



**APOSTOLIC ASSEMBLY**  
*of the faith in Christ Jesus*

# *Seven* **Transforming** *Words*

**SEVEN EVANGELISTIC LESSONS**  
*for Friendship Groups*

*By Andy Provencio*



**DEPARTMENT OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION**

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# Presentation

## OUR THIRD CYCLE OF EVANGELISTIC LESSONS



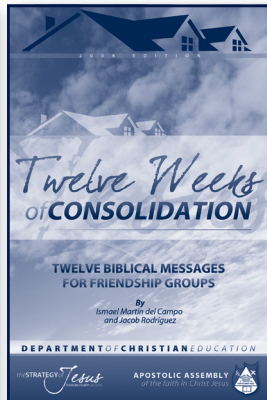
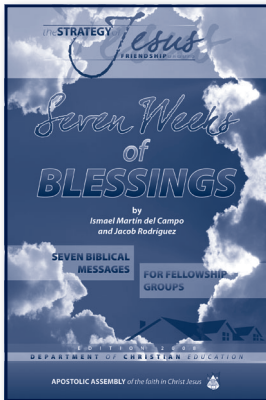
Dear Pastors and Leaders:

We present to you the third series of evangelistic lessons for our Friendship Groups.

On this occasion I have selected seven phrases used by our Lord Jesus. These phrases were directed to seven persons who had a transformational encounter with Him. For this reason, the book is called ***“Seven Transforming Words.”*** The Master’s words are transformational words of life. When men hear the call of Jesus, their lives are changed forever by His word.

I want to extend my words of appreciation to Pastor Andy Provencio, who accepted the challenge of writing this manual using the selected phrases.

We remind you that if you have already launched the training plan for the Strategy of Jesus, you must use the manuals in the following order:



### FIRST:

You obtain the booklet of evangelistic lessons:  
**7 WEEKS OF BLESSINGS**

### SECOND:

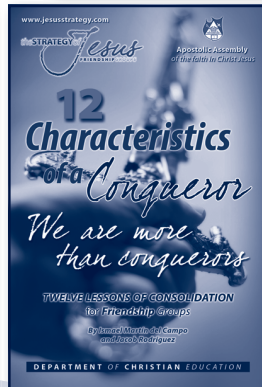
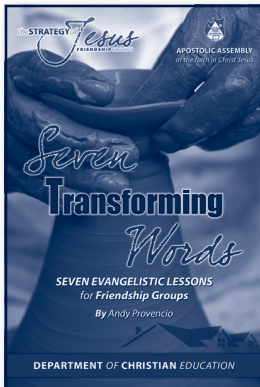
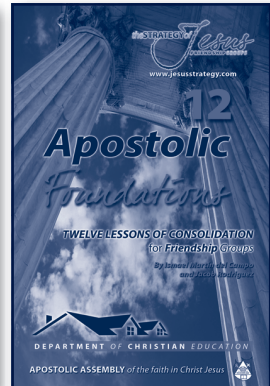
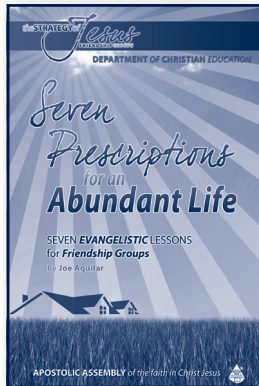
You use the booklet of consolidation lessons:  
**12 WEEKS OF CONSOLIDATION**

### THIRD:

You obtain the second 7 week booklet of evangelistic lessons:  
**7 PRESCRIPTIONS FOR AN ABUNDANT LIFE**

### FOURTH:

You use the second 12 lessons booklet of consolidation:  
**12 APOSTOLIC FOUNDATIONS**



### FIFTH:

You obtain the third 7 week booklet of evangelistic lessons :  
**SEVEN TRANSFORMING WORDS**

### SIXTH:

You use the third 12 lessons booklet of consolidation:  
**12 CHARACTERISTICS OF A CONQUEROR**

May God powerfully bless  
your churches and Friendship Groups.

Bishop Ismael Martin del Campo,  
**President of the "Strategy of Jesus" Committee**



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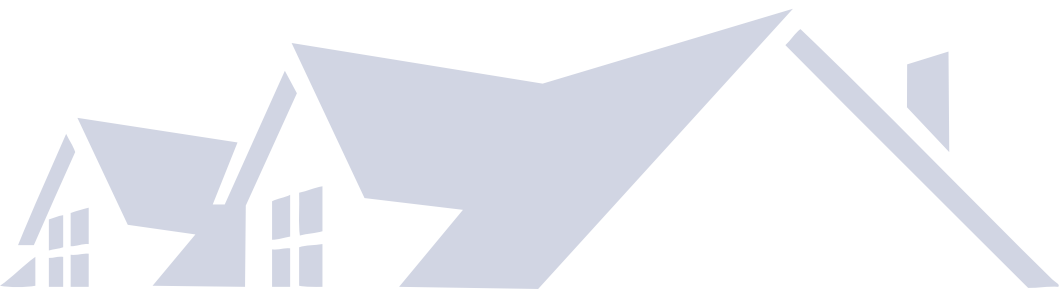
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## Lesson #1

# You Must Be Born Again

**Ice Breaker:** What is the thought that comes to mind with the term "Born Again?"

**Key Verse:** John 3:7:

*"Marvel not that I said unto you, you must be born again."*

### Introduction:

Most sermons and books on the subject of "being born again" usually center on what it means to become recreated (coming from the Greek word palleggenesis). This is a topic of utmost importance, especially for those who have not been born again. However, our lesson deals with what it means to be born again.



