



# *following* **JESUS**



## **STUDY GUIDE**

# WEEK ONE - September 12

## "You're Invited"

following  
JESUS

### Matthew 9:9-13

*As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth. "Follow me," he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him. 10 While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house, many tax collectors and "sinners" came and ate with him and his disciples. 11 When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and 'sinners'?" 12 On hearing this, Jesus said, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. 13 But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners." (NIV)*

Many religions will say, "Change and you can join us." Jesus' invitation, however, is "Join us and you will change." When we begin to get closer to Jesus-followers and try to follow Jesus ourselves, we notice over time we begin to change and become a disciple. Jesus' invitation to the tax collector Matthew to "follow me" was met with confusion and concern—because Jesus asked a tax-collecting sinner to be a part of His ministry. And then had the audacity to eat a meal with other tax-collecting sinners. But Jesus knew it was within the context of community that change can take place. So Jesus invited Matthew—and Jesus invites YOU to join the community and begin to change—not to change first, and then join the community.

#### KEY POINTS

As we come to look at, consider, and get in touch with this passage, there are some key points for us to take to heart:

#### **1. Jesus invites anyone to follow Him.**

Matthew 9:9 *"As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth. "Follow me," he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him."*

Jesus calls Matthew—a tax collector—to follow Him. He has called people before—like two sets of brothers who were fishermen on the Sea of Galilee—but the call of Matthew sends a powerful signal to the crowds surrounding Jesus. Matthew's name tells us he was a Jew. He's described as a tax collector. So—he's a Jewish tax-collector—a person who's purchased the right to charge and collect taxes from his fellow countrymen for Rome. Among the careers Jewish parents did not want their sons to pursue were tanner, shepherd, and tax collector—with tax collector being the worst. Tax collectors were hated, they were despised, and they were deemed unclean. In spite of all this, Jesus calls Matthew the tax collector to come and follow Him. This is a reminder to any and all of us—we don't have to be perfect to follow a perfect Savior. Jesus calls us from where we are, and as we are, to follow Him. He accepts us as we are as He forgives and restores us. We then spend the rest of our lives changing our hearts, minds, and lives to be more and more like Him.

- What does it mean to you that Jesus invites anyone to follow Him?
- How does this impact you personally?
- How does this impact how you look at others?

## **2. Jesus wants to meet our friends.**

Matthew 9:10 *"While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house, many tax collectors and 'sinners' came and ate with him and his disciples."*

That evening, after Matthew has responded to the call to follow Jesus, he hosts a dinner party for his friends. So, who does the most despised man in town invite to dinner? Other sinners and tax collectors, of course. There is nothing more contagious than a new follower of Jesus. When we initiate our relationship with Jesus, one of the first things we want to do is to introduce Him to all of our friends. We want them to experience Jesus, too! We need to make sure we don't miss the point here that Jesus ate with them—which was scandalous to some—but it also reminds to us Jesus came for everyone.

- How committed are we to introducing our family, friends, co-workers and those we encounter to Jesus?
- What are some obstacles that get in the way?

## **3. Sometimes "religion" gets in the way of "relationship."**

Matthew 9:11-13 *"When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, 'Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and 'sinners'?' "On hearing this, Jesus said, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. 13 But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."*

The call of Matthew to follow Jesus would certainly have raised some eyebrows, but the scene of Jesus and His disciples eating with sinners and tax collectors was enough to make the Pharisees' heads explode! To be fair, they were acting out of their religious convictions and understanding that eating with this crowd would disqualify them from going to the temple—because they would be considered unclean. What we find is their "religion" had become so legalistic, it made "relationship" with those whom needed God the most, sinful. Their understanding of what would please God was far removed from the heart of God.

Jesus hears their comments and responds. He shares with them healthy people don't need a doctor—but the sick do. Jesus wants them to understand He is with the people He needs to be with—addressing the sickness of their soul. Jesus shifts the focus back on them and asks them to ponder what a quote from Hosea 6:6 means: *"I desire mercy and not sacrifice."*

Again, the Pharisees had their “religious” commitments down—their sacrifices were perfect—but they missed the point. A person who is forgiven is to be gracious, forgiving, and merciful to those who are not. In the end, we have to wonder who was more “sick”—the sinners and tax collectors whose imperfect “religion” was being sanctified in the presence of Jesus—or the Pharisees whose perfect “religion” missed the point of extending mercy to those who were not perfect.

