

THE  
**GOSPEL**  
PROJECT<sup>®</sup>

**Jesus the Savior**

*Daily Discipleship Guide*

FALL 2020 | VOL. 9 | CSB



# God's Word to You



## A Summary of the Bible

In the beginning, the all-powerful, personal God created the universe. This God created human beings in His image to live joyfully in His presence, in humble submission to His gracious authority. But all of us have rebelled against God and, in consequence, must suffer the punishment of our rebellion: physical death and the wrath of God.

Thankfully, God initiated a rescue plan, which began with His choosing the nation of Israel to display His glory in a fallen world. The Bible describes how God acted mightily on Israel's behalf, rescuing His people from slavery and then giving them His holy law. But God's people—like all of us—failed to rightly reflect the glory of God.

Then, in the fullness of time, in the Person of Jesus Christ, God Himself came to renew the world and to restore His people. Jesus perfectly obeyed the law given to Israel. Though innocent, He suffered the consequences of human rebellion by His death on a cross. But three days later, God raised Him from the dead.

Now the church of Jesus Christ has been commissioned by God to take the news of Christ's work to the world. Empowered by God's Spirit, the church calls all people everywhere to repent of sin and to trust in Christ alone for our forgiveness. Repentance and faith restores our relationship with God and results in a life of ongoing transformation.

The Bible promises that Jesus Christ will return to this earth as the conquering King. Only those who live in repentant faith in Christ will escape God's judgment and live joyfully in God's presence for all eternity. God's message is the same to all of us: repent and believe, before it is too late. Confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe with your heart that God raised Him from the dead, and you will be saved.

Suggested for  
the week of

## Unit 25: Jesus and the Kingdom (Gospels)

September 6	<b>11</b>	<b><i>Session 1</i></b>	Jesus Tells the Kingdom Parables ( <i>Matthew 13</i> )
September 13	<b>20</b>	<b><i>Session 2</i></b>	Jesus Tells the Parable of the Sons ( <i>Luke 15</i> )
September 20	<b>29</b>	<b><i>Session 3</i></b>	Jesus Teaches Difficult Truths ( <i>John 6</i> )
September 27	<b>38</b>	<b><i>Session 4</i></b>	Jesus Raises Lazarus ( <i>John 11</i> )

## Unit 26: Jesus the Savior (Gospels)

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## Unit 27: Jesus the Risen King (Gospels)

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November 15	<b>103</b>	<b><i>Session 2</i></b>	Jesus Encounters Two Disciples ( <i>Luke 24</i> )
November 22	<b>112</b>	<b><i>Session 3</i></b>	Jesus Prepares His Disciples ( <i>John 20</i> )
November 29	<b>121</b>	<b><i>Session 4</i></b>	Jesus Commissions His Disciples ( <i>Matthew 28; Acts 1</i> )

# THE GOSPEL PROJECT®

## *The Gospel Project*®

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### **Ed Stetzer**

Founding Editor

### **Trevin Wax**

General Editor

### **Brian Dembowczyk**

Managing Editor

### **Daniel Davis**

Content Editor

### **Josh Hayes**

Content and Production Editor

### **Ken Braddy**

Manager, Adult Ongoing Bible Studies

### **Brandon Hiltibidal**

Director, Groups Ministry

### **Send questions/comments to:**

Content Editor by email to [daniel.davis@lifeway.com](mailto:daniel.davis@lifeway.com) or mail to Content Editor, *The Gospel Project: Adult Daily Discipleship Guide*, One LifeWay Plaza, Nashville, TN 37234-0175; or make comments on the Web at [lifeway.com](http://lifeway.com).

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## A Word from the Editor



### Trevin Wax

General Editor—*The Gospel Project*  
AUTHOR OF MULTIPLE BOOKS, INCLUDING  
*This Is Our Time: Everyday Myths  
in Light of the Gospel*

All of the Bible points to Christ, which is why *The Gospel Project* seeks to study the Bible with an eye to Christ, who is the focus of divine revelation. And now we've arrived at the volume where all the foretastes and prophecies, all the shadows pointing forward to the Messiah, come to their fulfillment. The cross and resurrection of Jesus the King is the heart of the Bible and the heart of our faith.

