



Get to Know Jesus

Discipleship Studies – Session Three – What do the ACTIONS of Jesus tell us about Jesus?

From the First Session Introduction - *So, you want to get to know Jesus! That's a very good thing to desire. And you know what? I have the sense that the feeling is mutual because Jesus wants to get to know you too! The prophet Jeremiah wrote the words of God himself when God said, "You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart." Jesus isn't a "hide and seek" God...at least not in the way you remember the game! In the case of Jesus, he doesn't hide. In fact, Jesus is doing everything he can to get your attention. So, let's get to know Jesus!*

Think about YOUR actions on a day to day basis...how do they reveal who you really are?

Do your actions match up with what you feel about yourself?

Have you ever done anything where you were SHOCKED at yourself? Why did that happen? Who did it affect? What specifically shocked you? What did that action SAY about you?

Have you ever done anything where you were PROUD of yourself? Why did that happen? Who did it affect? What specifically made you proud? What did that action SAY about you?

How do you "judge" a person based upon their actions? Is that judgment fair?

Think now of the actions that you know Jesus did? What does that action tell you about Jesus? What's your favorite action of Jesus?

Introduction to this Session

People say that "actions speak louder than words." Isn't that true! In fact, there is a famous quote about actions and words - it has found new life on Facebook and Twitter. Maybe you have even uttered these words, commonly attributed to Francis of Assisi: "Preach the gospel. Use words if necessary." I think we can appreciate what these words are getting at...as followers of Jesus, we should live in such a way that our lives point to the person and work of Jesus. Unfortunately for the world, we are NOT Jesus! But Jesus is Jesus! And Jesus said a lot through his actions. Of course he also SAID a lot...that we will get to in a future session.

But before you start looking at Jesus' specific actions, remember what Jesus was ALL about – it is called, “the Kingdom of God.” Here's a quick taste of that Kingdom:

- *The Kingdom of God is the rule of God. And it rests upon the Lordship of Jesus Christ.*
- *The Kingdom of God produces not only a personal follower of Jesus but a community of followers . . . that community, in turn, submits to the sway or rule of the Kingdom. As it does, the Jesus followers individually and corporately express, represent, and advance God's Kingdom on the earth.*
- *Properly conceived, you and others who follow Jesus possess Divine life. This life in community joyfully enthrones Jesus Christ, expresses His rule in the world, and as a result, enjoys the blessings of the future age here-and-now (Rom. 14:17; Heb. 6:5).*
- *According to the New Testament, the church is not a building. Neither is it a denomination, a religious service, nor a non-denominational organization. The church is a living organism. It is simply this: A community of people who possess the life of God's Kingdom and who express it together.*
- *Your New Testament contains the epic saga of the early Jesus movement. That saga centers on how God the Father has made Jesus of Nazareth both Lord and King of the universe. When the New Testament uses the word translated, “Christ” it is really attempting to say that Jesus is Messiah and King. Jesus is KING Jesus – we live for and represent a King and a Kingdom.*
- *According to the Gospels, the master thought of Jesus was the Kingdom of God which is “at hand.” The Kingdom is HERE in Jesus. The book of Acts continues this thought and tells the story of how the Kingdom made its introduction in Jerusalem and spread to Rome through the church – the community of the Kingdom.*
- *The Kingdom of God is a dual reality. It is “already,” but it is “not yet.” The Kingdom is present. At the same time, it is future. The Kingdom is today; but it is also tomorrow.*
- *In effect, the future age of the Kingdom is present on the earth even though it is a future reality. With the coming of Jesus, the Kingdom that belongs to the future age has broken into this present age.*
- *Consequently, those Christ followers who gather as a shared-life community under the Lordship of Christ are living in the presence of the future as well as seeking the grace from God to experience that Kingdom now in their lives.*
- *The Kingdom of God is also a mystery. It does not set out to destroy human authority in this age. Instead, the Kingdom destroys the powers and principalities in the spiritual realm. Its enemy is the kingdom of darkness and the ruler of this age (Satan).*
- *Put another way, the Kingdom of God does not seek to change the political order of things by human effort. It rather makes changes in the spiritual order that affect the lives of men and women at a deeper level.*

- *The Kingdom works quietly and secretly among men and women. It is not a forceful power that cannot be resisted. The Kingdom is rather like a man planting a seed. Its success depends on the type of soil in which it is planted.*
- *Like a mustard seed, its growth is slow and imperceptible. Yet at a future day, the Kingdom will be manifested in great power and glory. The fact that the Kingdom is fulfilled today, yet it is waiting to be consummated, is indeed a mystery.*
- *In all of Paul's letters, the theme of the Kingdom of God appears. However, Paul's letters were primarily written to Gentile audiences. Thus he speaks more of the Lordship of Christ than he does the Kingdom of God.*
- *For Paul, Jesus as Lord is a synonym for the Kingdom. In addition, terms such as "reigning," "rule," "majesty," "Lord Jesus Christ," "King of kings," "Lord of lords," "Christ the Head," "the age to come" are all Paul's shorthand ways of describing the Kingdom.*



Now, why bring up the Kingdom? Because not only did Jesus represent the Kingdom and make the Kingdom real and present but HIS ACTIONS WERE KINGDOM ACTIONS. The actions of Jesus tell us about what that Kingdom looks like – give that some thought. Think about what you know Jesus did...has he stopped doing Kingdom things? NO...his actions are past, present and future! In fact, one of the greatest acts of Jesus was saving, loving and transforming YOU! You are a act of God! Dwell on that for a while, won't you?