The call is for all of us to take whatever the next step needs to be in order to follow Jesus. If we’ve lived our life far away from God, Jesus did not come to offer us religion, He came to offer us relationship—and today, He invites each of us to follow Him and introduce Him to our friends. He gives us the assurance that He will accept us as we are and lovingly change our heart, mind, and life. Jesus came to offer you relationship—and for you to offer that relationship to anyone and everyone.

- Are there times when we allow our “religion” to get in the way of our relationship with others—especially those we see as being outside our religious circle? Can you share a time when you allowed this to happen or when you observed it?
- What did it feel like?
- What are some ways we can begin to open our circle to include all God’s people?
- Who do you know who needs to be introduced to Jesus?
- How can the group pray for you and that person(s)?

## **RESPOND**

As you think about this entire passage of scripture, respond to the following:

**H (Highlight):** What would you highlight in this passage? What do you hear God saying to you?

**E (Explain):** How would you explain the meaning of this passage to another?

**A (Apply):** How can you apply this passage to your relationship with God and your faith journey?

**R (Respond):** What response do you sense the Holy Spirit is calling you to make? What will be your response?

## WEEK TWO – September 19

### "Give It a Try"

following  
JESUS

### Luke 5:1-11

*One day as Jesus was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret, with the people crowding around him and listening to the word of God, 2 he saw at the water's edge two boats, left there by the fishermen, who were washing their nets. 3 He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little from shore. Then he sat down and taught the people from the boat. 4 When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch." 5 Simon answered, "Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets." 6 When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break. 7 So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them, and they came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink. 8 When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, "Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!" 9 For he and all his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken, 10 and so were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, Simon's partners. Then Jesus said to Simon, "Don't be afraid; from now on you will catch men." 11 So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him. (NIV)*

#### KEY POINTS

As we come to look at, consider, and get in touch with this passage, there are some key points for us to take to heart:

#### 1. Following Jesus begins with listening and learning.

*Luke 5:1-2 One day as Jesus was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret, with the people crowding around him and listening to the word of God, 2 he saw at the water's edge two boats, left there by the fishermen, who were washing their nets.*

Jesus spent most of His ministry in and around the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee near Capernaum. As Jesus taught and healed His way from town to town, He developed quite a reputation—and we find the crowds flocking to see Him. Jesus taught with grace and with an authority they did not see from the other rabbis or teachers of the law in their day. As Jesus taught, people listened. As He shared information, people heard it and took it to heart. Listening and learning is the doorway—the entry point to following Jesus. While information is good, it is not enough—just as right beliefs are not enough. We need to understand at some point they must be applied in life. There needs to be the connection between head and heart. When this happens, information then leads to transformation.

- What tends to get in the way of the connection of head and heart – of moving from information to transformation?
- What are some ways you have found that help you apply what you have learned as well as your beliefs to your every day life?

## 2. Following Jesus begins right where you are.

*Luke 5:3 He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little from shore. Then he sat down and taught the people from the boat.*

While Jesus was speaking to the crowd in front of Him, Simon and the other fisherman were busy working behind Him. They'd been out all night without catching anything and were washing and mending their nets. The crowd was pressing in, and Jesus stepped into the boat and asked Simon to push out so He could teach from the boat—and Simon complies. This was the first step in Simon's journey that would transform him from Simon to Peter—from fisherman to fisher of men—and from just a guy to the apostle upon whom Jesus would build His church. It started in a dock—just like any other day in his life. That's the way Jesus often works in our lives—by beginning right where we are.

- What does it mean to you that Jesus meets you right where you are?
- How might we share Jesus with others differently if we met them where they are?

## 3. Following Jesus asks you to do what you know differently.

*Luke 5:4-5 When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch." 5 Simon answered, "Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets."*

After Jesus is done teaching, He turns to Peter and asks him to take the next step. Jesus asks Peter to push out into the deep water and put his nets down for a catch. Peter complains they'd just finished working all night long without catching a thing, but he'll do what Jesus has asked him to do. Some of us have been in church all our lives and have well-worn patterns of how we relate to God. And then we hear Jesus tell us to do the same thing we've always done in a different way, and it makes a world of difference. An illustration of this would be to shift from a pattern of discipleship that informs us to one that results in transformation.

