

GOD IS HERE



+ **SESSION IN A SENTENCE:**

God made the perfect way to be with His people through Christ Jesus.

+ **BACKGROUND PASSAGES:**

Isaiah 55; Matthew 28

+ **SETTING:**

It's easy to read a story and picture the setting in our minds. But the Bible is different. Though the narrative occurred in a specific time and place, it connects directly to many more stories spread across years and miles within the Bible. Today's passage is no different. Jesus spoke to His disciples from a mountain in Galilee, but His words reached back into the Old Testament. In His final words, Jesus reveals not only Himself but also His purpose for His followers.

DAY 1

READ:

Isaiah 55:6-11

FOCAL PASSAGE:

Isaiah 55:8-10

NOTES

Nothing changes plans like a good rain. My cousin and his then fiancée (now wife of almost a quarter century) planned to get married in an outside ceremony in May. We arrived a few hours early for pictures; the day was cool, cloudy, and created a gorgeous background for photos. But an hour before the ceremony, a storm blew in and took with it chairs, tables, and almost every decoration. It took chain saws to clear the road to the ceremony, and all the long dresses had mud stains around the hem.

But I'll never forget that wedding. As I studied Isaiah 55:10 today, my initial thought was: "Lord, send Your Word down in my life. Let it overwhelm me just like a downpour." I don't want a sprinkle of the Bible in a devotion; I want a flood of His almighty, life-changing, wonder-working Living Word in my life! I want it to rearrange my mind, my heart, and my soul.

The next time it rains hard, maybe you'll pray the same prayer. Maybe you'll realize how parched you are, and it will remind you that your parched spirit is in deep need of His Word.

How are you seeking that deep-down saturation from God's Word in your life?

DAY 2

READ:

Isaiah 53:6-11

FOCAL PASSAGE:

Isaiah 53:4-8

NOTES

Isaiah 55:8 tells us that God's thoughts are not our thoughts and His ways are not our ways. At first glimpse at this verse, we might think that it's not a big deal to be off God's path. Perhaps we just wobbled a little, got lost, or maybe it seemed like we had a couple of paths to choose from.

If you've ever taken the wrong path, you know it can lead to disaster. A group of my cousins went hiking in a state park years ago. They all thought they knew where they were going, but they were wrong. Turning right would have led to the trail's end; turning left instead led to thousands of acres of wilderness. What should have been a three-hour hike ended up with a midnight rescue and panicked parents.

Isaiah 53:6 reveals that we all do the same thing in our own lives at times. It's not that we got sidetracked or veered off; we intentionally choose the path of sin, the path of self, and the path away from God. It's good every now and then to consider where we would be today without His loving-kindness to gather us—His wayward sheep—and bring us back to His path of life.

Where can you see your obstinate insistence to go on your own way?

VOICES from CHURCH HISTORY

"You are still in the quarry and not complete, and therefore to you, as once to us, much is inexplicable. But you are destined for a higher building and one day you will be placed in it by hands not human, a living stone in a heavenly temple."¹

—Lettie Burd Cowman
(1873–1960)

DAY 3

READ:

Matthew 28:16-20

FOCAL PASSAGE:

Matthew 28:16-18

NOTES

Mountains are a common backdrop for God's earthly encounters. They were a source of refuge, as in the case of Noah and his ark coming to rest after about a year on open water (Genesis 8:4) and Lot's family racing to hide from Sodom's certain destruction (19:17). God proved He would provide the appropriate sacrifice on the mountain for Abraham (22:14), and Jacob offered a sacrifice and invited his entire family to have a meal with him on top of one (31:54).

Moses came face to face with God in the burning bush on top of the mountain (Exodus 3:1) and that's the same spot where he brought the Israelites as they walked out of Egyptian bondage (3:12). Jesus preached a famous sermon on a mountain (Matthew 5:1), prayed on mountains (14:23), and, for just a moment, appeared in all His heavenly glory on one (see Matthew 17).

If you've ever hiked to the top of a mountain, or even a significant hill, you understand why: everything is different up there. From that perspective, we see more macro and less micro. Isn't it fitting, then, that Jesus gave His final identity, instruction, and promise from a mountain?

What are some of your own spiritual "mountaintop" experiences and how did they change your faith?

DAY 4

READ:

Daniel 7:9-14

FOCAL PASSAGE:

Daniel 7:11-14

NOTES

There are two images of Jesus: there's the Jesus who walked on earth, seen by thousands of people. And then there's the Jesus of heaven; only a few men have seen that scene.