Jesus isn't a belief system or a bunch of doctrines – JESUS IS ALIVE! AND MOST IMPORTANTLY, Jesus is STILL acting!

And if God is still acting and Jesus is THAT real then we can have a RELATIONSHIP with God. We can know Jesus intimately and personally. Your friends, spouse, children, and co-workers tell you about who they are through their actions. Their actions either invite you into their lives or repel you. Trust me when I say, every action of Jesus was done for the people God loves...that includes you! Jesus' actions impact people in the past, present and will for ages to come. So, what do we know about Jesus FROM HIS ACTIONS? Let's go...



Wanna get to know Jesus? Look at Jesus' Actions

First ACTION of Jesus - Jesus called people to follow him – the fact is, yes, he called twelve men but there were countless others who followed Jesus (e.g. in Luke 10, Jesus sends out 72). Have you ever wondered what Jesus was trying to tell us about himself through that action? Why did he do that? To answer this question, we must return to the Jewish context in which Jesus lived, and consider the expectations that Jews had regarding the final age. Jews believed in the restoration of the nation of Israel, which involved the regathering of the twelve tribes of Israel. In light of this expectation, Jesus' action of appointing twelve disciples who have a special place among his followers takes on great significance for the Jews observing Jesus' ministry. It would very likely have been seen as symbolizing the restored twelve tribes of Israel, and as Jesus appointing rulers of Israel for the final age. It is hard to imagine that Jesus did not attribute such significance to this action himself. In fact, it seems that this action was an indirect way of making a messianic claim. Jesus was proclaiming the coming Kingdom of God, associating himself with that Kingdom, and appointing twelve of his followers to places of authority. All of these things would indicate to Jews that Jesus was claiming to be a significant figure, a figure that many Jews would identify as the messiah. In addition, any number divisible by seven (in this case the 70 and 72 who were supposedly following Jesus as well) is a GOD number. In other words, there were countless followers of Jesus. The gospel writers are telling us that Jesus' action in selecting followers is ONE TASTE of the reality of his Kingdom.

Second ACTION of Jesus – Miracles – we learn from Jesus' miracles that this world is BIGGER than what we can measure, see and physically experience. In fact, the world and life is FULL of incredible possibility because God can act in miraculous ways in our lives, in time and space. There are many people who don't believe that truth. In fact, Jesus' actions tell us when the Kingdom of God is present, you live in the realm of not only possibilities but IMPOSSIBILITIES. Jesus' miracles say one thing loudly – “Get God out of the box.” J.B. Phillips once wrote, “the trouble with many people today is that they have not found a God big enough for modern needs...their idea of God is largely static...a God who is really too small to command adult loyalty and cooperation.” If your Jesus can't do the impossible, your God is too small! I am not as amazed about what I know about God as I am about what I don't know about God. We are all called to embrace a child like trust and fascination with God which allows God to produce the supernatural and allows people to burst from the confines of theology/practice to become instruments of God to a dying world. Our problem, though, IS THAT IT IS HUMAN NATURE TO WANT TO PUT GOD IN A BOX. We want to form God into our own image. We all desire a God that is convenient for our personal comfort, acceptance and control. Unfortunately, Jesus' actions do not give us that option! You have to deal with them. Jesus breaks the safety net of doctrinal systems and institutionalized theology. Jesus breaks the belief that God's action and activity is static and not dynamic...that God has already acted and does not act like He did in the bible anymore. The predominant world view is secularistic and denies the possibility of the miraculous, denies the existence or significance of anything spiritual/religious, believes in a closed universe that can be intellectually and scientifically mastered, sees human potential as the focus of unlimited, utopian power, and disallows any activity of God. Jesus' actions tell us something else that is GLORIOUS! We live in a universe that is filled with Jesus and the possibility of mystery, the unpredictable and the miraculous!

- a) Healings: Through healing people, Jesus was not only healing these people physically, but spiritually as well. He was restoring them to the community, in to the people of God. In a way, he was preparing them for the new Israel in the Kingdom of God of the final age. Also remember the expectation that in Jewish expectations about the final age, there was the expectation that all illness and deformity would be removed. Again, Jesus' healings have implications for his words about the Kingdom and his identity as one who will make that Kingdom real.

