

Encountering Jesus

Parent's Companion

SCRIPTURE / BACKGROUND / FAMILY ACTIVITIES



**Meet Jesus in the stories.
Explore them together.**

A parent resource for reading closely, retelling confidently, and helping children explore Scripture through play and conversation.

Find your place

Select a title or page number to open that page.

Quick start: begin tonight	3
Using this companion	4
How a Story Block works	5
Meet the Activity Block	7
Choose your family rhythm	17

The stories

01 Jesus Calls the Fishermen	18
Matthew 4:18-22	
Calling, leaving, and learning to follow Jesus.	
02 Zacchaeus	20
Luke 19:1-10	
Jesus seeks the lost, welcomes, and restores.	
03 Mary & Martha	22
Luke 10:38-42	
Welcome, listening, and the one thing needed.	
04 Lazarus	24
John 11:1-44	
Jesus meets grief and calls Lazarus into life.	
05 The Cleansing of the Leper	26
Mark 1:40-45 / Matthew 8:1-4 / Luke 5:12-16	
Compassion, touch, and the authority to make clean.	
06 Bartimaeus	28
Mark 10:46-52	
A cry for mercy, restored sight, and following Jesus.	
07 Jesus Calls Matthew	30
Matthew 9:9-13	
Following Jesus, sharing a table, and learning mercy.	
08 Jesus Calms the Storm	32
Mark 4:35-41 / Matthew 8:23-27 / Luke 8:22-25	
From a great storm to the question: who is this?	
09 The Woman Who Touched Jesus	34
Mark 5:21-34 / Matthew 9:20-22 / Luke 8:43-48	
A touch of faith, healing, and the gift of peace.	
10 Nicodemus	36
John 3:1-21	
New birth, the Spirit, and the gift of God's Son.	
11 The Woman at the Well	38
John 4:1-42	
Living water, true worship, and a town coming to Jesus.	

Quick start: begin tonight

1 Set out two blocks

Choose a Story Block and the shared Activity Block. Find the matching chapter in this companion. A physical Bible, plain paper, and something to draw with can be nearby.

2 Hear the story

Read the passage from your Bible or use the illustrated read-aloud. Turn to the matching pictures as you read. On the first evening, let your child listen and look. Some sentences continue from one picture to the next; read them naturally.

3 Model it, then retell together

Tell the story once in your own words while turning the block. Then invite your child to join in. Ask, “What happened first?” and “What happened next?” A child can speak, point, make a sound, finish your sentence, or turn to the next picture.

4 Intentionally choose one activity

After Retell, choose Reflect, Character, Act Out, Connect, or one option from the four-choice face. Choose the activity deliberately; the Activity Block is not rolled. Use the story chapter’s Simple Start or Go Deeper examples.

5 Close simply

Pray a sentence together, or let each person name something they want to remember. Follow your children’s lead and attention spans. A brief visit can be enough; continue when they want to explore more.

Retell every time. One additional activity is enough. Come back to the same story and let familiarity grow.

Using this companion

Meet Jesus in each passage

Encountering Jesus helps families attend to what Jesus says and does, how people respond, and what changes when they meet him. The stories invite close listening to Scripture, with pictures that help children remember and retell.

Read the background for yourself

The parent pages explain the setting, the movement of the passage, and details that help its meaning come into focus. Read these before exploring the story or return to a section when a question arises. You do not need to present every background detail to your child.

Use the illustrated read-aloud with your family

Each story has six pictures arranged in two rows. The numbered narrative follows their order. Read the whole passage alongside the pictures when your family is ready. Scripture remains the source; the pictures support the telling.

Keep the examples close to the story

Each chapter includes retelling questions and practical ideas for Reflect, Character, Act Out, Connect, Music, Wonder, Prayer, and Find. These are specific ways to explore that passage. Let a question, a drawing, or a moment of play lead you back to what the Bible says.

Choose Simple Start or Go Deeper

Both approaches can work at any age. Simple Start offers a small, supported way to participate. Go Deeper gives more room to investigate, imagine carefully, create, and make connections. Choose according to your child's familiarity, interest, and energy.

Keep learning together

Distinguish what the passage says from what you wonder about. You can say, "Let's see if the Bible tells us," or "I don't know yet." Your child does not need a parent with every answer. They need someone willing to listen, explore, and return to Scripture with them.

You do not need to work through every page or activity. Use this companion to feel equipped, then follow your child's curiosity.

How a Story Block works

Example: Jesus Calls the Fishermen. Faces 1-3 across the top; faces 4-6 below.



1. Read

Read the story from the Bible. Narratives are available at bibleblocks.org/resources. As you read, turn the Story Block to show the picture that matches each part of the story.

2. Show How to Retell

Use the six pictures to briefly tell the story back in your own words without a story in front of you. Keep it simple. The pictures are there to help you remember the main moments.

3. Let Your Child Retell

Pass the Story Block to your child and invite them to tell the story. They can tell one sentence for each picture, or simply share what they remember. Help with questions like:

- “What happened first?”
- “What happened next?”
- “What did Jesus do?”

How a Story Block works

Choose one activity. Close simply.

4. Choose an Activity

Choose one activity from the Activity Block based on your family's time, energy, and interest. One activity is enough.

5. Close Simply

End with a short prayer or one thing your family wants to remember. "Jesus, thank you for this story. Help us remember it and follow you. Amen." That is a complete Bible Blocks experience.

Choose What Fits Today

The Story Block helps your child remember and retell the story. The Activity Block helps your family explore the story in a new way. Begin every Bible Blocks experience with Retell. Then intentionally choose one additional activity based on your family's time, energy, and interest. Most activities include two ways to begin:

Simple Start

For children who need more support, shorter responses, movement, drawing, or concrete prompts.

