

Life Connect Study One: Are You Ready to Meet Christ?

[Mark 10:17-31](#)

I Remember a young man coming to see me when he had just left school and begun work in London. He had given up going to church, he said, because he could not say the Creed without being a hypocrite. He no longer believed it. When he had finished his explanations, I said to him, "If I were to answer your problems to your complete intellectual satisfaction, would you be willing to alter your manner of life?" He smiled slightly and blushed. His real problem was not intellectual but moral.

This, then, is the spirit in which our search must be conducted. We must cast aside apathy, pride, prejudice and sin, and seek God in scorn of the consequences.

OPEN

What are two or three of your biggest questions about Jesus Christ?

When you think of total commitment to Christ, what is most unsettling about the idea?

He might want me to do something I don't want to do.

I have too many other issues to deal with right now.

He might want me to give up something I want to keep.

What if he's not real?

He might let me down.

I don't want to be ridiculed for my beliefs.

Other:

STUDY

Read [Mark 10:17-31](#).

¹⁷As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. "Good teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

¹⁸"Why do you call me good?" Jesus answered. "No one is good—except God alone.

¹⁹You know the commandments: 'Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, do not defraud, honor your father and mother.'"

²⁰"Teacher," he declared, "all these I have kept since I was a boy." ²¹Jesus looked at him and loved him. "One thing you lack," he said. "Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."

²²At this the man's face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth.

²³Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!" ²⁴The disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said again, "Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! ²⁵It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."

²⁶The disciples were even more amazed, and said to each other, "Who then can be saved?"

²⁷Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God."

²⁸Peter said to him, "We have left everything to follow you!"

²⁹"I tell you the truth," Jesus replied, "no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel ³⁰will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age (homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields—and with them, persecutions) and in the age to come, eternal life. ³¹But many who are first will be last, and the last first."

1. What admirable qualities did the wealthy man display?

2. How did Jesus reveal the area of unwillingness in the man's heart?

3. When Jesus told the man to sell everything and give away the proceeds, the man responded immediately—by getting up off his knees and walking away. What do you think he had decided that made him do that?

4. Fear is the greatest enemy of truth and can paralyze anyone who searches for truth. How do you see fear—or apathy, pride, prejudice and sin—working in the rich man's life?

5. Where do you see those hindrances in your own life?

6. Jesus looked at the man and "loved him." What encouragement do you draw from Jesus' attitude toward this seeker?

7. Christ is very open about the cost of following him. What benefits does he promise for those willing to pay that cost?

8. What costs might Jesus be asking making our church to make in order to more closely follow him?

COMMIT

The rich man asked Jesus a theological question but was not satisfied with the answer. How willing are you to hear and obey the answers Jesus gives to your questions about him?

Jesus went right to the point of the wealthy man's greatest obstacle to faith: he asked the man to give away his wealth. If you were that man, what do you think Jesus would ask you to do?

Open your mind and heart to God in Jesus Christ. Tell him that you are ready to be confronted by him no matter how unsettling or inconvenient it is.

Christian Basics Bible Study - Christ: Basic Christianity.

Life Connect Study Two: The Claims of Christ

[John 8:51-59](#)

Jesus claimed an intimate relationship to God—Son to Father.

That Jesus claimed this is confirmed by the indignation which he aroused in the Jews. He "made himself the Son of God," they said. So close was his identification with God that it was natural for him to equate a person's attitude to himself with that person's attitude to God. Thus,

to know him was to know God; to see him was to see God;

to believe in him was to believe in God; to receive him was to receive God;

to hate him was to hate God;

to honor him was to honor God.

OPEN

How do your mental images of God and Jesus differ?

How are those images similar (or identical)?

To what extent do you associate your attitude toward Jesus with your attitude toward God?

STUDY

Read [John 8:51-59](#).

⁵¹[In controversy with Jewish religious leaders, Jesus said,] "I tell you the truth, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death."

⁵²At this the Jews exclaimed, "Now we know that you are de-mon-possessed! Abraham died and so did the prophets, yet you say that if anyone keeps your word, he will never taste death. ⁵³Are you greater than our father Abraham? He died, and so did the prophets. Who do you think you are?"