A book on what it means to be the President of the United States would not be limited to an election campaign, though one could not become President without being elected. A book on what it means to be married does not end with the wedding, though there would be no marriage without the wedding. Not to criticize teaching material based on "how to be born again," this book deals with the new life resulting from being born again.



## I. Many People do not Believe in the New Birth

### a. Once a person is labeled, the label sticks

We say, "Once a thief, always a thief;" "Once unfaithful, always unfaithful;" and "Once a liar, always a liar." One man said, "The only person who allows for change in my life is my tailor. He measures me every time I go see him."

### b. We believe God changes lives

One of the basic differences between churches, organizations and institutions is that church people believe that lives can be changed by the power of God. ***"From now on we regard no one from the human point of view; even though we once regarded Christ from a human point of view; even no longer; therefore if anyone is in Christ he is a new creation, the old has passed away, behold the new has come (2 Cor. 5:16-17)."***

## II. What Does It Mean to be Born Again?

### a. The mystery of physical birth used to describe spiritual birth.

Some things are so difficult to explain that they cannot be expressed by mere words. Therefore, we use symbols to explain them. Jesus said, ***"I came that ye might life and have it more abundantly (John 10:10)."***

Jesus said to Nicodemus, ***"...That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit (3:6)."***



With this, Jesus was using the mystery of physical birth to illustrate how one enters into the new life through Christ.

Paul wrote, ***“I tell you this, brethren; flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable” (1Cor. 15:50).***

Peter wrote, ***“You have been born anew, not perishable seed, but imperishable through the living and abiding word of God (1 Peter 1:23).”***

**b. Through New Birth, you become the person you were meant to be.**

***“For as in Adam, all die, so as in Christ all shall be made alive (1 Cor. 15:22).”***

Jesus does not want believers to be an imitation of someone else. He wants believers to be themselves, and more like Jesus.

***“Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth that we should be a kind of first fruits of His creatures (James 1:18).”***

Perhaps you have said to yourself: I have really never been the best at anything. I was never head of the class in school. I was never a star athlete. I was never given an outstanding leadership award.







However, a Christian can be his or her best in Christ. By His power, a believer becomes the person he or she was meant to be.

### **c. A new life is a changed life.**

There has never been a life that is so great that it cannot be made better through recreation. An young man once said after his conversion "I feel so clean now."

The mother of this young man said, "We knew something had happened before he told us. He has been different at home."

The changed life is not mere reformation. Have you heard of flying worms? That is what a butterfly is. When God transforms you, you become a child of God, and "old things are passed away."

## **III. Born Again Means a New Relationship with God**

When we are born again, God removes our sin.

***"No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in him; he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God (1 John 3:9 NIV)."***

Because we love God, we become more and more like Him (Matt. 22:37).



### **a. A new life means a new attitude towards others**

***“...Love your neighbor as yourself (Matt. 22:39b).”*** Concerning a church, someone once said, “That is not a church that’s a hornets’ nest.” In response, someone else said, “That’s not a hornets’ nest, hornets do not sting one another.”

Whether hornets sting each other or not, a New Testament church is to be a fellowship of love because it is made up of people who are born from above (**1 John 4:7**).

### **b. A Story of Love**

The following story illustrates the way Christians should treat each other.

A teenage girl was in an accident. Her body was crushed, and for days no one thought she would live. However, the girl did live, but her rehabilitation progress was painstakingly slow. A deacon from the girl’s church asked if the insurance was still paying for the bills, but he discovered the funds were depleted.

The deacon said to himself, “I will find people in the church to help me handle the cost of further hospitalization for the girl.”

A doctor from the congregation said, “I will make no charge for my work.”





Another person from the church paid for the family's transportation charge back and forth to the distant hospital, while another took care of the family's telephone bills.

That is a perfect example of how a New Testament church should work.

## Conclusion

This lesson does not cover all there is to being born again, but it is a basic introduction. As we mature in Christ, God help us to give more understanding to what it means to being born again.

### STEPS TO GROWTH

1. Are all things still new in your life?
2. Are you the person you were meant to be?
3. What is your attitude now towards others?





## Lesson #2

# Neither Do I Condemn Thee

### Ice Breaker

Have you ever had the Lord defend you in front of others?