In previous volumes, we've watched how Jesus proclaimed and demonstrated the glory of the coming kingdom of God through His authoritative teaching and amazing miracles. We've heard His teaching and watched His wonders. But all of those words and actions were building to the greatest demonstration of God's glory—Christ's willingness to die on the cross in our place for our sins. The perfect Son of God chose to lay down His life in order to save sinners like you and me and give us eternal life as adopted sons and daughters of God.

The good news doesn't end with the cross, of course. As we will see, Jesus was raised from the dead and exalted as the King of kings. After His resurrection, before returning to the Father, Jesus appeared to His followers and gave them the Great Commission and promised them the Holy Spirit to fulfill it. We take part in the story because we trust in Christ's salvation and we obey His command to take this good news to the world. Our prayer for you is that this volume of *The Gospel Project* will encourage you to share the good news of Christ crucified and raised for a world in need of salvation.

# EDITOR

## About the Writers



**Eric Geiger** (unit 26, sessions 1,3) is the Senior Pastor of Mariners Church in Irvine, California. Previously, Eric served as senior vice-president for LifeWay Christian Resources. Eric received his doctorate in leadership and church ministry from Southern Seminary. He has authored or coauthored several books, including *Simple Church*. Eric is married to Kaye, and they have two daughters, Eden and Evie.



**Daniel Im** (unit 27, session 4) serves as the Senior Associate Pastor at Beulah Alliance Church in Edmonton, Canada. His latest book is *You Are What You Do: And Six Other Lies About Work, Life, and Love*. He and his wife, Christina, have three children, and they cohost the IMbetween Podcast—a podcast on marriage and parenting. For more information, visit [danielim.com](http://danielim.com) and follow him on social media @danielsangi.



**Chris Poblete** (unit 26, sessions 2,4,5) serves as Lead Pastor at King's Cross Church in Rancho Santa Margarita, California. He earned an MDiv from Gateway Seminary. He is the author of *The Two Fears: Tremble Before God Alone*. Chris and his wife, Alyssa, have three children, Geneva, Haddon, and Judson.



**Mary Wiley** (unit 27, sessions 1-3) is the author of *Everyday Theology*, a Bible study exploring essential doctrines and why they matter in everyday life. She holds an MA in theological studies from Southern Seminary. She and her husband, John, have two children and live in the Nashville area. She works in Christian publishing and hosts the Questions Kids Ask podcast. Connect with her at [marycwiley.com](http://marycwiley.com) or @marycwiley.



**Jared Wilson** (unit 25, sessions 1-4) is Assistant Professor of Pastoral Ministry at Spurgeon College, Author in Residence at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, and Director of the Pastoral Training Center at Liberty Baptist Church, all in Kansas City, Missouri. He is the author of nearly twenty books, including *The Gospel According to Satan*. Jared is married to Becky, and they have two teenage daughters, Macy and Grace.

# THE GOSPEL PROJECT

A Journey Through the Storyline of Scripture

**Fall 2018**

## ***In the Beginning***

Creation and the Fall (Genesis; Job)  
God Establishes a Covenant People (Genesis)  
God Grows His Covenant People (Genesis)



**Winter 2018-19**

## ***Out of Egypt***

God Redeems His People (Genesis; Exodus)  
God Provides for His People (Exodus)  
God Receives Worship from His People (Ex.; Lev.)



**Spring 2019**

## ***Into the Promised Land***

God Guides His People (Num.; Deut.)  
God Gives His People a Home (Joshua)  
God Delivers His People (Judges; Ruth)



**Summer 2019**

## ***A Kingdom Provided***

God Provides a King (1 Samuel)  
God Provides a Godly King (1-2 Sam.; Psalms)  
God Provides a Wise King (1 Kings; Eccl.)



**Fall 2019**

## ***A Nation Divided***

God Speaks to His People (1-2 Kings)  
God Judges the Sin of His People (2 Kings; Prophets)  
God Shows Mercy to His People (2 Chron.; Prophets)



**Winter 2019-20**

## ***A People Restored***

God Sustains His People (Daniel)  
God Restores His People (Ezra; Prophets)  
God Prepares His People (Neh.; Esth.; Mal.)