⁵⁴Jesus replied, "If I glorify myself, my glory means nothing. My Father, whom you claim as your God, is the one who glorifies me. ⁵⁵Though you do not know him, I know him. If I said I did not, I would be a liar like you, but I do know him and keep his word.

⁵⁶Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad."

⁵⁷"You are not yet fifty years old," the Jews said to him, "and you have seen Abraham!"

⁵⁸"I tell you the truth," Jesus answered, "before Abraham was born, I am!" ⁵⁹At this, they picked up stones to stone him, but Jesus hid himself, slipping away from the temple grounds.

1. Jesus had a unique claim to special intimacy with God. What examples of his claim do you find in this passage?

2. Why do you think Jesus could say, "If anyone keeps my word, he will never see death"?

3. How does this claim about power over death show Jesus' understanding of his own equality with God?

4. To claim that he existed before Abraham, Jesus could have said, "Before Abraham was born, I was." Instead he said, "I am." To understand the affect of those words on the Jewish religious leaders, look at how God answered Moses' question about God's name: "God said to Moses, 'I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: "I AM has sent me to you"' (Exodus 3:14). In that light, what does Jesus' use of the present tense say about who he claimed to be?

5. Imagine yourself today hearing a person say the things Jesus said in this passage. What conclusions could you draw about that person? (Think of several alternate conclusions.)

6. What further evidence would you look for in order to evaluate the person's claims?

7. If everything Jesus said here is true, what difference does it make—to the world at large? to you personally?

8. Why do we often act as though Jesus is not really God?

9. Do you think it would have been easier to believe that Jesus was the Son of God while he was on earth or now in today's? Why

COMMIT

If you are not sure you believe what Jesus said about himself, commit yourself to further investigation.

If what you have read today has raised some new ideas, trust God to clarify what he wants you to know.

Ask God to show you what to think of Jesus Christ.

Christian Basics Bible Study - Christ: Basic Christianity.

Life Connect Study Three: The Character of Christ

[John 13:1-17](#)

Some years ago I received a letter from a young man I knew slightly. "I have just made a great discovery," he wrote. "Almighty God had two sons. Jesus Christ was the first; I am the second." I glanced at the address at the top of the letter. He was writing from a well-known mental hospital.

There have of course been many pretenders to greatness and to divinity. Lunatic asylums are full of deluded people who claim to be Julius Caesar, the Prime Minister, the Emperor of Japan or Jesus Christ. But no one believes them. No one is deceived except themselves. They have no disciples, except perhaps other patients. They fail to convince other people simply because they do not seem to be what they claim to be. Their character does not support their claims.

The Christian's conviction about Christ is greatly strengthened by the fact that he does appear to be who he said he was. There is no discrepancy between his words and his deeds.

OPEN

When have you been deceived by someone who turned out not to be what he or she seemed?

How did you find out the truth?

STUDY

Read [John 13:1-17](#).

¹It was just before the Passover Feast. Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love.

²The evening meal was being served, and the devil had already prompted Judas Iscariot, son of Simon, to betray Jesus. ³Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; ⁴so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist.

⁵After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

⁶He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?"

⁷Jesus replied, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand."

⁸"No," said Peter, "you shall never wash my feet."

Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me."

⁹"Then, Lord," Simon Peter replied, "not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!"

¹⁰Jesus answered, "A person who has had a bath needs only to wash his feet; his whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you." ¹¹For he knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said not every one was clean. ¹²When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. "Do you understand what I have done for you?" he asked them. ¹³"You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. ¹⁴Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. ¹⁵I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. ¹⁶I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. ¹⁷Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them."

1. Jesus "knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God." What did he do as a result of this knowledge ([vv. 3-4](#))?

2. How does his action contradict what we would expect a person with such knowledge to do?

3. Why do you think Peter protested at having his feet washed by Jesus?

4. Jesus exhibited both the greatest self-esteem and the greatest self-sacrifice. How are both qualities demonstrated in his menial work of washing his disciples' feet?

5. Jesus acknowledged himself as "Teacher" and "Lord" while setting the example of footwashing ([vv. 13-15](#)). How would you describe the character of that sort of Lord and Teacher?

