
WHO IS JESUS TO YOU?

When I was growing up we had a tradition in our home that I didn't like very much. Each year on Good Friday, from noon until 3 pm, my mother would make me and my siblings go to our rooms and write out the answer to this question: Who is Jesus to you? I knew the reason she made us do this was because those were the hours that Jesus hung on the cross: 'It was now about the sixth hour, and darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour' (Luke 23:44).

I didn't like it because at that time of the year it was just starting to get warm, and I always wanted to be outside playing baseball. And it seemed that on every Good Friday, the weather was perfect for baseball. But I'm glad she made us go to our rooms. Often, in spite of my grumpy attitude, when I finally sat down to write my answer, it became one of the most meaningful things I did all year.

I'm a grown man now, but I still take some time by myself on Good Friday and write in my journal about Jesus. I love to remind myself of how much he has done for me.

In our next section, you'll have an opportunity to examine the experiences of five people who had encounters with Jesus. The rich young man walked away from Jesus because he loved his money. Nicodemus didn't believe Jesus at first but, over time, he became a follower. Once the woman at the well got over her shame, she accepted Jesus as her saviour. Saul had a dramatic encounter with Jesus that changed his life – and the world – for ever. And Peter gave a stunning affirmation of Jesus even though he didn't yet understand all that it would cost him. But the thread that holds them all together is that each person had to make a personal decision about Jesus.

At the beginning of this book, I told you I'm a follower of Jesus but that your decision about him was your responsibility. I simply wanted to guide you through 100 Bible passages about Jesus and then leave it to you to come to your own conclusion. I'm still going to stick with that. But I will tell you this: my hope and prayer is that if you haven't yet made your decision to believe in Jesus and follow him, you will do so by the end of this book. If you'd like some help with that you can refer to *Beginning a relationship with Jesus Christ* on page 153.)

In writing this book, I've truly enjoyed taking a journey through the Bible's greatest story. And I hope that as you've read, reflected and prayed your way through the 100 stops on that same journey, you've not only gained an appreciation for who Jesus is, but you also developed a love for prayerfully reading God's Word. Don't let this be the end of your times with the Bible. Let it become the beginning of a lifetime of meeting God every day through the Bible and prayer.

Date:

Who is Jesus to you?

PRAY Lord, clear my mind and heart of every distraction so that I can have a fresh encounter with you today.

READ Matthew 19:16–30

REFLECT

Over the years, I've heard some people – usually those with lots of money – express frustration with this passage: 'Well, I guess we're all supposed to give away everything and live like Saint Francis, is that it?' I've also heard other people – usually those who wish they had more money – express satisfaction with this passage: 'Well, I guess rich people don't really understand the gospel, do they?' But a careful reading of what Jesus said reveals that he was talking not only about money and possessions, but also about something far more serious.

Notice that, in spite of all his wealth in this world, the rich man was worried about what would happen to him in the next. That's still the big issue. Regardless of who you are, what you know or even what you believe, at some point everyone must come to grips with this question: what happens to me after death?

The man in this passage thought he had it all figured out: do good things (19:16,20) and he would get a place in heaven. That's what many people believe today. They imagine a pair of giant scales in the cosmos, and if your good deeds outweigh your bad, then bingo, you're in! But Jesus pulls the rug out from under that perspective. First, he challenges what it means to be 'good' (19:17). He then carries the philosophy to its logical extension: just being good isn't good enough; to earn your salvation you must be perfect (19:21). Excuse me? Even the disciples were baffled; if a good, rich man can't get in, who can (19:25)?

By the end of the conversation Jesus made it clear there were two things preventing this man from gaining the eternal life he sought: his attachment to wealth and his belief that salvation could be earned through good works. The man went away sad because neither of those strategies works. In the end, Jesus made it clear that there is only one way to get to heaven: 'Follow me'. That means believing in Jesus and living like him – just what he had been saying all along.

APPLY Are there things that prevent you from completely following Jesus? If so, what are they and what would it take to remove them?

PRAY Spend a few minutes talking to Jesus, imagining that he has personally addressed this challenge to you: 'Follow me'...