



Journeys

JUDSON BIBLE LESSONS | Fall 2021 | Vol. 1.1

One quarterly booklet for both teachers and students with fresh, crisp, comprehensive life application bible lessons.



Dear *Journeys* Readers,

Judson Press is excited to launch this new revision of *Journeys Bible Lessons*, having incorporated many of the features readers requested through our marketing survey. You will find this new improved version easy to engage with the biblical scholarship and life application you have come to expect. The lessons are designed to be comprehensive in teaching and succinct in length, making it adaptable for different settings including personal devotion, small group studies, Sunday and weekday Bible classes. Whether you are a teacher or student, you can choose from the accompanying instructional resources to tailor the learning experience you desire to achieve. We hope that you will enjoy this new *Journeys* and consider additional opportunities to use it within your ministry setting and home.

Sincerely,
Shelby Haggray
Curriculum Editor

**JUDSON AND
ABHMS-RELATED
INFORMATION**

will be interspersed throughout the lesson—highlighting additional Judson resources related to the lesson's theme, as well as news briefs and denominational information of interest to the readers.

LOVE

love is the verb

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.

—MARK 12:30 NRSV

Introduction

In our society we are bombarded with messaging in media designed to influence our opinions, values, and actions. As Christians, the messaging we disseminate through our personal actions and words can be just as influential. With so much divisiveness among factions across our country, now is a critical time to live out the greatest commandment of our faith as a way of being the salt and light in a world that needs salvation and direction.

Lesson Objectives

- To illuminate the impact of Jesus' teaching and ministry on the Jewish community.
- To appreciate why Jesus was intent on elevating relationship over rules and ritual.
- To acknowledge that loving God fully is a continual conscious act of spiritual discipline.
- To encourage emulating Jesus and relying on the aid of Holy Spirit to help us genuinely love all of humanity in all of its diversity.

Mark 12:28-34 NRSV

28 One of the scribes came near and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, he asked him, "Which commandment is the first of all?"
29 Jesus answered, "The first is, 'Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one;
30 you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.' 31 The second is this, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these." 32 Then the scribe said to him, "You are right, Teacher; you have truly said that 'he is one, and besides him there is no other'; 33 and 'to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the strength,' and 'to love one's neighbor as oneself'—this is much more important than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices." 34 When Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." After that no one dared to ask him any question.

LESSON THEME:

Each lesson has a theme to highlight the lesson's focus. Teachers can group lessons thematically for a topic-focus series structure.

INTRODUCTION:

Contains a succinct lesson description informing readers on what they will learn.

LESSON OBJECTIVES:

Outlines overall goal of the lesson.

SCRIPTURE:

Follows the Revised Common Lectionary. Each month of writings having at least one lesson from the Gospels, the Epistles, and the Old Testament. Scripture is presented in the NRSV (other versions may be referenced).

MAIN BODY OF THE

LESSON: Includes three sections: *Into the Scripture*, *Into the Lesson*, and *Into Discipleship*.

INTO THE SCRIPTURE

provides the socio-historical background of the scripture and relevant theological analysis that is intrinsic to understanding the context, setting and characters.

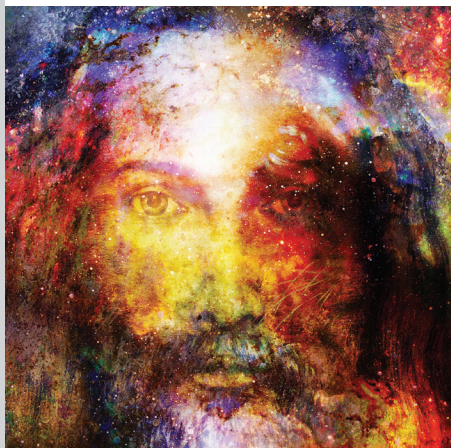
Into the Scripture

Man on a Mission

The gospel of Mark presents the life, ministry and passion of Jesus Christ with a peculiar energy that reflects the drive Jesus evinced in fulfilling his calling. The first half of the gospel focuses on his teaching and healing ministry, and the latter half focuses on him setting his face like flint toward Jerusalem. There is a certain climatic build that leads us episodically through Jesus' reveal as the Son of Man. His popularity grows with each new teaching, healing, and miracle.