### Bible Reading: John 8:11

*"She said, 'No one, Lord.' And Jesus said to her, 'Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more.'"*

### Introduction

It's amazing that whatever transgressions that we are guilty of doing daily are the same ones we condemn others of in order to ease our guilty consciences. God is the only One qualified to pass judgment, and He is also able to convict our adversaries in the middle of their persecution against us.

***"The LORD said to my Lord,  
"Sit at My right hand, Till I  
make Your enemies Your foot-  
stool (Psalms 110:1)."***





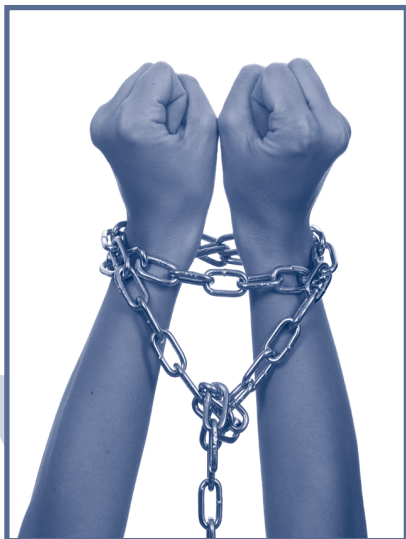
Jesus fulfilled a type and figure of His own life and ministry by letting us know that His love for humanity far outweighs any principles or laws ever written. In this lesson, we will focus on man's love and judgment, as compared to the love and judgment that is given by our Lord.

## Man's Love

### 1. A "frail love" is what men have to offer one other.

***"They said unto him, Master this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act (John 8:4)."***

The first thing that the Scribes and Pharisees did was bring the adulterous woman to the Lord for judgment. One thing that we must all understand is that when someone commits a moral error or mistake in their life that brings conviction to their spirit, it is already condemning enough in their mind.



At best, man offers a fragile and unsubstantial kind of love. On the other hand, the essence of God is love. As God's children, we must always do His work in a Spirit of love.

**2.** There is always agreement in division. For some reason people cannot seem to agree on anything in life without expressing an opinion that will often offend others. However, when a situation





arises in which judgment and condemnation come into the picture, people will agree as if they were the best of friends. When they are trying to hurt you, they will all agree that you are worthless.

***“Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned; but what sayest thou (John 8:5)?”***

### **Man’s Judgment**

**1. “And the Scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman in adultery (John 8:3).”** The judgments of man are quick and cut-throat. A mind and a man without God can never show the genuine love of God. Pointing the finger at others has always been an easy way of shifting the blame from ourselves. In recent years, many Christians have taken to registering shock at social injustice in faraway places. They point to a tyrant in a foreign country or a rich man’s greed, thanking God they are not like that. However, they ignore their own tyranny in their own workplace or family, and do not acknowledge their own materialism.

**2. Man is very impatient about everything in life. It is only when we accept Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord that we truly come to understand peace and patience. In people’s urgency for quick answers and expedient results, they will become pushy and downright rude. This was the case with these Scribes and Pharisees. “This they said, tempting him that they might have to accuse him (John 8:6).”** They continued asking Jesus for an answer, giving the impression that they had come seeking counsel. However, their real intention, an attempt to trick the Lord into a trap, was apparent. Such is the way man works.



## God's Judgment

1. The judgments of God are always patient and very wise. Though at times in this life we are tempted to question His judgments and even blame him for our circumstances, his decisions are always just, even in the middle of what seems to be our darkest hours. Men can say a lot of things about an individual, but only the Word of the Lord stands forever. ***“So when they continued asking Him, He raised Himself up and said to them, “He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first.” (John 8:7).*** The Bible tells us that he then stooped down on the ground and continued writing. Whatever he wrote is unsure, but the few words that he spoke afterwards made a supernatural impact upon the hearts of all that heard.



2. As it was back then, so it is today. Only God's words have the power to change people and their thoughts. ***“Then those who heard it, being convicted by their conscience went out one by one, beginning with the oldest even to the last. And Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst (John 8:9).”***

Could this Scripture somehow let us know that, even though we must go through many afflictions and difficulties in this life, when all is said and done, it will be just us and Him standing in the midst?



## God's Love

1. The love of God is incomprehensible to the human mind. There is no other Love in the world that can even compare to the love God has for us. In a sharp contrast, the Lord takes our place even in the presence of our accusers. ***"When Jesus had raised Himself up and saw no one but the woman, He said to her, 'Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you (John 8:10)?"*** When the woman should have been the one crouched onto the floor in shame, we see the Lord on the floor instead, while she is left standing. That is what you call sacrificial, genuine and deep love. When it should have been me, He took my place.

2. ***"She said, no man Lord." The Lord goes on to say, "Neither do I condemn thee."*** In other words, God is telling the woman: it is only because of Me that you do not have any accusers. I have judged them with my words, yet I show my love for you with the same words.





Isn't that peculiar that the same words that the Lord speaks bring shame to some, and to others, life?

