



MONDAY 2.22.16 Matthew 4:12-22 Matthew set the context for much of Jesus' ministry: he left his hometown of Nazareth (a tiny farming village), and based himself in Capernaum, a larger fishing town on the shores of the Sea of Galilee. Trade routes often brought Gentiles through Capernaum. Jesus healed and preached there, and called fishermen from the area as his first disciples.

The gospel of John tells more about how Andrew and Peter came to follow Jesus (see John 1:40-42). Matthew emphasized that this was not a part-time interest; "they left their nets" wasn't so much a job change as a life change. When and how did you hear Jesus say, "Come, follow me"? How did you respond? How is your life different because of following Jesus?

TUESDAY 2.23.16 Mark 1:21-34 In Jesus' day, most of today's medical and psychological insights into human hurts weren't available. Yet nothing we know about epilepsy or mental illness would cause a person to accurately peg Jesus as "the holy one from God." This story likely gives us a peek at the cosmic conflict between good and evil. Jesus' confident teaching and healing both shook and drew people. Then, as now, people needed physical, spiritual and emotional healing. Commentator Stephen Short observes that the effect of Jesus' teaching and healing was to "excite wonder, but not to evoke faith." Have you ever experienced something that caused wonder in you, even if you didn't exactly "believe" it? What are the things that move you from uninvolved wonderment to life-changing faith in Jesus?

WEDNESDAY 2.24.16 Mark 2:1-12 Homes excavated in Capernaum show a maximum capacity for about 50 people in the 'living room.' When four friends tried to bring their sick friend to Jesus on a stretcher, the room was full. So they got creative! Most houses then had an outer staircase to the roof, which was usually made of branches and rushes laid over the roof beams and covered with dried mud. They climbed up, dug through, and laid him at Jesus' feet. The man would have stayed paralyzed without his four friends' energetic, creative caring. When was the last time you were able to be a "stretcher bearer" for someone else? Who has been a "stretcher bearer" for you? How determined and creative are you willing to be to bring Christ's help to someone you know who needs it?

THURSDAY 2.25.16 Mark 12:9-14 Israel's religious leaders, especially the group known as Pharisees, created a hedge of strict rules around the Old Testament law. But Jesus knew God's heart. He knew that love, not rule-keeping, was at the heart of every commandment (see Matthew 22:36-40). Jesus wasn't destroying Sabbath observance, but showing what it was meant to look like. For many Christians, the weekend day of worship seems like any other day except for going to church. What is your "Sabbath" experience like? Have you considered using this one day a week as a time to be with family and friends more meaningfully? Might you, like Jesus, use the day to bring God's healing into your community? Ask God to help you choose one way to make your Sabbath keeping more like Jesus'.

FRIDAY 2.26.16 Mark 5:21-34 A desperate woman sought Jesus. He moved away, followed by a crowd, to help a synagogue leader named Jairus' sick daughter. (We'll look at that case tomorrow.) The woman's problem would be serious today, but it was worse then. Jewish law (see Leviticus 15:25-27) saw her condition as permanently "unclean," like a leper. She was forbidden to touch anyone; hence her furtive touch of Jesus' garment. But "Jesus recognized that power had gone out from him." What a burden of shame this woman must have carried, along with her physical issues. Many people saw ailments like hers as judgments from God (see John 9:2). How do you see yourself? Are there things in your life you'd rather keep hidden? Was Jesus being unkind when he called the healed woman forward—or was he freeing her from shame as well as from her physical disorder?

SATURDAY 2.27.16 Mark 5:35-43 As Mark told his story, Jesus' ministry had already met hostility from the religious authorities (see Mark 2:6, 24; 3:6, 22). With his daughter deathly ill, Jairus ("one of the synagogue leaders") laid aside any objections he might have had to Jesus' work. When messengers came saying the girl had died, Jesus encouraged Jairus, saying, "Don't be afraid; just keep trusting." He repaid the synagogue leader's trust by giving him back his daughter. When Jesus said the girl was "only sleeping" (verse 39), he did not mean she hadn't died. Even then, people knew well how to distinguish death from unconsciousness—professional mourners weren't called out when a person was still breathing. Jesus meant that, because he was there, her time in death would be no longer than a sleep (see also John 11:11-14). How is Jesus' power over even death a source of hope and confidence for you as you face life with all of its uncertainties?

Love: How do these devotions teach about the love of God and the love for one another?

Learn: What have you learned about where Jesus walked that helps you with where you walk?

Share: What key insights have you learned this week on how to share your faith with others?

Serve: Look at the prayer list. Who can you pray for? Who needs a little extra help in an area where you can make a difference?

Healing Strength: Bucky Jordan (friend of Tim Jordan), Rex Townsend, Chris Osborn (Ken and Sandy Grubb's daughter), Janet Coons (Donna's daughter)

Sympathies: Family of Wilbur Meyer, Family of Mary Ruth Nigh (friend of Birdwells)

Homebound Members: Mary Hicks, Mary Schmidt, Joann Young, Jeanne Carman

Military Personnel: Adam Walters, Joseph Roberts, Lucas Lamkin, Adam Clark