Go Deeper

For children ready for more independence, reflection, writing, discussion, or detail. You can choose either option at any age. Use what fits your child today.

Meet the Activity Block



- | | |
|-----------------------|--|
| 1 Retell | Tell the story using its six pictures. |
| 2 Reflect | Draw, color, or write a response. |
| 3 Character | Attend to a person in the passage. |
| 4 Act Out | Make a pose or act out a moment. |
| 5 Connect | Connect this passage with another Bible story. |
| 6 Four choices | Choose Music, Wonder, Prayer, or Find. |

Retell every night. Then intentionally choose one additional activity. Return to the same story with a different activity another time.

Retell

Tell the Story Using the Pictures



Retelling is the heart of Bible Blocks. Return to it every time you explore a story.

Simple Start: Tell What You See

Give your child the Story Block and invite them to turn it from picture to picture. Ask them to say one thing they see on each side. Use prompts such as:

- “What do you see?”
- “Who is in this picture?”
- “What is happening?”
- “What happened next?”

If all six sides feel like too much, choose three pictures and tell the beginning, middle, and end together. You can also begin each sentence and let your child finish it.

Go Deeper: Retell in Your Own Words

Invite your child to use all six pictures to retell the complete story. Encourage them to include:

- what happened first
- what Jesus said or did
- how the other people responded

The goal is not a perfect performance. The Bible is the source of the story. The block is a memory tool that helps your child begin to make the story their own.



Reflect

Respond Through Drawing or Writing

Reflect gives children space to slow down, notice something meaningful, and respond to the story.

Simple Start: Draw One Moment

Ask your child to choose one picture from the Story Block. They can draw:

- the whole scene
- one object
- their favorite moment
- one person
- a facial expression

When they finish, ask:

- “Tell me about your picture.”

Stick figures and simple drawings are enough. The purpose is not artistic skill. The drawing helps your child think about the story.

Go Deeper: Respond to the Story

Invite your child to choose the moment, phrase, action, or person that stood out most. They can draw or write about:

- something they noticed
- something that surprised them
- something they want to remember
- something the story teaches them about Jesus
- something that connects with their own life

Try one prompt:

- “This part stands out to me because...”
- “One thing I learned about Jesus is...”
- “This story makes me think about...”
- “One thing I want to remember is...”

Children can respond with a picture, several sentences, or a journal entry.



Character

Experience the Story Through Someone's Eyes

Character helps children pay closer attention to one person's experience within the story.

Simple Start: How Did They Feel?

Choose one character from the story. Ask:

- "How do you think this person felt?"

Your child can name the feeling, show it with their face, or draw the character's expression. Then ask:

- "Did their feelings change?"

Compare how the person may have felt at the beginning and at the end. Possible feelings include:

- | | | | |
|------------|-------------|-----------|------------|
| • happy | • sad | • afraid | • angry |
| • confused | • surprised | • hopeful | • peaceful |

Encourage your child to point to the pictures that helped them choose those feelings.

Go Deeper: Tell the Story as the Character

Invite your child to retell part or all of the story from one character's perspective. Begin with:

- | | |
|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| • "I am ____." | • "At the beginning, I..." |
| • "When Jesus ____, I..." | • "I felt..." |
| • "By the end..." | |

Afterward, ask:

- "What did this person see Jesus do?"
- "What might this person have believed about Jesus?"
- "How did the encounter change this person?"
- "What does this character help us notice about the story?"

Your child may answer aloud, write a first-person journal entry, or tell the story while holding the block.



Connect

Connect This Story to Another Story

Connect helps children recognize repeated ideas, actions, and themes throughout Scripture.

Simple Start: Find One Similarity

Place this Story Block beside another Story Block your family has already explored that has a clear connection. Ask:

- “What is one thing these stories have in common?”

Your child might notice:

- Jesus helped someone
- someone was afraid
- someone asked Jesus for help
- Jesus welcomed someone others rejected
- someone chose to follow Jesus
- something changed after meeting Jesus

Handle and turn the blocks together. The pictures can help jog your child’s memory. There may be more than one good connection.

Go Deeper: Choose Your Own Connection

Place all the previous Story Blocks where your child can see and handle them. Ask your child to choose another story that connects with the current one. Then ask:

- “What connects these stories?”
- “How are the people similar?”
- “How are they different?”
- “What did Jesus do in both stories?”
- “How did the people respond differently?”
- “What theme appears in both stories?”

Your child can also connect the story to another part of Scripture that is not represented by a block. The goal is not to guess the connection the parent has in mind. The goal is to notice a meaningful connection and explain it.

Act Out

Bring the Story to Life



Act Out helps children experience the movement, emotion, and action of the story with their whole bodies. No costumes, props, or scripts are required.

Simple Start: Create a Freeze Frame

Choose one picture from the Story Block. Ask:

- “Can you make your body look like this part of the story?”

Your child might pose as someone:

- climbing
- listening
- welcoming Jesus
- following Jesus
- calling out
- kneeling
- walking away

Say, “Freeze!” Then ask:

- “Which part of the story are you showing?”

Repeat with another picture if your child wants to continue.

Go Deeper: Act Out All Six Scenes

Choose a narrator. The narrator turns the Story Block one side at a time and describes what is happening. Everyone else acts out each scene using their bodies, facial expressions, movement, and voices. Children can take turns playing different people or retell the entire story from one character’s perspective. Try adding:

- simple dialogue
- sound effects
- different emotions
- a narrator who connects the scenes

Afterward, ask:

- “Which scene felt most important?”
- “What did acting it out help you notice?”



Prayer

Talk to God About the Story

The Four Choices

One side of the Activity Block contains four options: Prayer, Find, Music, and Wonder. Choose the option that best fits your family today. Prayer helps children respond to God using the ideas, emotions, and needs they discovered in the story.

