



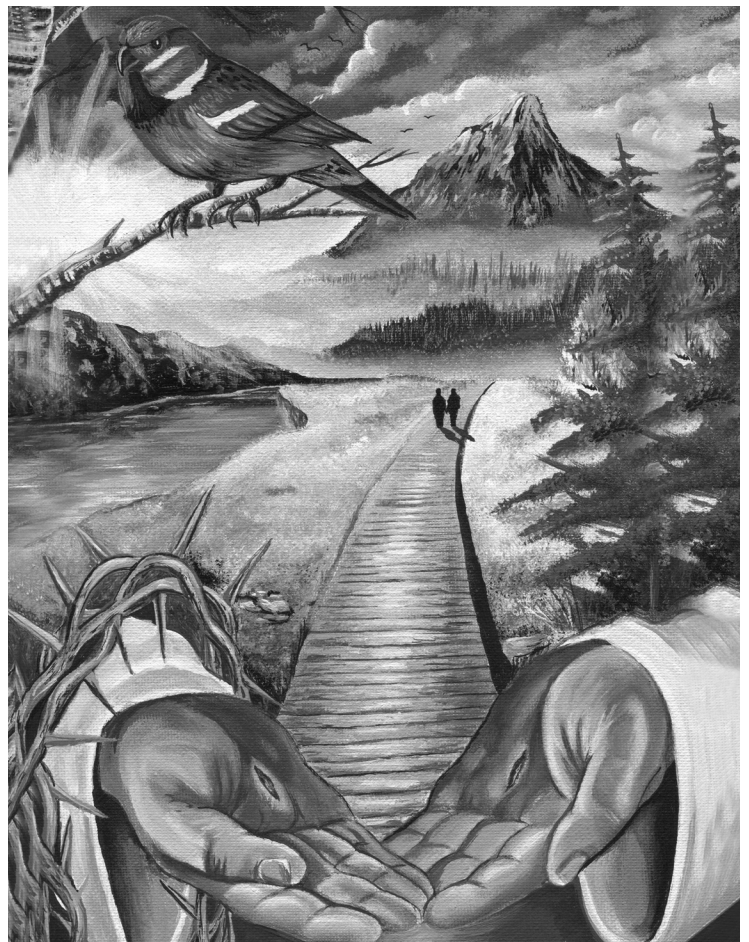
# WHO IS JESUS?

## LESSON 3: The Journey to Jerusalem

### Lesson Focus:

**Jesus' teachings show us what is important in God's Kingdom.**

The book of Luke began by describing the birth of Jesus. It introduced Jesus as the Son of God. Then, as Jesus started His ministry, God announced that Jesus was the King and Messiah He had promised to send. God also showed the disciples who Jesus really was: a mighty prophet and God Himself in human form on earth.



**Artwork by Vincent M., former Crossroads student**

After all of those things happened, Jesus and His disciples left Galilee and began traveling to Jerusalem. They planned to join thousands of Israelites to celebrate the ancient feast of Passover\* at God's temple in the city.

While they traveled, Jesus taught important things to everyone they met along the way. He showed people what His Kingdom looked like. He ate with both sinners\* and religious leaders. He taught people that loving God meant loving the people around them too. Jesus' journey to Jerusalem with His disciples showed the world who He was and what was important to God.

1. Which of Jesus' teachings are you most familiar with?

It was a long journey to Jerusalem, and Jesus and the disciples did not go directly there. They stopped in many small towns along the way. Jesus sent His disciples ahead to prepare each new place for His visit. In every town they visited, Jesus announced the good news of His Kingdom and invited people to follow Him. He also healed people and performed amazing miracles, like raising people from the dead. He taught people how to live

\* An asterisk after a word or phrase indicates that it is defined in the Glossary of Terms on page 7.

completely new lives. He challenged them to change their greed\* into generosity\* and their anger into forgiveness. He told them to welcome outsiders and to follow God's greatest commandments:\* "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. Love him with all your strength and with all your mind.' And, 'Love your neighbor as you love yourself'" (Luke 10:27).