6. Put yourself in Peter's sandals. How would you have reacted when Jesus started to wash your feet?

COMMIT

Question 1

How will your life be affected if you have a Lord and Teacher with the character of Jesus?

In order to have Jesus as your Lord and Teacher, how must he "wash" you?

Whose feet is God calling you to wash more often, not literally but in a true servant sense?

What would New Life At Calvary look like if it were to take the position of being a foot washing congregation?

Why does pride seem to be a much bigger issue for us than it is for Jesus?

Search your heart to be sure you are willing, then ask Jesus to be your Teacher and Lord.

For further reading: Chapter three of Basic Christianity

Christian Basics Bible Study - Christ: Basic Christianity.

Life Connect Study Four: The Resurrection of Christ

[Luke 24:36-48](#)

Of the resurrection, Luke—who is known to have been a painstaking and accurate historian—says there are "many proofs." We may not feel able to go so far as Thomas Arnold, who called the resurrection "the best attested fact in history," but certainly many impartial students have judged the evidence to be extremely good. For instance, Sir Edward Clarke, K.C., wrote to the Reverend E. L. Macassey:

As a lawyer I have made a prolonged study of the evidences for the events of the first Easter Day. To me the evidence is conclusive, and over and over again in the High Court I have secured the verdict on evidence not nearly so compelling. Inference follows on evidence, and a truthful witness is always artless and disdains effect. The Gospel evidence for the resurrection is of this class, and as a lawyer I accept it unreservedly as the testimony of truthful men to facts they were able to substantiate.

OPEN

How do you go about proving or disproving something?

I talk to people I trust.

As far as I'm concerned, seeing is believing.

I don't think we can prove anything for sure.

I gather the facts and draw my own conclusions.

If something feels right, I tend to believe it, and if it doesn't feel right, I don't believe it.

Other:

How do you respond to the idea that someone could come back from the dead by his own decision and under his own power?

STUDY

On the Sunday after he was crucified, Jesus appeared to two people on the road from Jerusalem to Emmaus. They rushed to the eleven remaining disciples and reported to them.

Read [Luke 24:36-48](#).

³⁶While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you."

³⁷They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. ³⁸He said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? ³⁹Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have."

⁴⁰When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet. ⁴¹And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, "Do you have anything here to eat?" ⁴²They gave him a piece of broiled fish, ⁴³and he took it and ate it in their presence.

⁴⁴He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms."

⁴⁵Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. ⁴⁶He told them, "This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, ⁴⁷and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. ⁴⁸You are witnesses of these things."

1. Why would the disciples be frightened at the prospect of the ghost of Jesus, but joyful at the prospect of Jesus in the flesh?

2. What proof did Jesus offer that he was not only spiritually alive but physically alive?

3. In order to investigate for themselves whether he had a physical body, what did Jesus invite the disciples to do?

4. How does Jesus' resurrection confirm what the Old Testament Scriptures predicted about him?

5. We do not have Jesus present with us in the flesh; we can't touch him or watch him eat. What evidence do you have for his rising from the dead and being alive today?

6. What is your conclusion from examining the evidence of Jesus' resurrection?

COMMIT

Question 1

How is your life different because Jesus is alive?

What further changes would you like to see in your life because Jesus lives?

What does it mean to have Jesus's power living inside of us?

Why do we still struggle with sin after the resurrection?

Can Jesus be your Savior without being your Lord?

If you still doubt that the resurrection happened, how will you go about investigating the facts more thoroughly?

If Jesus is your Lord, thank him for being not a dead ideal but a Person who lives, and allow him to be more and more involved in your life.

If you are unsure whether Jesus rose physically from the dead, commit yourself to investigating further.

For further reading: Chapters four and five of Basic Christianity.

Christian Basics Bible Study - Christ: Basic Christianity.

Life Connect Study Five: The Meaning of the Cross

[1 Peter 2:21-25](#)

Christianity is a rescue religion. It declares that God has taken the initiative in Jesus Christ to deliver us from our sins. This is the main theme of the Bible.

You are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.

