

THE STORY OF

JESUS

BIBLE STUDY STUDENT GUIDE

A ten-week study on the life, ministry,
crucifixion, resurrection, and promised
return of Jesus Christ

THE STORY OF JESUS
BIBLE STUDY STUDENT BOOK

I Am A Watchman
Publications

I Am A Watchman Publishing
Union City, California

THE STORY OF JESUS BIBLE STUDY STUDENT BOOK. Copyright © 2018 by iamawatchman, Inc. All Rights Reserved.

The *I Am A Watchman* ministry desires to equip and encourage believers, reach the lost, and see individuals prepared for the return of the King.

I Am a Watchman Publications
www.IAmAWatchman.com

Printed in the United States of America
ISBN# 9781642544138

First Printing, September, 2018



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It is with profound gratitude that I recognize the following for making it possible for me to prepare the Story of Jesus Bible Study and share in the Kingdom's work.

I recognize that it is by the grace of God I am here today. My prayer is that this work, and the resources developed by the *I Am A Watchman* ministry, will bring honor and glory to His matchless name. The Word is true when it states that our heavenly Father is patient, loving, and kind.

Secondly, I would like to recognize my wife. Her love, support, and partnership in ministry has changed my life. I am very proud of her. She has a creative mind, a generous heart, and tirelessly serves. I am blessed.

I would also like to recognize my two children—both of whom have worked hard and sacrificed much in support of the Kingdom's work. And I would like to thank my parents; they adopted me, cared for me, and time and time again went out of their way to show their love for me. They have fostered in me a desire to learn, share, dream, and do, and for that I am forever grateful.

And finally, I would like to thank Scott and Beck Townsend, founders of the *I Am A Watchman* ministry. Their vision, sacrifice, and faith have been a blessing to me, and to many. I am proud to serve with them in *such a time as this*.

ABOUT THIS STUDY

The goal in writing the STORY OF JESUS is to provide a resource that makes reading Scripture more enjoyable and understandable. The Story Of Jesus resource is not designed to replace the Bible, it is designed to be an aid in reading and understanding the Bible.

In this resource, the material in the Gospels is merged and arranged in approximate chronological order to form an easy to follow account of the life, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Pastoral notes and cross-references (see the right column of each page) provide background information on uncommon terms and highlight sections of Scripture of particular importance.

Scripture passages are quoted from The Holy Bible, New International Version, Copyright 1973, 1978, 1984, by International Bible Society, published by Zondervan Publishing House.

This five part study resource profiles the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. In general, SECTION ONE profiles the birth of Jesus through the end of His first year of ministry. SECTION TWO profiles His second year of ministry. SECTION THREE profiles his third year of ministry. SECTION FOUR profiles he last months of His ministry, and SECTION FIVE profiles the week leading up to the crucifixion through His ascension into heaven.

Material for this book is drawn from the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John).



THE STORY OF

JESUS

BIBLE STUDY STUDENT GUIDE

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|--|----|
| SUGGESTIONS FOR HOW TO USE THIS STUDY RESOURCE | 5 |
| SESSION 1 (AN OVERVIEW OF THE GOSPELS) | 6 |
| SESSION 2 | 16 |
| SESSION 3 | 25 |
| SESSION 4 | 33 |
| SESSION 5 | 40 |
| SESSION 6 | 51 |
| SESSION 7 | 56 |
| SESSION 8 | 62 |
| SESSION 9 | 67 |
| SESSION 10 | 73 |
| EPILOGUE | 78 |
| HOW TO BECOME A CHRISTIAN | 79 |
| WHAT EVERY BELIEVER SHOULD DO | 81 |

SUGGESTIONS FOR HOW TO USE THIS STUDY RESOURCE

This study is designed to help individuals become more familiar with the Gospel story, better understand the chronological time line for the ministry of Christ, and gain insight into a number of challenging Scripture passages. Study resources include leader and student books, an e-book, ten PowerPoint presentations and several links to teaching videos that compliment the material in this book.

Suggestions for leading this study

- ➔ Pray for the class leader, and that God will reveal new insight, encouragement and guidance as you review the Gospel story.
- ➔ This Bible Study follows ***The Story of Jesus*** book. Most of the answers to the questions in this booklet can be found in the text or the pastoral commentary notes (located just to the right of the text).
- ➔ The e-Book version of this study book is an INTERACTIVE .PDF file which allows class participants to type-in answers (***or answers can be hand-written in the text box areas after the lesson is printed.***)
- ➔ Journal your questions each week. Share these with your class leader, a church ministry leader or prayer partner.
- ➔ Take advantage of (and tell a friend about) the library of discipleship resources on the IAmAWatchman.com website, and the teaching videos posted at vimeo.com/IAmAWatchman.

SESSION 1

1. Note several interesting facts about the Gospel writers or their writings.

This information can be found in the Story of Jesus book (pages 15-16).

➡ **Matthew was...** *[write or type your answer below]*

➡ **Mark was...** *[write or type your answer below]*

➡ **Luke was...** *[write or type your answer below]*

- ➔ **John was...** *[write or type your answer below]*

2. True or False? The Messiah fulfilled more than 120 prophecies during his ministry on earth 2000 years ago.

CHECK ONE

True

False

- ➔ **NOTE:** *The odds of less than half of the Messianic prophecies coming true is approximately 1 in 10¹⁵⁷ power. The fulfillment of prophecy proves that Jesus was not just a good man, or worker of miracles—Jesus is more than that. Jesus is divine (John 1:1).*

3. John 1:1-5 presents the following truths:

- ➔ **Jesus has an eternal nature.**
- ➔ **Jesus is one with God (not part of God, like God, or one in purpose with God, but one in essence with God).**
- ➔ **Review John 1:1-18 and note five titles or descriptors of Jesus:**

4. What the genealogy In Matthew 1 reveals:

➔ **How does the structure of the genealogy in Matthew 1 indicate that God is in control? *[write or type your answer below]***

➔ **How does the variety of individuals listed indicate that God delights in diversity? *[write or type your answer below]***

➔ **How does the mention of Jeconiah indicate that God can always make a way? *[write or type your answer below]***

5. Announcing the birth of John the Baptist (Luke 1:5-22)

➡ **Why was the birth of John a miracle?** *[write or type your answer below]*

➡ **How was John the Baptist the fulfillment of prophecy (see Malachi 4:5-6; Matthew 11:7-15)?** *[write or type your answer below]*

➡ **What judgment befell John's father for his lack of faith?**
[write or type your answer below]

- **Luke 1:57-79** notes how Zechariah was restored and given a significant word of prophecy from the Lord. What does this reveal about God's grace? *[write or type your answer below]*

6. Gabriel's announcement to Mary (Luke 1:26-38)

- **Who is Gabriel?** *[write or type your answer below]*
- **God chose Mary because of her heart—not her wealth, position, training, or education. What does this truth about how God works mean to you?** *[write or type your answer below]*