- Can you think of a time when Jesus asked you to do the same thing you have always done, but now in a new way?
- Can you share what that was? What was it like?



- What do you sense God is calling you to do in a new way to make a difference for Him and His Kingdom?
- How can the group help?

#### 4. Following Jesus leads to good things for you and others.

*Luke 5:6-7 When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break. 7 So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them, and they came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink.*

Simon and the other fisherman let down their nets, and they suddenly teem with a catch of fish so large it's in danger of sinking their boat. We find them calling to their fishing partners (the sons of Zebedee) on the shore to come and help. This becomes a reminder, when we follow Jesus, He will do exceedingly, abundantly more than we could ever imagine.

- What are some ways following Jesus has led to His doing exceedingly, abundantly more than you could have ever imagined?
- Can you share some examples?

#### 5. Following Jesus reveals who you are...the bad and the good.

*Luke 5:8-10a When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, "Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!" 9 For he and all his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken, 10 and so were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, Simon's partners.*

Simon—as well as all who were with him, including James and John—were astonished at what Jesus had done. We find Simon falling to his knees as he becomes aware of his sinfulness in the presence of Jesus. His conviction is clear and real, and he wants to hide himself from God's presence. When we come face to face with who Jesus is and what Jesus does, especially compared to our "performance," we experience conviction and guilt. When we are confronted with God's holiness and perfection alongside our sinfulness and imperfection, we want to run—but that is just the time Jesus leans in and says, "Follow me..."

- Can you relate to Simon and his initial reaction as he finds himself in the presence of Jesus?
- What does it mean to you to know that, even with your imperfections, Jesus still says, "Follow me?"

## 6. Following Jesus allows you to use what you know for good.

Luke 5:10b-11 *Then Jesus said to Simon, "Don't be afraid; from now on you will catch men." 11 So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him.*

Jesus agrees to take Simon, James, and John as they are and retool them to fish for people. God takes who and what we are and uses it to show and share His love in the world.

- What does being retooled by Jesus mean to you?
- How has Jesus "retooled" you for His use in the Kingdom?

### **RESPOND**

As you think about this entire passage of scripture, respond to the following:

**H (Highlight):** What would you highlight in this passage? What do you hear God saying to you?

**E (Explain):** How would you explain the meaning of this passage to another?

**A (Apply):** How can you apply this passage to your relationship with God and your faith journey?

**R (Respond):** What response do you sense the Holy Spirit is calling you to make? What will be your response?



## WEEK THREE – September 26

### "There's a Cost"

following  
JESUS

#### Mark 8:27-37

*Jesus and his disciples went on to the villages around Caesarea Philippi. On the way he asked them, "Who do people say I am?" 28 They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets." 29 "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" Peter answered, "You are the Christ." 30 Jesus warned them not to tell anyone about him. 31 He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again. 32 He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. 33 But when Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, he rebuked Peter. "Get behind me, Satan!" he said. "You do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men." 34 Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. 35 For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it. 36 What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul? (NIV)*

#### KEY POINTS

As we come to look at, consider, and get in touch with this passage, there are some key points for us to take to heart:

##### 1. Jesus invites us to walk with Him.

Mark 8:27a *Jesus and his disciples went on to the villages around Caesarea Philippi.*

To be a disciple meant "to walk in the dust" of the rabbi—meaning to walk so closely with the teacher on the road that the dust he kicked up coated their clothes. Jesus invites His disciples to walk with Him and allow the dust of His teaching to cover our lives.

- What does it mean to you to walk with Jesus?
- What are some ways to be intentional in doing so?

##### 2. All kinds of people have opinions about Jesus.

Mark 8:27-28 *Jesus and his disciples went on to the villages around Caesarea Philippi. On the way he asked them, "Who do people say I am?" 28 They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets."*

Jesus asked, "Who do the people say I am?" The disciples had their ears to the ground and knew the popular opinions about their rabbi/master. They tell Jesus, "Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and still others one of the prophets."

Today, there are still a host of beliefs as to who is Jesus—a prophet, a good moral person, a myth, the Son of God, the second person of the Trinity—and the list goes on.