- b) Exorcisms: Jesus' healings of the spirit are the beginning or perhaps the foreshadowing of the final defeat of evil (Satan) that is experienced now and expected in final age. Jesus' exorcisms go hand and hand with his proclamation of the Kingdom of God.
- c) Multiplication of loaves: Jesus' multiplication of bread is understood as a foretaste of the bread of heaven (a new manna – see Exodus where God fed his people in the wilderness) that will be provided by God in the Kingdom of God. We will not have a need because Jesus is the BREAD of life!
- d) The Resurrection: Jesus' resurrection is the FINAL victory of God's Kingdom in life. It is a foretaste of what every one of his followers will experience because of his great love...victory. Victory over every aspect of life where we feel defeated...victory over that which brings us down and sidelines us from living for Jesus...victory over any entity that keeps us stuck in suffering and death. The resurrection is Jesus' ultimate action – and it happened for you!

Jesus' ACTIONS say loads about who Jesus is...CS Lewis once remarked that either Jesus was telling the truth or he had the mentality of a poached egg. That might be humorous but it is true! Jesus' actions tell us about who he is...Jesus is the “face of God.” Jesus' actions say loudly -

The Kingdom of God IN YOU!



Jesus followers are called to be nothing less than “the body of Christ,” the extension of Jesus' body on earth right here and now. You and I are called to replicate who Jesus was by manifesting who Jesus is. This was God's strategy – this is how God expands the influence of the Kingdom of God.

Remember, the Kingdom looks like Jesus. And when we follow Jesus, we participate in this Kingdom and more – here's an awesome truth – Jesus lives in and through us – we look like Jesus. Woa!

This is why the New Testament places so much emphasis on imitating Jesus. For example, Paul commands the Ephesians, “Be imitators of God.” He then explains exactly what he means when he adds, “Live in love, as Christ loved us and gave his life for us” (Eph 5:1-2). Think seriously about that. We are called to do nothing less than imitate God. The Greek word for “imitate” means “to mimic” “mime” or “shadow” someone else. Do you realize what that means? We are to be the shadow that Jesus' casts. A shadow never does anything that the one casting it does not do. So too, we are to do exactly what we have seen God do in Jesus Christ. We are to love as Christ loved us on the cross: nothing more and nothing less.

Jesus' actions tell us that his cross-quality love is something we're called to live in. Love isn't something we're supposed to do occasionally, when it's convenient, when we're in the mood or when we already like the other person. Rather, cross-quality love is to be woven into the very fabric of our

life—our breath, our brain waves and our heart beat. The time you're called to love is when you're breathing, when you're conscious, when your heart is beating. This love we are called to live in isn't something sentimental or abstract: it always takes the form of action—as Jesus' love did on the cross and in the empty tomb.



Getting to the Finish Line

So, here you are...you made it to the end of the study. I know, many words to read and comprehend. NOW it is your turn to look at some of Jesus' actions. Read over the following stories of Jesus from the gospels – read and ask yourself the question – what does this story TELL me about Jesus? You watch what Jesus does! It will tell you volumes about your Savior and Lord!

I like the gospel of Mark because it is focused on the Kingdom of God and Jesus' actions specifically – here are some sections to read:

- ❖ Jesus confronts evil in the wilderness – Mark 1:12-13
- ❖ Jesus heals someone who is paralyzed – Mark 2:1-12
- ❖ Jesus calms storms – Mark 4:35-41
- ❖ Jesus sends people out to share the Kingdom - Mark 6:6-13
- ❖ Jesus feeds 1000s - Mark 8:1-10
- ❖ Jesus is miraculously changed - Mark 9:1-13
- ❖ Jesus blesses kids - Mark 10:13-16
- ❖ Jesus on the cross - Mark 15:33-41

Take notes as you go along in the story. Remember, you are not just noting what Jesus says or does...you are noting what you learn about Jesus...who he is! GET to know Jesus! Remember?

Last but not least – you are just scratching the surface on getting to know Jesus. I've been married to my wife, Vicky for almost 25 years and I'm still learning more about her. Do you recall this section of the gospel of John, "Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of disciples, which are not recorded in this book...Jesus did many other things as well? If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written." It's as if the writer, just to wrap things up, adds "Oh yeah, I left a ton of stuff out." You'll never get to the end of getting to know Jesus.



Final Thoughts

Here's your final assignment - the BEST WAY you can get to know Jesus by talking to Jesus.

So, ask Jesus to help you get to know him – NOW!

Say, "I want to get to know you Jesus." Say it at least five times in a row. Say it repeatedly throughout the day today.

And know that in order to get to know Jesus:

- You're going to have to talk to Jesus
- You're going to have to spend time with Jesus
- You're going to have to listen to Jesus
- You're going to have to be vulnerable with Jesus
- You're going to have to ask Jesus questions and then listen

Next Study will focus on what Jesus' actual disciples tell us about him – in other words, when you look at his followers, what does that tell us about the Jesus we love and serve? That is Session Four!