Simple Start: Echo Prayer

Pray one short line at a time and invite your child to repeat it. For example:

- “Jesus, thank you for this story.”
- “Thank you for seeing people.”
- “Thank you for helping people.”
- “Help us listen to you.”
- “Help us follow you.”
- “Amen.”

Adjust the prayer to fit the story you explored. Short and simple prayers are enough.

Go Deeper: Three-Part Prayer

Invite each person to say or write three short prayers:

- “Jesus, thank you for...”
- “Jesus, help me...”
- “Jesus, please help...”

Encourage your child to connect each prayer to something in the story. You can also ask:

- “What would you like to say to Jesus after hearing this story?”
- “What part of this story do you need help living out?”
- “Who does this story make you want to pray for?”

Children can pray aloud, silently, or in writing.

Find

Find the Story in the Bible



Find helps children connect the pictures on the block with the words of Scripture.

Simple Start: Find the Book and Chapter

Give your child a Bible and help them locate the story. Show them how to find:

- the name of the book
- the large chapter number
- the smaller verse numbers

Let your child hold the Bible, turn the pages, and point to where the passage begins. For younger children, you can find the book while they look for the chapter number. The goal is to help children understand that the story on the block comes from the Bible.

Go Deeper: Become the Passage Finder

Give your child the Scripture reference and invite them to locate it independently. Once they find it, ask them to:

- read one or more verses aloud
- find a sentence spoken by Jesus
- locate the verse that matches one side of the block
- identify details that are not shown in the pictures
- compare the passage with their retelling

Ask:

- “What did you notice in the Bible that you did not notice on the block?”
- “How did the pictures help you follow the passage?”

The Story Block supports the story. Scripture remains the source.



Wonder

Make Space for Questions

Wonder helps children become curious, notice details, and recognize that Scripture is worth exploring. Not every question needs an immediate answer.

Simple Start: Share One Wonder

Look at one picture from the Story Block. Begin with:

- “I wonder...”

For example:

- “I wonder how this person felt.”
- “I wonder what Jesus said next.”
- “I wonder why the crowd responded that way.”
- “I wonder what happened afterward.”

Then invite your child to share one wonder of their own. You can simply receive the question without trying to solve it.

Go Deeper: Explore a Question

Invite your child to choose one question they would like to explore. Return to the Bible passage and look for clues. Ask:

- “What does the passage tell us?”
- “What does it not tell us?”
- “Which picture made you ask that question?”
- “Is there another part of the Bible that might help us?”
- “What do you still wonder?”

Your child can discuss the question, draw it, or write it in a journal. It is okay to say:

- “I do not know. Let’s keep wondering and learning together.”

Wonder is not about producing the correct question. It is about paying attention and becoming curious about God’s Word.

Music

Remember the Story Through Sound



Every family is different in music abilities and skills. Please don't hesitate to rely on any family musical talent, Spotify or YouTube playlists. You might even ask kids for song requests.

Remember

Begin with Retell. Then intentionally choose one additional activity. Use Simple Start when your child needs more support or a concrete way to respond. Use Go Deeper when your child is ready for more independence, reflection, discussion, or detail. You can choose either option at any age. Follow your child's curiosity. Keep it simple. Come back to the story again.

Choose your family rhythm

Begin with Retell

Retell each time you gather. Then choose an activity that fits your children that day. Each story offers up to eight additional activities: Reflect, Character, Act Out, Connect, Music, Wonder, Prayer, and Find.

Linger with each Story Block

We usually recommend 3-5 activities per story, spread across several gatherings. You might Reflect one evening, explore a Character the next, and Act Out once the story becomes familiar. Retell remains the starting point each time.

Let your children shape the pace

Do more or less depending on how your children are doing. Repeat an activity they love, follow a question for another evening, or move to the next story when they are ready. Follow their lead and attention spans.

Take a quicker first journey

You can also read and retell one Story Block at each gathering, choosing an activity if it fits. Return to a favorite story for deeper exploration later. Familiarity with several stories can open new possibilities for Connect.

Return without starting over

You do not need to finish a chapter before using another block. Read the passage again, recall what happened, and choose the next activity that interests your family. The guide remains here for questions and ideas whenever you need it.

A suggested starting point: 3-5 activities per Story Block, in addition to Retell. Explore more or fewer as your family wishes.



Jesus Calls the Fishermen

Matthew 4:18-22 | Parent background

When Jesus walks along the Sea of Galilee, he's entering the place where these men earn their living. Fishing takes strength, skill, equipment, and people who can work together. Nets need constant attention, and a boat represents a serious investment. Peter, Andrew, James, and John already have work and family responsibilities when Jesus calls them. Matthew has just described Jesus announcing that God's kingdom has come near, recalling Isaiah's promise of light dawning in Galilee. The invitation on the shoreline belongs to that larger announcement: these fishermen will accompany Jesus as he brings God's restoring rule into people's lives.

"Follow me" means much more than agreeing with a teacher's ideas. A disciple learns by staying close: listening, watching, asking questions, and gradually taking on the teacher's way of life. Here, Jesus is the one who approaches and calls. His promise, "I will make you fishers of people," joins their familiar work to a purpose they have yet to understand. He'll teach them to gather people into God's kingdom. The words "I will make you" give the invitation its patience as well as its authority. The men aren't being asked to arrive with everything figured out; their learning will happen in relationship with him.

That doesn't make the decision a small one. Matthew repeats the immediate response of both pairs of brothers, then makes the cost more personal by naming the father James and John leave behind. Work, income, family expectations, and a familiar future all come into view. Mark adds that hired workers remain with Zebedee, helping us picture an established family business without imagining him abandoned alone. Neither writer tells us how he feels about his sons leaving. The focus stays on the new claim Jesus makes on their lives. Following him will shape where their loyalties lead and what they do with the lives they already have.