Spring 2020

***Jesus the Messiah***

Jesus Comes into the World (Luke)  
Jesus Begins His Ministry (Gospels)  
Jesus Among the People (Gospels)



Summer 2020

***Jesus the Servant***

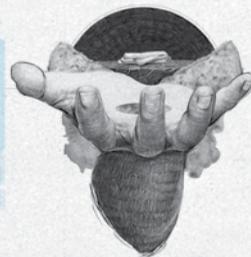
Jesus the Healer (Gospels)  
Jesus the Teacher (Gospels)  
Jesus the Miracle-Worker (Gospels)



Fall 2020

***Jesus the Savior***

Jesus and the Kingdom (Gospels)  
Jesus the Savior (Gospels)  
Jesus the Risen King (Gospels)



Winter 2020-21

***The Mission Begins***

The Holy Spirit Comes (Acts; Epistles)  
Fundamentals of the Faith (Acts; Epistles)  
New Life in Christ (Acts; Epistles)

Spring 2021

***The Church United***

Living Like Jesus (Acts; Hebrews)  
The Sent Church (Acts; Epistles)  
Don't Forget (Acts; Epistles)

Summer 2021

***All Things New***

Paul in Prison (Acts; Epistles)  
Facing Adversity (Acts; Epistles)  
Jesus Will Come Again (Revelation)

Unit 25, Session 2

## Jesus Tells the Parable of the Sons

**SESSION IN A SENTENCE:** The climax Jesus told reveal God's goodness and welcome to welcome any sinner home.

**BACKGROUND PASSAGE:** Luke 15

One our mural hangs a prize of Rembrandt's masterpiece *The Return of the Prodigal Son*. As first glance, it doesn't seem to contain much detail. In the foreground, illuminated by some mysterious light, the repentant son kneels before his compassionate father, who is embracing him. This is the main focus of the painting and most people's recollection of the parable. But as the right reveals the prodigal's older brother, with his hands folded. He too is illuminated because his role in the story is equally prominent. While there are other interesting details we could mention, the main point of both the painting and the parable is right there in the light: the father welcomes his "wasted" son with the same love he has for his "righteous" son. Yet the story turns the typical responses of "the wiser" and "the righteous" inside out.

**1** Why do you think this parable is so often called "The Prodigal Son" while the older brother's role is overlooked?

Unit 25, Session 2 21

**1** Gather with your group for Bible study and fellowship. Use the **Group Time** in your *Daily Discipleship Guide* to follow along and participate in the session. Mark up the Scripture passages, answer the questions, fill in the blanks, do the activities, write out questions and thoughts—Make this guide yours!

**Point 3: Jesus receives words of worship (John 6:66-69).**

"From that moment many of his disciples turned back and no longer accompanied him."  
 "So Jesus said to the Twelve, "You don't want to go away too, do you?"  
 "Simon Peter answered, "Lord, to whom will we go? You have the words of eternal life."  
 "We have come to believe and know that you are the Holy One of God."

The twelve disciples had been around Jesus for a while. They had heard his teachings and seen His miracles, but so had lots of other people. Now, after some hard teaching from Jesus, they watched as some who claimed to follow Christ walked away into the distance. But the Twelve remained. And so Jesus' question, Peter for all his impetuosity, replied with the right answer: the response of faith and worship. Truly seeing and believing Jesus means every other option has become no option at all, and that leads to worship of "the Holy One of God."

**1** What are some declarations of truth that glorify Jesus?  
 Salvation comes through faith alone in Christ alone. He is the way, He is the truth, and He is the life (John 14:6). He is the only way to the Father, the only way to new and eternal life. The world's wisdom runs counter to the truth of Christ, which is why so many left Him when He challenged their worldly beliefs. Therefore, to follow and worship Jesus means rejecting the ways of the world in favor of God's truth. We must love Him above all, not ourselves, or we will miss out on His love for us. We must love His way, not our own, or we will not live at all.

**God is Truthful:** The Scriptures are clear that in God there is no falsehood. God represents things as they really are. Everything He says can be \_\_\_\_\_ because God guarantees the truth of everything He tells us. Telling the truth is one way we bear the \_\_\_\_\_ of God, whose \_\_\_\_\_ is "the way, the truth, and the life."

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### Group Time

**Point 1: Selfishness leads to rebelling against the Father's goodness (Luke 15:11-13).**

"He also said, "A man had two sons." "The younger of them said to his father, "Father, give me the share of the estate I have coming to me." So he distributed the assets to them."  
 "Not many days later, the younger son gathered together all he had and traveled to a distant country, where he squandered his estate in foolish living."