## Conclusion

Grace can be best defined as the “undeserving favor of God.” We’ve all had the grace of the Lord intervene in our lives on different occasions. We should be forever grateful that Gods’ judgments are just. What is an even greater fact is that His love is perfect. ***“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5:8).”*** God’s greatest attribute is His love for you and me!





## Lesson #3

# Make Haste and Come Down

### Ice Breaker:

Have you ever found yourself in a situation where you felt unable to accomplish a goal? If so, how did you react?

**Bible Reading:** Luke 19:1-10

**Key Verse:** Luke 19:5

### Introduction

There are people who seem to possess everything that this world values. To some, these people are considered very successful. At one time or another, some of us have felt envy towards someone in this position. Zacchaeus was considered a person who supposedly had everything. He was a prestigious and wealthy man, but in reality, something was missing in his life. It was what he did not possess that







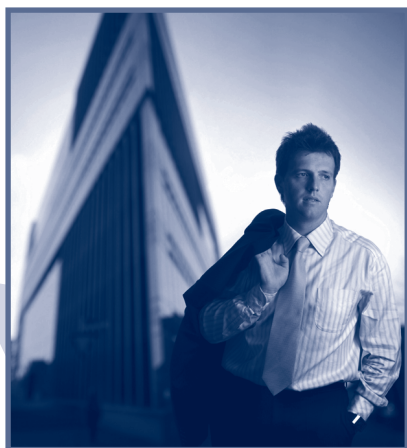
made the difference in his life. When he met our powerful God, he received what was missing.

It is possible that today someone present in this meeting feels like they are in this position. They have happiness and success in their life, yet they know something is still missing. Understand that it is Jesus who has everything that you need. If you will respond to Him as He passes by, He will provide. You are invited to journey with us as we witness how things can change when a little man meets a great God.

## 1. Man Always Has a Need *Luke 19:1-4*

### a. A Man of Prestige

Zacchaeus was a publican (tax collector) who worked for the Roman government. He was considered a wealthy and influential man. One of the traits that distinguished Zacchaeus was his short stature. Nonetheless, many people respected him and perhaps even feared him. We often meet people today with similar characteristics as Zacchaeus'. Perhaps they do



not have big bank accounts, but they enjoy a measure of greatness, freedom and control in their lives. However, we must remember that we are nothing without God (*Jn. 15:5*). It really doesn't matter how much we possess or what we think of ourselves. What matters is that we possess spiritual assets when this life is over (*Mark 8:36-37*).



## b. Zacchaeus' Concern

Even though he was a wealthy man, Zacchaeus had reached a place in his life where he knew something had to change. The Bible records that Zacchaeus felt a desire to see Jesus. It is also possible that he did not consciously understand what was happening in his life, yet his soul yearned to seek and know the Lord. There is no need as great as the need to want to have an encounter with the Lord. Those who become concerned for their spiritual needs are the ones who prepare the way for such an encounter.

## c. Zacchaeus' Dilemma

Before Zacchaeus could arrive to where Jesus was at, he had to overcome two great obstacles: the multitude and his personal condition. Zacchaeus was unable to see Jesus because of the crowds! There are many who cannot “see” because of the crowds. Some allow relatives and friends to keep them from knowing God’s will. Zacchaeus’ physical condition, his small stature, kept him from seeing Jesus. His situation can represent any condition (physical, spiritual, emotional) that one may have.

## 2. A Caring God Seeks Man

According to **Luke 19:5**, Zacchaeus was not the only one seeking that day. Jesus was seeking someone to save. When these two factors unite, great things can happen.

### a. Jesus Draws Near

This is the way it always happens. God’s way is to draw close to needy sinners and offer abundant life (**John 6:44, 65**). Oth-



otherwise, man cannot be saved. According to Scripture, we are all dead in our sins until God provides our salvation (***Eph. 2:1-4***). If the Lord does not reveal our condition to us, we cannot see it and will not have a desire to seek Him.

### **b. Jesus Considers Zacchaeus' Need**

When Jesus called Zacchaeus down from the sycamore tree, He already knew everything about Zacchaeus' life. In spite of knowing Zacchaeus' faults and weaknesses, Jesus longed to have communion with him. What an amazing picture of God's divine grace! Our caring Father knows everything about us, yet He is willing to consider and supply our needs

### **c. Jesus Calls Zacchaeus**

Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem where He would soon give His life for humanity. However, He made a stop for one man who had shown little interest in Him. Who was this Zacchaeus that Jesus would stop and call for? He was a sinner needing the love of God in his life. Jesus made an "urgent and direct" call that was particular to Zacchaeus. God always deals with us in individual and particular ways.



### 3. A Glorious Change

**Luke 19:6-10** – *There are three significant acts which reveal the change in Zacchaeus' life*

#### a. Zacchaeus Obeys the Lord

Take notice that Zacchaeus does not delay in receiving the Lord in his life: He is obedient to the call, willingly opens his heart, and displays great joy with the opportunity to be in the presence of the Lord.