- ➔ **Joseph and Mary lived in Nazareth. Student booklets prompt participants to note a fact about the city of Nazareth. What does this reveal about God’s ability to use anyone from anywhere at any time?** *[write or type your answer below]*

- ➔ **How did Gabriel’s announcement change Mary’s plans and challenge her faith?** *[write or type your answer below]*

7. Joseph and the birth of Jesus (Matt. 1:18-24)

- ➔ **Joseph struggled to understand Mary’s pregnancy. Though he could have pressed for harsh disciplinary measures to be carried out, he planned to “put her away quietly.” What does this reveal about Joseph’s heart?** *[write or type your answer on the next page]*

- ➔ **Keeping in mind Joseph's choice, Jesus' rebuke of the Pharisees in Matthew 15:1-20 and Paul's counsel in Romans 14, how should believers today think about the *letter of the Law* and the *spirit of the Law*? *[write or type your answer below]***

8. The birth of Jesus (Luke 2:1-16)

- ➔ **Note an interesting fact about the census.**
[write or type your answer below]

- ➔ **Note an interesting fact about Joseph and Mary's journey to Bethlehem.** *[write or type your answer below]*

- ➔ **Note an aspect of the birth story which points to the humble nature of his birth.** *[write or type your answer below]*

9. Infancy (Luke 2:21-38)

- ➔ **Jesus was presented and circumcised in accordance the Law. What does this, and Matthew 5:17 reveal about Jesus' commitment to be obedient to the Law?** *[write or type your answer below]*

- ➔ **Note several ways the Messiahship of Jesus was confirmed before He was two years old. *[write or type your answer below]***

10. Infancy and Childhood (Matt. 2:1- 23; Luke 2:40-52)

- ➔ **Note an important fact about Herod the Great.**

[write or type your answer below]

- ➔ **What do the gifts of the Magi (prophetically) represent?**

[write or type your answer below]

➔ **Note an important fact about the “flight to Egypt.”**

[write or type your answer below]

SESSION 2



1. The ministry of John the Baptist (John 1:6-9; Matthew 3:1-6; Luke 3:15-18)

- Why did John refer to Jesus as the “*Lamb of God*?” What did that signify? *[write or type your answer below]*

- Note a few characteristics of the ministry of John the Baptist: *[write or type your answer below]*

2. The baptism of Jesus (Matt. 3:13-17; John 1:29-34)

- What is the significance of baptism, and how did the meaning of baptism change after the resurrection? *[write or type your answer in the text box on the next page]*

- ➔ **What happened during the baptism of Jesus that validated His calling and identity?** *[write or type your answer below]*

3. The temptation of Jesus (Luke 4:1-13)

- ➔ **How did Jesus prepare for His ministry?**
[write or type your answer below]

➔ **In what three areas did Satan tempt Jesus?**

[write or type your answer below]

➔ **How did Jesus respond each time Satan tempted him?**

[write or type your answer below]

4. The calling of the disciples (John 1:10-12, 35-51)

➔ **Note an observation or two regarding the choosing of the disciples. *[write or type your answer below]***

- ➡ **The 12 Jesus chose would not have spent much time together were it not for Him. It is likely that most of the disciples would not have chosen to be friends—some would have been natural enemies. Why do you think Jesus chose these men? [write or type your answer below]**

5. The first miracle (John 2:1-12)

- ➡ **Was the city of Cana a notable city? [write or type your answer below]**

- ➡ **Was Jesus invited to the wedding because He was known as a worker of miracles or had some degree of notoriety at this point in His ministry? [write or type your answer below]**

- ➔ **What are some of the important symbolic elements in this story?**
[write or type your answer below]

6. Jesus cleanses the temple (John 2:13-21)

- ➔ **Are John 2 and Matthew 21 contradictory Scriptures?**
[write or type your answer below]

- ➔ **How does this event note the authority of Jesus?**
[write or type your answer below]

- ➔ **How is Jesus' cleansing the Temple is the fulfillment of prophecy?**

[write or type your answer below]



7. Jesus meets with Nicodemus (John 3)

- ➔ **Who were the Pharisees and why were they hostile to Jesus?**

[write or type your answer below]

- ➔ **What does it mean to be “Born Again” (V.3), and how does that tie into verse 16? *[write or type your answer below]***

8. Jesus and the woman at the well (John 4:5-43)

- ➡ **Why was there animosity between the Samaritans and Jews in the days of Jesus?** *[write or type your answer below]*

- ➡ **What can one infer about the woman from the notation that she was gathering water in the afternoon?**

[write or type your answer below]

- ➡ **The woman becomes a powerful witness for Jesus. Why might this be considered unusual?** *[write or type your answer below]*

- ➔ **What is the result of the woman's witness?**

[write or type your answer below]

9. Opposition in Nazareth (Luke 4:16-36; Mark 3:8-12)

- ➔ **What was the prophesied mission of Jesus? (Luke 4:16-21).**

[write or type your answer below]

- ➔ **From Luke 4, and from your observations, note a few examples of how God works in mysterious ways: *[write or type your answer below]***

- ➔ **Demonic activity was common during Jesus' ministry. How did this manifest itself and do you think demonic activity has changed today?** *[write or type your answer below]*

10. The healing of Peter's Mother-in-Law (Luke 4:38-44)

- ➔ **How was Peter's Mother-in-law a supporter of Jesus' ministry?**
[write or type your answer below]

- ➔ **How did she respond after being healed - what did she do?**
[write or type your answer below]

SESSION 3

1. The Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7).

- ➔ The Sermon on the Mount is the first of five _____ in the Gospel of Matthew and is the longest recorded _____ of Jesus.
- ➔ There are _____ Beatitudes—each intended to comfort and align the hearer’s perspective to that of Christ (Rom. 12:1-2).
- ➔ How is the authority of Jesus affirmed in this sermon? *[write or type your answer below]*

- ➔ The Lord’s Prayer is not a presentation on _____ to pray, but rather, _____ to pray.
- ➔ What does Jesus say about worry? *[write or type your answer below]*

- ➔ According to Philippians 4:6-7, what are we to do when worried? *[write or type your answer in the text box on the next page]*

2. The compassion of Jesus (Mark 1:40-45)

- According to the Pharisees, a person with leprosy was physically and _____ unclean.
- Why did Jesus order the healed man not to tell anyone? *[write or type your answer below]*

3. Affirming the ministry of John the Baptist (Matthew 11:2-19)

- Do the questions regarding Jesus express the doubts of John the Baptist or his disciples? *[write or type your answer below]*

- How does Jesus describe John the Baptist (Matt. 11:2-15)?
[write or type your answer in the text box on the next page]

4. A dinner teaching on grace and forgiveness (Luke 7:36-50)

- This story presents a model for finding grace and forgiveness.
 - » **Step one:** Draw close to Jesus. How did the woman in this

story “draw close?” *[write or type your answer below]*

- » **Step two:** Acknowledge your sins and show remorse. How did the woman in this story do this? *[write your answer below]*