- Why do you suppose there are so many different beliefs and opinions as to who Jesus is?
- How might you help others understand who Jesus is? What would you say to them?

### **3. Your opinion of Jesus is all that matters—to Jesus.**

Mark 8:29-30 *"But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" Peter answered, "You are the Christ." 30 Jesus warned them not to tell anyone about him.*

When we understand who Jesus is, it becomes a game changer. Jesus asks the disciples the most important question that can be asked of any person: "Who do you say that I am?" Simon answers without hesitation, "You are the Messiah." In Matthew's account of this story in chapter 16, Simon calls him the Christ—the Anointed one—the Messiah. Jesus says to him, "Blessed are you Simon Son of John for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my father who is in heaven. From now on, you will be called Peter (rock) because on this rock I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Simon's answer to this question changes his identity. The same holds true for us when we answer this question for ourselves by faith—Jesus changes our identity.

- Who do you say Jesus is?
- What does it mean to you to allow Jesus to change your identity?
- What are the challenges you face in living out that new identity?

### **4. Following Jesus is not always easy as it means we need to die to our agenda.**

Mark 8:31-33 *He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again. 32 He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. 33 But when Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, he rebuked Peter. "Get behind me, Satan!" he said. "You do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men."*

When Peter declares Jesus is the Messiah, Jesus is as far north as He can be and still be in Israel. From this point on, Jesus turns His face and heads toward Jerusalem and the cross that is waiting for Him. Up until now, every time Jesus showed up, a crowd had gathered—but as Jesus heads toward Jerusalem, the crowds get smaller and smaller. Jesus shares what's coming, but Peter—the Rock upon whom Jesus is going to build His Church—begins to object.

Peter didn't quite understand exactly what kind of Messiah Jesus is going to be, and Jesus begins to rebuke him. This won't be the last time Peter will put his foot in his mouth. At the Mount of Transfiguration, Peter's refusal to let Jesus wash his feet and the rash promise he made that he would never desert Jesus, we find Peter always getting ahead of Jesus and allowing his agenda to get in the way. Jesus rebukes him because Peter had to learn to die to his agenda. It was important this happened if Peter was ever going to be all God created him to be. The same is true for us as well.

- In what ways do we allow our agendas to get in the way of God's agenda?
- How do you see this getting in the way of the transformation God wants to bring about in your life?
- What do you need to die to?
- How might the group help you?

## 5. Following Jesus is costly.

Mark 8:34-36 *Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. 35 For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it. 36 What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul?"*

There is a cost to following Jesus—because this isn't about being a consumer, but rather it's about being a follower. Here Jesus reveals "the fine print" of what it means to follow Him and to be called a disciple. It requires denying yourself, carrying a cross, and continuing to follow Jesus through it all—both the good times and bad. Salvation is free, but discipleship is costly. Jesus then reveals a truth...we all know life ends no matter how hard we work or how much we accumulate over time. But Jesus knows when we follow Him, we will have life always. So there's a cost, but it's worth it in the end.

- Do you think we take seriously the cost of following Jesus?
- What tends to get in the way?
- What are you doing to tend your soul?
- What do you hear God saying to you?
- How can the group help?

## **RESPOND**

As you think about this entire passage of scripture, respond to the following:

**H (Highlight):** What would you highlight in this passage? What do you hear God saying to you?

**E (Explain):** How would you explain the meaning of this passage to another?

**A (Apply):** How can you apply this passage to your relationship with God and your faith journey?

**R (Respond):** What response do you sense the Holy Spirit is calling you to make? What will be your response?

## WEEK FOUR – October 3

### "Time to Multiply"

following  
JESUS

#### Acts 1:3-14

After his suffering, he showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God. 4 On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. 5 For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit." 6 So when they met together, they asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?"

7 He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. 8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." 9 After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. 10 They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. 11 "Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven."

