

RENEWED BY GOD'S POWER



+ SESSION IN A SENTENCE:

God's miraculous signs and wonders, of which the resurrection of Jesus is the greatest, demonstrate His glory and draw people to Himself through Christ.

+ BACKGROUND PASSAGES:

Joshua 24; Mark 16; Luke 7

+ SETTING:

At the conclusion of the Book of Joshua, all of Israel is gathered together by Joshua to make an important decision: Will they serve the Lord alone or not? Joshua makes his final case for choosing the Lord, and part of his evidence for this case is the miracles the Lord had performed on their behalf in the exodus, in the wilderness, and in the conquest. God's miracles serve the purposes of drawing people to Himself, of revealing His glory and bringing Him glory, and of vindicating His words. The greatest miracle of all is the resurrection of Jesus Christ, securing for us the promise of eternal life.

DAY 1

READ:

Joshua 24:1-13

FOCAL PASSAGE:

Joshua 24:1-13

NOTES

One of the most repeated commands in Scripture is Remember. In both the Old and New Testaments, God's people are called dozens of times to remember God's work in the past—to remember His goodness, His grace, and His mercy toward them. Sometimes this command is explicit, but often it is indirect, as when Joshua once again recounted the story of God's faithfulness to His people:

- how He led Abraham to the land of Canaan and promised it to him;
- how He gave Abraham an heir in Isaac;
- how He sent Moses and Aaron to deliver the Israelites from captivity in Egypt; and
- how He ultimately led the Israelites to victory over the people of Canaan.

Why did Israel need this reminder of their history, including the events they had just experienced—and why do we need these reminders as well? Because the Israelites were prone to forget. And when they forgot, what happened? They began to question God's goodness. They doubted His character. They ultimately denied Him and went their own way, worshiping and serving false gods instead of the One who had given them everything.

And we are no better. Our memories also are far too short when it comes to God's acts of faithfulness, including His miraculous and ordinary work on our behalf. That's why we need both the constant reminders from Scripture of all His deeds and also to remember how we have seen God act in our own lives: how He has shown us His goodness and faithfulness time and time again; how we have seen our lives transformed because of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection.

We need to remember so that we don't forget. Because when we forget, we lose.

What is one way you have seen God's faithfulness in your life?

DAY 2

READ:

Joshua 24:14-33

FOCAL PASSAGE:

Joshua 24:14-15

NOTES



ESSENTIAL DOCTRINE #33: MIRACLES

A miracle is an event in which God makes an exception to the natural order of things, or supersedes natural laws, for the purpose of demonstrating His glory and/or validating His message. Miracles are recorded throughout Scripture; miraculous signs and wonders were oftentimes evident when a prophet or an apostle was speaking God's message to the people. Because we believe God to be all-powerful and personally involved in this world, we believe He can and does perform miracles.

Why do people worship the Lord? That might seem like a strange question, all things considered. But it's actually an important one we need to consider, not only for ourselves but also for the people in our communities who don't know Jesus.

When Joshua called the Israelites together one final time, He challenged them to make a decision—to worship the Lord or to worship the false gods of their ancestors and the people of Canaan. Make your choice, he said. But if you're going to worship the Lord, then actually worship Him. Not Him and some other gods—worship Him alone! When the people declared their commitment to worshipping the Lord, they based their commitment on what He had done. He had brought them out of Egypt and performed great signs and miracles before their eyes. He protected them along the journey to the promised land. He drove out the people who lived in Canaan. He was their God because of all He had done.

Reading this passage in the moment, you can't help but feel stirred by it. After all the grumbling, all the faithless acts, they finally seemed to get it. And in a sense, that's right. The miraculous works of God, the signs and wonders He performed in their presence, were drawing them to Him. But reading in hindsight, we know that their commitment wouldn't last. Their hearts were fickle, and Joshua's prediction that they wouldn't worship God was right.

