



# Refreshed Relationships Bible Studies



**REFRESH**

*WIC THEME 2024*

## **Refreshed Relationships**

### **Weekly Group Bible Studies**

#### **Introduction**

Throughout the gospels, so many people encounter Jesus and the way they respond to Him is so diverse. Some believe Him, others abuse Him, not everyone whose life was touched by Jesus chose to follow Him.

The following studies highlight six stories where people encountered Jesus and discovered how important repentance is in radically refreshing our relationship with God and with others.

As you reflect on these studies individually or with others, we encourage you to open your heart to God. Let's continue to walk down that same path of repentance together, that we might continually experience times of refreshing that God graciously and lovingly wants to pour out on us (Act 3:19-20).

## Study 1: Jesus Sees Us

### A) Relate

Was there ever a time where you felt ostracised or isolated because of your background, lifestyle choices or demographic? What was it like?

### B) Read

Luke 19:1-9

### C) Review

Tax collectors in Jesus' day often had a bad reputation among locals because this tax would go directly to Rome (the centre of what was the foreign oppressing empire). To earn the right to tax in a region, one needed to win by bidding, and many would skim off the top of what was taxed to enrich themselves. It was a strategic decision to make money out of a bad situation.

As a result, they were often hated and ostracised even by local Rabbis, excommunicated from synagogues, and disqualified from being witnesses in court. If you entered the home of a tax collector you would be ceremonially unclean.

### D) Reflect

1. What does Luke highlight about Zacchaeus and his reputation (v2,7)?
2. Zacchaeus goes to some lengths to get a glimpse of Jesus (v3-4), what does this reveal about him? Would you have done the same? Why or why not?
3. Jesus invites Himself to the home of Zacchaeus. What does this reveal about Jesus' as well as His primary motivation (v5, 9, 10)?
4. While we only get a small glimpse of the conversation with Zacchaeus, we know that his encounter with Jesus changed his relationships significantly. How would you summarise those changes? (see vs 8)
5. The Greek word for Repentance is "Metanoia" which is essentially a 180 degree about-face turn. How does Zacchaeus' declaration reflect repentance? What has happened here from Jesus' perspective (v9)?

## E) Respond

- Recall and reflect on significant moments in your life when Jesus convicted you to repent. Share with others what that moment was like and how you were changed.
- Ask the Lord to help you repent of sins that might be causing Him, yourself or others pain right now in your life.
- Ask the Lord to show you and help you to change things in your life for the better (E.g. Zacchaeus blesses the poor **instead** of hoarding; generously restores those he defrauded **instead** of cheating them).
- Ask for forgiveness from those whom you have hurt and give forgiveness to those who are hurting you.
- Share what you have learnt in this study with someone who might not yet know the love, mercy and forgiveness of Jesus.

## Study 2: Jesus Knows Us

### A) Relate

Have you ever felt like you could not associate with certain people or groups because you felt that you were not good enough or that they would not accept you because of your cultural background or something you had done in your past? What was that experience like for you?

### B) Read

John 4:1-26

### C) Review

When we look at Jesus' life and ministry, the conversations He had significantly changed people's lives. Today we explore the longest recorded conversation Jesus had with an individual – a woman from an ethnic group that despised the Jewish people. Jesus spoke with this woman while his disciples were in a Samaritan village buying food and while she was drawing water from a well on the city outskirts. As we reflect on Jesus' interaction with the Samaritan woman, consider the impact he had on her and the whole neighbourhood.

### D) Reflect

1. Why was the woman surprised that Jesus initiated a conversation with her (v9)?
2. How would you describe what Jesus is offering the woman (v10, 13-14)?
3. When Jesus says, "Go call your husband..." What is the area of the woman's life that Jesus highlights to her through his divine insight (v16-18)? What does this reveal to you about the woman's thirst and the reason for Jesus highlighting this area of her life?
4. Why do you think the woman began telling the people in the town about Jesus, and what was her simple testimony?
5. How would you describe the two ways that the Samaritans came to believe in Jesus (v39-42)? How does this encourage you?