The rest of Matthew gives this brief beginning room to grow. These disciples will hear Jesus teach, see him welcome people others avoid, and struggle with what kind of Messiah he is. They'll misunderstand and fail as well as learn. By the Gospel's ending, the risen Jesus sends his followers to make disciples among all nations, teaching others to live by his words. The promise made beside the lake reaches that far. This first departure is the beginning of a shared life in which Jesus prepares them to help others follow him too.

Come, Follow Me

Matthew 4:18-22



Pictures: top row 1-3, then bottom row 4-6. Read the six sections as one short story.

- 1** As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee,
- 2** he saw two brothers, Simon Peter and Andrew. They were fishermen, throwing a net into the water. Jesus said, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of people."
- 3** Right away, Peter and Andrew left their nets and followed him.
- 4** Farther along, Jesus saw two more brothers, James and John. They were in a boat with their father, Zebedee, fixing their nets.
- 5** Jesus called them too. Right away, they left the boat and their father.
- 6** They all began a journey of walking after their rabbi.



Zacchaeus

Luke 19:1-10 | Parent background

Zacchaeus has money and status, but the crowd's reaction tells us what kind of standing he has among his neighbors. Tax collection served the ruling authorities and offered opportunities to profit at other people's expense. As a chief collector, he probably held a senior place in that system, although Luke doesn't spell out his job. His wealth and occupation make Jesus' decision to stay with him startling. Jesus is nearing Jerusalem, where his own life will be taken, yet this stop in Jericho reveals the purpose of the journey: seeking and saving people who are lost.

The encounter begins with Zacchaeus trying to see Jesus. Running ahead and climbing a tree could look undignified for a wealthy adult in a society that valued public honor, but he does both to get a view. Luke leaves his motives unexplained. What changes the scene is that Jesus looks up, names him, and says he must stay at his house today. In Luke, language like “must” often points to God's saving purpose. Jesus treats this visit as something that belongs to his mission. Zacchaeus comes down joyfully, and the man watching from a distance becomes the host who receives him.

Sharing someone's home and table expressed welcome and association. That's what the crowd objects to: Jesus has crossed a boundary they think should remain in place. Their complaint isn't simply that Zacchaeus needs to improve. They question whether Jesus should come near him at all. The response that follows takes the harm associated with his work seriously. Zacchaeus speaks of giving half his possessions to the poor and repaying anyone he has defrauded four times over. His words are usually understood here as a commitment to change. On that reading, repentance reaches the people affected by wrongdoing through generosity and costly repair. Jesus has already offered his welcome before any repayment is promised.

This is especially striking after Luke's account of a wealthy ruler who becomes deeply sad at the prospect of giving his possessions to the poor. Zacchaeus receives Jesus with joy, and his money becomes part of his response. Jesus then announces that salvation has come to this house and calls him a son of Abraham. He publicly affirms Zacchaeus's place among God's people in front of those who have dismissed him. The final words explain the whole visit: the Son of Man came to seek and save the lost. Zacchaeus set out to see Jesus; by the end, we discover whose searching has brought the encounter about.

Salvation Comes to This House

Luke 19:1-10



Pictures: top row 1-3, then bottom row 4-6. Read the six sections as one short story.

- 1** Zacchaeus was a rich chief tax collector.
- 2** Jesus was passing through Jericho.
- 3** Too short to see over the crowd, Zacchaeus ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree. Jesus said, "Hurry down! I must stay at your house today." Zacchaeus hurried down and welcomed him gladly.
- 4** People grumbled, "He's staying with a sinner!"
- 5** Zacchaeus said, "I'll give half my belongings to the poor. If I've cheated anyone, I'll repay four times as much."
- 6** Jesus said, "Today salvation has come to this house. He too is a son of Abraham. The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."



Mary & Martha

Luke 10:38-42 | Parent background

Martha opens her home to Jesus, and that welcome matters. Earlier in Luke 10, Jesus sends messengers who depend on households receiving them, feeding them, and hearing their message. Hospitality helps make his ministry possible. Anyone who has prepared for guests can understand the demands Martha is carrying. Luke introduces her through a generous action before showing how the work begins to pull her attention away. The story takes place within the everyday pressures of receiving someone: there is care to offer, work to do, and a guest whose presence can become lost among the preparations.

Mary is sitting at Jesus' feet and listening to his word. Sitting at a teacher's feet could describe the position of a student, so this is a picture of someone learning as a disciple. Jesus protects her place there when Martha asks him to send her away to help. We don't need to assume that every Jewish teacher excluded women from learning to appreciate what he does in this home. Mary is welcome to receive his teaching, and the expectations surrounding household work won't be allowed to take that opportunity from her. Her listening is part of the life with Jesus that Luke elsewhere describes as hearing God's word and doing it.

Martha's frustration comes out in a pointed question: doesn't Jesus care that she's been left to serve alone? She wants him to settle the matter by telling Mary to help. Jesus answers by naming Martha's worry and distraction. The welcome she has offered has become so demanding that she's struggling to receive what her guest is giving. His repeated "Martha, Martha" makes the response personal, and his words move from her "many things" to the "one thing" needed. Calling Mary's choice the "good portion" may even echo the meal setting: amid concern over what to serve, Mary is receiving something lasting. Jesus' assurance that it won't be taken from her directly answers Martha's request.

Luke places this scene immediately after the Good Samaritan, where love takes the form of demanding, practical care. Together, the passages keep service and listening connected. Later, Jesus describes himself as one who serves. Martha's work has value; here, anxiety and resentment are consuming it. Nor does this one moment define either sister forever. In John, Martha speaks a remarkable confession of faith and later serves at another meal without criticism. Luke ends this encounter with Jesus' assurance about Mary's choice. We never hear Martha's reply. Leaving that ending open allows the importance of receiving Jesus' word to remain with us, without turning the sisters into fixed labels for busy and quiet people.