This is still true today. Miraculous demonstrations of God's power create engagement and excitement; they pique our curiosity. But miracles can't be the foundation of lasting worship. We need something else, a greater, internal miracle, the greatest miracle of all—a new heart given by faith in Jesus alone. Only the gospel of Jesus, by which we receive this new heart, allows us to worship God the way He intends—in sincerity and truth (Josh. 24:14).

What are some ways your life reflects a sincere worship of Jesus?

DAY 3

READ:

Matthew 8

FOCAL PASSAGE:

Matthew 8:28-34

NOTES

“If we had been there ...”

Whenever we read biblical accounts of miracles like the ones in Matthew’s Gospel, these five words inevitably come to mind. We can’t help it. We prefer to believe that unlike the people of the region of the Gadarenes, we wouldn’t have asked—no, begged—Jesus to leave after He freed the demon-possessed men from their bondage. If we had been there, we would have recognized the truth in the terrified words of the demons that here was the Son of God in the flesh. If we had been there, we would have dropped to our knees and worshiped Him as God in the moment.

Except we probably wouldn’t have.

The people of the region, the people who begged Jesus to leave because of the power they saw at work in Him, were far more like the Israelites of Joshua’s day (Josh. 24:19) than perhaps they would have thought. Jesus’ demonstration of His power confronts us with His identity—He is the Son of God. He is God in the flesh, dwelling among us, the One whom even the demons fear! And the people’s instinct was to drive Him away—to depart from His presence because His power and holiness was too much for them. And by nature, it is too much for us as well. We have a tendency to follow in our predecessors’ footsteps, even as we look back and down upon them. We are far more like them than we want to admit. Give us our smaller “gods,” the ones that are far safer even if they are not good, or even real. But Jesus is too good for that as well. By choosing to dwell among us, He rejects our attempts to push Him away. He helps us to see that yes, we would have done just what our predecessors did, and perhaps even more. But He draws us to Himself so that we see His holiness—far from being a source of fear—is the source of our hope.

In what areas of your life do you try to send Jesus away? What would welcoming His holy presence accomplish?

DAY 4

READ:

Luke 7:1-17

FOCAL PASSAGE:

Luke 7:11-17

NOTES

There are few words that are more beautiful than these: “He had compassion on her.” The “He” in this case being Jesus. The “her” being a widow whose son had just died. And Jesus did something incredible when He saw her mourning as her son’s body was carried out of the town. He had compassion on her—and He gave her son life again. The most compassionate act Jesus could take was to do the impossible: to raise the dead.

Jesus did what only God can do. All who saw this incredible act responded in the only way that made sense: they worshiped the Lord. They glorified God, giving thanks to Him for the undeniable power they saw at work in Jesus. They were amazed by His power and spread the word about this Man who had power like the prophets of old, like Elijah and Elisha, who healed the sick and raised the dead (see 1 Kings 17:17-24; 2 Kings 4:18-37). And they were right to be amazed. We all should be amazed at the power of Jesus in every way it is demonstrated. He is the Lord—the One who lived and died and lived again so that we can live forevermore with Him.

But we should be equally amazed by Jesus’ compassion. We cannot demonstrate the same power that He did because we are not God. But we can show compassion as He did. We can avoid turning away from the pain and suffering around us and instead enter into it. And in doing so, we can take advantage of opportunities for God to be glorified as we show compassion and kindness to those who suffer.

How will you show compassion to someone today?

DAY 5

READ:

Mark 16:1-8

FOCAL PASSAGE:

Mark 16:1-8

NOTES

VOICES from THE CHURCH

"It's no overstatement that if Jesus didn't rise from the grave then there would be no Christianity. But again and again the apostles staked their lives on this crazy fact: their friend had been tortured, murdered, and buried, and then one day he showed up again in the flesh, complete with the scars to prove it."¹

-Andrew Peterson

What is the greatest of all God's miracles? There are many we could point to, of course: the parting of the Red Sea; Jesus' feeding a great multitude with a boy's meager meal; God's bringing the universe into being out of nothing. But all of these—even the miracle of creation out of nothing—pale in comparison to one: the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

Jesus' resurrection has been the subject of debate since the day He came back from the dead. Did it really happen? Did He really even die in the first place? Did His disciples make up the whole thing? But there's a more important question that all people need to ask about the resurrection, this great miracle: If the resurrection is true, what are we going to do about it? The thing about the resurrection is that if it is true—and it is—it changes everything. Literally.

