and bleeding even while she was trying to touch Jesus.

It is nice to have friends to help you, but friends are only good if they have faith too. But what if, like this woman, you have no one to help you? What if all the people around you are faithless people? This woman proved that Jesus alone is enough, if you have faith. She was sick for 12 years and still managed to push through an excited crowd alone to reach Jesus. What is your excuse?

Chapter 18. Jesus Restored Life to a Girl

FEAR NOT, ONLY BELIEVE!

A large crowd had gathered around Jesus. The people were expecting him, and they welcomed him.

Then a man named Jairus came forward and fell at the feet of Jesus. He was a leader of the synagogue. He begged Jesus to come with him to his house, because his daughter was dying. She was about 12.

Jesus agreed to go with him, and the crowd followed. There were so many people. Jairus probably hoped the crowd would not slow them down too much. Her daughter could die at any moment now.

But Jesus suddenly stopped. He swung around and said something that did not make sense. Jairus must have heard wrong. It sounded like Jesus said, "Who was it? Who touched me?" But everybody was touching him. Wait, Jesus was talking about that woman with the bleeding disease!

What I did not tell you was that when the woman touched Jesus, he was on his way to heal a girl who was about to die. The touch of faith arrested his attention even in this urgent situation. Faith and healing were that important to Jesus. He had to find out what happened.

The woman took her time explaining what she experienced with the doctors, how she spent all her money, and how they could not find a cure. Then she continued to talk about how she heard of Jesus, and how she became determined to find Jesus and take her healing by faith.

Finally, she finished telling her story, and they continued. As they walked, Jairus recognized someone from his household approaching them. And Jairus could probably guess that it was bad news. The man said, "Your daughter is dead. There is no need to bother Jesus anymore."

Was it too late? But Jesus said to Jairus, "Fear not, only believe." This would be an excellent motto for all of us. Fear not, only believe.

Some people suggest that Jairus was in a panic, because Jesus told him not to fear. We cannot be sure of this, especially because one disciple remembered that Jairus appeared confident. He even said, "My daughter has just died. But come and put your hand on her, and she will live."

When reading the Bible, keep in mind that just because one person says something to another person, it does not always mean that this other person is doing something opposite. When Jesus said, "Fear not," it does not mean that Jairus was in fear.

When you tell someone, "I love you," it does not mean that this person thinks that you hate him. Many things are good to say in every situation. Whether someone is in fear or not, it is always good to tell him, "Fear not." And it is always good to tell someone, "Only believe."

Many people make mistakes in reading the Bible, because they keep wanting to guess what the characters in the Bible were feeling or what they were doing when something was said to them. So when Jesus said to someone, "Fear not," they would think, "Aha! That person was afraid." It is possible, but the Bible does not tell us that, and it is always right to say, "Fear not."

When you tell someone, "Happy birthday!" it does not mean that he is having an unhappy birthday. You would say it whether or not his day has been going well. It is a very silly mistake, but religious scholars do this a lot. This is a simple thing, but if you will remember it, it will help you avoid many mistakes.

There is little wrong with imagining how someone might feel, or wonder about some of the untold details in the Bible. Just remember you cannot insist that something you imagined must be true, and you cannot build a teaching on a guess.

We might not know how Jairus felt, but we know what Jesus said, and that is enough. Even when the situation appeared to have gotten worse, Jesus insisted that there was no need to panic. All you need is faith in God. And with that said, they continued to the home of Jairus.

When they arrived, there was a commotion. People were crying and wailing, because the girl was dead. Jesus entered the room. He took the girl's hand and said, "Little girl, I say to you, get up!" Her spirit returned and she stood up. She was alive again. Everyone was amazed.

For Jesus, raising the girl from the dead was just as easy as waking her up from sleep. Even when things look worse and worse, there is always hope with Jesus, if you will fear not, but only believe.

Chapter 19. Jesus Healed the Blind

I WAS BLIND, BUT NOW I SEE

Jesus healed people with all kinds of diseases and disabilities. Nobody was unimportant to him, and no sickness was too difficult for him. He healed many blind people, giving them sight by God's miracle power so that they could see.

As Jesus was walking through the towns one day, two blind men found out that he was passing their way. They had heard about the astounding miracles of Jesus, and they believed that he could heal them too.

Although they could not see, they followed the sound of the crowd and called out loudly, "Have mercy on us, Son of David!" The "Son of David" was a name for the Christ, the one God promised would come to save his people. By calling Jesus this name, the blind men were showing their faith that Jesus was the one sent by God.

The blind men continued following Jesus, calling out for his help. They did not give up, even though it was not easy for them. Finally, Jesus went into a house, and the blind men followed him inside. Jesus looked at them and asked, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?"

Again, Jesus considered this a matter of faith. When it came to healing, Jesus never asked anyone, "Do you think it is the will of God to heal you?" But he said things like, "Do you believe that I am able to heal you?" or "Do you want to be healed?" or "Your faith has healed you." Healing comes when you want it, decide to get it, and have faith to take it.

The blind men replied, "Yes, Lord." They believed that Jesus could make them see again. Jesus touched their eyes and said, "According to your faith, let it be done to you." What you believe is what you will get.

People often think that it makes no difference what they believe and what they ask for in prayer. God will give them whatever he decides anyway. But Jesus did not teach this way about faith and prayer. All through the Bible, we are taught that God will give us what we believe.

One time, some people of Israel complained that God was making them suffer, and God answered, "What you said about me, I am going to do to you." Good things also work the same way. Here Jesus said, "It will be done for you according to your faith." God will be a healer to you if you believe and speak as if he is a healer to you.

Although the blind men could not see with their eyes, they could see with the hearts. They saw in their hearts that Jesus was the hero God had promised to send. Seeing this truth was the first step to positive change in every other area of life. When this faith made contact with Jesus

Christ, a miracle happened. Immediately, their eyes were opened, and they could see. The men were so happy and amazed that they could not keep the good news to themselves. They went out and spread the word about Jesus all over the area.

Another day, Jesus and his disciples were walking through the city when they saw a man who had been blind since he was born. Jesus explained to his disciples that God would not receive honor in this man's blindness, but God would receive honor in this man's healing.

Sickness is not a good thing. It is not a gift, and it does not honor God. Healing is what honors God. Jesus explained that sickness cannot show people that God is good and great. Healing is what shows people that God is good and great.

Then Jesus did something interesting. He made some mud and put it on the man's eyes and told him to wash it off. The man obeyed Jesus. When he washed off the mud and opened his eyes, he discovered that he could see!

Why did Jesus heal him this way? There is one possible reason. Remember that God took materials from the earth to form Adam's body. This man had been blind from birth perhaps because he was born without eyeballs or born with defective eyeballs. And Jesus created perfect eyeballs for him, just like how God created a body for Adam. But this is only a guess. Jesus might have done it this way for another reason.

People in the area were surprised. Some of them wondered if it was the same man who used to sit and beg. The man who was healed kept telling them, "I am that same man." They asked him how this happened, and he explained, "Jesus made mud, put it on my eyes, and told me to wash it off. When I did, I was healed and I could see for the first time in my life."

The people took the man to the Pharisees, the faithless religious leaders who tried to cause trouble for Jesus over and over again.

The Pharisees asked how he was healed. The man replied, "Jesus put mud on my eyes, and I washed, and now I can see." Some of them were upset and said, "This man cannot be from God." Others wondered, "But can a sinner do such miracles?" Then they asked the man who was healed, "What do you say about him?" And the man answered, "He is a prophet."

The religious leaders insisted to the man that Jesus was a bad person, a sinner. But the man answered, "All I know is that I was blind, but now I see." Faithless religious people are bullies. They will not listen to God, to the Bible, or to reason. They have their own opinions and traditions, and they want to push people around until they agree with them.

But this man was brave and loyal. He was not easily bullied. Jesus had healed him, and he was forever loyal to Jesus. He talked back to the religious people and even answered them with sarcasm, mocking them. This is often the right way to answer faithless people. Refuse to be bullied. Stand up for Jesus.

The religious people said to the man, "We have no idea where this Jesus came from. We are followers of Moses!" Moses was a great prophet in the past, but Moses himself followed Jesus and predicted the coming of Jesus. These religious people did not really believe Moses. Their whole way of life was a lie to make them look like smart and good people. They were in fact the most foolish and bad people.

You might think, "The man had been blind all his life, and now he was healed. If they loved God so much, and if they were good people, then they should have celebrated with him." Faithless religious people do not think like that. The truth is that they do not care about God or people. They are very bad people. The worst people. They talk about God to make themselves look good, but they have no faith and do not want you to find out. When faith appears in someone, they want to destroy the person.

The man was a blind beggar just a short time before this. He lived in helplessness and humiliation, but the healing miracle gave him the spiritual strength and insight to stand up for what was right.

He answered, "This is amazing. You people act like you know everything about God, but you do not know where Jesus came from, and he is the one who opened my eyes by a miracle. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing."

Sometimes faithless religious people will bully you by bragging about how many books they have read, or how many years they have spent in seminary. They will brag that certain schools and churches approved them and gave them certificates.

The truth is that they want to win an argument without giving reasons from what God teaches in the Bible. This is because they do not want to admit that they are wrong, and they want to look like they are right. So they speak about unimportant reasons to convince you that they are smarter and better than you, hoping that you would give up.

This man had never been to Bible school or seminary. He was not a pastor or scholar. But he saw the truth about these faithless religious people. They were shameless. He refused to surrender to religious bullies.

The Pharisees, the faithless religious people, became so angry and frustrated. They could not bully the man. They could not twist the truth and control the man. When they slandered Jesus, faith, and miracles, the man argued back. And what the man said made much more sense than what the faithless people said. The religious people could only use force. They kicked the man out!

When Jesus heard that they had kicked the man out, he went to find him. Jesus asked him, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" The "Son of Man" was also a term that the prophets used

when they predicted the coming of Christ. The man answered, "Who is he, sir? Tell me so that I can believe."

Jesus said, "You have seen him. He is the one speaking to you." In other words, Jesus himself was the Christ that the prophets predicted. The man said, "Lord, I believe," and he worshiped Jesus.

What a wonderful example of true faith, humility, and worship. This man had been blind all his life. He did not have the advantages that other people received, such as those enjoyed by the religious leaders.

One miracle of healing awakened such faith and power in him that he defended Jesus against the religious bullies. He immediately believed and worshiped Jesus when he found out that Jesus was the Christ. This man was much better than most people today who call themselves Christians. So much better.