The setting is ancient Palestine. God's people find themselves under Roman rule that increasingly views itself as the supreme power. And as a people with no perceived political clout, many of the Jews suffered alongside others who were economically oppressed and socially marginalized. Yet, God's people still hoped and believed in the words of the prophets concerning a long, promised messiah. Such a one would bring liberation, restoration, and elevation to them as God's chosen nation.

The Jewish religious leaders, however, desire to maintain the status quo. The scribes, the pharisees, and the Sadducees had all ensconced themselves as the religious



elite. They lorded over the rest of the community and used the Law as their chastening rod. Jesus uses this same Law to bring hope and renewal to the listeners by teaching a heart-religion over a head-religion.

Jesus' teachings elevate the true nature of God as loving, compassionate, and omnipresent in their lives.

Thus the religious leaders grow increasingly threatened, believing that Jesus could upend their control over the religious norms of Judaism. As for the Roman government, any consideration of Jesus' growing popularity would be perceived as a potential political threat. The Romans also understood the Jews' hope for a messiah and did not look kindly on Jesus' rise in fame.

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Jesus uses this same Law to bring hope and renewal to the listeners by teaching a heart-religion over a head-religion.

For Whom By Whom

The Mark who wrote this gospel was not one of the twelve disciples, but possibly a second-generation Christian who was associated with Peter in Rome. As Mark is the first of the four New Testament gospels to be penned, scholars speculate that much of this gospel accounts the life and words of Jesus as Peter conveyed them to Mark while they were together.

The intended audience for the gospel consisted of the culturally diverse house-church communities that developed around or after the destruction of the Temple about 70 BCE. At that point, Gentiles Christians outnumbered Jewish Christians, and the Christian community in general was now distinguished from the Jewish community that still practiced Judaism. The other synoptic gospels (addressed primarily to Jewish hearers) highlight more of the Judaic codes and restrictions pertaining to keeping the Law. Mark's thematic focus leads the reader more toward consideration of how we treat others and our own morality in light of the example of Christ (516-18).¹

Into the Lesson

Who is This Guy?

It was the week in which Jesus would die. In this lesson's text, we find Jesus at the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, both teaching a people hungry for change and being challenged by the local religious leaders. He had "triumphantly" entered the city on Sunday to a throng of expectant followers waving palm leaves and strewing their garments in his path. Nothing about riding a donkey made his entrance low key. However, it did fulfill the prophecy "O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee . . . riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass" (Zechariah 9:9 KJV). There was also nothing low key about Jesus overturning the tables of money changers in the temple the next day. He saw them as thieves engaging in crooked transactions. The religious leaders saw Jesus as someone who was clearly upsetting the status quo. They not only saw him as an interloper, but as one with authority and power they could not explain.

Thus when we find Jesus mid-week teaching at the Temple, it is not surprising that the religious leaders had already conspired, seeking to trap him in his teachings so that they might have him killed. One by one, they took their turn—the chief priests, the scribes, the Pharisees, and the Sadducees; "By what authority do you do these things?"; "Should we pay taxes to Caesar?"; "Whose wife would she be in the resurrection?" . . . Jesus mystifies the leaders, for he aptly responds while avoid-



ing self-incrimination. Moreover, Jesus would end this inquisition on a sacred high note when he responds to the final question of "what is the greatest commandment?"

The Answer to All Questions

Jesus responds to the question of "what is the greatest commandment?" by reciting the Shema from Deuteronomy 6. The Shema is a Hebrew reference to the first word of the first commandment as it is presented in Deuteronomy. Shema means "HEAR," and traditionally represents the whole statement of the first commandment: 'Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength' (vv. 29, 30). As Jesus then recites the first commandment, he places priority on our love and devotion to God first above any other religious act.