The resurrection means there really is a God and that we live in a very supernatural world. It means that the very real God really did create everything and sent His Son into the world to dwell among us as one of us (John 1:14). It means all of His miracles and all of His teachings and all of His promises are true. The resurrection vindicates every word Jesus ever spoke about Himself and every countercultural message He ever taught. The resurrection is God's greatest miracle, intended from the beginning to reveal the truth about Jesus to us.

And because it's true, we need to decide what we're going to do with it. Will we repent and believe, will we turn away from our sins and the pursuit of our own personal glory and submit our lives to Jesus? Or will we continue to go our own way and run headlong into disaster? The choice is yours and mine.

Do you believe the resurrection of Jesus is true? If so, what difference will this belief make in your life today?

GROUP

NOTES

VOICES from CHURCH HISTORY

"It costs something to be a true Christian. Let that never be forgotten. To be a mere nominal Christian, and go to church, is cheap and easy work. But to hear Christ's voice, follow Christ, believe in Christ, and confess Christ, requires much self-denial. It will cost us our sins, and our self-righteousness, and our ease, and our worldliness. All—all must be given up. We must fight an enemy who comes against us with twenty thousand followers. We must build a tower in troublous times. Our Lord Jesus Christ would have us thoroughly understand this. He bids us 'count the cost.'"²

—J. C. Ryle (1816-1900)

POINT 1: God's miracles draw people to Himself (Josh. 24:14-18).

_____ and _____ the Lord solely and wholeheartedly is the only proper response to God's saving works.

ESSENTIAL DOCTRINE #33: MIRACLES

A miracle is an event in which God makes an _____ to the natural order of things, or supersedes natural laws, for the purpose of demonstrating His glory and/or validating His message. Miracles are recorded throughout Scripture; miraculous signs and wonders were oftentimes evident when a prophet or an apostle was speaking God's message to the people. Because we believe God to be _____ and _____ involved in this world, we believe He can and does perform miracles.



What are some ways the Lord has drawn you to Himself?

POINT 2: God's miracles bring Him glory (Luke 7:11-17).

Jesus, the divine Son of God in the flesh, displayed the miraculous power of God as the Giver of life by raising the widow's son from the dead. Jesus is the _____ and the _____.



What is the connection between God's miracles and God's compassion for human beings?

Jesus' miracle at Nain prompted the people to _____ God and give Him glory and to _____ others about what they had seen.

? Why do you think the people were compelled to share the report of this miracle with others?

POINT 3: God's miracles vindicate His words (Mark 16:1-8).

The miracle of Jesus' resurrection vindicated His prophecies of rising on the _____ day and confirms the truth of everything He said, especially about our _____ and _____ life in Him.

? What are some truths that should guide our lives because of Jesus' resurrection?

Because Jesus rose from the dead, we should want to tell the _____ about the salvation Jesus won for us through His _____ and _____.

MY RESPONSE

Because of the number of God's miracles recorded in Scripture, we believe that He can and does perform miracles today, always living with hope that nothing is beyond His power.

- **HEAD:** How should believers reconcile the realm of science and the truth that God performs miracles in the world?
- **HEART:** How will you allow the miracle of the resurrection to change your perspective on life?
- **HANDS:** Who is someone you will be praying to experience God's supernatural intervention resulting in repentance, faith, and salvation?

NOTES

VOICES from CHURCH HISTORY

"He died, but he vanquished death; in himself he put an end to what we feared; he took it upon himself and he vanquished it ... O life, O death of death! Be of good heart; it will die in us, also. What has taken place in our head will take place in his members; death will die in us also. But when? At the end of the world, at the resurrection of the dead in which we believe and concerning which we do not doubt."³

-Augustine (354-430)