Think about the difference between this man and the faithless people. These people had all kinds of trainings and privileges. They claim to be the best followers of God, but when someone received a miracle from God and answered them in faith, they kicked him out. Notice that Jesus himself was not a member of their group. God himself was not welcomed by them, and Jesus was also standing outside of their church!

The story of Jesus Christ is about God's love for his people, and it is also about the fight between good and evil. Satan brought evil into the world, and Jesus came into the world to overcome evil.

Evil was not only in the devil, but it was also in evil people. And the evil people were not only those who said that they rejected God, but many evil people were those who claimed that they loved God, but rejected Jesus and rejected those who believed in miracles.

There are many people like that today. They have no faith in God, no faith in Jesus, and so they say that there are no more miracles today. This evil teaching is called cessationism. And there are other faithless teachings that are called by other names.

The truth is that these people have no faith today, and so they experience no miracles today. Instead of admitting this, they want you to be faithless like them, and this is why they will try to convince you and bully you until you agree with them. Be like this man we talked about. Do not let faithless people bully you. Do not betray Jesus Christ.

Just because people are in a church does not mean they believe in God. Find out what they teach, what they believe, and how they act. Some churches contain people that have faith, but many churches do not. If you have faith, some people might kick you out of their church.

However, even if faithless people kick you out of their church, Jesus will meet you outside and welcome you. Jesus himself is outside of that church, because they have also kicked him out. But since Jesus is salvation, when they kicked Jesus out, they have also kicked out their own salvation.

Chapter 20. Jesus Multiplied the Food

I THINK I MADE WAY TOO MUCH

Jesus and his disciples slipped away to a remote place to be by themselves. However, the people discovered where they had gone, and a huge crowd began to gather from many towns. When Jesus saw the people, he had compassion on them and healed those who were sick. Healing comes from compassion. Any teaching that fights the ministry of healing is cruel. It is full of hate and selfishness.

Jesus spent hours healing the sick and teaching the people. When the evening came, the disciples said to him, "This is a remote place, and it is very late. Send the people away to the villages so that they can buy food for themselves."

But Jesus said to Philip, "They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat." Jesus already knew what he was about to do, but he said this to test his disciple's faith and understanding. He always wanted his disciples to increase in faith.

Philip answered, "There are so many people here. Even if we spend eight months of a man's wages, it would not buy enough food for each one to have a bite!"

There were about 5,000 men there, and on top of that, there were many women and children. The total number of people could have been several times more than 5,000. This overwhelmed Philip. He was still thinking in terms of what was possible for ordinary people, and not what was possible for Jesus or for someone with faith in God.

Then Jesus asked, "What do we have?" Andrew, another disciple, spoke up, "Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many people?"

Although we refer to them as "loaves," they were probably more like small, flat pieces of bread, similar to pita bread. The fish were likely small dried or salted fish, probably similar in size to sardines. The boy brought the food for himself. It was not a lot of food even for one small person, not to say for more than 5,000 people.

As always, Jesus was confident. He instructed, "Bring the food to me, and have the people sit down." He took the loaves and fish. Looking up to heaven, he gave thanks to God. Then he began to break the food into pieces and gave it to his disciples to distribute to the crowd.

As Jesus did this, a miracle happened. He kept breaking up the food and handing the pieces over to the disciples, and then he continued breaking up the food and handing more pieces to the disciples. He kept going and going, and he never ran out of food. The bread and fish kept

multiplying, and everyone began to eat. They ate, and they ate, and they ate some more, until all of them were full.

Jesus took one portion of food that was barely enough for one person, and multiplied it so that it fed many more than 5,000 people. But there was more to the story. After everyone had enough to eat, the disciples gathered the pieces of food that were left over, and they collected 12 baskets of food.

Imagine that there was one burger in your hand. Then it became 5,000 or even 20,000 burgers. Many people probably ate two or more burgers, so there were probably many more than 20,000 burgers. And after that there were 12 baskets full of burgers left. This is the power and generosity of God through Jesus Christ.

God is interested not just in our survival, but our abundance. It takes faith to grasp this. At a later time, the disciples discussed among themselves about forgetting to bring food with them. And Jesus rebuked them, "You have so little faith! Why are you arguing about having no food?" Then he reminded them of the times when he multiplied food to feed tens of thousands of people, and still had many baskets left over. He said, "How is it that you still do not understand?"

They were still learning about Jesus and about faith. And they wrote down these lessons that Jesus taught them, so that we may learn them too. Eventually, they understood Jesus, and they understood faith, and they walked in great power and miracles, just like their teacher.

Most people who call themselves Christians still do not understand. And many religious teachers and leaders do not want to understand. How about you? How long will it take you to understand?

Chapter 21. Jesus Walked on Water

THE WAVES HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH IT

After the miracle of multiplying one person's food to feed more than 5,000 people, Jesus wanted to spend some time alone to pray and to rest. He sent his disciples ahead of him in a boat across the Sea of Galilee.

Late that night, the disciples were in the boat in the middle of the sea, while Jesus was alone on land. He saw that they were having a difficult time, because a strong wind was against them, and heavy waves crashed against the boat.

About three o'clock in the morning, Jesus walked on the water, coming close to the boat. One disciple later wrote that Jesus wanted to walk past them! You say, "They were struggling. They were in trouble." But Jesus had taught them faith and showed them many examples. One time he even rebuked a storm and made it obey him. If the disciples had learned from this, they would have stayed calm and prayed with faith.

In fact, they could have done the same thing that Jesus did the other time. Later Jesus would tell them, "I tell you the truth, anyone can say to this mountain, 'Throw yourself into the sea,' and if he does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him." Anyone who has faith can do what Jesus did. But at least the disciples of Jesus Christ should never panic.

He intended to walk past them, but the disciples saw him walking on the water. They were terrified and cried out, "It is a ghost!" Jesus replied, "Do not be afraid. Have courage. I am Jesus." He was walking on the water as if he was on land. He was confident, and unaffected by the storm.

Peter was one of the disciples, and he became very excited. He called out to Jesus, "Lord, if it is you, tell me to come to you on the water." Jesus did not think that this was an abuse of power. He did not think that miracles are only for emergencies.

Peter could have waited in the boat, but he did not want to. He wanted to walk out to Jesus by miracle power. Jesus never told them miracles were unique to him, that only he could perform miracles. He had always taught that when they believed in him, they could work miracles too. In fact, one time Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, whoever believes in me will also do the miracles that I have done. He will do even greater miracles than these."

So Jesus answered, "Come!" Peter stepped out of the boat and began to walk on the water toward Jesus. At first, he felt brave and full of faith. It worked! He was walking on water! But then, he looked around at the wind and waves, and fear gripped his heart.

People often claim that doubt is logical, and it is smart to question everything. The truth is that they do not have the spiritual intelligence and strength to have faith, and so instead of admitting this in humility, they want to convince everybody that their weakness is a good thing. But doubting the wrong thing is foolish, and it is a sign of weakness to question miracles.

Look at Peter. What did the waves have anything to do with walking on water? Without God's miracle power, could anyone walk on water when the sea is calm? No, walking on the water under any condition would require miracle power. It would be impossible without it.

Now he was already walking on the water. The waves were there when he started. The only difference was that he started to notice them more. Instead of focusing on Jesus, he made the mistake of focusing on the waves, and forgot that without miracle power, he could not have taken the first step. Since he had taken the first step, he could have walked all the way to Jesus. His fear was foolish and unreasonable. His doubt was not smart.

When that happened, Peter started to sink. He cried, "Lord, save me!" Jesus reached out and grabbed him. And Jesus said, "You still have too little faith. Why did you doubt?" He scolded Peter for not having enough faith to walk on water. Never let anyone tell you that doubt is good, healthy, or understandable. Doubt is never good, and never acceptable. If you doubt, you can repent and ask for help, but never lie to yourself and say that it is a good thing. Keep growing in faith. Never give up or make excuses.

The moment Jesus entered the boat, the storm ceased. They were in awe and said, "You really are the Son of God!" And they worshiped him.

Chapter 22. Jesus Restored Life to Lazarus

I AM THE RESURRECTION. RIGHT NOW.

A man named Lazarus was sick. He was a good friend of Jesus, and he lived in the village of Bethany with his sisters, Mary and Martha. Of course, they knew that Jesus could heal him. They sent a message to Jesus that said, "Lord, the one you love is sick."

When Jesus heard this, he said, "This sickness will not end in death. It is for the glory of God so that the Son of God will receive glory from it." He did not mean the sickness itself would bring glory to God. The sickness was already there. If the sickness itself could bring glory to God, Jesus only had to let Lazarus suffer it. He would not have to do anything.

Jesus meant that this situation would end in victory over sickness, and this victory would result in the glory of God. As we have seen many times, miracle healing brings glory to God, and Jesus was about to perform one of the most powerful miracles that people had ever seen from him. God was glorified when the miracle happened, not when the sickness happened.

Although Jesus loved Lazarus and the sisters, he did not go to them right away. He stayed where he was for two more days. After that, Jesus said to his disciples, "Let us go back to Judea."

However, the disciples were worried because the people in that area had tried to hurt Jesus before. But Jesus was not afraid. He told them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, and I am going there to wake him up." The disciples thought he meant that Lazarus was only resting. They said, "If Lazarus is sleeping, he should be fine. He will recover."

But Jesus explained, "Lazarus is dead. For your benefit, I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. Now let us go to him." By the Holy Spirit, he had knowledge of things that happened far away. He knew that by this time Lazarus was dead, but for Jesus, bringing back Lazarus from the dead was as simple as waking up someone from his sleep.

When Jesus arrived in Bethany, Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. Many people had come to comfort the sisters, Mary and Martha. When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed in the house.

Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask."

Jesus answered, "Your brother will live again."

Martha said, "I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day." She was talking about the fact that, at the end of human history, God will bring back to life all the people who have died. Those who have known God will come back from the dead with a new body to enjoy life with God forever. Those who have not known God will come back from the dead to be punished forever. When Jesus said, "Your brother will live again," Martha could only believe that he was talking about that day.

Then Jesus answered, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me, even if he dies, he will live. Whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" Remember this. This is one of the most important things you can ever learn.

Jesus said, "I am the resurrection." He did not say that he was the resurrection. He did not say that he will be the resurrection. Resurrection is not just a day. Resurrection is a person. The day itself is not going to resurrect anybody. It is the person who will resurrect everybody on that day. Jesus is the resurrection, and he is here now. You can know him now.