5. A discussion regarding the source of Jesus’ power (Matthew 12:22-45)

- ➡ **Is it possible for a demon to render someone blind or mute?**
[write your answer below]

- ➡ **Did the Pharisees deny the power of Jesus, or seek to bring into question the source of His power?** *[write or type your answer below]*

- ➔ Many signs and wonders marked the ministry of Jesus—often miracles were extended at the request of those in need. Why did Jesus deny the Pharisees when they requested a sign?
[write or type your answer below]

6. Jesus teaches in parables (Matthew 13:1-52)

- ➔ Why did Jesus teach in parables? *[write or type your answer below]*

- ➔ What is the general meaning of the parable of the sower?
[write or type your answer below]

- ➔ What is the general meaning of the parable of the wheat and tares?
[write or type your answer below]

- ➔ **What is the general meaning of the parable of the mustard seed?**
[write or type your answer below]

7. Supporting the ministry of Jesus (Luke 8:1-3)

Note something about the following individuals:

- ➔ **Peter's Mother-In-Law:**

- ➔ **Mary Magdalene:**

- ➔ **Susanna:**

- ➔ **Joanna:**

8. Authority over the elements (Mark 4:35-41)

What the elements of this story reveal about how we should face fears

- ➔ **The setting (evening on the sea of Galilee):**
[write or type your answer in the text box on the next page]

➔ **What is significant about the setting (evening on the sea of Galilee)?** *[write or type your answer below]*

➔ **Who brings peace in the midst of the storm?**

➔ **Did Jesus have sufficient power to deal with the problem?**
[write or type your answer below]

➔ **Did Jesus rebuke the disciples in this story and if so, why?**
[write or type your answer below]

- ➔ **Did Jesus rebuke the disciples in this story and if so, why?**
[write or type your answer below]

9. Authority over the demonic realm (Mark 5:1-20)

- ➔ **What is the location of this story?** *[write or type your answer below]*

- ➔ **What does the reader learn about the demonic world from this story?** *[write or type your answer below]*

- ➔ **Why were the herdsmen angry?** *[write or type your answer below]*

- ➔ **Why was the loss of their livestock considered a just reward according to Jewish tradition?** *[write or type your answer below]*

- ➔ **What did the formerly demon-possessed man ask of Jesus, and what did Jesus ask him to do?** *[write or type your answer below]*
- ➔ **What was the result of this man's witness (see Mark 6:53-56)?**
[write or type your answer below]

SESSION 4



1. Affirming the authority of Jesus

- **Why is Jesus confronted in Matthew 12 for doing good on the Sabbath?** *[write or type your answer below]*

- **In Matthew 12 Jesus is accused of breaking the Law. Did Jesus break the Law or the traditions of man? (Matt. 12:9-14).** *[write or type your answer below]*

- **Review Mark 7:13, Matthew 15:3, and Acts 15:10 then note the relationship between man's traditions (even valued traditions in the church), the Law/Word of God, and Jesus Who is the Lawgiver (James 4:12).** *[write or type your answer below]*

2. The ministry of healing

- **The healing of Jairus' daughter (Mark 5:22-43):**
Jairus was a Synagogue Official. What was the relationship between Jesus and most Synagogue Officials at this time?
[write or type your answer below]

- **What was Jesus response to Jairus' request for help (vv. 22-24)?**
[write or type your answer below]

- **The interruption (Mark 5:25):** **On the way to heal Jairus' daughter, a woman with a severe medical condition, hoping for a blessing, lunged toward Jesus and touched His robe. How did Jesus respond to this interruption?** *[write or type your answer below]*

- **The challenge (Mark 5:35):** **There is often a setback before the blessing. The 'setback' in v.35 seems insurmountable—but note what happens, and what that means for believers today?** *[write or type your answer below]*

3. Review Matthew 9:35-38, and note the prayer, the need and the opportunity

➤ **The prayer:** *[write or type your answer below]*

➤ **The need:** *[write or type your answer below]*

➤ **The opportunity:** *[write or type your answer below]*

4. Jesus sends out the Twelve (Mark 6:7-13; Matthew 10:14-42)

➤ **Why do you think Jesus sent the disciples out in pairs (Mark 6:7)?**
[write or type your answer below]

➔ **How does the directive in Matthew 10:9-10 compare with the order in Luke 22:35-36? What can believers today infer about there being only one right approach or way to accomplish a task?**
[write or type your answer below]

➔ **Did Jesus say that persecution was probable or promised?**
[write or type your answer below]

➔ **In light of Matthew 10:16-25 and Philippians 3:8, is the cost of being a disciple worth it?** *[write or type your answer below]*

5. The death of John the Baptist (Matthew 14:1-12)

➔ **What prompted John's murder by the weak King Herod?** *[write or type your answer below]*

- ➔ **In Matthew 11 Jesus referred to John as ‘great,’ yet he died in prison, had few possessions, acquired no wealth, wrote no books, led no army and held no political office. What does this tell us about how God measures greatness? *[write or type your answer below]***

6. Jesus feeds the 5000 (John 6)

- ➔ **Was the need for food a surprise to Jesus or a test for the disciples? *[write or type your answer below]***

- ➔ **How was the disciples’ faith further tested that night (VV:16-21)? *[write or type your answer below]***

- ➔ **The world today values technology, research, information, and education. According to John 6:26-28, why is it best to look for the insight and truth in the right place and with the right motive? *[write or type your answer below]***

7. Jesus speaks of Commitment (John 6:22-69)

- ➡ It is often difficult for individuals to listen well when Jesus speaks of commitment and sacrifice. How is that truth illustrated in this story? What did Jesus say that was difficult to understand or hear, and how did the crowds respond? *[write or type your answer below]*

- ➡ How do Peter's words in v.68 apply to the Church today? *[write or type your answer below]*

SESSION 5

THE THIRD YEAR OF JESUS' MINISTRY QUESTIONS:

1. Mark 7:1-5. Why Jesus did not observe the traditions of the Pharisees (which they considered law).

- ➔ How does the Mishna (the Oral Law) and the Laws of the Pharisees differ from the Law of Moses? *[write or type your answer below]*

- ➔ What is the difference between God's Law as revealed in Scripture (2 Pet. 1:20-21; 2 Tim. 3:16) and the various civil and religious laws of man? (Acts 5:29). Does one have more binding force than the other? *[write or type your answer below]*

2. An encounter with a Syrophenician woman (Mark 7:24-30)

- ➔ **Note several facts about the location of this story, Tyre, the land and of the Philistines (Isa. 23; Jer. 47:4; Ezek. 26):** *[write or type your answer below]*