## **E) Respond**

- Are you thirsty for things in life that won't bring eternal meaning and satisfaction – if so what might they be for you?
- What “Dirty Water” might be in your life? How can you replace that with pure and living water that only Jesus can give?
- Pray that Jesus will wash out any dirty water or meaningless focus with His pure and life-giving power and presence.
- Share what God has shown you in this study with someone who may not yet know that Jesus can satisfy their true thirst.

## Study 3: Jesus Opens Our Spiritual Eyes

### A) Relate

Have you ever found yourself noticing/seeing something in a familiar place or situation that you had never noticed before? For example, you may have walked on a familiar street many times before noticing a particular business that had been there for decades. You may have read a passage in the Bible a hundred times before noticing a key statement that you had never seen before. What was the thing that you noticed that you had never seen before?

### B) Read

John 3:1-21

### C) Review

In this passage John tells the story of a religious leader named Nicodemus who had a profound knowledge of the Scriptures but perhaps had not noticed or understood some of the key truths about the work of God in and through people until He met with Jesus.

The truths that Jesus reveals in his discussion with Nicodemus is really the only knowledge and understanding that Nicodemus as well as every human being needs.

### D) Reflect

1. What is it that Jesus wants Nicodemus “to see” and “enter into” (v3, 4)?  
What do you think this means?
2. According to Jesus, what is the one requirement to enter the kingdom of God?  
What do we learn from Jesus about this process? How would you describe this in your own words?
3. What important role and impact does “believing in Him” have in being born again (v14-15, 16-18)?
4. What does Jesus reveal about those who love the darkness and avoid the light (v19-20)?
5. What does this reveal about the importance of repentance in being born again?

## E) Respond

- If you have accepted Jesus as your Lord and Saviour you have been born again. Reflect and share what life was like for you before and after you made Jesus the Lord of your life. What are some of the key changes that you have noticed in your life since you put your faith in Jesus?
- If you have not been born again, you can do so now by meaningfully saying the following prayer:

***Dear Lord Jesus, I know that I am a sinner, and I ask for Your forgiveness. I believe You died for my sins and rose from the dead. I turn from my sins and invite You to come into my heart and life. I want to trust and follow You as my Lord and Savior.***

- Share with someone who does not yet know Jesus what you have learnt in this study.



## Study 4: Jesus Releases Us from Condemnation

### A) Relate

Have you ever had a fault or flaw exposed in front of others. If so, how did you feel in that moment? How do you feel now as you think back on it?

### B) Read

John 8:1-11

### C) Review

In chapter 7 of John's gospel, we learn that Jesus is in Jerusalem celebrating the Festival of Tabernacles (John 7:1-10). We also learn that many of the religious leaders were on the lookout for Jesus as they wanted to arrest and kill him (John 7:11, 19, 32). The religious leaders were desperately trying to disprove Jesus' claims about being the Messiah who had been prophesied in their Scriptures. They kept looking for ways in which they could accuse Jesus of breaking God's law and thereby prove that he was not who he claimed he was. In this passage, the religious leaders bring a woman who was caught in the act of adultery to try and trap Jesus into giving a response that was outside of God's law. In His response to them and to her Jesus demonstrates that He is the only one who is able to judge according to the law of Moses. He is also the only one who can release a person from the consequences of the law of Moses.

### D) Reflect

1. Why did the Scribes and Pharisees bring the woman caught in adultery to Jesus, and what were they trying to achieve (verse 6)?
2. What do you notice about the way that the religious leaders treated the woman and Jesus?
3. What do you think Jesus was implying in his statement to the religious leaders? Why might the older religious leaders have been the first to drop their stones?
4. Reflect on Jesus' response to the woman in verses 10-11. How does his handling of the situation demonstrate mercy and forgiveness?
5. In what ways do you see yourself in the woman and the Pharisees?