Think about what Martha said. At first, she said, "Jesus, my brother would have lived if you had been here in the past." And after that, she said, "My brother will live at the last day in the future." She thought that the miracle could have happened in the past, and the miracle will happen in the future.

But Jesus told her, "But I am the resurrection, and I am here now." God is the one who performs miracles, but God is not in the past or in the future. God is here now.

Most people never learn this, especially those who call themselves leaders and scholars. They think of themselves as the best followers of Jesus, but they are the worst. They might know the books and sermons by other faithless leaders and scholars, but they do not know Jesus in the here and now. If they will throw away their pride and only listen, just stop and listen.

Jesus was not healing only in the past. Jesus will not be healing only in the future. The day itself is not going to heal anyone. Jesus himself is healing, and he can bring healing to anyone. And Jesus is here now. For Jesus, it is always a good time for a miracle. It is not a matter of time, but a matter of faith. You can have healing now. You can have miracles now.

Jesus answered Martha, "I am the resurrection. Whoever believes in me will live even if he dies. Do you believe this?" And Martha replied, "Yes, Lord. I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God." He was the one God promised to send, and the one the prophets predicted, the one who would come into the world.

After this, Martha went to her sister Mary and said, "Jesus is here. He is calling for you." When Mary heard this, she immediately got up. She rushed to Jesus and fell at his feet, saying, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." She believed that Jesus would have healed Lazarus in the past.

Many people are stuck in that place, even though they have the entire Bible and all these stories about Jesus. They believe that Jesus would have done this or that in the past, but not now. They think that God has ceased doing these things, but the truth is that they have ceased to believe in God.

When Jesus saw Mary weeping and all the other people weeping with her, he was deeply moved. Jesus asked, "Where have you put him?" They answered, "Lord, come and see." Then, Jesus also wept.

Together, they came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone covered the entrance. It was a large and heavy stone, and it would have taken multiple people to move it.

Jesus said, "Take away the stone." This worried Martha, and she said, "Lord, he has been dead for four days. The body is decaying by now, and it will smell terrible.

Jesus answered, "Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?" Faith believes before it sees. Faith believes before it feels. If you believe in miracles, you will see miracles. You have faith for healing miracles before you see healing miracles. You have faith God answers your prayers before he answers your prayers.

Faithless religious people sometimes challenge the followers of Jesus, demanding that they prove he is still performing miracles and healing people by showing them these miracles. Jesus can indeed show them miracles, but that is not the way people who claim to follow him should talk. If they are true followers of Jesus, they should join those who have faith in him for miracles. Instead of fighting us, they should help us heal the sick and pray for people.

They took away the stone. Jesus looked up and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. You always hear me, but I said it for the benefit of these people here, so that they will believe you sent me."

Then Jesus shouted, "Lazarus, come out!"

The dead man came out. His hands and feet were wrapped in pieces of cloth, and a cloth covered his face. Jesus said to them, "Remove the grave clothes and let him go." After that, many of the people there believed in him.

Jesus answers prayers and performs miracles, not just in the past, and not just in the future. He is always ready, but the question is whether we have faith for miracles today. Never let anyone tell you that if you had lived in the past, you would have seen his miracles, but we are in a different time now. That is a lie. The past did not perform those miracles. Jesus was the one who did those miracles, and he is here now. And he said that if we will believe, then we will see the glory of God.

Chapter 23. Jesus Revealed His Glory

A MEMORIAL OR A MIRACLE?

One day, Jesus took with him Peter, James, and John, and led them up a high mountain by themselves.

As Jesus was praying, the disciples fell asleep. Then Jesus began to transform in his appearance. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became blinding white like the light itself. This is called the transfiguration of Jesus.

Suddenly, Moses and Elijah appeared. They were two great prophets in the past. They began talking with Jesus about finishing his work and leaving the world. This would happen soon in Jerusalem.

When the disciples woke up, they saw the glorious appearance of Jesus and the two men talking with him. They were stunned. They did not know what to say or what to do.

As Moses and Elijah were starting to leave, Peter suggested, "Master, it is wonderful for us to be here. Let us make three tents as memorials – one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." He was overwhelmed and did not make sense.

While Peter was saying this, a bright cloud appeared and enveloped them. A voice came from the cloud, saying, "This is my Son. Listen to him!" The disciples were terrified and fell on their faces to the ground.

Jesus came over and touched them, and he said, "Get up, do not be afraid." When they looked up, Moses and Elijah were gone, and they saw only Jesus.

The transfiguration was a shocking revelation of the glory of Jesus Christ. However, it was not meant to be a moment frozen in time so that we can use it only as historical reference for future teaching.

Peter had suggested building tents, as if to make this a permanent memorial. But Jesus was not interested in building memorials to past revelations. Instead, he wanted to put the revelation to work.

After what happened on the mountain, he led the disciples back down the mountain, right into the midst of people who needed him, including a young boy who was suffering from an evil spirit.

Jesus rebuked the disciples for their unbelief. Then he rebuked the people for their unbelief. And then he cast out the demon, showing that his power was not just for historical discussion, but for immediate action.

This is the difference between those who merely want to remember what God did in the past and those who have faith to see what God can do now.

Like Peter on the mountain, many people today want to build memorials. A memorial could be a statue to honor a person or event in the past. It can be beautiful, but the statue is a dead thing. The person is not here now. The event is not happening now.

This is how faithless people teach the stories of Jesus. They appear very excited about what Jesus did in the past, but then they behave as if he is dead.

For many people, religion is only a memorial, something like a statue that they worship. They would even make Jesus into something like a statue as if he is not doing anything like what he did in the Bible.

They want to create traditions and rituals that celebrate what God did in the past. They want to divide God's work into neat categories – Moses, Elijah, and Jesus – and treat each as a separate era, frozen in time. But Jesus shows us that faith is not about building memorials. It is about living in the power of God today.

There are people who are spiritually asleep. They are happy to build memorials and follow traditions. But there are also those who are spiritually awake. These are the people who put God's word into action, and who believe that God's power is alive and active today.

The Bible is not just a book of memories. It is the living word of God, powerful and effective, expanding in action and effect. The transfiguration was not meant to be a monument to the past, but a call to faith and action in the present.

Evil has possessed the hearts of many people, and so they claim that the works of God have ceased. They reduce the Bible to a mere memorial of Jesus Christ. They want to make the Bible into a monument to the past, instead of unleashing its power in the present.

Listen! The Bible is not God's tombstone! God is not dead. His word is living and powerful to produce miracles today.

What will we do with God's revelation? Will we build a memorial, or will we live in faith and see miracles? Will we make traditions out of God's word, or will we unleash its power to change lives?

The transfiguration of Jesus was a moment of revelation, but it was also a call to action. Jesus did not stay on the mountain. He went back down to continue his ministry of miracles. He

showed that the power of God is not something to be admired from a distance, but something to be experienced and put to work. Jesus is not just the people's hero in the past. He wants to be your hero today.

Chapter 24. Jesus Explained the Key

ANYTHING IS POSSIBLE FOR SOMEONE WHO BELIEVES

Jesus had transformed on a mountain in front of his disciples. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became blinding white like the light itself. As special as it was, the disciples were not meant to build a memorial out of the experience. They were supposed to bring what they learned back down the mountain to preach Jesus and heal humanity. But at this time, all of them still had much to learn.

When they came down from the mountain, they saw that a large crowd had gathered around the other disciples. Some religious scholars were arguing with them. When the people saw Jesus, they turned their attention to him. He asked, "What is happening here? What are you arguing about?"

A man rushed forward and explained, "Teacher, I brought my son to you. He has an evil spirit that makes him unable to talk. Sometimes it takes him and throws him down. It causes him to foam at the mouth and grind his teeth. Sometimes he is even thrown into fire or water. It is very dangerous for him. I brought him here and asked your disciples to cast out that evil spirit, but they could not do it."

The religious scholars probably argued with the disciples because the disciples failed to heal the boy. This is what happens today too. We are learning to follow the ministry of Jesus, and when we are unsuccessful, faithless religious people would pounce on it as an opportunity to mock and to argue. The boy was suffering, and the scholars should have joined the disciples to help him. But they did not care about the boy. They only wanted to defend their own opinions and traditions.

Jesus answered, "Oh, faithless generation! How long must I be with you? How long must I put up with you? Bring the boy to me." Did you expect him to react this way?

People assume that Jesus would be patient with those who have doubt. This is a lie. Jesus hated it! And he let everyone know it. Then some people insist that Jesus would rebuke only leaders and ministers, and we should not place blame or pressure on regular people. This is a lie too. Jesus blamed everybody. All of them! He said, "Oh, faithless generation!"

Jesus was annoyed with doubt and unbelief. He never said anything good about doubt and unbelief. If you have weak faith, do not give up. Continue to grow. But do not lie to yourself and say Jesus is fine with it. He is not fine with it.

He demands strong and consistent miracle faith, and he demands it from everyone. He requires it from every educated person, every uneducated person, every rich person, every poor person,

every healthy person, every sick person, every minister, every man, every woman, and every child. If we do not live up to this, do not join together and say that Jesus never demanded it. Join together to repent and to grow in faith.

Jesus looks at us with true love. He does not look down on us and assume that we are foolish and useless. He knows that we are made in the image of God, and we are able to walk in this kind of faith by the grace of God. This is real love and respect.

There should have been no failure from the disciples. There should have been no hostility from the scholars. There should have been no worry and confusion from the father and son. Although Jesus had been teaching faith and working miracles for a few years by now, the people were still in deep unbelief and weakness.

This is why I am following the example of Jesus and continuing to talk to you about faith. And when God sends you to talk about Jesus, faith will be one of the most important lessons you teach the people.

So Jesus said, "Faithless generation! How long do I have to put up with you? Bring the boy to me." They brought the boy to him. When the evil spirit in the boy saw Jesus, it took the boy and threw him down, causing him to foam at the mouth.

Jesus asked, "How long has this been happening to him?" The father answered, "Since he was a child. The spirit often throws him into the fire or into water, trying to kill him. Please have compassion and help us, if you can."

But Jesus answered, "What do you mean 'if you can'? All things are possible for someone who believes." The man understood that Jesus was putting responsibility on him to have faith, and this faith is not just something that puts up with suffering, but it is a miracle faith that destroys suffering.

He answered, "I believe! Help me with my unbelief!" He said that he believed, but his faith was probably not strong. When you have a good attitude, and when you are willing to improve, Jesus will help you even when he must rebuke you.

When Jesus saw that even more people were beginning to gather, and probably wishing to avoid more trouble, he decided to end it. He turned to the boy and said to the spirit, "You spirit that makes this boy unable to talk and hear, I command you to come out of him and never enter him again!"