#### b. Zacchaeus was Willing to Change

We notice in Zacchaeus an attitude of "repentance." His willingness to obey and make changes in his life is obvious proof that he had a transforming encounter with God. There was both a confession and change in Zacchaeus' life because genuine repentance does not only produce confession, but also a willingness to change.

#### c. The Mercy of the Lord

The effects of Zacchaeus' encounter with Jesus were enough to produce a life-changing experience in his life. The Lord's mission was meant to impact the lives of needy people who have received the power to make positive changes in their lives. Assuredly, every good gift that comes from above is because of the great love and mercy of Jesus Christ.





## Conclusion

There are some who find themselves in a similar condition as that of Zacchaeus, and need a personal encounter with the Lord. Man can possess great things, but as much as he can acquire, it will never compare with the privilege of having a personal saving relationship with Christ.

### STEPS FOR GROWTH

1. What do you feel was the greatest challenge Zacchaeus had to face?
2. In what way does Zacchaeus resemble many people today?
3. What are the conditions that God seeks in man in order to perform the miracle of salvation in his life?







## Lesson #4

# I That Speak Unto Thee Am He

### Ice Breaker:

Who is someone that has really been an influence in your life? Explain how.

**Bible Reading:** John 4: 7-26

**Key Verse:** John 4:26

### Introduction:

The love of God knows no boundaries. It doesn't matter what nationality or social class a person may belong to. It doesn't even matter if one might have made some mistakes in the past. God views people, not for what they have been, but for what they can become. He sees the potential in everyone and chooses to use ordinary people to accomplish extraordinary things (*1 Corinthians 1:27*).





In John 4, a simple Samaritan woman has an unexpected encounter with Jesus at Jacob's well. The powerful revelation that she would receive would prove to be life-changing and would allow many others to come to know Jesus.

We will first reflect on the discourse that preceded these transforming words that Jesus spoke to the Samaritan Woman: ***"I that speak unto thee am He."***

## 1. A Divine Encounter

Each of us matters to Jesus. Throughout the Gospels, Jesus often taught the multitudes; but on this day, He makes time to focus on one individual. It is important to note that in Jesus' day it wasn't traditional to even acknowledge this Samaritan woman, let alone ask her for a drink of water. In John 4:9, we can clearly see that the woman was surprised by Jesus' request for water. Although Jesus was indeed thirsty from His journey, the wellbeing of this woman was His main concern. Have you ever had a personal encounter with Jesus? He is just a prayer away.

## 2. The Gift of God and Living Water

### a. What a precious gift

The Samaritan woman asks in verse nine ***"How is it that you are asking drink of me?"*** Jesus replies, ***"If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, give me to drink,***



***thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water."***

Jesus Himself is the gift of God. He is the perfect expression of the love of God. It is a special act of God in becoming flesh to restore humanity to a state of grace. What a precious gift.

### **b. Living Water**

In verse 14, Jesus says, "But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

The Living Water Jesus spoke of is the Holy Spirit.

The woman visited this well to draw water for a physical thirst, but Jesus had the capacity to provide her with Living Water for her spiritual thirst. Many spiritual functions parallel physical functions. As our bodies hunger and thirst, so do our souls. We would not think of depriving our bodies of food and water when they are hungry and thirsty, why then should we deprive our souls when they hunger and thirst? The written Word, the Bible, can satisfy our hungry souls and the Living Water that Jesus offers can satisfy our thirsty souls.





### 3. The Transformation

#### a. Personal conviction

Everyone has made mistakes in life. The Apostle Paul declares, ***“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23).”*** Throughout the Gospels, it is evident that Jesus had a way of reaching out to the lost. He was often criticized for befriending those who others had made outcasts.

In John 4, Jesus didn’t condemn the Samaritan woman, but aimed to convict her of her sin. He captured her interest with His knowledge of her past (verses 17 & 18), and she began to realize that Jesus was no ordinary man (verse 19).

#### b. A powerful revelation – “I that speak unto thee am He”

The fact that the Samaritan woman asked Jesus a question about the place of public worship in verse 20 shows that she had a desire to know the truth. Her statement about the coming Messiah in verse 17 shows that she was waiting for this Messiah with anticipation: ***“I know that Messiah cometh, which is called Christ: when He is come, He will tell us all things.”*** Her soul was thirsty for Living Water. Jesus revealed Himself as Messiah to the Samaritan woman when He said, ***“I that speak unto thee am He.”***

These words transformed her as she received a powerful revelation of who Jesus really was: the Messiah that she had been waiting for.



A true transformation can only begin when one receives a true understanding of who Jesus is. The Word of God is clear: ***“Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is God with us (Matthew 1:23).”*** Jesus Christ is God almighty manifested in the flesh (*1 Timothy 3:16*).

