



Who Can Enter into Christ?

Is it true that Christ invites *anyone*—regardless of past or present sinfulness—to enter into a relationship with Him? This study introduces you to several people whom Jesus sought out—not because of their goodness, but because of His love for sinners. Through this study, behold the Savior who came “to seek and to save that which was lost” (Lk. 19:10).

How to do this study:

If you believe the gospel (the good news about Jesus Christ), you can wake up every morning and say to yourself, “God is not angry with me anymore!” This is true of all those whom God has redeemed, simply because of the substitutionary life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Believers have so much to thank Him for!

The stories of the Bible help us see the heart of our Savior as He relates to sinners. Because we share the same sinful nature and heritage of the individuals whose stories fill the pages of Scripture, we can relate to their shame, emptiness, and desperation. Our own stories of need and redemption are not so different from theirs.

Choose **one** of the narratives listed below. Read through the story carefully. While each story recounts how the good news of Jesus Christ intersected the life of a real person, please remember that the main character of every story in the Bible is God Himself. Use the meditation prompts that follow to help you identify the heart of each story. Use your own journal or the pages that follow to record your thoughts. Then take time to apply what you learned from God’s Word to your own life.

John 4:1- 42—The Woman of Samaria

Mark 5:1-20—The Demon-Possessed Man

Luke 18:35-43—Blind Bartimaeus

Acts 16:16-34—The Philippian Jailer

How to continue this study:

You may want to continue your study by reading the other stories in the list above. Simply repeat the steps noted above, and spread your study out over an entire week. Ask the Lord to help you understand what you are seeing about Him, and to grow your trust in His character and confidence in His heart toward repentant sinners.

After working through the listed narratives, you may want to go even deeper. You can continue your study by choosing one of the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John) to read all the way through—at your own pace (a small portion of a chapter or a chapter each day). As you prayerfully read through the gospel you have chosen, record in a journal the kinds of people Jesus sought out (*What were they like? What problems did they have?*) and the help Jesus offered them through a relationship with Himself.

Meditation Prompts:

- What do you learn about God/Jesus Christ from this story?

- Describe the main human character in this story. Write down any details or descriptions about this individual you find in the passage. Imagine what his/her daily life might have been like. How do you think his/her personal background affected relationships with others in their community? How do you think this person viewed himself/herself?

- Even as He compassionately cared for an individual's physical needs, Jesus always had a greater agenda. He met the pressing physical needs of people in order to meet the deeper, spiritual needs of people. Christ correctly identifies each person's greatest need: a relationship with Him. In the story you read, what did Jesus offer this individual in Himself? (Or, for the Acts 16 passage, what specific truth about Christ did Paul and Silas point out to the jailer as the answer to his greatest need?)

- How did this person respond to Christ? (Or, for the Acts 16 passage, how did the jailer respond to the good news about Christ?)

- What did this person have to *turn from* in order to *turn to* Christ?

- How did this person's response to Jesus Christ change him/her?

- What was the impact of this change on others who knew him/ her?
- Do you see yourself in this story? How?

Personal Response:

- In each of the listed narratives, it is easy to see that the individual in the story needed rescue. The condition of each of these individuals was desperate indeed! How do you view your own spiritual condition apart from Christ? Do you see yourself as too bad for God’s forgiveness? Or do you tend to measure yourself against others who seem worse than you and think you aren’t that bad?
- How does the good news of Jesus and His desire “to seek and to save the lost” correct your view of yourself?
- What did God show you from this study about Himself that corrects a wrong way you have been thinking about Him?
- Do you believe that Jesus came “to seek and to save” you? Briefly write out your own story of Christ rescuing you in your greatest need.¹
- Take time to thank God for what you learned through His Word. Praise Him for being a “friend” of sinners and for coming “to seek and to save the lost”—including you! (The verses on the following page can help you make a practice of thanking God for your salvation. Remember, gratitude is a wonderful antidote to fear!)

¹ If you don’t know with confidence that Christ has rescued you, please seek help from a trusted, spiritual adult.

Preach the Gospel to Yourself²

Take time every day to reflect on God's grace and mercy to you through Jesus Christ. Choose one or two of the verses below to pray back to God in thanksgiving for your salvation. Even better, commit some of these verses to memory, so you can call them to mind whenever you are tempted to doubt God's love for you in Christ!

Psalm 103:12 *As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.*

Isaiah 1:18 *Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.*

Isaiah 53:6 *All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.*

Psalm 130:3-4 *If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.*

Micah 7:19 *He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.*

Romans 4:7-8 *Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.*

Romans 8:1-2 *There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.*

Ephesians 1:7-8 *In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence.*

² The encouragement to "preach the gospel to yourself" every day was made popular by author Jerry Bridges.