Then he couples it with Lev.19:18b—as the second most important command: that we should love our neighbor as ourselves. As Jesus lifts up the Shema as the fulfilling of all the Law and prophets, he demonstrates that the love we are to express to God and to one another is a higher priority than flawlessly fulfilling legalistic rules and regulations.

← INTO THE LESSON takes the reader deeper into the lesson's narration and commentary, outlining the spiritual and practical take-aways that teach the lesson objectives.

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From Head-Religion to Heart-Religion

From Old Testament teachings, Jews wore phylacteries (little scripture boxes) on their forehead and hung mezuzahs (a small scroll of key texts including the Shema) on their door posts (Deut. 6:8). These were ways to keep God in the forefront of their thinking and living. They would repeatedly recite the texts and teach them to their children. They would adhere to the regulations and perform sacrifices according to the Law. There were a lot of ritual codes and rules that applied to all different life situations. The religious leaders gained power by over-zealously enforcing them; the people became weary of trying to maintain compliance at every turn. While the Law helped shape the values, attitudes, and behavior of the Jews, the form of the Law overtook its function. There was often more focus on the sacrifice or punishment from breaking the Law than the good will and justice it was intended to yield.

Being Jewish, Jesus understood that dynamic and sought to help his people recognize that the Law was good, and was intended for good when one's religious priorities were in order. Even more so, Jesus understood that with the advent of his ministry, God was offering believers a whole new realm of spiritual communion—for God was now incarnate in Christ, sitting there talking with them. And only Christ knew that the end result of his pending sacrifice would grant them a stronger relationship with God than they had ever perceived. Jesus knew that his sacrifice would advance God's purposes in carrying the Law to its fulfillment. Jesus was transforming their faith from a head-religion with phylacteries and codes to a heart-religion and personal communion with God through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. All that Jesus does was God's way—through Christ—of reiterating true worship.

The All-encompassing Commandment

By elevating a heart-religion above a head-religion, Jesus disarms the power of the religious authority to lord it over the people with rules and regulations. He signifies that the heart of Judaism is about relationship—ours to God and to others. The rules and regulations of the Law were not meant to be stumbling blocks upon which the people would fall in their efforts toward a righteous

life. Instead, God intended them to be stepping-stones toward a more perfect relationship, which Jesus now reveals through the pairing of the verses in Deuteronomy and Leviticus.

An Inclusive God

Such an emphasis on the right way for the Law to be fulfilled must have further unnerved the religious leaders due to the preceding parable where Jesus alludes to the Temple coming to an end and God giving the vineyard to others. Not only had the religious leaders felt threatened, but it had not yet occurred to them that their faith tradition was about to be shared with others—namely Gentiles. So for the Jewish religious leaders, this would not be just about losing power, but also about losing ownership. The church today still faces a crises of segregation due to racism, prejudices, and ill-perceived notions of ownership. We must all remember that the church belongs to God and we are stewards tasked with using it to help usher in the reign of God to which ALL are welcomed.



God was offering
believers a whole new
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talking with them.



Into Discipleship

Love is the Verb

The act of loving God is not just an intent that happens naturally for us. Rather, it is a discipline we must intentionally practice just like we invest time, energy, and focus into things that are most important to us. Our relationship with God is no different. Recall that Moses warned the Israelites of the various and sundry temptations in the Promised Land that would draw their affection and focus away from God—unless they kept in the forefront of their thinking all that God had done for them. Thus, rehearsing scriptures along with the Shema and other prayers throughout the day helped the Israelites and those to this day who practice Judaism remain intimate with God. Through Christ, God has given us everything we need to grow deeper in our focus and affection for God.

From being forgiven of our sins and put in right relationship with God to having the blessed indwelling of the Holy Spirit, we can perpetually commune with the God who desires to lavish us with love, mercy, grace, peace, and joy. Putting time, energy, and focus into loving God with our heart, soul, mind, and strength allows us to grow stronger spiritually and better discern God's will as we become more attune to the voice of the Holy

Spirit in our lives. Actively and intentionally engaging daily in our relationship with God helps keep us from obsessing over things in life that are un-redemptive.