The spirit screamed and shook the boy, but it came out and left him. And the boy became very still. For a moment, the crowd thought he was dead. But Jesus took his hand and helped him stand up. The boy was healed.

Later, when Jesus was alone with his disciples, they asked him, "Why could we not cast out the spirit?" He answered them, "Because of your unbelief, your weak faith. I will tell you the truth, if you have faith even like a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you."

Faith is the key to both receiving miracles and performing miracles. Remember what the angel said to Mary? The angel said, "For nothing is impossible with God." And Jesus said to the boy's father, "All things are possible for someone who believes." Now he said to the disciples, "Nothing will be impossible for you."

This means that whether it is to receive or to perform miracles, all of God's power is available to people through faith. Anything is possible for God, and when you have faith in God, anything is possible for you.

Chapter 25. Jesus Entered Jerusalem

IF THEY KEEP QUIET, THE STONES WILL CRY OUT

As the time drew near for the Passover, Jesus and his disciples traveled to the city of Jerusalem. This was a special time when many people would come to celebrate and remember how God had rescued his people from Egypt.

Before they reached Jerusalem, Jesus turned to two of his disciples and said, "Go to the village ahead of you. There, you will find a donkey tied up, and it has never been ridden. Untie it and bring it to me."

The disciples did as Jesus said. When they found the donkey, they untied it as he had instructed. Some people who were nearby asked, "Why are you untying that donkey?" The disciples replied, "The Lord needs it."

The two disciples brought the donkey to Jesus and placed their cloaks on its back. Then Jesus sat on the donkey as he entered Jerusalem. A prophet had predicted this long ago, saying, "Look, your king comes to you, riding on a donkey."

Jesus was the king, the chosen hero, and the Son of God himself. But he did not storm into the city on a war horse. Instead, he rode peacefully on a donkey. By this, he signaled that he would begin his kingdom not with human soldiers and weapons, but by divine powers and qualities, by faith and love, and by miracles. It was how his disciples would spread his influence throughout the world.

Most of the crowd spread their cloaks on the road, as if rolling out a red carpet for him. And others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road.

As Jesus was coming closer to Jerusalem, the whole crowd of disciples began to shout and sing, and to praise God for the miracles that they had seen.

They shouted, "Hosanna! The Savior is here! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Praise God in the highest heaven!" The people were in a joyful frenzy.

Some of the religious leaders in the crowd said to Jesus, "Teacher! Rebuke your disciples!" They thought the people were out of control and speaking outrageous things.

But Jesus answered, "Let me tell you, if these people were silent, the stones themselves would cry out!"

Followers of Jesus Christ must learn to praise and worship God. On that day, the people worshiped God from their hearts and showed us how to do it. True worship does not have to be serious like a funeral. In fact, it should often be the opposite.

It is good to praise God for miracles, healing, blessings, and all the things he does for us. Some people think it is wrong to bring attention to these things, but Jesus approved this reason for worship.

The people were not looking for miracles instead of seeking Jesus. And they were not waiting to see miracles before they would believe him. They already believed him, and they had already seen miracles, and they were praising God for what he had done.

They knew that God's power is part of who he is, just like his love and wisdom. If it is wrong to bring attention to God's miracles and blessings, then it is also wrong to bring attention to his wisdom and love. It is wrong to criticize those who keep praising God for his miracles and blessings.

It is good to praise God with simple words. If the simple things you say are true, then they are good things. Simple worship is not bad. It is bad if we never learn more about God and grow deeper in our worship, but no matter how much we learn, it is always good to shout, "God, I love You!" over and over again if you mean it each time you say it.

People look down on simple worship because of their pride. When they worship, they want to show how serious and deep they are, so they can feel very smart and spiritual, and so everybody else will admire them. To God, these people stink!

The truth is that most people who think that they have deep worship really do not. Many things they say in worship are just faithless and whiny words.

Listen to their favorite songs. Many of them focus on human weakness instead of God's strength and kindness. Faithless worship is depressing because it talks so much about sin and suffering instead of God's power to heal and to bless, and to work miracles. It is as if the people are worshiping themselves rather than God!

Imagine if Jesus walked into one of those churches and listened to the worship. Would he not say, "How come you are singing about all these problems? I came to save you from all of this!" The people would probably tell him to be quiet so they could continue their funeral-like service. God is not dead. Do not hold a funeral for him. Hold a celebration with singing, shouting, and dancing.

It is good to be emotional when we worship God. People have different personalities. Some of them tend to be excited, and some of them tend to be calm. It is not wrong to be silent and serious sometimes. But people often act serious because they are too proud to be sincere and joyful before God.

There is nothing wrong with showing emotion in worship. If everyone else is praising God with joy, and you just sit there looking miserable, you are the one who is wrong. Even if you are not feeling happy, you should at least stand up and support the others. Worship by faith, not by your feelings, and then God will move your heart too.

There is no need to shout and dance every time we worship, but it is not wrong. We can shout and dance by faith, just because we think God deserves this kind of excitement and energy from us, even if we do not feel like it at first. Faith is what makes worship true, whether it is loud or quiet.

Many people who think their worship is deep are just following traditions. They argue about things like whether to use instruments, whether to stand or sit, but none of that matters without faith. Worship God with faith. Praise Him in all situations.

Some disciples praised God when they were in prison, and God sent an earthquake that set them free. Today, there are times when followers of Jesus worship together in sincere faith, and healing miracles happen all over the meeting place. That is true worship.

True worship might seem not smart and not serious to those who follow their own opinions and traditions, but God wants powerful praise that is full of faith and joy, not a dead ceremony. He wants everyone to take part, to sing, to praise, and to see his power at work.

What is truly shameful is when faithless people stop others from worshiping God because of their pride. They are like the faithless people who told Jesus to stop his disciples from giving him the welcome that he deserved. They are like those who opposed Jesus and wanted to kill him to protect their own opinions and traditions.

Look at your church. Does it worship like the people in the Bible did, or does it look down on people like that? You might be surprised to realize that you have been standing with people who reject true worship, just like the faithless people who were against Jesus. It is time to change.

Jesus loved the people, but he knew that many of them did not accept who he was. He wanted to help them and show them the way to God. He wanted to be the answer to all their problems. But he also knew that many of them would turn away from him, reject him, and destroy themselves. So as Jesus came closer to Jerusalem and saw the city before him, he started to weep.

Chapter 26. Jesus Feasted with His Followers

DO THIS TO REMEMBER ME

The time had come for the Passover, a celebration that reminded the Jewish people of God's great deliverance. The truth is that the Passover had always been a picture of a much greater deliverance that Jesus was about to bring, not just to Israel, but to the entire world, and to every person who would believe in him.

Jesus knew this would be his last meal with his disciples before he would face the challenges ahead. He wanted to share something important with them, so he made plans for a special gathering.

As evening approached, Jesus and his disciples came to an upper room in Jerusalem. They settled around a table, ready to enjoy the Passover meal together. The room was filled with the warmth of friendship and love as they shared stories and laughter.

As they began to eat, Jesus looked around at his friends and thought about what was about to happen. He understood that soon he would be betrayed, arrested, and put to death. He had known this for a long time. The prophets had predicted all of this. He had to experience these things in order to save humanity. He wanted to prepare his disciples for what was to come. He had mentioned it to the disciples a number of times, but they did not seem to understand.

Jesus wanted to teach them an important lesson. He stood up, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. The disciples were confused. What was Jesus doing? He poured water into a basin and began to wash their feet, one by one.

At that time, washing feet was something a servant usually did. People wore sandals and walked on dusty, dirty roads, so their feet would get really dirty. When someone visited a house, the servant would wash their feet as a way of welcoming them. It was a job that not many people wanted to do.

The disciples were shocked. Peter said, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet? Do not do this!" But Jesus insisted. And he said, "Do you understand what I have done? You call me Lord and Teacher, and you are right. I am indeed the master of you all. If even I have washed your feet, you should also serve one another."

When Jesus washed the feet of his disciples, it was a big surprise. He was the most powerful and important person. He was even the Son of God, the hero of humanity. But now he was bent down, washing their feet. He was showing them that even though he was their leader, he was willing to do the work of a servant. He used his position for their benefit.

After Jesus returned to heaven, he wanted his disciples to remember to take care of one another. He did not want them to fight over who was the most important or who could be the boss. If he, the real leader, would do this for his followers, then nobody is too important to humble himself and serve other people.

This would be a necessary lesson for the disciples to work together and keep the group intact. Once religious pride seeps into the hearts of people, even if no one attacks the group, it would destroy itself from the inside.

You might think you are better than someone else, but you are never better than Jesus. If even Jesus would humble himself to serve other people, then you should also be able to serve other people too. Some people always try so hard to prove that they are number one. But only Jesus is number one.

There is another side to this. It also means that no one can think he is so much better than you that he can abuse or control you. He is not better than Jesus. At the end, we really do not answer to one another, but each of us have to answer to Jesus.

No religious leader can tell you to agree with something that does not agree with Jesus, because no religious leader is greater than Jesus. He is the master of us all. It does not matter if religious people think you are good or important. God's opinion is the only one that matters. If you have faith, God already thinks you are great! And if you are a religious leader, do not make people follow you. The people do not belong to you. They belong to God. Teach people about Jesus, and tell them to follow him.

Then Jesus said, "I have been very eager to eat this Passover meal with you before my suffering begins."

And Jesus took the bread and gave thanks. He broke the bread into pieces and handed it to his disciples. He said, "This is my body, given for you. Do this to remember me."

And then he picked up a cup of wine, and said, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you." He said that his blood will be poured out for many, so that their sins can be forgiven.

Jesus was setting up a way for his followers to remember him. The practice is known as communion or the Lord's Supper.

As they continued the meal, Jesus said that one of them would betray him. The disciples were extremely troubled by this. Each of them asked him, "Surely it cannot be me, Lord?" Jesus knew that his disciples loved him, but among them, Judas Iscariot had decided to betray him for money.

He knew that soon they would face difficult challenges, but he reassured them, saying, "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God. Also believe in me."

Today, churches make the Lord's Supper an extremely important thing, but they do not really do it at all. Churches will pass around tiny crackers and tiny cups of juice, and call that the Lord's Supper. But that is not even a snack, and certainly not a supper!

When Jesus did it, it was a complete meal. Today, when churches do it, the pastor is probably the only one who talks, and the rest of the people listen before they take the tiny crackers and tiny cups. But when Jesus did it, it was a time of conversation among all of them, just like what happens during a real dinner.