## **E) Respond**

- If this study has reminded you of times when like the pharisees you have been critical or judgemental towards others, prayerfully confess this and pray for forgiveness from Jesus.
- Perhaps you relate more with the woman caught in sin and you hear the voice of angry accusers in your head day in and day out. Pray and ask Jesus to help you comprehend His grace and forgiveness towards you and to release all ongoing guilt and shame.
- Is there someone in your life that needs to hear from you what you discovered while reflecting on this passage?

## Study 5: Jesus Cleanses Us

### A) Relate

Can you recall a time when you reluctantly had to accept help from someone else? What was the need and how did you feel about receiving the help and support?

### B) Read

John 13:1-11

### C) Review

The passage before us today recounts a scene that occurred during the last Passover meal that Jesus had with his disciples. In biblical times, it was common in Middle Eastern hospitality to offer slaves/servants to wash the dirty feet of guests before they entered a house. Perhaps because of budget constraints, there was no servant to wash the feet of Jesus and his disciples before the start of the meal. Foot washing was considered such a lowly and menial task and degrading task that one might understand why the disciples may simply have ignored the fact that their feet were dirty. Jesus, however, seized the moment to teach about the cleansing that only he can offer and the way he wants his disciples to love and care for one another.

### D) Reflect

1. Why is it that Jesus, as the leader, is able to do such a menial task for His followers according to verses 3 to 4?
2. What might have been Simon Peter's reason for not wanting Jesus to wash his feet (verse 6)?
3. What is the significance of Jesus explanation that those who have had a bath need only wash their feet (verse 10)?
4. Jesus also tells his disciples to wash one another's feet (13:14). What is the significance of this?
5. What does Jesus' inclusion of Judas in the foot-washing ceremony convey about his love and grace and human free will?

## **E) Respond**

- Have you already had the bath of God's gift of forgiveness and salvation?
- In what areas of your life might you need a foot wash of forgiveness?
- Are there others in your life that may need a foot wash/to receive forgiveness?
- How might this passage change the way that you behave towards your brothers and sisters in Christ as well as others in one or more areas of your life this week, e.g. home, work, school etc?
- Who in your life needs to hear about what you have learned in this study?

## Study 6: Jesus Forgives Us When We Repent

### A) Relate

Can you remember a time when you hurt someone really badly and you had to sincerely apologise and seek their forgiveness? What did it feel like to have to apologize? How did the person respond to your apology?

### B) Read

Luke 23:32-43

### C) Review

The passage today details the interaction that Jesus had with two men who were being crucified either side of him. Jesus is very weak following the violence that he had suffered from the Roman guards. He is so weak that a traveller named Simon from Cyrene is forced by the guards to carry the cross of Jesus up the hill. It is amazing that Jesus who is in so much pain and anguish of body and soul is able to ask God the Father to forgive those who are hurling abuse at Him. The men on the cross on either side of Him, respond to Him in opposite ways which reflects the posture of their hearts.

### D) Reflect

1. What do you notice about the majority response to Jesus when He is on the cross (vs 32-39)?
2. How does Jesus plead with His Heavenly Father for them and why (vs 34)?
3. What would you say is the key difference in the way that the criminal in verses 40 to 42 interacts with Jesus as opposed to all the others present at the crucifixion?
4. What does Jesus' response to the criminal in verse 33 teach us about the heart posture that He desires from people?
5. Do you think that the criminal in verses 40 to 42 was deserving of the reply that he got from Jesus?

## E) Respond

- Do you need to repent of times when your response to Jesus may have been like those at the foot of the cross and the accusing thief?
- Have there been times when you have demanded that Jesus act in a certain way or do what you want him to do, with no consideration of the will of God in your life? If so, repent and seek his forgiveness through prayer. Ask Him to help you to live focussed more on His will and his kingdom rather than your own.
- Have there been times when you may have doubted that Jesus has the same heart posture towards you that he had towards the repentant thief? If so, know that God is faithful and His word is true. Simply pray for forgiveness with a humble posture and you can be assured that you will spend eternity with Jesus.
- Who in your life needs to hear about what you have learned in this study?