- ➔ **What was the woman's request? (vv.25-26):** *[write your answer below]*

- ➔ **Explain Jesus' use of the cultural reference, 'dog' (v. 27):** *[write or type your answer below]*

4. The story of the feeding of the 4000 (Matthew 15:32-39)

- **What are some of the similarities between this story, and the story of Jesus feeding the 5000 in John 6?** *[write or type your answer below]*

- **What are some of the marked differences in the two stories?** *[write or type your answer below]*

5. The Pharisees ask Jesus for a sign (Matthew 16:1-12)

- **Do verses such as Isaiah 35:4-6 and Isaiah 43:7-9 indicate that signs or miracles would accompany the Messiah?** *[write or type your answer below]*

➔ **Review Matthew 16:1 and note the Pharisees' intent:** *[write or type your answer below]*

➔ **Why did Jesus reference Jonah in His response to the Pharisees (v.4)?** *[write or type your answer below]*

6. The healing of the blind man in Bethsaida (Mark 8:22-26)

➔ **Was the blind man in Mark 8 healed immediately, or did the healing unfold as a process?** *[write or type your answer below]*

- ➔ **Does the miracle happening as a process indicate a lapse in Jesus' power or ability?** *[write or type your answer below]*

- ➔ **How does the fact that the miracle in Mark 8 happened as a process apply to believers today?** *[write or type your answer below]*

7. Who is Jesus (Matt. 16:13-20)?

- ➔ **Why did some believe Jesus to be John the Baptist?** *[write or type your answer below]*

- ➔ **How is Peter commended (vv.18-19)?** *[write or type your answer below]*

8. The Transfiguration (Luke 9:28-36)

- ➔ **What is the Transfiguration of Jesus?** *[write or type your answer below]*

- ➔ **How was Jesus' true nature affirmed?** *[write or type your answer below]*

➡ **Why did Moses and Elijah appear?** *[write or type your answer below]*

➡ **Was Peter's suggestion wrong or inappropriate? (v.33):** *[write or type your answer below]*

9. Confronting a demonic presence (Matthew 17)

➡ **Why could the disciples expel demons in Mark 6 but not in Matthew 17?** *[write or type your answer below]*

- **What should believers learn from this story?** *[write or type your answer below]*

SESSION 6

UNDERSTANDING THE DIFFICULT SAYINGS OF JESUS



HARD SAYINGS FROM THE THIRD YEAR OF MINISTRY

Jesus spoke often of the cost of discipleship during His last months of ministry. He called (and calls) His followers to walk a different path and lead a different kind of life than those who do not believe. The New Testament notes that the Lord calls His followers to be sanctified (1 Cor. 1:2). Sanctification is a theological term meaning, *to be set apart*. Jesus communicated this truth in many ways in the months leading up to the cross (through talks, sermons, parables, rebukes, by washing the disciple's feet during the Last Supper, through His sacrifice on the cross, etc.). This session examines some of the difficult but key statements of Jesus which note the high expectations He has for His followers.

1. What is the practical application of the verse noted below?

“If your hand or your foot causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life maimed or crippled than to have two hands or two feet and be thrown into eternal fire. And if your eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into the fire of hell.” Matt. 18:8-9

2. What is the practical application of the verse noted below?

“Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, “Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?” Jesus answered, “I tell you, not seven times, but seventy [times] seven.” Matt. 18:21-22

3. How do the following passages note the divinity of Jesus?

“I tell you the truth,” Jesus answered, “before Abraham was born, I am!” At this, they picked up stones to stone Him.”

John 8:58-59

“‘The Father and I **are one**.’ Again the Jews picked up stones to stone Him...Jesus said... ‘I have shown you many miracles from the Father. For which of these do you stone Me?’ ‘We are not stoning you for any of these,’ replied the Jews, ‘but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, **claim to be God**.’” John 10:31-33

4. In John 9, a man who was born blind is healed by Jesus. When asked about the reason for this man's blindness, Jesus said that the man was blind so that "the work of God might be displayed in his life" (a reference to his encounter with the Messiah). This invites the question: *Why was the man born blind?* Would it not have been more merciful if the man went blind a week or two before he met Jesus? What does this story reveal about God's timing versus our expectations?

"His disciples asked him, 'Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind? Neither this man nor his parents sinned,' said Jesus, 'but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life.'" John 9:2-3

5. The many Old Testament admonitions to honor parents makes Jesus' response to the man's question particularly difficult to understand. What do the commentary notes in the **STORY OF JESUS book reveal about the motive and merit of the man's excuse?**

6. What does the following verse reveal about the expectation Jesus has of His followers?

“Then Jesus said to His disciples, ‘If anyone would come after Me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me.’” Matt. 16:24

7. What do the following verses reveal about individuals being accountable to respond to the truth revealed to them? What does this say about nations such as America where there is freedom, and study resources are readily available?

“Then Jesus began to denounce the towns where He had done so many of His miracles, because they hadn’t repented of their sins and turned to God. ‘What sorrow awaits you, Korazin and Bethsaida! For if the miracles I did in you had been done in wicked Tyre and Sidon, their people would have repented of their sins long ago, clothing themselves in burlap and throwing ashes on their heads to show their remorse. I tell you, Tyre and Sidon will be better off on judgment day than you.’”

Matt. 11:20-22

➡ *[write or type your answer in the text box on the next page]*

8. Satan has dominion over this world (2 Cor. 4:4; 2 Pet. 3:9) until the return of Christ at the end of the Tribulation. What do the following verses note about what believers can expect, and the importance of being spiritually strong and ready?

“Now there were some present at that time who told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices. Jesus answered, ‘Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans because they suffered this way? I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish.’” Luke 13:1-3

SESSION 7

Additional research notes and teacher helps are available in the PowerPoint presentation.



THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY:

Matt. 21:1 “As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage on the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples,

Matt. 21:2 saying to them, “Go to the village ahead of you, and at once you will find a donkey tied there, with her colt by her. Untie them and bring them to Me.

Matt. 21:3 If anyone says anything to you, tell him that ‘the Lord needs them, and he will send them right away.’

Matt. 21:4-5 This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet: “Say to the Daughter of Zion, ‘See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.’”

Matt. 21:6 The disciples went and did as Jesus had instructed them.

Matt. 21:7 They brought the donkey and the colt, placed their cloaks on them, and Jesus sat on them.

Matt. 21:8 A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road.

Matt. 21:9 The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted, “Hosanna to the Son of David!” “Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!” “Hosanna in the highest!”

Matt. 21:10-11 When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, “Who is this?” The crowds answered, “This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee.”

Matt. 21:12 Jesus entered the temple area and drove out all who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves.

Matt. 21:13 “It is written,” He said to them, “‘My house will be called a house of prayer;’ but you are making it a ‘den of robbers.’”

Matt. 21:14-15 The blind and the lame came to Him at the temple, and He healed them. But when the chief priests...saw the wonderful things He did and the children shouting in the temple area, “Hosanna to the Son of David,” they were indignant.