### **c. A new direction – “Come see a Man”**

Upon receiving the revelation that Jesus was the Messiah, the Samaritan woman immediately testified to others in her city about her encounter. Many of the Samaritans of that city came to believe in Jesus after hearing the Samaritan woman’s message: ***“Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?”***

Jesus turned a simple Samaritan woman of questionable character into an effective witness. What a powerful transformation.



## Conclusion

Jesus Christ was born to become the physical expression of God's love on Earth. He is the Messiah, "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world (John 1:29)."

Understanding this truth is the first step to a powerful transformation in one's life. Come to Jesus, and you will be amazed at what one encounter with the Messiah can do in your life.





## Lesson #5

# FOLLOW ME

## *The Call of Matthew*

### Ice Breaker:

What have been the kindest words spoken to you by a stranger?

**Bible Reading:** Matthew 9:9-13

**Key Verse:** Matthew 9:9

*"As Jesus passed on from there, He saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, 'Follow Me.' So he arose and followed Him."*

### Introduction

The smallest statements can carry a great deal of power when spoken by the right person at the right time. Throughout the Gospels, Jesus performed miracles and transformed the lives of many people by the power of His





word (Hebrews 4:12). At the power of His word, the storm was calmed, the sick were healed, the broken-hearted were comforted and many found new direction in their lives.

Jesus consistently accepted people from every level of society. Several of the twelve disciples that Jesus chose were fishermen, but one was a tax collector. In this lesson, we will examine Jesus' call to Matthew, the tax collector. We will find how two words spoken by Jesus, "Follow me," sparked hope in Matthew's heart and began a powerful transformation in his life.

## 1. A Despised Tax Collector

**a. Matthew was by profession a tax collector.** In Jesus' day tax collectors were despised because there were few who were considered honest men. Tax collectors were infamous for becoming rich by overcharging people in their taxes and keeping a portion for themselves. They were also viewed as traitors because they were employed by an oppressive government.



**b. Jesus saw beyond the natural exterior and looked into Matthew's heart.** In Matthew, Jesus saw certain qualities and characteristics that He could work with and use. He saw Matthew's potential and knew that He could shape and mold Mat-





thew into a brand new person; but only if Matthew was willing. The way Jesus viewed Matthew is the same way He views each of us. He looks at our heart and sees our potential. He doesn't look at us for who we are, but for what we can become. He doesn't look at past failures, but desires to give us future victories. Just like Matthew, we must be willing to receive a new life from Jesus. It all starts by heeding to Jesus' call: "Follow me."

## 2. The Call

**a. Jesus' call to Matthew was a call to be His disciple and teacher in training.** Jesus actually came into contact with Matthew while he was at work collecting the land tax. "And as Jesus passed forth from thence, he saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom." Jesus approached Matthew and spoke two words to him, "Follow Me." The fact that Matthew said nothing in response, but immediately rose up to follow Jesus, showed his desire for a new direction in his life. Matthew must have been tired of being disliked by people and living a dishonest life as a tax collector.

**b. Matthew desired a change in his life and realized that Jesus was the only one who could bring about that change.** There may be some changes that we desire to make in our own lives. The apostle Paul declares, "Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new ( 2 Corinthians 5:17)." Like Matthew, we must realize that true and complete transformation can only come when we make a conscious decision to follow Jesus.



### 3. A Decision To Follow

**a. “Follow Me.” These two words spoken by Jesus made their way straight to Matthew’s heart.** The Bible says Matthew left all to follow Jesus (Luke 5:28). Matthew was so serious about following Jesus that he left his job as a tax collector knowing full well that he could never return to it. He came to realize that answering Jesus’ call and deciding to follow Him would be much more rewarding. Matthew began a brand new and exciting chapter in his life.

**b. Deciding to become a true follower of Jesus will require certain sacrifices on our behalf.** The apostle Paul calls us to “forget those things which are behind, and reach forth unto those things which are before (Philippians 3: 13).” Deciding to follow Jesus is the best decision we can make. It’s an easy decision when we consider all of the blessings that are sure to follow.





#### 4. From Tax Collector To Disciple

**a. Two changes occurred when Matthew decided to follow Jesus.** Firstly, Jesus gave Matthew a brand new life. Matthew not only belonged to a new group as one of Jesus' disciples; he now was accepted and belonged to Jesus. He was not just accepting a different way of life; he was now an accepted person. For a despised tax collector, the change must have been wonderful.



**b. Secondly, Jesus gave Matthew a new and exciting purpose for his skills.** Tax collectors were known for their record keeping and attention to detail. When he followed Jesus, the only tool from his past job he carried with him was his pen. Jesus' call eventually allowed Matthew to put his skills to their finest work. Matthew was a very keen observer, and he must have recorded what he saw going on around him as he followed Jesus. The Gospel of Matthew was as a result of his observations. Matthew couldn't have known that God would use the very skills he had sharpened as a tax collector to record the greatest story ever lived. God also has a very meaningful purpose for each one of us. What skills do you possess that can be used for the honor and glory of God?