Many religious people also claim that Jesus is really in the crackers and cups. However, Jesus intended those items in the meal to be symbols of his body and his blood. A symbol is like a picture. It reminds you of the real thing, but it is not the real thing.

Jesus meant that when his followers sit together for a meal once in a while, they should remember him and what he did to save his people. Instead of doing that, religious people want to say that the crackers and cups are really the body and blood of Jesus.

Imagine thinking that a picture of Jesus is the real Jesus. Why would people do that? Because they do not know the real Jesus. If they convince themselves that the picture of Jesus is the real Jesus, then they can convince themselves that they know the real Jesus. This is silly, but it is what faithless religious people do. It takes no faith to handle a picture.

Faithless churches do not know the real Jesus. But they want you to believe that the whole situation is good and real. They give you a picture of Jesus and tell you that picture is the real Jesus. If you accept this, you would think, "Wonderful, they really know the real Jesus!"

And remember that communion is supposed to be a full meal. In giving you only tiny crackers and cups, the churches do not even have the whole picture! It is like they have torn off a corner of the picture and then tell you that it is the entire real Jesus. It is all very silly and useless.

A picture of a person reminds you of the person, but it is not the person. Jesus himself said, "When you do this, remember me." The picture is there so you will remember the real Jesus and talk about him with other followers of Jesus.

The bread and cup remind you of Jesus, but never think they are the real Jesus, or that Jesus is in the bread and cup. Faithless people use many other symbols in the forms of clothes, decorations, rituals, and special days. They like symbols so much because they have no faith. Many of them do not know Jesus at all. You know Jesus by faith, and only by faith. When you live by faith in Jesus, you will not need to play silly religious games.

Chapter 27. Jesus Arrested by the Faithless

DO YOU BETRAY ME WITH A KISS?

After the Last Supper, Jesus and his disciples left the upper room and went to a garden called Gethsemane.

Jesus knew that he was about to face the most difficult moment of his life. Everything that had happened up to this point was leading to this moment. His mission, and the reason he was born, was to die for the sins of humanity. He felt the weight of the world on his shoulders, knowing that he would soon be arrested, harshly treated, and die to save his people. As the time to do this came closer, Jesus felt the pressure of what he had to do.

Jesus was going to take the punishment for all the wrong things people have done. This is called the atonement. Atonement means that Jesus was going to make things right between God and people. By dying on the cross, Jesus would take the place of his people and suffer the punishment that they were supposed to suffer.

He did this because he loved us and wanted us to be forgiven. Through his sacrifice, we can be close to God again and be forgiven for our sins. In fact, the righteousness or goodness of Jesus would be given to us. Jesus was, and forever will be, the hero of humanity. And if he is your hero, you will be saved from all your sins.

As they arrived in the garden, Jesus told his disciples, "Sit here while I go over there to pray." He continued with Peter, James, and John. He became sorrowful and troubled. He said, "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and watch with me."

He went on a little farther and bowed with his face to the ground, saying, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup be taken from me. Yet let your will be done, not mine." Jesus knew that the will of God was for him to continue with the plan, and he prayed like this to commit himself to it. As he said in another place, "Now my soul is troubled. Should I pray, 'Father, save me from this hour'? But this is the very reason I came! Father, bring glory to your name." The Father and Son had agreed to this plan even before the creation of the world.

Notice that when people wanted miracles and blessings, they never talked about the will of God. Jesus did not ask them to think about it. He only demanded faith from them. He even asked some people, "Do you want to be healed?" He did not say, "Does God want you to be healed?" He asked about the will of the people, not the will of God. In another place, Jesus said, "If you stay with me, and my teachings stay with you, then you will ask what you will, and it will be done for you." When it comes to miracles and blessings, what is your will?

Faithless people teach the opposite thing. Since they have no faith to receive miracles or to perform miracles, they want to say that miracles only happen by the will of God. When miracles never happen, they can just say it is never the will of God.

Do you see how sneaky this is? It is a trick. They have no faith, but if you believe what they teach, you will never find out that they have no faith. Then they will still appear very spiritual and important to everyone. But their teaching is against the whole pattern of the ministry of Jesus.

When Jesus returned to his disciples, he found them sleeping. He said, "Could you not stay up and watch with me for even one hour?" And he went back to pray again. Each time he came back, he found them sleeping.

Perhaps the disciples did not understand the seriousness of the moment. Imagine how alone Jesus could have felt. He was about to be arrested and condemned, and to be punished for the sins of the whole world, when he himself had never sinned. But his closest friends did not understand him and could not help him. He had to do this alone. Yet, he was not alone, because God was with him.

Meanwhile, in the city of Jerusalem, one of the disciples was making a terrible decision. Judas Iscariot had gone to the religious leaders and agreed to betray Jesus for thirty pieces of silver. Judas had been with Jesus and the other disciples, but Satan had taken hold of his heart.

Judas knew that the religious leaders were looking for a way to arrest Jesus. He offered to arrange a place and time for them to arrest him. He would identify Jesus by giving him a kiss, a greeting of friendship that would become an act of betrayal.

Jesus returned to his disciples one last time and found them sleeping again. He said, "Are you still sleeping and resting? But the time has come. The Son of Man will be handed over to sinners. Get up! Let us go. The one who betrays me is here."

While he was still speaking, Judas arrived with a large crowd of people armed with swords and clubs. They were sent by the faithless religious leaders who were against Jesus.

Judas stepped forward and greeted Jesus with a kiss, saying, "Greetings, Rabbi!" But Jesus asked, "Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?"

And Jesus said to the crowd, "Am I some dangerous criminal, that you bring swords and clubs to arrest me? I have been teaching at the temple every day, but you did not arrest me. But this is your moment, when evil dominates."

As the people moved forward to arrest Jesus, Peter drew his sword and slashed at one of the servants among them, cutting off his ear. But Jesus said, "Enough of this," and he ordered Peter to put his sword away. Christians will not use violence to spread the influence of Jesus Christ.

We will use messages and miracles. Then Jesus touched the man's ear and healed him. Even at a time like this, Jesus was healing people.

Earlier, Jesus had told his disciples, "Tonight, all of you will run away and leave me. As the prophet said, 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.'" Of course, the disciples did not want to think that they would leave Jesus. And Peter exclaimed, "Even if the others leave you, I will never leave you."

Jesus answered, "I will tell you the truth. Tonight, before the rooster crows, you will say three times that you do not even know me." But Peter could not accept this. He said, "Even if I must die with you, I will never say I do not know you!" And all the other disciples said the same.

However, at this moment when Jesus was being arrested, the disciples were terrified. Certainly, they did not want to be disloyal. They did not want to leave Jesus alone. But they were not strong enough. They were not as strong as they thought. So they ran away, and left Jesus by himself as he was led away.

Chapter 28. Jesus Sacrificed Himself

I WILL DO ANYTHING TO SAVE MY PEOPLE

After his arrest in Gethsemane, Jesus was taken to the high priest for questioning. His name was Caiaphas. The religious leaders were determined to find an excuse to put Jesus to death. They had been threatened by his teachings and miracles, and now they saw their chance to silence him once and for all.

As Jesus stood before the leaders, they tried to trap him with their questions, to trick him into saying something that they could use against him. Jesus knew they had decided to find a way to kill him, and they were not going to be fair about this, but he did not make it easy for them. He remained composed and answered them with wisdom and authority.

It was a sham trial. They were going through the motions trying to reach the verdict they wanted. But even then they had a hard time doing it properly. They tried to twist his words, and they brought false witnesses against him. But even the false witnesses did not agree with one another.

Finally, the high priest said, "In the name of God I demand you to tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God." Jesus answered, "You have said it. And in the future you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven."

The high priest exclaimed, "Blasphemy! Do we need more witnesses? You have heard the blasphemy yourself. What is your decision?" What Jesus said was not blasphemy. He did not insult God or steal honor from God, because what he said was true. But the religious leaders said, "He deserves to die!"

Nevertheless, the Jews were under Roman rule, and they did not have the authority to carry out a death penalty. Therefore, the next morning, they brought Jesus to Pilate, who was the Roman governor. They wanted Pilate to hand down the death penalty against Jesus.

As Jesus stood before Pilate, the governor asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" And Jesus replied, "You have said so." But when the religious leaders made accusations against him, he remained silent.

Finally, Pilate decided Jesus had done nothing wrong, certainly nothing that deserved the death penalty. Pilate even noticed that they wanted Jesus to die because they were jealous of him, and not because Jesus was some dangerous criminal. Pilate wanted to set him free.

However, the faithless religious leaders had gathered a crowd of people at Pilate's house. They had convinced the people to put pressure on Pilate, and to demand that Jesus be put to death.

When Pilate said that he wanted to release Jesus, the crowd shouted, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" Crucifixion was a way to execute someone by nailing him to a wooden cross until he died. It was a very cruel and painful way to kill someone.

Stop for a moment. Think about this. This is the result of faithless religion. What harm can come from faithless opinions and traditions? What harm can come from a little cessationism and ritualism? What harm can come from sidestepping the teachings of Jesus about faith and miracles? What harm? They murdered him!

Even if some people pretend to be civilized, the same spirit of murder is in their hearts. The outcome is this kind of murderous frenzy and delusion. Faithless religion has been one of the most violent and despicable forces in the history of humanity.

Pilate wanted to release Jesus. Even Pilate's wife warned him about killing an innocent man. But those who were supposed to be his own people pressured an outsider to kill their own hero. Finally, the crowd shouted, "Anyone who claims to be a king is against Caesar. If you let this man go, you are no friend of the Roman Emperor."

This made Pilate nervous. He did not want to be accused of committing treason by supporting someone who might be seen as a rival king. So Pilate finally gave in. He ordered that Jesus be flogged and then crucified.

After being beaten, Jesus was forced to carry his own cross to the place called Golgotha, which means "The Place of the Skull." It was a hill outside the city where criminals were executed. The cross was heavy, and Jesus struggled under its burden. The crowds followed, some weeping for him, while others jeered and mocked.

When they arrived at Golgotha, Jesus was nailed to the cross by his hands and feet. The soldiers placed a sign above his head that read, "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews."

As Jesus hung on the cross, growing weaker with each moment, he looked at the people around him and said, 'Father, forgive them. They do not understand what they are doing.'" Even as he was suffering a painful death, he used some of his remaining strength to pray for those who hurt him. This was the kind of person faithless religious people decided to kill.