One Thing Is Needed

Luke 10:38-42



Pictures: top row 1-3, then bottom row 4-6. Read the six sections as one short story.

- 1 As Jesus and his disciples traveled, they came to a village. A woman named Martha welcomed Jesus into her home.
- 2 Her sister Mary sat at Jesus' feet, listening to what he said.
- 3 But Martha was distracted by all the serving.
- 4 She came to Jesus and said, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work alone? Tell her to help me!"
- 5 Jesus answered, "Martha, Martha, you're worried and upset about many things,
- 6 but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it won't be taken away from her."



Lazarus

John 11:1-44 | Parent background

John makes sure we know Jesus loves Martha, Mary, and Lazarus before telling us that he waits two days after hearing Lazarus is sick. Those details are deliberately difficult to hold together. The sisters appeal to someone who loves their brother, yet he doesn't arrive before the death they hoped he would prevent. Returning to their village of Bethany also means returning near Jerusalem, where Jesus has recently faced an attempt to stone him. His journey brings him toward both grieving friends and growing danger. John connects what happens here with God's glory: through this encounter, people will come to know the Father's life-giving work in the Son.

Martha meets Jesus with words Mary will later repeat: if he had been there, their brother wouldn't have died. Sorrow and trust belong together in her conversation. When Jesus promises that Lazarus will rise, she understands him to mean resurrection at the last day, God's future raising of the dead. Jesus brings that hope into the present through his own identity: "I am the resurrection and the life." The person standing before her is the source of the life she hopes for. Her confession that he is the Christ, the Son of God, is one of the Gospel's fullest statements of faith, even though she still doesn't understand everything he's about to do.

With Mary and the mourners, Jesus is deeply troubled and weeps. The language John uses suggests a forceful response, possibly indignation at death's destructive power, though John doesn't say exactly what prompts it. What is unmistakable is how profoundly Jesus is affected. He already knows he will call Lazarus out, but that knowledge doesn't make the family's grief unreal. At the tomb, Martha's warning about the smell after four days underlines the reality of death. Jesus thanks the Father, calls Lazarus by name, and the dead man comes out. The people who couldn't give him life can now help free him from his burial cloths.

John follows the consequences beyond the family's reunion. Many witnesses believe; others report the event, and the leaders decide Jesus must die. Giving life to Lazarus moves Jesus closer to giving his own life. Lazarus returns to ordinary life and later shares a meal with Jesus; his raising points beyond itself to the resurrection Jesus will enter, where death has no further power over him. This particular rescue isn't a promise that every bereavement will be reversed now. It reveals the one in whom the larger hope rests. Jesus' tears and his authority belong together: the giver of life fully enters the sorrow of people who have lost someone they love.

Lazarus, Come Out!

John 11:1-44 | A short retelling of the passage



Pictures: top row 1-3, then bottom row 4-6. Read the six sections as one short story.

- 1** Mary and Martha sent word to Jesus: “Lord, Lazarus, the one you love, is sick.” Jesus stayed where he was two more days.
- 2** When Jesus arrived, Lazarus had been in the tomb four days. Martha said, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother wouldn’t have died.”
- 3** Jesus said, “I am the resurrection and the life.”
- 4** Mary said, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother wouldn’t have died.” Jesus wept.
- 5** The tomb’s stone was removed. Jesus prayed, then called loudly, “Lazarus, come out!”
- 6** Lazarus came out alive, wrapped in burial cloths. Jesus said, “Unwrap him and let him go.”



The Cleansing of the Leper

Mark 1:40-45 | Parent background

The man's request is carefully worded: “If you are willing, you can make me clean.” He doesn't ask whether Jesus has enough power. He asks whether Jesus will use that power for him. Mark gives us no name or account of how long he has suffered, but he does show a person who approaches, kneels, and speaks for himself. The word “clean” helps us understand the weight of his request. He is seeking a change that reaches beyond the condition of his skin into his place in the life of his people.

The diseases often translated as “leprosy” in the Bible cover a wider range of skin conditions than the modern diagnosis of Hansen's disease. Under Leviticus 13, a priest examined these conditions and declared a person ritually clean or unclean. Someone with an unclean condition was required to live outside the camp while it remained. These categories governed worship and community life; they weren't a judgment that the person was morally worse or had caused the illness by sinning. That background helps us feel the significance of Jesus reaching out his hand. Before the healing is described, he touches the man whose condition is associated with separation. His answer is as direct as the request: “I am willing. Be clean.”

The cleansing happens immediately, but Jesus still gives him something to do. He must show himself to the priest and bring the offering Moses commanded. Leviticus 14 describes a process of examination, purification, and return to community life after healing. The priest's role is to recognize the change and oversee what follows. The offering comes after Jesus has healed him; it doesn't purchase the cure. Keeping this instruction in view gives restoration its full meaning. A healed body opens the way back into relationships and worship that the condition had disrupted, even though Mark doesn't tell us how that return works out for this particular man.

Instead, Mark carries the story toward an unexpected consequence. Jesus warns the man to keep quiet, but he spreads the news widely. Jesus can no longer enter a town openly and stays outside in desolate places, where people continue coming to him. Earlier, he had spoken of traveling to other towns to preach; the publicity now affects that work. Mark leaves the man's motives unexplained, so we don't need to turn his response into either calculated defiance or an excuse based on enthusiasm. The ending creates a striking reversal: the man has been given a way back into community, while Jesus remains outside the towns. His compassion is powerful and personal, and the encounter also shows that receiving his help involves listening to his direction.