## Conclusion

Jesus makes each of us capable of being His servant when we decide to heed to His call. Matthew answered Jesus' call, and the transformation that took place in his life was remarkable. He went from a despised tax collector to one of Jesus' twelve disciples. Matthew introduced many of his friends to Jesus (Matthew 9:10) and also compiled the Gospel of Matthew. Matthew didn't allow his past shortcomings to hinder his new and exciting future with Jesus.

Jesus' call to follow is not limited to Matthew, but is extended to each of us. We just have to be willing to answer His call. Have you recognized Jesus saying to you, "Follow Me?" What has been your response?





## Lesson #6

# I Will, Be Thou Clean

### Ice Breaker:

Have you ever wondered if you were or were not acting within the will of God?

**Bible Reading:** Matthew 8:1-3

**Key Verse:** Matthew 8:3

*"And Jesus put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, 'I will; be thou clean.' And immediately his leprosy was cleansed."*

### Introduction:

The will of God is not complicated when you are searching for it wholeheartedly. The problem begins in one's life when they start listening to anyone else other than the One that created





them. It is always in the will of God to restore, heal and ultimately save His people from their sins. This is the whole reason of Christ's existence on earth. ***"Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth (1Timothy 2:4)?"***

## A Jewish Perspective

**1. The four different writers of the Gospels indicate that there were varying accounts of the same events.** In the case of Matthew, a Jewish tax collector, the first miracle given account is of the man being healed from leprosy. It is interesting to note that during Biblical times, rabbis despised lepers and believed leprosy to be an ultimate judgment of God.

**2. This is the first place in the New Testament where Jesus is called Lord.** ***"And, behold there came a leper and worshipped him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt thou canst make me clean (Matt. 8:2)."*** According to the society of this time, the leper was out of place. He should never have approached Jesus, much less called Him Lord. However, he catches the attention of the Living God in the same way that we all must catch His attention: through worship.





## A Human Perspective

**1. The leper was brave, and in a sense, desperate for a healing touch on his body as well as on his mind.** The sick man realizes the only way to ask this God of great authority for anything was to first acknowledge who He is. ***“God is a spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth (John 4:24).”***

When we acknowledge God as this man does, He gives you a better understanding as to who you are.

**2. “If” is the word the leper uses to ask the Lord for healing in his time of despair.** God’s willingness in a matter should never be questioned because God is always willing. The Bible declares, ***“Love never faileth (1 Cor. 13:8).”*** When the Bible states never, it means that the Love of God will stretch across all boundaries, regardless of the circumstances to save needy souls.



## A Godly Perspective

**1. God is God all by Himself.** He is the Master of the entire universe and knows exactly what is happening on Pluto, Mars and Earth all at the same time. God is everywhere, and to the amazement of human beings, can be in all places to perform miracles and wonders.

God does things on His timing and precision. The healing of this leper, as almost all miracles and healings that Jesus did, was conditional. We must understand that God is always willing to do his part, as long as man is willing to say yes to God's "IF."

***"If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear form heaven, and will forgive their sin, and heal their land (2 Chron. 7:14)."***







**2. Whenever the Lord touches somebody physically, spiritually, emotionally or mentally, they are always completely healed from whatever had them bound.** King David was bound to one of the worst kinds of premeditated sin there is, yet through his humility, he found God in his prayers. ***Psalms 51:10*** states, ***“Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.”***

Even in his darkest hour, David was truly repentant when he asked God to ***“Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation.”*** Isn't it wonderful to know that even when we are at our worst, God is still at His best, giving freely of His love for us.



## Conclusion

It is beautiful when God restores His own to salvation. Jesus could have done many more miracles and healings in front of the multitudes as the Bible states, but the fact of the matter is the Lord is more concerned with healing individuals than multitudes.

God knows all things and knows if he heals one individual, the individual will become a witness for God, and only eternity will determine the impact of that miracle. Are you willing to receive your personal miracle and enter the will of God today?

Without doubt, this is your hour. He is saying to you, "I will, be thou clean!"





## Lesson #7

# Today Thou Shalt Be With Me In Paradise

### Ice Breaker:

What is your concept of what "Paradise" will look like?

**Bible Reading:** Luke 23:26-43

**Key Verse:** Luke 23:43

*"And Jesus said to him, 'Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise.'"*

### Introduction

There are two kinds of responses to our own personal suffering: **(1)** we can complain about God and say, "If You are such a great, powerful and loving God, why am I in this terrible mess?" **(2)** We can acknowledge that we are sinners that do not deserve





anything, and cry out for mercy *and help from God in our time of desperation.*

The world is full of people who, in their self-righteousness, complain and rail against God, presuming that the Creator of the universe is obligated to make their lives easy. However, there are only a few who accept the fact that God owes us nothing, and that any goodness that comes our way will be due to God's mercy, not our merit. The Gospel of Luke records the story of the two thieves to teach us that there is great reward in having the right attitude towards suffering. In this lesson, the two thieves represent the two ways of responding to suffering while relating to Christ in suffering.