These two commandments were given by God hundreds of years ago and written in the Old Testament. Jesus taught the people what it meant to truly follow them.



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2. What do you think it looks like to love God with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind?

3. What do you think it means to love your neighbor as you love yourself?



Notes/Questions

## Loving Your Neighbor

Not everyone who heard Jesus' message understood what God's greatest commandments meant. So, Jesus told a parable.\* It was a story about a good Samaritan\* (suh-MEHR-ih-tuhn).

Read **Luke 10:25–37**.

4. Write what happened in the story in your own words:

Samaritans were not usually thought of as good examples or heroes by people in Israel. Samaritans were people who had left Israel and started their own nation. They created their own religious laws and stopped worshiping God in His temple.

The Israelites and Samaritans often argued about who was truly following God. They hated each other. But when Jesus told a story about what it means to “love your neighbor” and follow God’s commandments, He used a Samaritan as an example.

5. How is the Samaritan in the parable a good example of how to “love your neighbor as you love yourself”?

It would have been less surprising if the Levite\* (LEE-vite) and the priest were the heroes of the story. The Levite and the priest were just trying to follow God’s law that said they could not touch a dead or dying body. They had remembered to obey that part of God’s law. But they had forgotten to love their neighbor.

Jesus wanted people to understand that loving their neighbors was part of following God’s laws. To show their love for God, they had to do more than simply follow religious rules; they also had to love the people God had made.

Even before Jesus told the story of the Samaritan, He taught people what loving others meant through His actions. He talked with tax collectors and sex workers. He went to their houses and ate meals with them. These were people who struggled to follow God’s laws or did not know how to follow God at all. But Jesus spent time with them and loved them.

Israel’s religious leaders watched Jesus and started to criticize Him. They said, “If Jesus is really God’s prophet, why is He spending time with sinners and eating with them?”

The religious leaders could not understand what Jesus was doing. They tried to follow all of God’s laws perfectly. They believed that anyone who spent time with sinners would be seen as sinful too—and they might be tempted\* to sin themselves. So, they made their own religious rules against it. But Jesus kept breaking those rules.



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## Jesus Tells More Parables

Jesus went to banquets, or dinner parties, that the religious leaders would never attend. He attended banquets with sinners. He visited houses where sick people lived, and He healed them. He did these things to help people understand that God’s Kingdom was for the poor, the sick, and sinners. He showed them grace\* that the religious leaders did not understand.

Jesus also attended banquets with the religious leaders. He wanted them to understand that they could be part of His

Kingdom too. But He told them they were acting like members of a special, private club. The religious leaders thought they were better than other people because they tried to be perfect. They did not think God cared about anyone but them. So, Jesus told them a parable about what God’s Kingdom was really like.

Read **Luke 14:15–24**.

6. What excuses did the guests give for not coming to the banquet?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
7. While the guests were busy doing things they thought were important, what happened?

This parable was Jesus’ message to the religious leaders. They were the people who refused to come to the party. They were busy doing things that they thought were more important. They tried to follow every law they read in Scripture. They tried hard to love God with all their heart and soul, but they had forgotten that loving the people around them was part of loving God.

The religious leaders did not understand what Jesus was saying to them in the parable of the banquet. They were still holding on to the idea that the rules they were following were helping them earn God’s love. So, Jesus told the parable of the prodigal\* son.

Read **Luke 15:11–32**.

It is easy to focus on the younger son in the story—the son who was a mess. The younger son demanded his share of his father’s money and ran off to a faraway land. He spent all of the money and then came back home because he was broke, scared, and hungry.

But there is something important to learn from the older son too. He tried to be the “good son” and obey his father. However, he didn’t get things right either.