To Know Christ is to Know God and Love as God Loves

One of the best ways to love God is to emulate the example and teachings of Jesus, for he is God in the flesh (Heb. 1:3). Living the beatitudes and other aspects of the Sermon on the Mount, as simple as it may sound, is the path into developing a heart and mind that is in harmony with the heart and mind of God. We have Christ as our example, and we have the Holy Spirit actively encouraging us from within as Christ's teachings mold us into disciples whose witness is impactful on those around us.

The more effort we put into being like Christ, the easier it will be to love others as ourselves. We will see others as God sees them, made in God's image. And we will recognize that God loves everybody unconditionally and be free to do the same. This does not mean we have to approve of everything someone does; but it means that we recognize that we ALL need God's grace and salvation.

INTO DISCIPLESHIP teaches readers the everyday practical ways in which they can apply the lesson to their lives and live out its teachings as today's disciples of Christ.

The Denominator that Makes Us One

The incredible diversity that exists in our country is a source of enrichment for some and rage for others. Those who appreciate and embrace difference are grateful for opportunities to befriend persons who are different from themselves socially, ethnically, economically, and otherwise. Yet there are many who feel threatened and encroached upon by persons of different values and backgrounds. For Christians across the spectrum and in every demographic category, we have the opportunity to bring restoration and healing to the fractures within our society if we are willing to live the two greatest

commandments and place them above our heritage, our politics, our race, our culture, and our preferences and prejudices. Let us first love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and likewise love our neighbor as our self—whatever it takes. As we emulate God’s unconditional love and equally value the humanity of every person, we will not be far from the kingdom.

Note:

1. The New Interpreter’s Bible Commentary, Vol. 8, Mark. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994.

FULL-COLOR PRODUCTION:

Journeys fresh, new layout now features full-color images in addition to the traditional poignant quotes.

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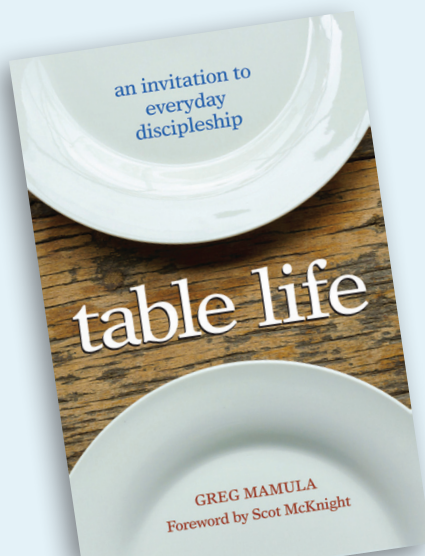


Table Life: An Invitation to Everyday Discipleship by Greg Mamula

Discover how participating in the spiritual disciplines of eating together, listening, storytelling, scripture reading, and communion with our community begins to shape us into people who recognize and celebrate the presence of Christ in every aspect of life.

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PUBLISHERS SINCE 1824

Reflection Questions

Into the Scripture

There is something about a crowd. Consider the contrast of the crowd when Jesus enters Jerusalem to the crowd the day he dies. Does “crowd” or “mob” mentality ever influence church members? Give examples and whether the results are positive or negative.

Into the Lesson

What are signs we can look for in our faith walk to ensure that we are practicing a heart-religion over a head-religion. Why is a heart-religion intrinsic to Christianity?

Into Discipleship

The Church belongs to God, and we are stewards who possess it but do not own it. What are ways we can incorporate this truth into our congregational ethos as it relates to how we steward our ministry resources as well as engage in evangelism and hospitality?

Living the Lesson

Four ways we express our love for God and neighbor are through worship, devotion, compassion, and justice. Some people focus more on worship and devotion (acts of piety), while others focus more on compassion and justice (acts of mercy).

Seek to have a balanced life of discipleship by regularly engaging in all four of these acts. Start with a self-assessment by writing out the activities you did in each category for the last month. Below is an example for each category.