Jesus didn't provide a backstory for us, but one small detail does on the stage for the young son's actions. By asking for his inheritance early before his father's death, the younger son essentially told his father, "I wish you were dead." Thus, he alienated and cut himself off from his father and family because he desired to live for himself. This is the essence of every sin, both from the prodigal son and from us.

**1** Why might people resist identifying with the prodigal son at this point in the parable?

In verse 13, Jesus said the inheritance the son took early in his greed was "squandered" and that his lifestyle was "foolish." Whatever expenses or pleasures the son was chasing after in his new life came up short in reality, and the pursuit cost him everything (vs. 14-16). He should have seen it coming—but as we've often enough, a handful of sin, whether public or private, one day will come as overbearing. So how much worse is it at the center—rather than God—is so too operationally bankrupt and so yourself in its own catastrophic and unrelenting emptiness.

**2** What words of warning and encouragement might you give to someone younger than you?

### My Mission

Because we have been given the Holy Spirit, who guides us in our truth, we proclaim the full counsel of Scripture, even the more difficult parts, so others may have Jesus' words of life.

- How will you move closer toward Jesus in faith because He has the words of eternal life?
- What are some ways your group can support and encourage one another in the mission of sharing the gospel with others?
- With whom will you share about Jesus and the words of eternal life? Pray for guidance and the words to say for when you next encounter this person.

#### Voices from Church History

"In reading the words of eternal life it is to bring to the Holy Spirit, and the life (John 14:6), and that everyone is encouraged walking along the Way, remembering that the Holy Spirit is the Lord."

—St. Basil the Great (c. 330-375)

#### Notes

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**2** At the conclusion of the session, use **My Mission** to respond to the truths from God's Word. Choose at least one of the questions on the page to drive your response in faith, in community, and in mission for Jesus Christ, the center of God's Word and our purpose in life.



## Unit 25

# Jesus and the Kingdom

## *Gospels*

### Memory Verses

“Simon Peter answered, ‘Lord, to whom will we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and know that you are the Holy One of God.’”

—JOHN 6:68-69

# Jesus Tells the Kingdom Parables

**SESSION IN A SENTENCE:** Jesus used parables to teach what the kingdom of heaven will be like while we wait for Christ's return and His full reign in the world.

**BACKGROUND PASSAGE:** Matthew 13

Have you ever seen one of those Magic Eye® images? You might have encountered a display of them for sale in a poster shop or at a mall walkway kiosk. The images work based on some elusive trick of human optics. At first glance, they simply look like an abstract swirl of colors. No discernible image can be seen. But if you stare at the image long enough and in the right way, a concrete image of some definition comes through. Not everyone is able to see this hidden image though. It can be frustrating when others marvel at the sailboat or the unicorn while all you can see is a whirlpool of neon.

The parables of Jesus work a little like that. At first glance, it can be difficult to discern what they mean. All we might see is a field, some seeds, or a pearl, but then, when we look at them the right way, a beautiful picture of the kingdom takes shape.

**?** When have you felt like the only one in a group of people not to “get” something? Why might you have found that experience unsettling?

# Group Time

## Point 1: Word of the kingdom of heaven will be sown on different kinds of soils (Matt. 13:1-9).

<sup>1</sup> On that day Jesus went out of the house and was sitting by the sea. <sup>2</sup> Such large crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat down, while the whole crowd stood on the shore.

<sup>3</sup> Then he told them many things in parables, saying, “Consider the sower who went out to sow. <sup>4</sup> As he sowed, some seed fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured them. <sup>5</sup> Other seed fell on rocky ground where it didn’t have much soil, and it grew up quickly since the soil wasn’t deep. <sup>6</sup> But when the sun came up, it was scorched, and since it had no root, it withered away. <sup>7</sup> Other seed fell among thorns, and the thorns came up and choked it. <sup>8</sup> Still other seed fell on good ground and produced fruit: some a hundred, some sixty, and some thirty times what was sown. <sup>9</sup> Let anyone who has ears listen.”

Jesus used a lot of agrarian imagery, the common language of the culture, both in His sermons and in His stories. But He used these images in a different way than His hearers would have expected. In this parable, for example, the portrait Jesus casts of a sower throwing seed everywhere, almost willy-nilly, wouldn’t make sense to the seasoned farmer. But we have to read these stories with spiritual eyes.



Why are stories so effective at teaching truths?