Matt. 21:16 “Do you hear what these children are saying?” they asked Him. “Yes,” replied Jesus, “have you never read, “‘From the lips of children...you have ordained praise’?”

WHAT THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY REVEALS:

1. The **PRESENTATION** of Jesus (John 12:12-15)

- Why is it that Peter and John being sent ahead to secure animals (Matt. 21:1-5) requires a step of faith? *[write or type your answer below]*

- How does the Triumphal Entry and purification of the Temple the fulfillment of the Zechariah 9 and Malachi 3 prophecies. *[write or type your answer below]*

2. How the events of the Triumphal Entry showed Jesus to be a different kind of **KING** (John 12:13b)

- ➔ What is the significance of Jesus riding a donkey, rather than a stallion?

- ➔ What is the significance of the Palm branches?

3. The events of the Triumphal Entry fulfilled **PROPHECY**

- ➔ The fact that there was a donkey and a **COLT** (Matt. 21:2) is the fulfillment of prophecy (see below). **Note your thoughts on the wonder and specific nature of prophecy in the text box below:**
 - » “Rejoice, rejoice...people of Jerusalem! Look, your king is coming to you! He comes triumphant and victorious, but humble and riding on a donkey—on a colt, the foal of a donkey.” (Isa. 62:11)
 - » “...Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, Lowly and riding on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey.” (Zech. 9:9)

4. The Triumphal Entry notes Jesus is **WORTHY** to be praised

- ➔ Note the response of the multitude in the text box below (Matt 21:7-9)

- ➔ The multitude sang/shouted phrases from Psalm 113-118, a passage known as the ‘Great Hallel’...*a passage directly linked to the mission and ministry of the promised Messiah.*
 - » The people shouted, “Hosanna to the Son of David.” What does Hosanna mean?

 - » What is the significance of this phrase the people shouted, “Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord” ?

 - » Was the phrase, “Even the stones will cry out...” (Luke 19:40) an overstatement by Jesus, or an expression of the profound nature of the occasion?

5. The Triumphal Entry notes that the Messiah came to open doors for **THE UNWORTHY**

Note what these references mean to you in the text boxes below each question.

- ➡ Isaiah 56:7 notes that the sanctuary should be a house of prayer.
Question: How can you make prayer more of a priority in your life, or help make the ministry of prayer be more emphasized in your church?

- ➡ Jeremiah 7:11 notes that some would make the Temple a den of robbers.
Is this a reference having a bake sale or car wash on church property?

- ➡ Malachi 3:1 notes that the Messiah would come to His Temple and exercise authority over it. Was this prophecy fulfilled by Jesus on the day of the Triumphal Entry?

SESSION 8

THE OLIVET DISCOURSE

MATTHEW 25-25



UNDERSTANDING MATTHEW 24-25 (Luke 21; Mark 13)

- ➔ The commentary notes in the STORY OF JESUS book notes that Matthew 24-25/Luke 21 is a **response** to the discussion concerning the destruction of the temple in Matthew chapter
- ➔ Matthew chapters 24-25 address the questions: ‘Tell us,’ they said, ‘**When** will this happen, and **what** will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?’” (Matt. 24:3). Some suggest the focus of this discourse is only about the Temple, only about the Rapture, only about the events of the last days, or only about Tribulation period events. What do you think is the focus of this discourse?

THE INFORMATION IN MATTHEW 24-25...

- ➔ Is **NOT** strictly presented in chronological order. **For example, Luke 21:20 follows Luke 21:6.**

- ➔ Has a layered meaning, with primary and secondary focus points (*just as Isa. 14:5-15 and Ezek. 28:1-17 reference both nations and Satan*).

IMPORTANT SCRIPTURE PROMISES

- ➔ 2 Tim 3:16-17 (*All Scripture is inspired and useful*)
- ➔ Prov. 25:2 (*Blessings come to those who search the Scriptures*)

REVIEWING THE TEXT

MATTHEW 24:4-8

- ➔ From Matthew 24:4-8 (and the verses noted below), one can discern:
 - » Satan is the “_____ of this age” (1 Cor. 4:4) and will continue to facilitate unrest until the _____
 - » Jesus said: “In the world, you *will* have _____” (John 16:33). *This is not a possibility, or a probability, but a promise.*

MATTHEW 24:4-13

- ➔ **Prophesied happenings: The decades following the resurrection would be marked by...**
 - » **False Messiahs:** Does Acts 5:36,37 and Acts 21:38 note the fulfillment of this prophecy?
 - » **War:** Does the Roman war against Jerusalem (66-73 AD) fulfillment of this prophecy?

- » **Approximately how many in the world are impacted by famine at this time?**
- » **Who are the #1 persecuted people group this century?**
- » **Signs in the heavens:** Luke 21:25 notes that there will be unusual **signs** in the heavens. **What are some of the unusual celestial happenings since 2012**

MATTHEW 24:21-27: HAPPENINGS ASSOCIATED WITH THE TRIBULATION PERIOD

- ➔ The Lord will come, without notice, and “Rapture” his people away from the toils and pain of this world (1 Thess. 4:16; 1 Cor. 15:51-52). **What is the Rapture?**
- ➔ There will be **great** distress, without **equal** (V.21-22). **Almost 200,000,000 died due to war, famine and genocide in the 20th century; has this prophecy already been fulfilled?**

- ➔ False Christs will deceive with **signs and wonders** (2 Thess. 2:9-10).
Does Satan have power to manifest miracles?

- ➔ The 'abomination that causes desolation' spoken of by Jesus. Paul and Daniel (Daniel 9:26-27; Matthew 24:15; 2 Thessalonians 2:1-4) is a reference to the

- ➔ According to Revelation 3:12, 21, the call is to stand firm to the _____

| **MATTHEW 24:44-46 [THE CHALLENGE]**

- ➔ According to Matthew 15: 1-30, believers are to be **watchful**, wise and

 - ➔ **Remember:**

- Believers are to expect and be ready for the return of the Lord.
Verses 39-41 note the sudden nature of His return: "Two will be
in the field, and one will be left..." (VV.39-41)*

SESSION 9

THE CRUCIFIXION

When Jesus died on the cross, the Temple veil was ‘rent in two’ (Matt. 27:51). This indicates that Jesus removed the barrier (the power of sin) that separated a holy God from sinful humanity.



Many have suggested that the crucifixion was some kind of miscalculation on Jesus’ part. Nothing can be farther from the truth. The willing sacrifice of Jesus was part of God’s perfect plan, referenced in Genesis 3:15, spoken-of by Moses, foreshadowed in the stories of Hosea and Jonah, alluded-to in the Old Testament Festivals of Passover and First Fruits, and specifically detailed by the prophets hundreds of years before Jesus was born. This section profiles Jesus’ awareness of the cross, and the meaning of the cross.