Acts of Piety / Loving God

Worship: Attending church regularly and eagerly participating.

Devotion: Having a dedicated time for prayer, meditation, and study.

Acts of Mercy / Loving Neighbor

Compassion: Providing help and support to those with needs.

Justice: Calling elected leaders when you want them to address a social injustice legislatively.

Looking at your list, did you spend much more time engaged in a certain category? Pray for guidance in balancing your commitments. Consider activities you can add to your weekly/monthly routine in order to practice both love of God and neighbor.

VERSATILITY OF THE LESSONS

is achieved by not having the date featured prominently. As mentioned, the weekly sequence of scriptures will follow the Revised Common Lectionary and the corresponding date for each lesson will be included in the table of contents but not prominently on the actual lesson. Therefore, each lesson can be used repeatedly at any time, in any setting, by both students and teachers alike. The lessons can be used for personal devotions, bible study, Sunday School, small groups, and thematic teaching.

INCREASED WRITER VARIETY

allows readers to hear the voices and perspectives from the wide diversity of cultures and ethnicities present within our ABCUSA family—thus the new Journeys helps us learn more from each other as our writers share in their distinct ways.



TEACHER RESOURCES: Each lesson will include an array of teacher resources to aid instruction. Teachers can select from the accompanying educational resources to develop each lesson according to the interests of their students.

Online Resources

- Poverty is an area that needs our focus through acts of justice and compassion. For reflection read the ABCUSA Case Statement on Ending Poverty at this link: <https://www.abc-usa.org/resources/resources-for-churches-and-leaders/mission-summit-conversations/mission-table-2015-case-statement-on-ending-poverty/>
- Use as a discussion starter the podcast of Aids and Wright-Riggins along with Amanda Tyler of the Baptist Joint Committee discussing Race, Religious Liberty, and Reconciliation at this link: <https://soundcloud.com/bjcpodcast/race-religious-liberty-and-reconciliation-a-conversation-with-aidsand-wright-riggins>
- Learn more about the daily recitation of the Shema prayer in Judaism: at this link myjewishlearning.com/article/the-Shema
- Learn more about the Temple Mount: myjewishlearning.com/article/what-is-the-temple-mount nationsonline.org/oneworld/map/Temple_Mount.html

Tuesday 11/02/21

Semi-continuous: Psalm 18:20-30; Ruth 3:1-7; Acts 7:17-29

Complementary: Psalm 51; Deuteronomy 28:58-29:1; Acts 7:17-29

Wednesday 11/03/21

Semi-continuous: Psalm 18:20-30; Ruth 3:8-18; John 13:31-35

Complementary: Psalm 51; Micah 6:1-8; John 13:31-35

Thursday 11/04/21

Semi-continuous: Psalm 127; Ruth 4:1-10; Romans 5:6-11

Complementary: Psalm 146; Numbers 36:1-13; Romans 5:6-11

Friday 11/05/21

Semi-continuous: Psalm 127; Ruth 4:11-17; Hebrews 9:15-24

Complementary: Psalm 146; Deuteronomy 15:1-11; Hebrews 9:15-24

Saturday 11/06/21

Semi-continuous: Psalm 127; Ruth 4:18-22; Mark 11:12-14, 20-24

Complementary: Psalm 146; Deuteronomy 24:17-22; Mark 11:12-14, 20-24

DAILY DEVOTIONAL READINGS: Included in each lesson, leading the reader prayerfully through the sequence of the Christian calendar.

Devotional Scriptures

Year B Proper 26 (31) Week of 10/31/21

Monday 11/01/21: All Saints Day

Semi-continuous: Psalm 18:20-30; Ruth 2:15-23; Romans 12:17-21; 13:8-10;

Complementary: Psalm 51; Deuteronomy 6:10-25; Romans 12:17-21; 13:8-10

QUARTERLY PRICING: *Journeys* print, \$12.59; *Journeys* ePub, \$9.99; and *Journeys* PDF, \$9.99.



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