8. Why was the father so excited to have his younger son home again?



Notes/Questions

9. Why was the older brother so angry?

10. In your own words, write what the father said to the older son:

The father's words in the story were meant for the religious leaders. Jesus wanted them to view sinners who were following Jesus the way God saw them: as beloved sons and daughters who were coming home to their Father. He also wanted the leaders to understand that the leaders themselves needed God's forgiveness. He wanted them to know that they were just as welcome in God's Kingdom.

The religious leaders rejected Jesus and His message. They had worked hard to try to earn God's love by keeping all of God's laws. They did not like the idea that the sinners Jesus spent time with could be forgiven or accepted by God. But they forgot that they were sinners too.

By rejecting Jesus, the leaders were rejecting God and what God wanted them to do. They had failed to realize that Jesus spoke for God because He was God. They failed to see that His message of forgiveness was for everyone, including them.

11. Why is it so hard for some people to admit they need God's forgiveness?



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## The Greatest Leader

God inspired Luke to write this account of Jesus' journey to Jerusalem for a reason. It is a reminder of the way God cared for His people in the past. Hundreds of years earlier, God raised up powerful leaders to guide His people back to Him.

God chose a man named Moses to free His people from slavery and lead them to a new land, where they began

a new life with God. Later, God chose King David to help gather the people of Israel together into a kingdom, where they were called to live according to God's law.

Jesus came to do the same thing Moses and David had done. He came to lead people toward a new life with God. But Jesus' journey also pointed to something even more important. Jesus was truly the greatest leader God's people had ever seen. He was God, yet He chose to spend time with both religious leaders and sinners. He ate with both priests and prostitutes. Jesus told people about God's love for them and showed them God's love through His actions. He taught them what was at the heart of God's law: loving God and loving others.

Through all of this, Jesus was introducing a new Kingdom, where everyone who followed Him would be welcome. They would all receive God's forgiveness because God saw each of them as His children, and He loved them.

The religious leaders proudly followed their laws to avoid sinning. But they failed to realize that they were sinning by not following God's command to love others. Because they couldn't recognize their own need for God's love and forgiveness, they saw Jesus' message as a threat to their power and control over the people. By the time Jesus reached Jerusalem to prepare for Passover, the religious leaders were making plans to kill Him—but that was all part of God's plan.

12. Why might it be difficult for some people to believe that God loves sinners and wants them to follow Him?

13. Do you believe that God loves you? Why or why not?

## Action Step

In this lesson, you learned about God's greatest commandments. Read Luke 10:27 again and reflect on your answers to questions 2 and 3. What is something you can do today to put one of those commandments into practice? Write down what you decided to do and what happened as a result:





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## Glossary of Terms

**Each lesson contains Bible names, terms, and ideas that may be new to you. We will do our best to provide definitions that are easy to understand. You will see an asterisk (\*) the first time each term appears in the lesson.**

**Commandment** — A teaching, law, or rule from God that must be obeyed. Christians follow God's commandments because they love Him.

**Generosity** — The act of giving money, help, kindness, etc., especially more than is usual or expected.

**Grace** — Kindness or help that is given when it is not deserved. God shows grace to those who follow Him, even though they have done nothing to earn it.

**Greed** — A selfish desire to have more money or other things than necessary.

**Levite** — Someone who did the daily religious work at the temple. They performed blessings and sacrifices and taught the people God's laws.

**Parable** — A simple story that teaches a lesson. Jesus told parables to help His followers understand what is

right and wrong in God's Kingdom.

**Passover** — A holiday that celebrates God's people being freed from slavery in Egypt.

**Prodigal** — Someone who wastes a lot of money and time and does not value what they have.

**Samaritan** — A person born in Samaria. The Samaritans were once part of the nation of Israel, but they separated from Israel, created their own religion, and married people from other nations.

**Sinner** — Anyone who hurts God, others, or even themselves through actions, thoughts, or spoken words that go against God's plan.

**Tempt** — To encourage someone to do something wrong, bad, or unwise, promising them something good in return.

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Use this space for **prayer requests, questions for the mentor who will review this lesson, or comments.**  
You can also use this space to **write a poem or draw.**

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