IMPORTANT FACTS

1. Jesus knew what was coming

- ➔ **What does John 16:16 and Luke 22:15 reveal about Jesus’ foreknowledge of His upcoming arrest, crucifixion and resurrection?**

[write or type your answer in the text box below]

- » “In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me.” (John 16:16)
- » “And he said to them, “I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.” (Luke 22:15)

2. God is always in control

- ➔ **What does the arrest of Jesus reveal? (see verses on the next page)**

- » Jesus, **knowing all that was going to happen** to him, went out and asked them, ‘Who is it you want?’ ‘Jesus of Nazareth,’ they replied. ‘I am he,’ Jesus said. (And Judas the traitor was standing there with them). When Jesus said, ‘I am he,’ they drew back and fell to the ground.” (John 18:4-6)
- » “While he was still speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, arrived. With him was a large crowd armed with swords and clubs...” (Matt. 26:47)
- » “Then Simon Peter, who had a sword, drew it and struck the high priest’s servant, cutting off his right ear. (The servant’s name was Malchus).” (John 18:10)
- » “Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels? But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen in this way?” (Matthew 26:53-54)

[write or type your answer in the text box below]

3. Jesus knew who He was

➊ What does the trial reveal about Jesus’ knowledge of who He was and God’s plan? *[write or type your answer in the text box below]*

- » **Jesus before the religious leaders:** “Are you then the Son of God?’ He replied, ‘You are right in saying I am.’” (Luke 22:70)
- » **Jesus before Pilate:** “Jesus stood before the governor, and the governor asked him, ‘Are you the king of the Jews?’ ‘You have said so,” Jesus replied...” (Matthew 27:11)

4. Note the malice and hatred

- ➔ **The following verses note how Satan prompts people to accomplish his will. What do these verse reveal about how Satan feels about Jesus and all who love God.** *[write or type your answer in the text box below]*

- » “The men who were guarding Jesus began mocking and beating him. They blindfolded him and demanded, ‘Prophecy! Who hit you?’” (Luke 22:63-64)
- » “The governor’s soldiers took Jesus into the Praetorium and stripped [Jesus] and put a scarlet robe on him, and then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on his head. They put a staff in his right hand. Then they knelt in front of him and mocked him. ‘Hail, king of the Jews!’ they said. They spit on him, and took the staff and struck him on the head again and again.” (Matt. 27:27-30)
- » “Now it was the governor’s custom at the Feast to release a prisoner chosen by the crowd. So, when the crowd had gathered, Pilate asked them, ‘Which one do you want me to release to you: Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?’ ‘What shall I do, then, with Jesus Who is called Christ?’ Pilate asked. They all answered, ‘Crucify Him!’” (Matthew 27:15, 17, 22)

5. The outcome of the trials

- ➔ **Were the charges against Jesus substantiated during the trials?**

[write or type your answer in the text box below]

- » **The finding of the religious leaders:** “The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for false evidence against Jesus so

that they could put him to death. **But they did not find any**, though many false witnesses came forward.” (Matt. 26:59-60)

- » **Pilate’s Assessment:** “Pilate announced to the chief priests and the crowd, **“I find no basis for a charge** against this man.” (Lk. 23:4)
- » **Herod and Pilate’s Assessment:** “Pilate called together the chief priests, the rulers and the people, and said to them, “You brought me this man as one who was inciting the people to rebellion. I have examined him in your presence and have found no basis for your charges against him. Neither has Herod...” (Lk. 23:13-15a)

6. The crucifixion

- ➔ **Noted below are several prophecies that Jesus fulfilled the day He was crucified. Note: NO prophecy regarding the crucifixion or resurrection was either partially fulfilled or left unfulfilled. Note a few prophecies that Jesus fulfilled that are especially meaningful or amazing to you.**

[write or type your answer in the text box at the end of this section]

- » **This was a spiritual battle:** *“And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He will bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel” (Gen. 3:15).*
- » Jesus Christ was forsaken by His disciples (Zechariah 13:7).
- » Jesus Christ was sacrificed as the Passover Lamb, on the day of Passover (Isaiah 53:7)
- » **Jesus was abused:** *“I gave My back to the smiters and My cheeks to them that plucked off the hair; I did not hide My face from spitting...” (Isaiah 50:6)*
- » Jesus was crucified with sinners (Isa. 53:12)
- » The hands and feet of the Messiah were pierced (Psa. 22:16)

SESSION 10

EVIDENCE FOR THE RESURRECTION



Most believe that Jesus was an actual historical figure, but do not believe that Jesus died on a cross and rose again on the third day. In this section study participants are asked to draw on what they have learned thus far about Jesus the Messiah, and respond to the common questions skeptics have regarding the cross and resurrection.

QUOTE: The probability of one person fulfilling less than have of the prophecies is one in a trillion, trillion, trillion, trillion, trillion, trillion, trillion, trillion, trillion...Equal to the number of atoms in a trillion, trillion, trillion, trillion, billion universes the size of our universe."

- From the Case For Christ by Lee Strobel

COMMON ARGUMENTS, OBJECTIONS, AND CONCERNS REGARDING THE STORY OF THE CROSS AND RESURRECTION AS PRESENTED IN THE GOSPELS:

⊖ **Argument #1: There is NO God or higher power.**

Many voices of influence (educators, movie stars, politicians, etc.) urge individuals to reject belief in God noting that the Gospel narrative is false, or at the very least, should be understood to be allegorical. For example, Dr. Victor J. Stenger, author of *Not By Design*, and Emeritus Professor of Physics and Astronomy at the University of Hawaii promotes the idea of *creation ex nihilo*. This model suggests there is no God, no master design or designer, and that all matter and life sprang forth spontaneously. The idea of matter spontaneously arising

from nothing, and all matter progressively evolving toward higher states of order is contrary to several fundamental laws of physics, but somehow is quickly becoming mainstream thought. ***How can one counter this teaching?***

➤ **Argument #2:** Jesus, by Himself or aided by a group, lived a kind of SCRIPTED LIFE designed to put Him in the right place at the right time to fulfill PROPHECY. ***How can one respond to this charge?***

➤ **Argument #3:** There was no CRUCIFIXION. Those who hold this view often note that crucifixions were usually mass or large group events (the Gospels note that only 3 were crucified on Good Friday), and that typically, Roman leaders in Israel did not schedule crucifixions on or near Hebrew Festivals (the Gospel's note that the crucifixion happened on the day of Passover). Therefore, it is argued, the Gospel narrative must be inaccurate. ***How does one refute this claim?***

[The text box for this question is on the next page]

