



# LONG STORY SHORT

## A Year through the Bible

### Reflection Guide

#### No Ordinary Man Matthew; Mark; Luke; John

#### Exploring the Story, Chapter 24

The Jesus presented in the Gospels—while doing rather ordinary things such as teaching, preaching, and healing—is far from ordinary. Instead, from the very beginning, Jesus' ministry is infused with God's power. In Jesus, the power of God encounters the deep brokenness of humanity and proclaims in word and deed the Good News of God's salvation.

#### MONDAY

*Read:* Matthew 5–7

*Reflect:* Just as Moses went up a mountain to deliver the Law to the people, in this section of the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus gives a new law to the people from a mountain. Do you think Jesus actually intends for his followers to follow the new law he gives in this passage? Why or why not? If you were to increasingly live according to this new law, how if at all, would your life be different?

*Respond:* In prayer, thank God for the gift of God's laws, and commit to living your life the way Jesus desires.

#### TUESDAY

*Read:* Matthew 9

*Reflect:* The people on the receiving end of Jesus' healing and restorative power are those who are most aware of their need of God's mercy and grace. Based on what you have read, do you think there are any limits or preconditions on Jesus' grace? Why or why not? How does your own willingness to extend grace and mercy compare to Jesus' actions? To what do you attribute any differences?

*Respond:* In prayer, ask God for the faith to extend grace and mercy as Jesus did, without limit or reservation.

#### WEDNESDAY

*Read:* Matthew 14

*Reflect:* In the middle of a severe storm, Jesus walks on water towards the disciples' boat. Peter asks that Jesus allow him to walk on water, too. Despite having his request granted, Peter remains fearful and distrusting. But, Peter's doubt is met with Jesus' outstretched hand. Place yourself in Peter's position. What is causing you to doubt God's goodness and faithfulness to you? Where are you experiencing Jesus' outstretched hand despite your doubts?

*Respond:* In prayer, ask Jesus where you can find his outstretched hand, and take comfort that God rescues us, even when we doubt.

#### THURSDAY

*Read:* Mark 4–6

*Reflect:* One of the things that becomes most apparent about Jesus is his all-encompassing authority. He teaches with authority, forgives sin with authority, and he has power nature, demons, and illnesses. What limits, if any, do you see to Jesus' power or authority? Practically speaking, what limits are you prone to impose on Jesus' power and authority in your own life? Why?

*Respond:* In prayer, ask God to help you dismantle any limits you may have established to Jesus' power to work in your life.

#### FRIDAY

*Read:* Luke 10

*Reflect:* Jesus sends out disciples to continue his own work of preaching, teaching, and healing. Next in this chapter comes teaching about the importance of loving our neighbors and learning from Jesus. Based on what you read in this chapter, what role do loving God, loving others, and learning from Jesus play in the life of faith? Which of those three do you find easiest? Why? Which do you find most difficult? Why?

*Respond:* In prayer, thank God for the privilege of joining Jesus in his work of preaching, teaching, and healing.

#### SATURDAY

*Read:* Luke 15

*Reflect:* This chapter contains one of the best-known parables of Jesus, the story of the "The Prodigal Son". The word "prodigal" means to have or give something on a lavish scale. Based on your reading of this story, which character is truly behaving in a prodigal manner? Place yourself in this story, imagining that you are the lost son returning home. What does it feel like to receive the welcome and forgiveness of the Father? What does this story tell you about God's forgiveness of you?

*Respond:* In prayer, rest in the prodigal grace of God, and feel the warmth of God's welcome and embrace.

#### SUNDAY

*Read:* John 6

*Reflect:* Jesus describes himself as "the Bread of Life," and that those who would have eternal life must feast on him. Many other foods and drinks—even those provided directly by God—offer temporary satisfaction. But only Jesus can truly satisfy the soul's deepest longings. At the deepest part of your being, for what are you truly hungry and thirsty? If Jesus really is the true food and drink, how (if at all) might Jesus satisfy your deepest needs?

*Respond:* In worship this morning, praise God for perfectly meeting our every need.

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