For hours, darkness covered the land as Jesus carried the sins of humanity. He was paying the price for the sins of each person who would believe in him. At last, Jesus cried out, "It is finished! Father, I commit my spirit into your hands!" He had completed the work he came to do. With that, he took his last breath and died.

At that moment, the earth shook, the rocks were split, and the tombs broke open. The curtain in the temple, which separated the presence of God from the world in the Most Holy Place, was

torn in two from top to bottom. This emphasized that everyone now has direct access to the presence of God.

Jesus was the final sacrifice for sin. People no longer need a temple or a priest to contact God. Any religious system that appoints priests or offers sacrifices for people to reach God or to receive forgiveness is a fraud.

The centurion and those who were with him saw the earthquake and what happened, and they said, "This man was really the Son of God!"

The faithless religious leaders wanted the people to look up to them and to listen to them, and to follow their complicated teachings and traditions. They made themselves the door or the bridge between God and the people. They wanted people to think that they are reliable guides to God, but in reality, they blocked people from connecting with God. When Jesus came offering people a simple way to God by faith in him, the religious leaders wanted to destroy him.

Faithless religious people are the same today, but now they also block the way to Jesus! They want you to look up to them and to listen to them, and to follow their complicated teachings and traditions. They make themselves the door or the bridge between Jesus and the people.

How? When you overcome them with evidence from the Bible about the teachings of Jesus on faith and miracles, they say that there are things in the Bible you do not understand because you have not studied in their schools. They say you cannot even have the special meal with other disciples to remember Jesus because you have not been appointed by their religious organizations. With many traditions like these, they want to force you into agreement with them.

They are religious bullies. They want to control you. The faithless mafia in the past controlled God's people, and extracted many benefits from them. Jesus came and overturned the corrupt system. Now the faithless mafia of today wants to control what Jesus started. But if you have faith, you can ignore all the rubbish and reach Jesus directly.

Jesus sends his followers to guide his people and preach his message. This is true. But you do not belong to them. You belong to Jesus. If another follower of Jesus teaches you about walking by faith, only wanting you to know God more fully and correctly, then you can listen to him. But even someone like that can never be a door or bridge between Jesus and you.

By faith, you will always have instant and direct access to Jesus. No one should stand between you and Jesus. No one should control your relationship with God. No one should trick you into serving them and their traditions. A true teacher will stand beside you and explain the way of faith more fully, and then, without blocking your way, he will allow you the freedom to follow Christ for yourself.

Chapter 29. Jesus Returned from the Dead

I TOLD YOU I WOULD BE BACK

After Jesus died on the cross, his body was taken down and placed in a tomb. A man named Joseph of Arimathea, who was a follower of Jesus, asked Pilate for permission to take the body. He wrapped the body in cloth and placed it in his own new tomb, which had been carved out of rock. A large stone was rolled in front of the entrance to seal it, and soldiers were stationed there to guard it. The disciples were heartbroken, thinking that everything was over.

However, the disciples should not have felt this way. Throughout his ministry, Jesus spoke openly about what would happen to him. He told his disciples that he would be betrayed, suffer, die, and then be raised back to life after three days. Jesus did not hide this truth. He shared it multiple times, preparing them for what was to come. He said, "The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and teachers of the law. He must be killed and on the third day be raised to life."

Despite his clear explanations, the disciples struggled to understand. The idea of the Christ being put to death was so difficult for them to accept that it simply did not make sense to them and did not stick in their minds. Peter even tried to argue with Jesus, and said that such a thing should never happen to him. Jesus had to correct Peter, and explained that this was all part of God's plan. He repeatedly told his disciples, "I will have to die, but I will be back."

When Jesus was arrested and crucified, the disciples were overcome with fear and sadness. They had forgotten, or perhaps never truly believed, that he would come back from the dead. It was only after the resurrection, when they saw the empty tomb and Jesus alive once more, that they began to fully understand what he had been telling them all along. He knew that he would be resurrected. But for his disciples, it was a miracle that changed everything. It was proof that Jesus was who he said he was and that he had power over death itself.

Early on the first day of the week, just as the sun was rising, some women made their way to the tomb where Jesus had been laid to rest.

Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome had bought spices so they could treat the body of Jesus. Back then, people would put special oils and spices on the body of someone who had died. This was a way to show love and respect for the person, kind of like giving them a final goodbye.

As they walked to the tomb, the women talked to one another, wondering how they would move the heavy stone that sealed the entrance. "Who will roll away the stone for us?" they asked one another.

When they arrived at the tomb, they were shocked to find that the large stone had already been rolled away! Who could have done this? The stone was very large and heavy. The tomb was empty. The women peered inside and saw that the body of Jesus was gone.

As they were wondering about this, angels appeared before them in clothes that dazzled like lightning. The women were terrified and bowed down with their faces to the ground. And the angels announced, "Jesus is not here. He has risen from the dead! Remember he told you, 'The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and teachers of the law. He must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.'" Then they remembered that Jesus had indeed said this.

When they went back from the tomb, they told the disciples what had happened. The men thought the story was too farfetched, and they did not believe them right away. Then Peter and another disciple ran to the tomb. When they arrived, Peter went into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen that had been wrapped around the body of Jesus, but the body was no longer there. The other disciple also went in. He saw and believed.

Later that day, the disciples were gathered in a locked room. Jesus suddenly appeared. He said, "Peace be with you." And he showed them his hands and side where he had been pierced. They knew it was not just a ghost or a vision, but Jesus had returned from the dead in his physical body, the same body that was nailed on the cross.

Thomas was a disciple of Jesus, but he was not there when Jesus appeared to them. They told him, "We have seen Jesus! He is alive!" But Thomas answered, "I will not believe unless I see the nail wounds in his hands and put my fingers into them, and place my hand into the wound in his side where they pierced him."

Eight days later the disciples were together again, and this time Thomas was with them. The doors were locked, but like last time, Jesus suddenly appeared among them. "Peace be with you," he said. Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and look at my hands. Put your hand into the wound in my side. Do not be faithless, but believe." Thomas exclaimed, "My Lord and my God!" Then Jesus reminded him, "You believe because you have seen me. Blessed are those who believe without seeing me."

He spent time with his disciples, reminding them how the prophets predicted everything that had happened. He explained the significance of his life, his ministry, his death, and his resurrection. His life was lived in righteousness as a representative of his people. His ministry showed humanity the way of God through his words, actions, and miracles. His death paid the price for sin, and his resurrection opened the door of everlasting life for all who would trust and follow him.

The news about the resurrection of Jesus spread quickly. Those who believed were filled with new hope and joy. They knew that their master had defeated even death itself.

Thousands of years before this, Adam and Eve had fallen into sin, bringing ruin to all of humanity. God promised that a future descendant of the woman, many generations later, would defeat the enemy, Satan. He said that although the serpent would injure this man, the man would crush the serpent's head. He would defeat the enemy for humanity. This man would take back everything that was lost because of sin, and he would gain even more for humanity.

At last, the promise was fulfilled. For a moment, Satan had injured the promised hero, Jesus Christ, but Jesus crushed his head. Jesus overcame sin and death for his people. And this victory is your victory, if you will believe in Jesus and follow him.

Chapter 30. Jesus Restored His Followers

BUT DON'T YOU HAVE ANY FISH?

After Jesus rose from the dead, he appeared to his disciples a number of times. They were filled with joy and wonder, but they were probably confused about what to do next. One morning, some of the disciples decided to go back to their old life. They went fishing.

Peter said to the disciples, "I am going fishing." They said to him, "We will go with you." They hopped into their boat and set out on the water. All night long, they fished, but they did not catch a single thing. They were disappointed, wishing they could find some fish.

As the sun began to rise, they saw someone standing on the shore. The man called out, "Do you have any fish?" They shouted back, "No! We could not catch anything!" Then the man on the shore said, "Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some."

It was a strange suggestion. They had tried all night and could not catch anything. What difference would it make to throw the net on that side? But they decided to give it a try. They threw their net over the right side of the boat, and suddenly, so many fish rushed into the net that they could not pull it back in!

Then John said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" This was something that Jesus did with the disciples soon after they first met. Right away, Peter jumped into the water and headed to the shore. Forget about the fish! The other disciples stayed in the boat and pulled the net full of fish back to shore.

When they were back on land, they saw that Jesus was cooking fish over a fire, and there was also bread. And Jesus said, "Bring some of the fish you have just caught." And Peter pulled the net to the shore. There were 153 large fish, but the net was not torn.

"Now come and have breakfast," Jesus said. The disciples gathered around him. Jesus gave them the bread and the fish, and they ate.

The night when Jesus was betrayed and arrested, Peter said to Jesus, "Even if the others leave you, I will never leave you!" But when Jesus was arrested, Peter was afraid and ran away. By the next morning, he had said three times that he did not even know Jesus.

He insisted that he was more committed than the other disciples, but at a time when Jesus needed him most, Peter left him to face the trouble alone. Imagine how ashamed he must have felt about that. And now it was time for the two of them to talk about it.

When they had finished eating, Jesus turned to Peter and said, "Do you really love me more than the other disciples do?" Peter answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Then feed my lambs."

Then Jesus asked him a second time, "Do you love me?" And Peter answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." And Jesus said, "Then take care of my sheep."

Then Jesus asked him a third time, "Do you love me?" Because Jesus was asking him that the third time, Peter was sad. He answered, "Lord, you know everything. You know that I love you." And Jesus said, "Then feed my sheep."

In this moving moment, it was as if Jesus was telling Peter, "I forgive you for running away when I was arrested. But now it is your turn to take care of the people, just like I took care of all of you. You were one of the first to follow me. Take care of them like they are your brothers and sisters. If you love me, then do this for me." And Peter did exactly as Jesus asked in the coming years, for the rest of his life.

Chapter 31. Jesus Commanded His Followers

ANYONE WHO HAS FAITH CAN DO THE SAME MIRACLES

After Jesus rose from the dead, he spent time with his disciples, teaching them, comforting them, and reminding them of all that he had shared with them before. The disciples had experienced many emotions over the past days – fear, confusion, sadness, and then the joy of seeing Jesus alive again. Now they had gathered on a mountain in Galilee, and they were listening to him.

Jesus was about to return to his Father in heaven, and he wanted his disciples to continue his work. He had a mission for them, one that would shape the rest of their lives. This moment was not only for the disciples in front of him. It was meant for every follower of Jesus who would come after them. If you are a follower of Jesus, then he was talking to you too. What he was about to say to them is now known as the Great Commission. And it was the beginning of something that would change the world.