Jesus Makes the Man Clean

Mark 1:40-45 | A short retelling of the passage



Pictures: top row 1-3, then bottom row 4-6. Read the six sections as one short story.

- 1** A man with leprosy knelt before Jesus and begged, “If you are willing, you can make me clean.”
- 2** Moved with compassion, Jesus reached out and touched him. “I am willing,” he said. “Be clean!”
- 3** Immediately, the leprosy left him.
- 4** Jesus sent him away with a warning: “Don’t tell anyone.
- 5** Go, show yourself to the priest and offer what Moses commanded for your cleansing, as a testimony to them.”
- 6** But the man began telling everyone and spreading the news. Jesus could no longer enter towns openly. He stayed outside in desolate places, and people came to him from everywhere.



Bartimaeus

Mark 10:46-52 | Parent background

Jesus is leaving Jericho on the road to Jerusalem, and he has already told his disciples what awaits him there: rejection, death, and resurrection. Just before this encounter, James and John ask for places of honor beside him. Jesus explains that greatness among his followers means serving, and that he has come to give his life for others. Then, with that journey ahead of him, he stops for a man people are trying to silence. Bartimaeus's story lets us see the kind of greatness Jesus has been describing.

Bartimaeus calls him “Son of David.” That title reaches back to God's promises about David's royal family and Israel's hope for a king who would bring deliverance. The man beside the road is asking this king for mercy: compassionate help in his own need. His blindness and begging explain his circumstances, but his voice, persistence, and clear request show us a person actively seeking Jesus. When others tell him to be quiet, he calls more urgently. Jesus stops and tells them to call him over. Before his sight changes, the message he hears changes: the one he is asking for help wants him to come near.

The cloak he throws aside makes his eagerness visible. An outer garment could also serve as a covering at night; Israel's law even protected a poor person's right to have a pledged garment returned by sunset. It could therefore be a valuable possession, though Mark doesn't tell us whether this was all Bartimaeus owned or what happened to it afterward. He throws it aside, springs up, and comes. Jesus then asks, “What do you want me to do for you?” The question gives him room to name his own need. Jesus has just asked James and John essentially the same question. They asked for honor; Bartimaeus asks to see.

After receiving his sight, Bartimaeus follows Jesus on the way. That final movement matters on this particular road. He began beside it while Jesus passed and ends by joining the journey toward Jerusalem. Earlier in Mark, another healing of blindness opens a stretch of teaching in which the disciples struggle to understand Jesus and the suffering ahead. Bartimaeus's healing closes that stretch. The arrangement helps us recognize the significance of seeing and following: the man others dismissed responds with an insight the disciples are still learning. Mark doesn't claim that he now understands everything about the cross. He shows a man who has called on Jesus for mercy, received his help, and chosen to go with him.

Bartimaeus Follows Jesus

Mark 10:46-52 | A short retelling of the passage



Pictures: top row 1-3, then bottom row 4-6. Read the six sections as one short story.

- 1** Jesus was leaving Jericho with his disciples and a large crowd.
- 2** Blind Bartimaeus sat begging beside the road.
- 3** He heard it was Jesus. He shouted, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” Many told him to be quiet, but he shouted louder.
- 4** Jesus stopped. “Call him.” They said, “Take courage! Get up! He’s calling you!”
- 5** Bartimaeus threw off his cloak, jumped up, and came to Jesus.
- 6** “What do you want me to do for you?” Jesus asked. “Teacher, I want to see.” “Go. Your faith has made you well.” Immediately he could see and followed Jesus along the road.



Jesus Calls Matthew

Matthew 9:9-13 | Parent background

Matthew's response to Jesus takes only a few words: he gets up and follows. But his occupation gives the invitation its weight. Tax collectors gathered money for the governing authorities, and the work was associated with overcharging and exploitation. Their reputation made them unwelcome company to many people. Matthew's Gospel doesn't describe his particular conduct or tell us he was wealthy like Zacchaeus. It does show Jesus approaching someone identified with a distrusted trade and inviting him into the same life of discipleship he has offered the fishermen. Later, the list of the Twelve still names him as "Matthew the tax collector."

The call leads into a meal with many tax collectors and people described as sinners. Eating together communicated association and welcome, so the Pharisees' question concerns more than an unfortunate choice of dinner guests. Why would a teacher who speaks for God bring himself this close to such people? Jesus hears them asking his disciples and answers for himself. His comparison is wonderfully direct: people who are sick need a doctor. Their need is the reason to approach. His presence at the table expresses the purpose of his work, just as his invitation to Matthew does. "I came ... to call ... sinners" explains the scene we have just watched.

Jesus then sends his questioners back to their own Scriptures: "Go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.'" In Hosea 6, the people's love for God disappears like morning mist. They offer worship while lacking the faithful love and knowledge of God that should shape their lives. Against that background, Jesus' quotation challenges devotion that has become detached from mercy. Worship is meant to form the way people treat those before them. At this meal, Jesus makes that connection visible by giving people others avoid a place with him and an invitation into a changed life.

The passage sits just after Jesus forgives and heals a paralyzed man. Taken together, these encounters show his authority and his willingness to bring people near, and they provoke questions about both. Matthew's departure from the tax office shows what responding can look like; the shared table shows how widely the invitation reaches. Mercy doesn't make wrongdoing unimportant. It opens a way for people who need help to turn toward God, which Luke's parallel account names as repentance. The question for Jesus' hearers is whether they understand God's desire well enough to recognize his work when it takes this form. The welcome that troubles them is central to the mission he has come to carry out.

Jesus Calls Matthew

Matthew 9:9-13 | A short retelling of the passage



Pictures: top row 1-3, then bottom row 4-6. Read the six sections as one short story.