Jesus explained this parable to His disciples in Matthew 13:18-23. The seed sown is the word about the kingdom, or we could say, the gospel. A person’s response to the gospel depends on the nature of the soil, or the state of his or her heart. The human sower has no way of knowing which hearts will be receptive and which ones won’t. So the sowing of the seed—the preaching and sharing of the gospel of Jesus Christ—must be done anywhere and everywhere because the responsibility for the growth is not our own but God’s.



Why should believers be encouraged that the growth of the kingdom is God’s responsibility and not our own?

## Point 2: Growth of the kingdom of heaven will permeate the world (Matt. 13:31-33).

<sup>31</sup> He presented another parable to them: “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his field. <sup>32</sup> It’s the smallest of all the seeds, but when grown, it’s taller than the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the sky come and nest in its branches.”

<sup>33</sup> He told them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like leaven that a woman took and mixed into fifty pounds of flour until all of it was leavened.”

In these parables, Jesus was helping His disciples to see the kingdom of God differently, to see it in faith. He did not want His followers to despise the day of small beginnings or to be offended by the unassuming start of His kingdom or its seeming defeat. For even Christ’s death brought freedom for the captives of sin, and His burial was but the precursor to His glorious resurrected life and ours. What Jesus was getting at in the double imagery of a small mustard seed and a little leaven is that the growth of the kingdom will, in the end, seem utterly unlikely and impossible.

A small mustard seed becomes the biggest tree; a little leaven affects the whole batch of flour. These parables illustrate that the kingdom’s growth will not only be unlikely but all-encompassing. The gospel of Jesus’ cross and resurrection will be the down payment, as it were, for the coming of the new heavens and new earth. What Christ began in His first coming He will consummate in His second with the kingdom of God in its fullness.

**Church and Kingdom:** The church’s

\_\_\_\_\_ is to witness to

God’s kingdom, proclaiming God’s

\_\_\_\_\_ of salvation through

Christ and demonstrating the power of the gospel through \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ so that others may be brought to live under God’s reign.



How should knowing Christ’s kingdom will prevail affect your viewpoint on earthly kingdoms?



### Voices from Church History

“All the Scriptural metaphors about the death of the seed that falls into the ground, about losing one’s life, about becoming the least in the kingdom, about the world’s passing away—all these go on to something unspeakably better and more glorious. Loss and death are only the preludes to gain and life.”<sup>1</sup>

—Elisabeth Elliot (1926-2015)

### Point 3: The worth of the kingdom of heaven will compel the forsaking of all (Matt. 13:44-46).

<sup>44</sup> “The kingdom of heaven is like treasure, buried in a field, that a man found and reburied. Then in his joy he goes and sells everything he has and buys that field.

<sup>45</sup> “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls. <sup>46</sup> When he found one priceless pearl, he went and sold everything he had and bought it.

Perhaps the man and the merchant in Jesus’ short parables could represent those who wear themselves out in the pursuit of what is “better and more.” Then one fateful day, they find *it*; they find the one treasure that makes all their previous treasures pale in comparison. Suddenly, *everything* they own holds no more value except to be sold to buy the one thing worth trading *everything* for. This, Jesus said, is the proper perception of the kingdom of God.

True \_\_\_\_\_, true eternal \_\_\_\_\_, are found in \_\_\_\_\_ alone.

Jesus Himself embodied the point of these parables, not in searching for the kingdom but in bringing the kingdom to us. He gave up *everything* because the kingdom of heaven is worth it. He knew His kingdom must come through His making atonement for sins and being resurrected for eternal life. Therefore, ushering in the kingdom of God was worth Jesus giving up His very life. Because of this, then, the kingdom of heaven is worth our lives as well.



How can Christians live to demonstrate that the kingdom of heaven is their greatest treasure?



# Daily Study

## Day 1: Read Matthew 13:1-9,18-23

As you read this right now, there are cares and worries in your life that can steal your joy in Christ if not submitted to His care. You may not be going through anything especially difficult, anything “big,” that could distract you from kingdom fruitfulness, but the danger to get off mission is always there. In fact, it may be during times of relative ease that we are most in danger. Suffering and hardship typically have a way of pushing us closer to God in faith.

So think of your day, your week, and your upcoming plans or obligations. They could feel perfectly routine and ordinary. But in your preoccupation and planning, are you forgetting to meditate on God’s Word, to pray, and to apply His Word to your life?