Jesus said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me."

This statement reveals the extent of his power as the King over everything. His authority is not limited to just one part of creation, but it covers all of heaven and all of earth. This means that everything, from the smallest of creatures to the grandest galaxies, falls under his command. Jesus had overcome sin and death through his resurrection, and now he held all authority given by God the Father. Jesus has the right to visit anywhere, and to teach anyone.

For the disciples, this was a powerful moment. Jesus, the same teacher and friend they had walked with, was now the one who ruled over everything. With this authority, he would send them out to carry his message to the world. His words assured them that they would not be weak or helpless. They were working under the power and blessing of the one who rules over all. Jesus would have power over everything forever. This gives his followers in every place and time great confidence as they live for him and spread his message.

Jesus continued, "Therefore, go into all the world and preach the gospel to everyone. Go to the people of all nations and make them my disciples." To preach is to announce, and the gospel means good news. The followers of Jesus must announce the good news to every person and in every area of the world.

Jesus Christ was the hero that God promised to send. He came and succeeded in his work. The good news is that now anyone can believe in him and benefit from what he did. Anyone who believes in Jesus and follows him is forgiven by God and restored to God. This person will not be punished, because Jesus suffered the punishment for sin. In fact, because this person is joined

to Jesus, he will enjoy many of the advantages that Jesus himself enjoys. This is indeed good news!

What should we do with the new disciples? Jesus said, "Baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and teach them to obey everything I have commanded you."

Baptism is a way to show that someone has come to follow Jesus. It is a ceremony that officially welcomes the person into the group.

Jesus told the disciples to baptize people in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. This is the doctrine of the Trinity. It means that God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. There is only one God, and this one God is the Trinity. Notice that the Son is God just like the Father is God and the Holy Spirit is God. Jesus is God. As we have seen, he is the Word and the Son of God that existed since the beginning, becoming human to save his people.

Baptism is also a symbol of being washed clean from sin. When someone is baptized, it shows that he is starting a new life with Jesus. Just like Jesus died and rose again, baptism is a picture of dying to our old, sinful ways and rising up to live a new life for God. It is a reminder that, through Jesus, we are forgiven and given a fresh start.

But baptism is only a symbol. It is a picture of the real thing. The reality is always in Jesus and in our faith, with or without the symbol. Suppose someone takes a picture of you. The picture can remind people of you, but the picture is not you. You exist even if the picture does not exist. In the same way, you become a follower of Jesus by faith only.

Faithless people like to exaggerate the place of baptism. They do not have faith, so that there is no reality of Jesus in their lives. But they still want to feel religious and spiritual, and to have something to make them feel better about themselves. Therefore, they commit to symbols and rituals, instead of to reality by faith. Stay away from this trap.

Jesus also said to teach the disciples to obey everything that he commanded. Although we have looked at many of the things that Jesus said and did, there are still many more teachings and amazing things that we have not talked about. As a follower of Jesus, continue to learn and grow in your understanding of his teachings. Find out more about what he said and what he did.

Jesus taught people about loving God and others, about forgiveness and humility. He explained the value of being merciful, of standing up for what is right even when it is hard, and of trusting God completely in any situation. He said many things about the kingdom of God, such as how it grows like a tiny mustard seed into something great, and how it is more valuable than any treasure.

He spoke about the importance of faith, saying that faith like a mustard seed can move mountains. He also warned about the dangers of greed, encouraging people to store up treasures in heaven. And he exposed the religious hypocrisy of many people. They pray and do good deeds so that other people can see them and admire them. He taught about the Holy Spirit, who would come to be a helper and guide for his followers.

He said many other things that you can read about in the Bible, and each time we read his words, we can learn something new. Even though we have learned a lot already, there is so much more to explore, and it is exciting to know that we can keep growing and learning with Jesus every day. Baptism happens to a person only once, but teaching is something that is never finished.

There is more to the Great Commission. Jesus also said, "These miracles will follow those who believe." We will mention only two. He said, "In my name they will cast out demons" and "They will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover."

Remember the evil spirit who took the boy and threw him down to the ground? Remember how the spirit tried to throw him into the fire and water? The disciples tried to cast out the demon but they could not. Jesus told them that it was because they did not have enough faith. Now he said that anyone who has faith is able to cast out demons.

Jesus healed many people during his ministry by putting his hands on them. Sometimes he would say a prayer or command, and sometimes the people were healed as soon as he touched them. Now he said that anyone who has faith is able to do the same thing.

Many followers of Jesus have done this throughout history. I have also done it. I would put my hands on sick people, and the sickness would leave them, and they would get well. The miracles happened right under my hands and as the people around us watched. This should be a regular practice when followers of Jesus gather.

Both preaching the gospel and healing the sick belong to the Great Commission. If you heal the sick but do not preach the gospel, you are not obeying the Great Commission. Likewise, if you preach the gospel but do not heal the sick, you are not obeying the Great Commission.

Miracles are so important to Christian doctrine, Christian living, and Christian ministry. Jesus did not want miracles to become less powerful and less frequent as his disciples continued his work. In fact, the opposite was true. When people commented on a remarkable miracle that Jesus performed, he would often say that anyone who had faith could do something even greater.

One time, Jesus said that no one should eat fruit anymore from a certain tree, and the tree died! When the disciples pointed that out, Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what I did to the tree, but even if you say to this mountain, 'Throw yourself into the sea,' it will happen."

Jesus wanted to break the limitations in our thinking. He even said, "I tell you the truth, whoever believes in me will also do the miracles that I have done. He will do even greater miracles than these." He did not want us to be limited even by the miracles he did. He said that we can do greater miracles by faith.

This does not mean that we are greater than Jesus. No! It is possible for us to do greater miracles, if we have faith, because Jesus will be the one who actually does them. In the same teaching, he said, "I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it."

Do you see that? Jesus said, 'And I will do it.' When we ask for miracles as followers of Jesus, he is the one who causes them to happen. Of course Jesus himself can do even greater miracles than those he did during his ministry. Jesus is alive, and he is with us, so even greater miracles can happen. He can always do greater things than he did before.

Chapter 32. Jesus Returned to Heaven

I WILL BE BACK, BUT THIS TIME IT WILL TAKE LONGER

After the suffering and resurrection of Jesus, he showed himself to the disciples and offered many convincing proofs. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God.

On one occasion, Jesus told them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for the Father's promise. This promise referred to the Holy Spirit. In the past, God gave his Holy Spirit to prophets, kings, and other individuals that he chose to perform special ministries. But God promised that one day all of his people would receive the Holy Spirit.

Remember John the Baptist? He said, "I baptize you with water, but after me comes one who is more powerful than I am. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit!" Baptism with water was only a ritual, a ceremony. Although God can do something in our lives whenever we obey him, the water itself was only water. It is nothing more than a symbol for something that God does in our lives.

On the other hand, the Holy Spirit is God himself, just like God the Father and God the Son. There is only one God. This one God is God the Father, God the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is God, and the power of God. And John said that Jesus would baptize us, not with water, but with the Holy Spirit. Jesus would be someone who gives us the Holy Spirit, God's very power, to fill our beings and fill our lives.

After a person believes in Jesus and becomes his follower, an important next step is receiving the Holy Spirit. The Bible calls this the baptism of the Holy Spirit, being filled with the Holy Spirit, or receiving the Holy Spirit.

Receiving Jesus Christ comes before receiving the Holy Spirit. And receiving Jesus Christ is different from receiving the Holy Spirit. While the Holy Spirit is involved when you first follow Jesus, receiving the Holy Spirit is a separate and special experience that happens after someone believes.

The Holy Spirit is the one who works in our hearts and brings us to Jesus. He is the one who causes us to put our faith in him. When we first believe in Jesus, we receive forgiveness for our sins and become part of God's family.

This is wonderful, but there is more. Jesus wants to give us the Holy Spirit, which is not just about forgiveness or being saved. It is about giving us power. This is the power to have courage for God, power to preach the gospel, and power to perform miracles.

Without the baptism of the Holy Spirit, believers miss out on the power that God wants them to have. The first disciples understood the importance of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. It filled them with courage to preach and with power to perform miracles. It was a major reason for their success.

Today, the baptism of the Holy Spirit is just as important. Many people are not stronger in their character or better in their work for God because they have forgotten about the baptism of the Holy Spirit. We must understand that receiving the Holy Spirit is different from receiving Jesus Christ, and that it comes after receiving Jesus Christ.

We must understand that receiving the Holy Spirit is not about receiving salvation, but it is about receiving miracle power from God. When we receive the Holy Spirit, we can experience more miracles, heal the sick with more power, speak with more boldness, and be full of God's wisdom and power. God will give his Holy Spirit to any follower of Jesus who will receive by faith.

At this point in our story, the Holy Spirit would be poured out upon the people of God very soon. Jesus explained that this would begin in Jerusalem, and it was why he wanted the disciples to stay in the city until that happened. After that, people would be able to receive the Holy Spirit anywhere in the world.

Jesus said, "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. Then you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the rest of the world."

When you receive Jesus Christ, you receive life. When you receive the Holy Spirit, you receive power! By faith alone, we can heal the sick, cast out demons, and even move mountains. But Jesus said that even more power was coming. This would be the same power that Jesus used to work miracles in his ministry. We have seen that faith alone can perform all kinds of miracles. But God wants us to have even more power and more courage, and to perform more miracles and bigger miracles.

When the time came for Jesus to return to the Father in heaven, he brought his disciples to the Mount of Olives, just outside of Jerusalem. As they gathered around him, he lifted his hands and blessed them.

While he was speaking, Jesus began to rise into the sky. He was actually flying upward into the sky. We call this event the ascension of Jesus. The disciples watched in awe as he ascended higher and higher, until a cloud hid him from their sight.

As they strained to keep watching him rise into the sky, two angels in white robes appeared beside them. They said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go."

Jesus will come back one day. At that time, a great resurrection will happen. The followers of Jesus will return to life and live with God forever. They will be safe and happy. But all the other people will be punished forever.

Then the disciples returned to Jerusalem to wait for the Holy Spirit as Jesus had instructed. They regularly gathered for prayer and discussion. They began to organize themselves and to prepare for the coming of the Holy Spirit, at which time they would show themselves to the world.

What happened to Jesus? And what is he doing now? Jesus returned to heaven. When he arrived, he was given a place to sit at the right hand of God the Father. This is a place of honor and power.

Jesus was the Son of God since the beginning. He had always had the highest honor. But this is different. Jesus is now sitting at the right hand of God also as a human. Jesus as the leader of humanity will have the highest honor in heaven forever. This means that humanity will never lose their place with God again.

