



WEEKLY STUDY

Week Five

This week Pastor Jacob wrapped up our series called Jesus Changed My Life. We've followed the story of John the Baptist through the last several weeks. John pointed to Jesus every step of the way even though he himself received a lot of attention for his charisma and quirkiness. The ending of John's story was not pretty. He was beheaded upon request of his brother's wife's (now *his* wife's) daughter. It's a messy story. Upon hearing about it, Jesus withdrew to a quiet place. He loved his cousin. He saw his sacrifice for the unfolding ministry of Jesus the Son of God.

If you are studying with your Providence Small Group, you can share from daily readings as well as the additional question at the bottom of this guide. If you would like to get connected to a Providence Small Group visit prov.church/smallgroups.

Find a time each day to read the passage of scripture, follow the daily prayer prompt, and then pray this or your own prayer.

*God,
Decrease my need to appease others.
Decrease my attention to pressure from outside forces.
Decrease my distractions.*

*Increase my courage.
Increase my obedience.
Increase my sacrifice.*

*In the name and for the sake of Jesus, Amen.
Amen*

DAILY STUDY

MONDAY: MATTHEW 14.3-12

Now Herod had arrested John and bound him and put him in prison because of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, ⁴ for John had been saying to him: "It is not lawful for you to have her."⁵ Herod wanted to kill John, but he was afraid of the people, because they considered John a prophet.

⁶ On Herod's birthday the daughter of Herodias danced for the guests and pleased Herod so much ⁷ that he promised with an oath to give her whatever she asked. ⁸ Prompted by her mother, she said, "Give me here on a platter the head of John the Baptist."⁹ The king was distressed, but because of his oaths and his dinner guests, he ordered that her request be granted ¹⁰ and had John beheaded in the prison. ¹¹ His head was brought in on a platter and given to the girl, who carried it to her mother. ¹² John's disciples came and took his body and buried it. Then they went and told Jesus.

- Herod was a morally weak leader who hid behind his niece's wishes to have a powerful prophet's head on a platter. He was covering up his own moral failures while taking the life of a true leader in John the Baptist. In this gruesome story, we see a reality that is played out in our world all of the time. One who wants to do what is right does not always get the best end of the deal. When has following God cost you position or power?
- *In prayer, offer God any power and position you hold. Ask God to use your life to point to Jesus.*

TUESDAY: ACTS 7.52-56

Was there ever a prophet your ancestors did not persecute? They even killed those who predicted the coming of the Righteous One. And now you have betrayed and murdered him— ⁵³ you who have received the law that was given through angels but have not obeyed it."

⁵⁴ *When the members of the Sanhedrin heard this, they were furious and gnashed their teeth at him. ⁵⁵ But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. ⁵⁶ "Look," he said, "I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God."*

- Stephen gave a lifetime's worth of testimony before the Sanhedrin. He told about the salvation history of God and it cost him his life. It's almost like Stephen was thinking about us when he gave this testimony and prodded those who would have him killed. He was willing to participate in the suffering of Christ for the cause of Christ.
- *Pray for those early followers who gave up their life for the sake of the gospel.*

WEDNESDAY: ACTS 12.1-2

Now about that time Herod the king laid hands on some who belonged to the church, to do them harm. ² And he had James the brother of John executed with a sword. ³ When he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter as well.

- When those who persecuted Jesus' followers saw the response from the crowds, they only stepped up the attacks. The execution of Jesus' followers pleased the crowd, so they went for more. This is not a pretty picture for Jesus' close followers. In many places today, this would seem almost unimaginable. But there are brothers and sisters in Christ who sacrifice as John the Baptist did.
- Pray for modern day followers of Christ who face heavy persecution for their faith.

THURSDAY: LUKE 9.23-25

Then he said to them all: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me."²⁴ For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will save it.

²⁵ What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit their very self?

- Pastor and martyr Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote about The Cost of Discipleship. In Nazi Germany he remained steadfast in his desire to follow Jesus no matter what. It cost him his life. Today, God is still using his writings and his story to inspire others who find themselves in a battle for what is right. We are not all called to such extreme sacrifice, but we are all called to humble ourselves and follow Jesus with our whole life.
- *As you pray, consider the weight of the cross on Jesus' back. Thank God for his willingness to lay down his life for you.*

FRIDAY: MARK 10.45

"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

- Who has more power than Jesus Christ? No one. And yet he chose to serve others with his life. In fact, he gave up his life so that we might truly live. How many kings or rulers with great power have you seen who would rather serve than be served? It is remarkable that the King of Kings would stoop so low in order to lift us up to life.
- *Thank God for the servant heart of Jesus. Ask that you might have the same heart growing in you.*

SATURDAY: JOHN 10.11-15

"I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep."¹² He who is a hired hand, and not a shepherd, who is not the owner of the sheep, sees the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf snatches them and scatters the flock.¹³ He flees because he is a hired hand and does not care about the sheep.¹⁴ I am the good shepherd, and I know My own, and My own know Me,¹⁵ just as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep.

- A good shepherd knows that his or her life is all about the sheep. Someone who is just doing the job for the money will run at first sign of danger, but Jesus the Good Shepherd looks danger in the face and danger loses its power.
- *Pray about the dangers in your life that threaten to snatch up your joy and purpose. Lean on the Good Shepherd.*

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

Pastor Jacob mentioned ministries that track the deaths of Christian martyrs around the world. Open Door USA is one of these ministries that does its best to learn names and circumstances of those who have died for the name of Jesus. You can learn more at opendoorsusa.org. What did you learn from this site? How does this inform your prayers?

With these ministries in mind, pray this prayer again.

*O Lord,
Decrease my need to appease others.
Decrease my attention to pressure from outside forces.
Decrease my distractions.*

*Increase my courage.
Increase my obedience.
Increase my sacrifice.*

In the name and for the sake of Jesus, Amen.