These kingdom parables help us see everyday life with spiritual resonance. Events in the news or in the neighborhood may look bleak, but Christ is upholding the universe. His plans will be fulfilled. The proliferation of evil seems inevitable, but Christ’s church is continuing and will continue to bear fruit.

So today can be the day of repentance and a fresh start. Don’t underestimate the power of the gospel in your life to re-center your mind and re-focus your gaze on the author and perfecter of your faith—Jesus.



What steps do you take to make sure the thorns of daily life do not choke out the seed of the kingdom in your life?

## Day 2: Read Matthew 13:10-17

Jesus said He used parables just as much for obscuring as for unveiling, as much for concealing as for revealing. What an odd thing to say.

This is a reminder, first of all, that truly seeing the kingdom of God depends upon God's revealing power. Think of Paul's enlightening words in Romans 8:7: "The mindset of the flesh is hostile to God because it does not submit to God's law. Indeed, it is unable to do so."

Second, however, these words are another reminder of just how polarizing the person and work of Christ is. It explains why when you share the gospel with one friend, he or she leans in to know more, but when you share with another, he or she becomes uncomfortable or offended. The message is the same, but the way it "lands" can be different. This is a reminder to believers that when our minds are set on the cares of the world—on pleasure, on accumulation, on popularity or reputation—we can miss the work of the kingdom in our midst.



How can you be more mindful in your everyday life of the reality of the kingdom of God?

## Day 3: Read Matthew 13:24-33

It seems counterintuitive to keep the two main thoughts of these two kingdom parables together, but doing so can be an immense encouragement to us. First, the parable about the wheat and the tares is a lesson for the church that just because someone identifies as a Christian or with the Christian religion doesn't mean he or she has become a true believer in Jesus Christ. Jesus taught that until the end of the age, some unbelievers will masquerade as believers—often themselves self-deceived about their spiritual state.

If the wheat and tares grow side by side in the world until the end, then the number of the "wheat" must end up depressingly lower than expected. Yet the second parable tells us that the kingdom will continue to grow and flourish. At the end of days, there will, in fact, be an innumerable count of genuine believers eager to worship Christ for all eternity (Rev. 7:9). The Lord will not fail in bringing many to Himself.



What does the parable of the wheat and the tares mean for your understanding of the kingdom of God in the world?

## Day 4: Read Matthew 13:34-43

It is not popular these days to speak of hell. Hell, in America, is more of a curse word than a real danger faced by every person who has ever lived. But even in the evangelical world, the concept of hell has begun to lose its resonance. The age-old errors of annihilationism (the view that those not in Christ simply cease to exist after death) and universalism (the view that God will save all people regardless of their faith in Christ) continue to poke their heads up in the church's landscape. And even those who still believe in hell rarely mention it.

In Matthew 13:34-43, Jesus points to a stark reality that every person must reckon with: There is such a thing as “evil” and such a thing as “lawlessness,” and the end result for both is a place of eternal conscious torment. Hell is real, and it will be a place of unending and excruciating judgment, the unending experience of God's wrath. In the light of this important truth, the last line of His exposition of the parable is gripping: “Let anyone who has ears listen” (v. 43).



How does knowing hell awaits every unrepentant sinner motivate you in prayer and evangelism?

## Day 5: Read Matthew 13:44-58

At the end of Matthew 13, just as Jesus had been predicting through His parables, the people in His own hometown rejected Him. They were offended by Him.

One reason for their rejection was their inability to fathom how anything mighty of God could come from their own surroundings. They knew Jesus' family. They knew His earthly father's trade. They could not see how any of that could amount to anything glorious.

The truth for today is that Christ plans to redeem His creation. He can (and will) take what is ordinary and use it for His own glory. Just as He Himself was born into a poor, ordinary family that had to lay Him in a feeding trough after His birth, Jesus is still using ordinary, unassuming people to spread His kingdom throughout the world. What remains for us, then, is that we do not become distracted by the ordinariness and routines of life so that we do not drift into unbelief.



What do the circumstances of Jesus' birth and upbringing say about God's plans and priorities?



## UNIT 25

## SESSION 1

1. Elisabeth Elliot, *These Strange Ashes* (Grand Rapids, MI: Revell, 1998), 146-47.
2. Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989) [eBook].

## SESSION 2

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