## 1. The Thief Who Mocked Christ



**a.** In times of trouble, including death, some will turn to God, knowing that only He is the answer to whatever comes against them. Others, in their ignorance, refuse to humble themselves and turn to Him. The thief who mocked Christ on the cross was such a person. Then one of the criminals who were hanged blasphemed Him, saying, ***"If you are the Christ save Yourself and us (Luke 23:39)."***

Demonstrating an utter lack of reason, the thief will-



fully refused to turn to the Lord. What a picture of a spiritually destitute, worldly man. The thief showed total indifference towards the fact that he was suffering “the due reward of his deeds.” Right and wrong, praise and blame, good and bad were of no interest to the thief; his one objective was to save his earthly skin. He might even have believed Jesus is the Messiah, the King of the Jews, but it was only a matter of convenience to him. This thief would have accepted anyone as savior if it meant getting him off of his own cross.

**b.** This is a particular way a segment of humanity relates to God in its suffering. Suffering interrupts a person’s private worldly goals and pleasures, so they ask themselves: why not try God? If God is King, then He can get me out of this mess.

This is known as the old car-jack theology. A car-jack is a dirty, useless thing kept out of sight in the trunk until you have a flat tire (a little suffering). Then you get it out, let it do the dirty work, then put it away again. The thief had no spirit of brokenness, guilt, penitence or humility. He could only see Jesus as a possible method by which to escape the cross. He did not see Jesus as a king to be followed. It never entered the thief’s mind that he should say he was sorry and change.

## 2. The Thief Who Humbled Himself

**a.** This man, unlike the other criminal, understood that he deserved the punishment that he received that day and that Jesus, on the other hand, was completely innocent (Luke 23:40-41). This thief humbled himself before the Lord and asked to be remembered. The Lord, hearing him out, had mercy upon him and promised that the thief would enter “paradise” with him that very day.



**b.** This man demonstrated the highest type of intelligence (Luke 23:40-43). This should be emulated in our personal lives in eight different ways:

**(1)** The thief feared and revered God (vs. 40). If there is one thing that each of us has to understand, it is that we must have a godly fear and reverence for God and His Word.

**(2)** The thief rebuked the other criminal for not fearing or revering God (vs. 40). We should always stand ready to mentor our families and friends, not only by word, but also by being good examples in revering the Word and the things of God.

**(3)** The thief acknowledged his own condemnation and helpless state (v. 40). Each of us must also acknowledge our helplessness and confess it before God and the world. This is why it is vital that we follow the “Lord’s plan of salvation,” as revealed in Acts 2:38.

**(4)** The thief acknowledged justice for his crimes committed (vs. 41). We need to know and understand that because of our sins, we don’t deserve to go to heaven; we deserve an eternity in Hell. However, thanks to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, we can spend eternity with Him in Heaven. The choice is ours.

**(5)** The thief confessed faith in the innocence of Christ who had been cleared by all civil rulers of any wrongdoing and was being crucified solely because of religious jealousy and malice (vs. 41). The Scriptures give testimony of the innocence of Christ, for though the adversary thought that he had a victory over the Lord of Lords in death, it actually was his defeat.



(6) The thief confessed Jesus as Lord (vs. 42). The Bible says that every knee will one day confess Jesus Christ as Lord. Why not do it now and receive His “commendation,” and not his condemnation (Romans 14:11).

(7) The thief confessed faith in the eventual triumph of Christ’s Kingdom (vs. 42). Remember that faith is the belief in something without necessarily seeing it and not doubting that you’ll receive it.

(8) Finally, the thief asked for the Lord’s mercy and forgiveness (vs. 42). As believers, we must always remember that if it wasn’t because of the Lord’s grace and mercy toward us, we would never be able to attain eternal life through our own efforts.

### 3. A Word on Paradise

The term “paradise” is used to indicate heaven or the presence of God. The fact that Heaven and paradise are the same place is clear from **II Corinthians 12:2, 4**. The words of the Lord



clearly teach that after death, the saved go immediately into His presence in heaven. ***"We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord (II Cor. 5:8)."***

It is important to point out that the repentant criminal who threw himself upon the Lord's mercy received assurance of salvation. He did not need to be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus because baptism was not required for salvation at that particular time. However, Jesus left a commandment to His apostles and disciples that after His death and the birth of the church (Acts 2), everyone had to first believe and be baptized in the name of Jesus in order to be saved.

## Conclusion

If you desire to be in the presence of the Lord one day, you must obey the gospel with the same repentant attitude as the thief who was received in "paradise." After you have made the greatest decision ever – accepting Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, then you must never forget where He brought you from, where He has you today, and what He will, by faith; continue to do for you in the future. A humble, obedient and prayerful lifestyle is also required. Someday soon we will hear God's voice coming from the "pearly gates or streets of gold" telling us "Welcome, thou good and faithful servants!"