You probably know that Isaiah saw into heaven, as did John and Daniel. God pulled back the veil between earth and heaven and allowed these men to glimpse into what was going on in the heavenly, spiritual reality. As we read Daniel's account carefully, we see that the Ancient of Days was seated on the throne (Daniel 7:9), and "one like a son of man" was brought before him (v. 13). That Son of Man, of course, was Jesus (Matthew 8:20). From God the Father, the Ancient of Days, Jesus was given "dominion and glory and a kingdom" that would last forever (Daniel 7:14).

Yes, Daniel lived six hundred years before Jesus came to earth. But the eternal things, taking place in the kingdom of heaven, were revealed on earth in our time line. When Jesus revealed in Matthew 28:18 that He had all authority, He meant that He already had it—had always had it. God's authority given to the Son was a promise from Daniel, but a certainty forever.

How does this peek into heaven give you a different understanding of the power of Jesus today?

DAY 5

READ:

Matthew 28:16-20

FOCAL PASSAGE:

Matthew 28:19-20

NOTES



KEY DOCTRINE #24: GOD IS IMMANENT

When we say that God is immanent, we mean that God is personable and relatable to those made in His image, while remaining completely distinct and unique from all of His creation. It means that God is not a distant deity (as imagined by the deist) who only sits on His heavenly throne with no interaction, but instead, He is a personal God who created people in His image to be in personal relationship with Him.

The Christian Standard Bible (CSB) records Jesus's final assurance like this: "And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20). A quick study of the word translated "remember" reveals that its inherent definition isn't what you might think. Other translations render it "look," "behold," "lo," "surely," or "be sure of this." Matthew used the word dozens of times in his Gospel. It's derived from the root word that means to know, see, behold, look, or perceive.

In Matthew 28:20, though, the verb is an imperative verb (a command) in the second person singular. Now, not everyone loves grammar and verb conjugation, but second person singular is "you" in the singular sense, as in "You, Johnny, go shut the door." Jesus, in telling us to consider that He always is with us even to the ends of the earth, invited each person individually to hear His plea: Look into it! Know it! Remember it! Believe it! Not simply as a corporate body, but individually. What a passionate reminder for each of us to know even today—know for sure—Jesus is with us all and with each of us individually.

How does Jesus's promise "I am with you" give you courage to make disciples?

GROUP

NOTES

VOICES from THE CHURCH

"The very fact that a holy, eternal, all-knowing, all-powerful, merciful, fair and just God loves you and me is short of astonishing. The wildest part is Jesus doesn't *have* to love us. His being is utterly complete and perfect, apart from humanity. He doesn't need me or you."²

—Francis Chan

POINT 1: The Lord is with His people from high above (Isaiah 55:8-11).

God is often beyond our understanding as His compassion, mercy, and forgiveness extend beyond human capacity.

? How does knowing God is beyond us encourage you?

God will accomplish what He says He will do, including making a way for the redemption of humanity.

? How do you respond to knowing God always had a plan of redemption because of His love for His people?

POINT 2: The Lord is with His people with full authority (Matthew 28:16-18).

We can identify with Jesus's disciples even today: They obeyed His instruction and felt called to worship, but doubts still lingered.

? How do obedience, worship, and doubt mix in someone's walk of faith?

Jesus, answering people's doubts, explained His divinity by proclaiming His ultimate authority in heaven and on earth.

? If we know and believe that Jesus has all authority, how should that change our prayer life and spiritual walk?

POINT 3: The Lord is with His people forever and always (Matthew 28:19-20).

In response to the authority of Jesus, His followers are instructed to make disciples by going, baptizing, and teaching.



What are some practical ways to make disciples?

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From Day 5: How does Jesus's promise "I am with you" give you courage to make disciples?

MY RESPONSE

Because God has made the way to be in relationship with Him through Jesus, we strive to live in joyful obedience to carry the gospel to all the world so that others might come to know God too.

- **HEAD:** How can you choose to acknowledge and believe Jesus to be your authority today?
- **HEART:** What can I confess to God concerning my devotion, or lack thereof, to Jesus's Great Commission?
- **HANDS:** What can you do to start on a journey to make more disciples this week?



Scan this QR code to access this session's Scripture passages.

VOICES from CHURCH HISTORY

"There is no day, no hour of the day, in which our Lord Jesus is not present with his churches and with his ministers; if there were, in that day, that hour, they would be undone."³

—Matthew Henry (1662–1714)