

***The Story Adult Study Guide***  
For the Week of March 29, 2020  
Chapter 25: “Jesus, the Son of God”



Key Events: Jesus’ transfiguration, Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead, his triumphal entry into Jerusalem, Jewish leaders plot to kill Jesus

Key Characters: Peter, James and John, Mary and Martha, Lazarus, Judas Iscariot (see page 492-493 for descriptions)

Bible Reference for this Chapter: Matthew 17, 21; Mark 8-12, 14; Luke 9, 22; John 7-8, 11-12

1. Read Jesus’ words, “Whoever wants to be my disciple . . .” (the paragraph on the bottom of page 353 to the top of 354). What does cross-bearing entail, and why is it so difficult?
2. Late in his public ministry, Jesus described what would happen to him in very clear terms. Why did his disciples, those closest to him, have such a hard time grasping this information?
3. Analyze the conversation between Jesus and the Pharisees on pages 357-358. What statements of Jesus were incomprehensible to their unbelieving hearts? Why was this so difficult?
4. Skeptics around Jesus rejected him for a variety of reasons. Consider the hearts and minds of today’s unbelievers. Why do people reject Jesus, and how can we change their minds?
5. Chapter 25 includes Jesus’ miracle of raising Lazarus from the dead. What is significant about the timing of this event?
6. Jesus entered Jerusalem on the donkey. (page 363-364) Was the people’s welcome genuine?
7. “Then Satan entered Judas.” (page 366) How does what happened to Judas provide a warning for us?
8. As you’ve read about the mission and ministry of Jesus during the past few weeks, what features jump out at you? Share your thoughts and reflections.

Prayer Suggestions

- Pray for the strength and motivation to commit my life to Christ, who lives in me by faith.
- Rejoice in the Good News that Christ’s resurrection means he will raise me to eternal life.

1. Living as a genuine disciple of Christ involves an attitude and a lifestyle totally contrary to the world's priorities. Jesus stated that his followers *must deny themselves*, that is, they must stop making themselves and their own self-interests the center of attention. In a world driven by human selfishness, the disciple is compelled by Christ's love to think and act selflessly, giving glory to God by serving the best interests of others. Christian discipleship places a priority on spiritual and eternal matters, not running after physical/earthly treasures. Cross-bearing involves submission to God's will revealed in his Word. By the Spirit's power, we align our will to God's ways and purposes, even though it contradicts the world's ways and may be difficult. Jesus stood out in the way he spoke and lived, and he was rejected for it. Likewise we stand out when we live for Christ and we're persecuted for it.
2. The idea of the God/man Jesus suffering and dying didn't make sense to his disciples who, like most Jews of their day, thought the role of the promised Messiah involved earthly/physical deliverance and political power. The disciples were privileged to witness the Savior's power and glory, and they didn't associate the concept of death with God's plan of salvation and God's glory. It would take the Holy Spirit to mature their faith and open their eyes to see the reason Jesus came into the world, to give his life as a ransom for all (1 Timothy 2:5-6). It also takes spiritual maturity to understand the concept of the Son of God being glorified in his sacrificial suffering and death. On a personal level, people don't like to think about or talk about their loved ones suffering and dying, and the prospect of death is the end of a relationship.
3. Discuss the meaning of Jesus' statements on pages 357-8. Only through the work of the Spirit and the eyes of faith can the words of Jesus be understood and accepted. *For I know where I came from and where I am going* = Jesus is true God (and true man) and is eternal; he'd complete his mission on earth and return to the Father. *I am going away . . . Where I go, you cannot come* = due to their unbelief they would never see the Father in heaven. *You are of this world; I am not of this world* = unbelievers are under the power and dominion of Satan; believers live in God's kingdom under Christ's rule. *Whoever obeys my word will never see death* = the gift of faith delivers from eternal death and results in salvation. *Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad* = Abraham believed and rejoiced in God's plan of salvation, the promise that *all nations on earth will be blessed through him* (Genesis 18:18). *Before Abraham was born, I am!* = the eternal Son of God was around during Abraham's time.
4. There are many stated and unstated reasons people reject the Savior, but a common basis for unbelief is spiritual arrogance or ignorance. The spiritually arrogant won't recognize their need for forgiveness and salvation from sin; they think they are capable of obtaining a status of righteousness by their own goodness and works (like the Pharisees). The spiritually ignorant are unaware of their condition and eternal destruction that awaits them; the devil has blinded them with false ideas of the world and has kept them from the truth revealed in God's Word. Such arrogance and ignorance is tragic. Christ died for the sins of the all people (objective justification), but only those with faith in the Savior will receive the benefits of Christ's redemption (subjective justification). **How can we change their minds?** In and of ourselves, we can't change the minds of unbelievers. We should avoid the temptation to dispute our Bible beliefs with unbelievers; human arguments and logic can't change the heart. It requires the work of the Holy Spirit through God's Word to pry open their hearts to see their sin and need for a Savior, and then enlighten them with the Good News of Jesus the Savior. God calls us to share the Word with people so the Spirit can do his work. Out of love for the Savior and for the lost, we respectfully, gently and patiently *give the reason for the hope that you have* (1 Peter 3:15).
5. Raising Lazarus pointed ahead to Christ's resurrection. Jesus performed the Lazarus miracle late in his ministry, only a few months before his own death. Jesus' claim in John 11:25-26, *I am the resurrection and the life*, would be confirmed soon on Easter Sunday. Lazarus' resurrection tremendously impacted the faith of many people (perhaps people who had opposed Jesus before came to faith), and in a short time, Christ's resurrection would become a central element of their faith in the crucified and risen Savior. Around the time he raised Lazarus, Jesus had been telling the disciples about his impending death and resurrection (although they failed to comprehend it). The Lazarus miracle also incited the Jewish leaders in their plot to kill Jesus, in keeping with God's timing.
6. As one of the 12 disciples, Judas had witnessed Christ's power and heard his teachings for 3 years. Yet Satan took control of Judas, led him away from Jesus and destroyed his soul. A warning to us all: *So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!* (1 Corinthians 10:12) Don't fall into spiritual complacency and laziness. Don't underestimate the devil's power and our constant need for spiritual strengthening through Word and sacrament. The devil is always working at God's people to lead them astray. Stay connected to the gospel *because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes* (Romans 1:16). Make time with God a top priority, and maintain a routine of private and public worship, Bible study, and prayer.
7. Answers will vary. Participants can share their reflections.