You should not sin, but if you do, this will not destroy the whole humanity! Jesus, as the leader of humanity, remains on the throne in heaven. Because he is there, you can repent and be restored. Jesus is the ultimate priest, and the only priest, of humanity. Jesus is our champion and our guarantee in heaven.

But he is not just sitting there. Jesus is praying for his people and directing their progress. He is arranging everything so that the gospel is entering into nations and into people's hearts and lives. He is teaching people to grow in knowledge and in faith.

Through his people, Jesus is preaching the gospel and teaching the truth to all of humanity, telling people to repent and follow him. Through his people, Jesus is healing the sick, casting out demons, and working other miracles. He is making history head toward the direction that God has planned. He is preparing the world for the day of his return, the day of resurrection and judgment.

Chapter 33. Jesus Sent the Holy Spirit

YOU WILL RECEIVE MIRACLE POWER FROM HEAVEN

After Jesus ascended into heaven, his disciples gathered in Jerusalem. They were already believers, followers of Jesus Christ. They were saved, born again, and destined for heaven. But Jesus promised them something else, something more.

They were not faithless and rebellious about the Holy Spirit and miracles. They believed what Jesus said, that he would send the Holy Spirit to give them even more power to preach the gospel, heal the sick, and perform miracles. While they waited for this, they regularly gathered for prayer and discussion, and they began to organize themselves for ministry.

On the day of Pentecost, they were all gathered in one place. Pentecost was a Jewish festival that happened fifty days after Passover. So then, it was about fifty days after Jesus rose from the dead.

Thousands of people came to this city for Pentecost. They came from different cities and towns, and even from other nations. The city was alive with excitement.

Here comes the miracle power!

The disciples were praying together in one place. Suddenly, there was a sound from heaven like a violent rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then they saw flames that looked like tongues of fire appeared and settled on each of them.

They were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they started to speak in languages that they had never learned.

This ability is called speaking in tongues. It is one of the most important abilities that the Holy Spirit gives to the followers of Jesus Christ. It puts them lightyears ahead of faithless religious people who are against the miracles of faith and the activities of the Holy Spirit.

For this reason, the Faithless will fight it as much as they can. They will criticize speaking in tongues. They will make fun of it. Some of them will kick out Christians who speak in tongues from their churches and ministries, and Bible schools.

Speaking in tongues is an ability to speak in a language that the person has not learned. It is not the same as being able to speak in a new language by studying it. The person speaks from his spirit and does not know what he is saying.

This is something miraculous and supernatural, but to a person who is filled with the Holy Spirit, it is something that he can easily do. Speaking in tongues is not an emotional outburst. The person speaking in tongues can remain calm and in control. He can decide to start and decide to stop.

A person who is speaking in tongues might be speaking in a human language. He does not understand what he is saying, but if there is a person nearby who knows the language, then that person can understand. At other times, the language might not sound like anything we are familiar with, but it should still sound somewhat like a language, and God can understand it.

Paul was a man who would later become a leader among the disciples. He wrote, "Anyone who speaks in tongues does not speak to people but to God." And he added, "I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you." Speaking in tongues is a way to pray to God or to worship him, even when we do not understand the words ourselves. These words are real communication with God, and they come from the deepest part of our being.

Speaking in tongues helps you speak to God even when you do not know what to say. When we are happy and do not have the words to express it, we can speak in tongues to praise God. When nothing is going on, we can speak in tongues to strengthen our spirits and make our day interesting.

And when we are scared or sad, we can speak in tongues to cry out to God, even if we cannot find the right words. Of course, Christians should walk in faith, peace, and victory. It is not normal to feel sad and defeated. But when we do feel that way, speaking in tongues will cause our spirits to become stronger, and the Holy Spirit will help us understand and confront our thoughts and feelings.

Speaking in tongues helps us use our minds better, and it can even make us smarter. It can make you more creative. It will help you think of new ideas and organize them better. You might suddenly get a great idea that turns into something successful. This is God's creative wisdom working in you. Speaking in tongues can give you new ideas, help you solve problems, and make you more effective in everything you do.

Speaking in tongues is a supernatural ability. Because the Holy Spirit is in you, this power is now part of who you are. It might feel so normal that you forget it is a superhuman ability. But speaking in tongues is a reminder that you are now connected to God and his supernatural power.

Returning our attention to the disciples, the Holy Spirit came down like a violent rushing wind, and flames of fire landed on each of them. Then they all started to speak in tongues. All of this made so much noise that it attracted the attention of the people in the city.

Because it was Pentecost, there were thousands of people from many nations gathered there, and they spoke many different languages. They were surprised and confused. They asked,

"What does this mean? These people are from Galilee, but we hear them speak in our own languages!" The disciples were speaking in the languages of people from all over the world.

Then Peter stood up with some of the other disciples.

He raised his voice and explained, "Listen! This is what was predicted by the prophet Joel. He wrote, 'God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy. Your young man will see visions. Your old man will have dreams. I will pour out my Spirit on my male and female servants, and they will prophesy.'"

In the past, God gave his Holy Spirit to prophets, kings, and a small number of people chosen to perform special ministries. But he had promised that one day he would give his Holy Spirit to all his people. He would give this miraculous power to all kinds of individuals, whether they are young or old, male or female, educated or uneducated.

In other words, God wants the power to work miracles to expand to all kinds of people and to all levels of society. It does not matter where they are from, what age they are, what race they are, or whether they have money or education. If they are followers of Jesus Christ, then they can receive the Holy Spirit by faith. And this was the beginning of the fulfillment of God's promise.

Peter continued, "Jesus of Nazareth was a man who did amazing things. God gave him power to do miracles and wonders, and you all saw it happen. But even though God had planned for him to come, you handed him over to be killed. You put him to death by having him nailed to a cross. But God raised Jesus from the dead! It was impossible for death to hold him down. We are all witnesses of this. Jesus has now been lifted up to the right side of God, and he received the Holy Spirit from the Father. This is why you are seeing and hearing what is happening now. God has made Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ!"

The people were deeply troubled by his words. They claimed that they were faithfully waiting for the Christ, but when the Christ came, they killed him. So they asked the disciples, "What shall we do?"

Peter replied, "Each one of you must repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." They had to admit that they were wrong, and turn away from their previous beliefs and actions. They must become followers of Jesus Christ. After that, they could also receive the Holy Spirit.

And Peter added, "This promise is for you and your descendants, and for those who are far away. It is for everyone that God calls to himself."

This is the promise that we can receive miracle power by the Holy Spirit after we receive Jesus Christ. This promise is for both that time and for all future time. This promise is for that place

and all other places. In other words, God wants the power to work miracles to expand to all future generations and to all other places.

As long as people can become followers of Jesus Christ and receive salvation from sin by faith, they can also receive the Holy Spirit and miracle power by faith. Receiving eternal life through Jesus Christ and receiving miracle power through the Holy Spirit are one gospel. They stand or fall together.

Never allow faithless religious people to cut up the gospel into pieces and remove some of it from you. They do not believe the gospel, but they do not want people to find out. The gospel contains some things that can make their unbelief more obvious, and so they try very hard to hide those things from people. It is like they wish they could crucify Jesus Christ again.

Many people accepted what Peter said. That day, about 3,000 people believed and became the disciples of Jesus.

Chapter 34. The Adventures Never End

IN THE NAME OF JESUS!

The disciples had a strong start. The Holy Spirit made a spectacular entrance. Peter's first sermon prepared the disciples to spread the message of Jesus even further. And they made 3,000 new disciples on the first day. The group continued to grow both in number and in maturity.

One day, Peter and John went to the temple. As they approached the temple, a man was being carried in. He was crippled from birth. Each day he was placed beside the temple gate, so that he could beg from those entering the temple. When he saw Peter and John about to go in, he asked them for some money.

Peter said to the man, "Look at us!" The man gave them his attention, expecting to receive something from them.

But Peter said, "I have no silver or gold, but I will give you what I have. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, get up and walk!"

Then Peter took the man's hand and pulled him up. And as he did, the man's feet and ankles instantly became strong. He jumped up, stood on his feet, and began to walk. Then he entered the temple with Peter and John, walking, jumping, and praising God.

All the people saw him walking and heard him praising God. Then they realized that he was the crippled beggar they had seen so often at the temple gate. And they were shocked.

The man was so happy, he was holding tightly to Peter and John. All the people were amazed. They rushed out and gathered around them.

When Peter saw this, he said to them, "People of Israel, why does this surprise you? And why are you looking at us as if we have healed this man by our own power or goodness? God has honored and glorified Jesus. This is the same Jesus whom you handed over to Pilate, demanding that he be put to death, even though Pilate wanted to release him. You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead. We are witnesses of this."

He continued, "You know this man that used to be crippled. It was by the name of Jesus, by faith in the name of Jesus, that he has been healed. There is salvation in no one else. God has given no other name by which we must be saved."

Peter finally learned the key! Now he gave the same reason for success and failure as Jesus did. He said it was by faith, faith in the name of Jesus, that the miracle happened.

When we say or do something "in the name of Jesus," it means that we are acting with his authority and permission, or that we are acting in his place. When Peter told the man to be healed "in the name of Jesus," he meant that he was doing it as a follower of Jesus and under his orders. But then the miracle happened because Peter had faith in Jesus.

Peter himself did not heal the man, Jesus did. Years later, Peter met another man who had been paralyzed for eight years. He said to the man, "Jesus Christ heals you," and the man was healed. Peter did not say, "I am a special disciple of Jesus, who has come to heal you." And he did not say, "Jesus could have healed you" or "Jesus will heal you." But Peter said, "Jesus Christ heals you."

Years after Jesus returned to heaven, he was still working miracles through his disciples. And Jesus is alive today. Jesus is working miracles today. The key is faith. Faith in Jesus. Faith in his name.

The disciples did not disappoint Jesus. They obeyed the Great Commission. They were preaching the gospel and healing the sick. Even when people were against them, they continued preaching the gospel and healing the sick.

It was only the beginning. The power to work miracles and experience the supernatural expanded to other kinds of people. Some of the most spectacular miracles and visions happened to seemingly ordinary disciples. There were visions and dreams, visits from angels, and appearances from Jesus. There were even miracles of teleportation, where a person would disappear from one place and appear in another place.

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today, and forever. If you have faith in Jesus today, then he will work miracles today. The adventures will never end, because when you have faith, the adventures will continue through you. Now rise up and walk, in the name of Jesus!