([Matthew 1:21](#))

The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost. ([Luke 19:10](#))

Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. ([1 Timothy 1:15](#))

We have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. ([1 John 4:14](#))

Through Jesus Christ the Savior, we can be brought out of exile and reconciled to God. We can be born again, receive a new nature and be set free from our moral bondage. And we can have the old discords replaced by a fellowship of love.

OPEN

In the nineteenth century a liberal optimism flourished. It was then widely believed that human nature was fundamentally good, that evil was largely caused by ignorance and bad housing, and that education and social reform would enable us to live together in happiness and goodwill. John F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr. promoted this philosophy in more recent years.

What evidence do you see today that such optimism about human nature was well founded?

What evidence do you see that it was unrealistic?

What evidence do you find in your own life that you need to be rescued—not from external problems but from undesirable characteristics within yourself?

STUDY

Read [1 Peter 2:21-25](#).

²¹To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.

²²"He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth."

²³When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. ²⁴He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. ²⁵For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

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1. What two purposes does Peter put forth for Jesus' death?

 2. In [verse 24](#) "the tree" refers to the cross. When Christ willingly died there, what did he accomplish for sinful humanity ([v. 24](#))?

 3. Do you think of Jesus' death as only an example, or do you believe that he also bore your sins? Explain your answer.

 4. Why would Christ's death as an example be insufficient to gain God's forgiveness for our sins?

 5. How does Jesus' behavior before his enemies show his confidence in the purpose of his death?

 6. What response from believers in Jesus does Peter anticipate ([vv. 24-25](#))?

 7. How does Peter's anticipated response in [verses 24-25](#) compare to your response to what Jesus did on the cross?

COMMIT

How have your loyalties been changed because Jesus died for you?

What can you do to demonstrate your change in loyalties?

How does the world work to change your loyalty from Christ to something else?

What makes it difficult to keep silent when we are being insulted by others?

What does it mean to think of ourselves as sheep who had gone astray, but are now returning to the Shepherd of their souls.

Offer your life to Christ and accept his willing sacrifice for your sins—whether today for the first time or renewing your commitment to him.

Christian Basics Bible Study - Christ: Basic Christianity.

Life Connect Study Six: The Spirit of Christ

[John 16:5-16](#)

Can human nature be changed? Is it possible to make a sour person sweet, a proud person humble or a selfish person unselfish? The Bible declares emphatically that these miracles can take place. It is part of the glory of the gospel. Jesus Christ offers to change not only our standing before God but our very nature. He spoke to Nicodemus of the indispensable necessity of a new birth, and his words are still applicable to us: "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God... Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born anew'" ([John 3:3-7](#) RSV).

Paul's statement is in some ways even more dramatic, for he blurts out, in a sentence that has no verbs: "If anyone in Christ—new creation!" (my translation of [2 Corinthians 5:17](#)). Here then is the possibility of which the New Testament speaks—a new heart, a new nature, a new birth, a new creation.

This tremendous inward change is the work of the Holy Spirit.

OPEN

How would you like to be different?

- I'd like to change my attitude toward life.
- I'd like to be less apprehensive about the future.
- I'd be more courageous.
- I'd be more loving toward people.
- I'd be more sincere.
- I like myself the way I am.

What do you think keeps you from making those changes?

What are some of the changes you believe the Holy Spirit has already made in your life?

STUDY

Read [John 16:5-16](#).

Jesus said this to his disciples just before he was arrested and crucified. ⁵"Now I am going to him who sent me, yet none of you asks me, 'Where are you going?' ⁶Because I have said these things, you are filled with grief. ⁷But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. ⁸When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment: ⁹in regard to sin, because men do not believe in me; ¹⁰in regard to righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; ¹¹and in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned.

8. How do you know if you're resisting the work of the Holy Spirit?

9. Can a believer allow his or her heart be hardened so that they no longer can sense the Holy Spirit's direction?

COMMIT

How will you respond to Jesus' gift of the Holy Spirit to teach, guide and empower you in your Christian life?

What changes do you think the Holy Spirit would like to make in you—with your cooperation?

Obey the prompting of the Spirit of Christ today. Give Christ permission to teach you and change you from the inside out, not only today but every day.

Christian Basics Bible Study - Christ: Basic Christianity.