12 Then they returned to Jerusalem from the hill called the Mount of Olives, a Sabbath day's walk from the city. 13 When they arrived, they went upstairs to the room where they were staying. Those present were Peter, John, James and Andrew; Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew; James son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. 14 They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers. (NIV)

After learning from Jesus, experiencing the presence of Jesus, and being with a community for a while, it's time to multiply and reach out to others. Jesus gives us a blueprint for what this can look like. We begin where we are and branch out from there. The text begins with just the disciples. At the end, the disciples are gathering with themselves and with Jesus' family. Following Jesus doesn't involve staying in the same place with the same people forever. Following Jesus involves being with Jesus, multiplying and expanding out with others, and inviting others to join.

## KEY POINTS

As we come to look at, consider, and get in touch with this passage, there are some key points for us to take to heart:

### 1. We never stop learning and growing.

*Acts 1:3 After his suffering, he showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God.*

Jesus had invested three years in His followers—calling them to follow Him, inviting them to try new things, and explaining the cost of discipleship. Each day was a further invitation to go deeper and deeper into the life of grace. Just when they might have begun understanding, Jesus was crucified, died, and placed in a tomb. In that moment, it seemed as if hatred had triumphed over grace, despair over hope, and death over life. But everything changed on Resurrection Day. Hatred, despair, and death did not get the last word—grace does—hope does—life does. After the resurrection, Jesus spent 40 days proving His resurrection and teaching His disciples about the Kingdom of God—but Jesus was still limited by time and space, and for God to do all that was possible through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, the Son had to return to the Father.

- Do you think we seek to grow in our faith and understanding of God's Word or do we allow ourselves to slip into complacency?
- What are some ways we can continue to learn and grow?
- What steps do you need to take to do so?

### 2. Jesus promises us the Holy Spirit.

*Acts 1:4-5 On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. 5 For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."*

Jesus had to return to heaven so the Holy Spirit—not limited by time, space, or a human body—could be everywhere and in everyone at once. The ascension and return of Jesus were coming soon, and His instructions to the disciples were not to leave Jerusalem until they've received the gift of the Holy Spirit.

- What does the promise of the Holy Spirit mean to you?
- What does the promise of the Holy Spirit mean to the body of Christ – the church?
- Do you think we look for the Holy Spirit's presence in our midst with eager expectation?
- Do you think we are open to following the Holy Spirit's leading?

### 3. We sometimes focus on the wrong things.

*Acts 1:6-8 So when they met together, they asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" 7 He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. 8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."*

Instead of paying attention to what Jesus just said, the disciples ask a question that makes it seem like they weren't listening the last 40 days—as they want to know if Jesus is going to restore Israel. God was about so much more than redeeming Israel in Jesus. He was saving the world. Here they are totally missing what Jesus is telling them. Now, before we are too hard on them, don't we have to admit we sometimes focus on the wrong things? Aren't we guilty at times of being concerned about what we want instead of being focused on the Kingdom agenda Jesus wants for our lives? Sometimes, we become so concerned about our wants, our needs, our creature comforts, and acting like consumers we forget about God's wants, God's desires, and what God needs us to do for Him with our lives. We find Jesus refocuses them and reminds them of the power they'll receive from the Holy Spirit to be His witnesses. Jesus wants us to know as well the same Holy Spirit seeks to empower us in order to be His witnesses as well.

- What are some things that tend to distract us from being about God's agenda?
- What are you doing in your life to connect you more deeply with God and His perspective for your life?
- How might the group help?

### 4. We need to do what Jesus asks in order to receive all Jesus promises.

*Acts 1:9-14 After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. 10 They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. 11 "Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven." 12 Then they returned to Jerusalem from the hill called the Mount of Olives, a Sabbath day's walk from the city. 13 When they arrived, they went upstairs to the room where they were staying. Those present were Peter, John, James and Andrew; Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew; James son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. 14 They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.*



After Jesus ascends to heaven, and the disciples are straining to see Him in the clouds, two angels remind them to stop looking to the sky and remember the promise that Jesus will come again. They return to Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives, replace Judas with Mathias, and begin to pray. It appears the primary design for the spreading of the Kingdom was in a small group of Jesus-followers who sought God together. They would spend the next ten days in a small group praying for what Jesus promised. The multiplication of the movement of the church would be birthed ten days later on Pentecost, but it began in a small group—in the upper room—pleading for the Spirit Jesus promised.

- Why do you think a small group of believers meeting together is important?
- What do you hear God saying to you as a small group?
- How might you be used for the sake of the Kingdom?

## **RESPOND**

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