- **Argument #4:** Jesus was crucified, but did not DIE ON THE CROSS. Within days of the cross, enemies of Christ suggested that the squad of Roman soldiers guarding the tomb of Jesus fell asleep, allowing someone to silently roll the several thousand pound stone that sealed the tomb aside and whisk away the body of Jesus, that was likely laden-down with more than 100 pounds of burial wraps and ointments. Within 150 years of the cross the Greek philosopher Celsus wrote that Jesus was put into a drug-induced coma to simulate death and that “the teachings of Scripture are absurd” (178 AD). The Gnostic Gospel of Barnabas suggests that someone was crucified, but it was not Jesus. The Koran suggests that Jesus was crucified, but never died on the cross. In the 19th century, Karl Bahrdt and Karl Venturini suggested that the Romans crucified Jesus, but when He appeared to be dead, He was removed from the cross and then revived. ***How does one refute these claims?***

➤ **Argument #5:** Jesus died on the cross, but there was **NO RESURRECTION**. Some believe that the account of the crucifixion in the Gospels is accurate, but that the resurrection story is fabricated. The leading schools of thought are 1) Someone other than Jesus was crucified, and his body was burned immediately upon his removal from the cross (as was common in first century Jerusalem) 2) Jesus' body was stolen from the tomb, and reports of his appearance were fabricated. *How does one begin to refute these ideas?*

➤ **Argument #6:** The differing accounts of **RESURRECTION DAY** events proves the biblical record has errors, contradicts itself, and therefore should not be held in high regard. A proponent of this view, Dr. Michael Martin, Professor Emeritus of Boston University wrote, "In summary, the accounts of what happened at the tomb are either inconsistent or can only be made consistent with the aid of implausible interpretations." *What can be said in response to the variance in Gospel accounts?*

SUMMARY

- ➔ Believe (Romans 10:9-10)
- ➔ Acknowledge (Rom. 3:23)
- ➔ Confess (1 John 1:9)
- ➔ Give God your heart (Prov. 23:26; Matt. 22:37)
- ➔ Obey (1 John 5:3, 13:17)
- ➔ Live a life worthy of your calling (Eph. 4:1)

RECOMMENDED READING:

- ➔ New Evidence That Demands A Verdict by Josh McDowell
- ➔ The Case For Faith by Lee Strobel
- ➔ The Case For Christ by Lee Strobel
- ➔ The Case For The Resurrection by G. Habermas & M. Licona
- ➔ A Ready Defense by Josh McDowell
- ➔ When Skeptics Ask by Geisler Brooks

EPILOGUE

The story of Jesus does not begin with the Gospels—it begins in Genesis, and is announced in the first prophecy in the Bible (Genesis 3:15). There God reveals His perfect plan to redeem humanity by sending a Savior. Jesus Christ is the expression and fulfillment of God's plan to overcome evil and offer salvation to humanity.

The Gospels note how Jesus demonstrated the love of God (John 3:16; Romans 5:8), and how He commissions (Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:8) all who believe to carry-on His work. The book of Acts and New Testament Epistles and Pastoral Letters profile how to live-out the 'Great Commission' challenge believers have received.

Studies show that believers in the early New Testament Church actively lived-out their faith. By the end of the second century A.D., more than 1,000,000 individuals had come to faith in Christ, and more than 80,000 died as martyrs. By the end of the fourth century A.D., more than 35,000,000 had come to faith, and approximately 1,950,000 died for it.

Jesus said that the cost of discipleship is high (Matthew 16:24-26). The calling is not for the curious, but for the truly committed. Yes, there are blessings in this life, and unimaginable rewards await the faithful in the age to come. However, believers must expect trials and tribulations and be prepared to overcome. Disciples of Christ are to be strong and brave. Disciples are to be the salt and light in a darkened world. Disciples are to have hope and share hope. Disciples are to be learners, and willing to share what they learn with others. Believing in Christ is good, but there is more. The challenge is to be a true disciple of Jesus Christ.

On the next pages (and in this teaching video on the topic of salvation: <https://vimeo.com/260646426>) you will find information on How To Become A Christian. Do not delay in making the most important decision a person can make—to become a faithful follower of Jesus Christ. Contact the I Am A Watchman ministry team through the contact portal on the IAmAWatchman.com website if you have any questions, would like to share a prayer request, or to share your decision to be ALL IN for Him.

GOD BLESS YOU AS YOU GROW IN HIM!

HOW TO BECOME A CHRISTIAN



Noted below is a simple, four-step plan to receive Christ as your Lord and Savior.. Some refer to this process as being saved (1 John 2:2; Acts 4:12) or born again (see John 3:3 and 2 Cor. 5:17). Born-again believers are disciples and followers of Christ. The courageous identify as Watchmen (see Ezek. 33:1-9). Those who believe in Jesus Christ, are saved by Jesus Christ; they are forgiven of their sins and assured of eternal life in heaven.

Additional information on the subject of salvation follows this simple four-step outline. **A link to a 20-minute video teaching on this vital topic is noted below:** <https://vimeo.com/260646426>

FOUR STEPS TO SALVATION:

1. **Acknowledge that you have sinned and that God has not been first place in your life** and ask Him to forgive your sins:
 - ➔ “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from every wrong.” (John 1:9)

2. **Believe that Jesus died to pay (atone) for your sins** and that He rose again and is alive today.
 - ➔ “If you confess that Jesus is your Lord, and you believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.” (Romans 10:9)
 - ➔ “Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name [Jesus] by which we must be saved.” (Acts 4:12)

3. Accept God's gift of salvation

- ➔ "For it is by *grace* you are saved, through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast." (Ephesians 2:8-9)
- ➔ Note: Restoring our relationship with God is not facilitated by anything we do, but by what Jesus already did for us!

4. Ask Jesus Christ to come into your heart and be Lord of your life.

- ➔ "To all who receive Him, He gives the right to become children of God." (John 1:2)
- ➔ [Jesus said] "Listen! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in." (Revelation 3:20)

You can begin a new life in the faith by praying a simple prayer of commitment to God. A sample prayer is noted below:

"Dear Jesus. Thank you for making me and loving me (even when I've ignored you and went my own way). I realize I need You in my life, I'm sorry for my sins, and I ask You to forgive me. Thank you for dying for me on the cross so that my sins can be forgiven. Please help me to understand Your love and Your Word. Help me to learn more about who You are and Your will for my life. As much as I know how, I want to follow You from now on. Please come into my life and make me a new person. I accept Your gift of salvation, and pledge to live for You and tell others about You."

THANK YOU JESUS!

WHAT EVERY BELIEVER SHOULD DO



Many ask: “What do I do now that I have committed to be a follower and disciple of Christ? What are the best next steps?” Noted below are five suggestions.