- 1** As Jesus walked along, he saw Matthew sitting at the tax booth.
- 2** He said, "Follow me."
- 3** Matthew got up and followed him.
- 4** In a house, Jesus and his disciples sat down to eat with many tax collectors and sinners.
- 5** When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?"
- 6** Jesus heard them and said, "Healthy people don't need a doctor; sick people do. Go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' I haven't come to call the righteous, but sinners."



Jesus Calms the Storm

Mark 4:35-41 | Parent background

The disciples get into danger while doing what Jesus has asked. After a day of teaching, he tells them to cross to the other side of the lake, and they take him with them. Some are experienced fishermen, yet the wind and waves overwhelm their boat. Mark describes a real threat: water is coming in, and they believe they may die. Jesus is asleep on a cushion in the stern. That small, ordinary detail holds his human life beside the astonishing authority the disciples are about to encounter. His sleep isn't described as a performance or a plan to frighten them.

Their cry is sharper than a simple request for rescue: “Teacher, don't you care that we are dying?” In that moment, his lack of visible action feels like indifference. Mark allows us to hear their fear in its untidy form. Jesus wakes and addresses the wind and sea directly: “Peace! Be still!” The wind stops, and a great calm follows. He deals with the danger before asking about their fear and faith. The rescue doesn't wait for them to find better words or produce a more convincing trust. His action gives them something new to understand about the person they have called Teacher.

Israel's Scriptures help explain why this is so startling. Psalm 107 describes sailors caught in a storm, brought to the end of their skill. They cry to the Lord, and he stills the storm and quiets the waves. Psalm 89 likewise praises God as the one who rules the raging sea. Mark doesn't explicitly quote these songs, but their language gives his account depth: Jesus does what Israel praises God for doing. The sea's obedience raises a question much larger than whether he can get a boat safely to shore. What kind of person commands forces that leave experienced sailors helpless?

That is where Mark leaves the disciples. The account moves from a great storm to a great calm and then to great fear. With the danger gone, they are deeply shaken by the authority of the one who has been beside them all along. They ask who he is, because even the wind and sea obey him. The final question keeps the passage from becoming only advice about managing fear or a promise that every trouble will stop when someone prays. The disciples have been rescued, but their understanding of Jesus must still grow. Their fear after the calm is part of that discovery: they are beginning to recognize a presence greater than the danger they first feared.

Jesus Calms the Storm

Mark 4:35-41 | A short retelling of the passage



Pictures: top row 1-3, then bottom row 4-6. Read the six sections as one short story.

- 1** One evening, Jesus said, “Let’s go to the other side.” His disciples took him in the boat.
- 2** A great windstorm arose. Waves crashed into the boat, filling it with water.
- 3** Jesus was asleep on a cushion in the back.
- 4** They woke him: “Teacher, don’t you care that we’re dying?”
- 5** Jesus got up, rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, “Peace! Be still!” The wind stopped, and everything was calm.
- 6** “Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?” he asked. The disciples were greatly afraid. “Who is this? Even the wind and sea obey him!”



The Woman Who Touched Jesus

Mark 5:21-34 | Parent background

Jesus is already on an urgent journey when the woman reaches him. Jairus, a synagogue leader, has begged him to come to his dying daughter, and a crowd presses around them as they go. Mark places the woman's encounter inside that unfolding story. The child is twelve years old; the woman has suffered for twelve years. One is the daughter of a named public figure, while the other comes from behind without a public request. Jesus will give his attention to both. Keeping Jairus's waiting in view helps us feel the significance of Jesus stopping in the crowd.

Mark describes years of bleeding, failed treatment, money exhausted, and a condition growing worse. Leviticus 15 adds another part of the setting: prolonged bleeding brought a continuing state of ritual uncleanness, affecting participation in worship and aspects of everyday contact. This wasn't a moral accusation against the woman. Her body carried a condition that had consequences within her community's worship laws. We aren't told whether relatives abandoned her or how neighbors treated her; the suffering and loss Mark records already give her situation its weight. After hearing about Jesus, she reaches toward the person she believes can help.

Mark says she touches his clothing; Matthew and Luke specify its edge or fringe. That detail may refer to the tassels Jewish people wore in response to the instructions in Numbers 15, reminders of God's commands and covenant. It places Jesus within the life of his people. Those tassels weren't given as instruments of healing, and Jesus' final words direct our attention to her trust in him. The bleeding stops immediately, before he asks who touched him. She knows the change in her body; he recognizes that healing power has gone out from him. His question takes the encounter beyond a cure received anonymously in the crowd.

The woman comes forward trembling and tells the whole truth. Jesus addresses her as "Daughter," affirms her faith, and sends her away in peace, free from her affliction. The family word matters while Jairus is still waiting for help for his own daughter. This unnamed woman is received personally and given words of assurance as well as bodily healing. Mark doesn't explain every reason Jesus asks his question, but its result is clear: she speaks and is answered. When news of the girl's death arrives moments later, Jesus tells Jairus to believe rather than fear. The two encounters illuminate one another. A long illness and a new bereavement bring people to the same Jesus, whose restoring power is joined to his attention to each person.

The Woman Who Touched Jesus

Mark 5:21-34 | A short retelling of the passage



Pictures: top row 1-3, then bottom row 4-6. Read the six sections as one short story.

- 1 Jesus walked with Jairus as a crowd pressed around him.
- 2 A woman had suffered with bleeding for twelve years. No one could heal her.
- 3 She thought, "If I just touch his clothes, I'll be healed." She came behind Jesus and touched his robe.
- 4 Immediately, her bleeding stopped. She knew she was healed.
- 5 Jesus asked, "Who touched my clothes?" His disciples said the crowd was pressing around him. Jesus kept looking. Trembling, the woman fell before him and told him the whole truth.
- 6 Jesus said, "Daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace, and be healed of your disease."



Nicodemus

John 3:1-21 | Parent background

Nicodemus comes to Jesus with a teacher's knowledge and a teacher's questions. He is a Pharisee and a respected leader who recognizes God's presence in Jesus' signs. His opening "We know" soon gives way to "How can these things be?" Jesus has moved the conversation beyond recognizing another teacher to receiving a life Nicodemus can't provide for himself. He comes at night for reasons John leaves unstated. Night also fits the Gospel's wider movement between darkness and light: this encounter begins with a person seeking understanding and ends with teaching about coming into the light God gives.

The phrase translated "born again" can also mean "born from above." Nicodemus hears the possibility of a second physical birth, while Jesus speaks about a new beginning whose source is God. His words about water and the Spirit have a rich background in Ezekiel 36, where God promises to cleanse his people, give them a new heart, and put his Spirit within them. Many Christians also hear a connection with baptism. The emphasis here is on life received from God: ancestry, religious standing, and expertise can't produce it. That helps explain why Jesus expects a teacher of Israel to recognize the promises behind his surprising words.

The wind develops the same thought. John uses a word that can mean both wind and spirit. We can hear the wind and see its effects without directing its course. Jesus uses that familiar experience to speak about people born of the Spirit. God's work is real without being something we can control. Nicodemus is being asked to receive a gift, even while he is still learning how to understand it.

Jesus then reaches for a particular story Nicodemus knows. In Numbers 21, people bitten by snakes look toward the bronze snake Moses lifts up at God's command and live. Jesus connects that provision of life with the Son of Man being lifted up. Later in John, "lifted up" clearly points to his death on the cross, which is also the place where his glory is revealed. The new life under discussion will come through God's gift of his Son. God's love for the world takes this costly, concrete form.

The gift also calls for a response. Light exposes what people do, and they can resist it or come toward the truth God reveals. The passage leaves Nicodemus's immediate response open. Later he questions an unfair judgment of Jesus and helps prepare his body for burial. John gives his story room to develop without supplying a neat conversion scene here. We meet a learned man discovering that knowing about God and receiving the life God gives belong together, but aren't the same thing.

Nicodemus Comes to Jesus

John 3:1-21 | A short retelling in six pictures



Pictures: top row 1-3, then bottom row 4-6. Read the six sections as one short story.

- 1 One night, Nicodemus came to Jesus.
- 2 He was a teacher. “You’ve come from God,” he said.
- 3 Jesus said, “You must be born again to see God’s kingdom.” Nicodemus asked, “How can someone old be born?”
- 4 Jesus explained that God’s Spirit gives new life. “The wind blows where it wants.”
- 5 “As Moses lifted up the snake, the Son of Man must be lifted up,” so everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.
- 6 God loved the world and gave his Son to save it. Light came, but people loved darkness. Whoever lives by the truth comes into the light.



The Woman at the Well

John 4:1-42 | Parent background

Jesus begins this encounter tired and thirsty, asking a Samaritan woman for water. The request crosses a real social and religious divide. Jews and Samaritans shared ancestral memories but disputed the proper place of worship and aspects of their life with God. Jacob's well holds that shared history: the woman calls Jacob “our father” and later asks whether Jesus can offer something greater than his well. John places the meeting around noon, but never says she comes then because her neighbors reject her. Her questions and the conversation Jesus welcomes are the strongest guides to understanding her.

“Living water” could mean fresh, flowing water, so she reasonably wonders how a traveler without a bucket will supply it. Jesus opens a deeper meaning: his gift becomes a spring within a person, rising into eternal life. Israel's prophets already used water this way. Jeremiah calls God the spring of living waters, and Isaiah invites the thirsty to receive water freely and listen so they may live. Later, John explicitly connects Jesus' living-water language with the Spirit. Here, a discussion about drawing water is becoming a revelation of the one who gives life with God.

When Jesus speaks about her five previous husbands and her present relationship, she recognizes a prophet. John doesn't explain how those marriages ended or how much choice she had in them. Jesus affirms the truth of her answer and continues speaking with her. Her question about worship therefore deserves to be heard seriously. Whatever prompted it, Jesus gives her a substantial answer to a dispute that divided their communities: Mount Gerizim or Jerusalem?

Jesus says a new time is arriving when worship of the Father won't depend on either place. He also says salvation comes from the Jews; this widening welcome grows out of God's particular history with Israel. Worship “in spirit and truth” reaches deeper than sincerity alone. Within John's Gospel, it points toward worship made possible by God's Spirit and shaped by the truth revealed in Jesus. God is seeking people who will worship him, and the Messiah who makes this known is sitting beside her at the well.

She leaves her jar and goes to the town with an invitation: come and see. While people approach, Jesus speaks to his disciples about a harvest ready to be gathered, helping them recognize the work unfolding before them. Many Samaritans believe because of her testimony, then many more through hearing Jesus themselves. They welcome him for two days and call him “the Savior of the world.” The story has moved from surprise over sharing a drink to a community receiving him. John's earlier declaration that God loves the world now has faces, a place, and people who have come to recognize the giver of life.

The Woman at the Well

John 4:1-42 | A short retelling in six pictures



Pictures: top row 1-3, then bottom row 4-6. Read the six sections as one short story.

- 1** Jesus sat beside a well in Samaria.
- 2** A woman came for water. Jesus asked for a drink and offered her “living water” that gives eternal life.
- 3** Jesus knew about her life. “You are a prophet,” she said. He taught her about worshiping the Father in spirit and truth.
- 4** “I know the Messiah is coming,” she said. Jesus answered, “I am he.”
- 5** Leaving her jar, she went to town. “Come, see a man who told me everything I did!”
- 6** Jesus stayed for two days. Many heard him. They believed and said, “We know he is the Savior of the world.”