The *next* chapter profiles what the highly committed disciple (*the Watchman*) should keep in mind and pursue. **The FREE resources on the www.IAmAWatchman.com website will help you on your spiritual journey. But first, here’s an overview of What every believer/disciple should DO.**

1. **Join a good, evangelical, Bible-teaching church:** When looking for a church, do not be unduly influenced by congregation size, building design, or professional music, drama and preaching presentations. Look for heart. Look to see if the people love each other. Discern whether or not the staff are good teachers and shepherds. Ask for information about church goals, study opportunities, beliefs, and missions involvement. Determine if staff teach and preach in a way that communicates the need to be prepared for the imminent return of the Lord. If this book is being read after the Rapture, be sure the church or small group you attend understands what has happened, and desires to be study Scripture to understand what prophecy notes will happen next. Ask to meet with a Pastor, Elder, or Deacon to discuss the church vision, how the church can be a blessing to you, and how you can be a blessing to the church.

2. **Join a small group.** The Bible Disciple-making ministry notes that some of the benefits of sharing in a small group include:
 - ➔ **You will begin to feel like part of God’s family:** It is easy to get lost in a crowd—to go to church and worship but stay invisible and anonymous. Meeting with a small group of fellow believers provides an opportunity to build relationships. It also provides the opportunity to share, learn, pray with and for others, and walk with others on your spiritual journey. When you are connected to fellow believers, you are part of a family and never stand alone.

- ➔ **You will grow faster spiritually in a group than alone:** The Word notes that we have been “predestined to become conformed to the image of Christ” (Rom. 8:29). Spiritual growth involves life change. Life change is optimized in the context of a small group. 2 Timothy 2:22 teaches that we are to “run after” godly character and “run away” from the passions of youth. This verse instructs us not to do this alone but “with those who call upon the Lord from a pure heart.” It’s always easier to exercise, physically or spiritually, in a group rather than alone (1 Timothy 4:7b).
- ➔ **You will not have to go through struggles alone:** It’s not only possible but probable that you could walk into and out of large group (worship) events with hurts, heartaches, and questions, but never connect with someone who will show an interest in you or identify with your difficulty. Many think their struggles are unique, but in a small group setting, it becomes clear that most struggles are universal. It’s encouraging to find that members of your group have not only struggled with common problems but have also found helpful solutions in God’s Word (1 Corinthians 10:13).
- ➔ **Pray, Pray, Pray:** Many are hesitant to pray in front of others, especially in a large group setting. In a small group of 6-12, you will learn to participate in prayer by having a conversation together with God. As you see prayer modeled by others you know, you will become more comfortable joining in prayer. It is good to pray for one another—it is even better to pray with one another.
- ➔ **You will understand the Bible better:** Have you ever listened to a message at a worship service and wanted to stop the speaker and ask, “But what about....?” If so, then a small group is for you. The message presented in a worship service is one-way communication. You listen while the speaker speaks. It’s fine for imparting knowledge, but not as effective for personal application. In a small group setting, you can ask questions, participate in a discussion of the text, and hear others share their insights. The truth in the Bible is practical, timeless, and designed to be applied to our everyday lives—participation in a small group helps individuals know how that is possible.

3. Develop your personal prayer life: Many have busy schedules and hesitate to schedule something new—particularly a new time commitment every day. However, prayer is not only important, it is essential. Jesus prayed constantly and encouraged his disciples to pray. Paul noted that believers are to “pray without ceasing” (1 Thess. 5:17). A great evangelist once said, “I have so much to do today, it would be impossible for me not to pray.” That’s a proper mindset. A few suggestions to help you develop a meaningful daily prayer time are noted below:

- ➔ **Schedule it:** For many, if it’s not on the schedule it doesn’t get done. It may take some time to get into a routine, but the benefit of setting aside this time will become clear.
- ➔ **Seek out a prayer partner:** This needs to be a confidant who will pray for you and with you—someone who will encourage you and challenge you. Pray with and for this person about specific needs. Keep a list of your prayer needs. Follow-up with your prayer partner to let them know you are praying for their needs. Follow-up with your prayer partner to let them know how God is working in your life. Be positive, be encouraging, and be perseverant. Ask church leadership to pair you with a prayer partner if one is not apparent.
- ➔ **Keep a prayer journal:** Note when you began praying for the specific needs, and when/how God moves. Review your prayer journal often and rejoice in seeing how God moves to answer specific requests.

4. Plan to give: Christian stewardship is the mark of Christian maturity. When believers give, believers receive. “God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Cor. 9:7). A few suggestions are noted below:

- ➔ Make a plan to provide regular financial support for God’s work. Note: there is a chapter on Christian Stewardship in this book, and articles on Christian finances on the iamaWatchman.com website.
- ➔ Ask for a copy of your church budget and familiarize yourself with church finances.
- ➔ Give cheerfully, regularly, and generously. Give your time, talent, resources, and finances.

- ➔ Rejoice in being able to support mission and outreach efforts through the local church. Seek God’s leading regarding providing above-and-beyond support (funds, time, encouragement) to address particular needs and ministry projects.
- ➔ Remember, God expects His people to be good and faithful stewards of the resources He entrusts to them (Luke 14:13-14; Matthew 25:14-30). Ask God to help you do what He desires you to do.

5. Read and study the Word: Titus 2:15 notes that disciples are to study and “rightly handle” (understand and share) Scripture. Acts 17:11 notes that the Bereans (a small group of believers living in Berea) were commended for their diligence in studying the Word. Acts 2:42 records that the early church committed themselves to learn from the Apostles. It honors God when His people strive to learn what the Word says, how to share it, and how to incorporate it into a daily walk. A few suggestions are noted below:

- ➔ Take notes during sermon and teaching times. Write down important points and questions. Follow-up with spiritually mature individuals.
- ➔ Write down your questions as you read—share these with a staff member or Small Group/Bible Study teacher.
- ➔ Consider purchasing a STUDY BIBLE—A Bible that has study/commentary notes on each page of the text. This will aid in understanding difficult passages.
- ➔ Listen to good Bible Study Teachers online, on TV, and/or radio. Church leadership may be able to share recommendations.
- ➔ Establish a Bible reading routine. Read for a certain number of minutes at a regular time each day.

THE STORY OF

JESUS

According to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John

iAMAWATCHMAN.com



About this author: Gary Ray is a student of the Word. He has served in pastoral ministry for 30 years and currently serves as President of the *I Am A Watchman* ministry.

He is a lifelong learner, knows and appreciates the grace of God, and enjoys speaking and writing about what God has done, and what He is going to do

About this booklet: This booklet is one part of a four-part study resource titled, *The Story of Jesus Study*. The four parts of this study resource are: a 320 page Story of Jesus book, an 76 page Story of Jesus Bible Study Leader's Guide, this 88 page Story of Jesus Bible Study Student Booklet, and a 10-part PowerPoint file teaching resource. These, and many other discipleship resources, are available through the www.lamaWatchman.com website.

Individuals who complete the 10-week study will reflect on what Jesus said, be encouraged by what He promised, and be challenged by reviewing what He expects of His followers.

Please visit the www.IAmAWatchman.com website to view our library of inspirational and informative videos, articles, and teaching kits, or to learn more about the Rapture Kit ministry.

God bless you as you grow in Him!

