

- Day 1 -

APPROACHING THE LORD

Jairus and the woman approached Jesus differently. Jairus approached him directly: “When he saw Jesus, he fell at his feet. He pleaded earnestly with him, ‘My little daughter is dying. Please come and put your hands on her so that she will be healed and live’” (Mark 5:22–23). The woman approached him indirectly: “She came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, because she thought, ‘If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed’” (Mark 5:27–28).

Neither way was wrong or right. Most likely, the way they approached Christ had to do with their stations in life. Jairus was a respected leader in the community. The bleeding woman was an outcast from society based on Jewish law. She shouldn’t have been out on the street in public, much less touching the tassels of Jesus’ cloak. She probably feared that if she approached Jesus directly, she would be denied, as it was against the law for him to touch her.

Sometimes we approach Jesus boldly. We know what we need and believe that he can give it to us. Other times, we approach Jesus hesitantly. We’re afraid to ask for what we need because we don’t think we deserve it or we’re unsure he will give it to us. We can learn something from Jairus and the bleeding woman. It doesn’t matter what state we’re in when we approach Christ—desperate, doubting, bold, or uncertain. What matters is that we *approach* him. We come to him as we are and ask him for what we need. He will not turn us away.

READ | Hebrews 4:14–16

REFLECT

1. When Jesus died on the cross, the veil in the temple tore in two (see Matthew 27:51). This veil separated two rooms in the temple: the Holy of Holies and the Holy Place. The Holy of Holies held the Ark of the Covenant, where God dwelled. Only the high priest could enter the Holy of Holies, and only once a year on the

Day of Atonement when he made sacrifices to atone for the people’s sin. Knowing this, what does it mean for Jesus to be our high priest? According to this passage, what kind of high priest is he?

2. Because Jesus is our high priest, how does the author of Hebrews say that we can approach God’s throne? What will we find there?

3. Take an inventory of yourself. How are you feeling? What thoughts are going through your mind? What has happened today that has impacted you? Considering this, how would you approach God’s throne right now—just as you are?

4. What do you need to bring before the Lord today? Do you feel confident bringing this before him, or uncertain, or worried, or something else? Explain your response.

PRAY | End your time in prayer. Come before the Lord just as you are. Tell him what you need. Be assured that your great high priest has paved the way for you to come before God’s throne with confidence so that you can receive his grace and mercy.

- Day 2 -

BROUGHT INTO BELONGING

According to Jewish law, the bleeding woman was unclean (see Leviticus 15:25–28). This meant she had to remain isolated from her community and no one could touch her until she was determined to be clean again. You can imagine that if she had been isolated for twelve years, she hadn't talked to many people. Who had listened to her in that time? Where did she belong? What community took her in despite her being unclean? It's reasonable to believe no one.

Historians speculate that her sickness started soon after puberty, which means she had lived most of her adult life in isolation, growing up through adolescence and young adulthood alone.² Until Jesus. Jesus saw her and listened to her. The Bible says that she “came trembling with fear and knelt down in front of Jesus . . . then she told him the whole story” (Mark 5:33 CEV).

Her *whole* story. How transforming it must have been to be heard—and not just for a minute but for as long as it took to tell her entire story. Then Jesus took things a step further. He said to her, “Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering” (verse 34). By calling her daughter, he was reincorporating her into the community.³ Jesus healed the woman physically but also emotionally. By listening to her and bringing her back into societal acceptance, he brought her out of isolation and into belonging.

READ | Isaiah 43:1–7

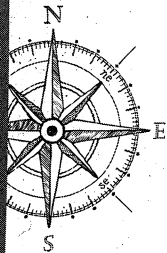
REFLECT

In this passage, the prophet Isaiah is conveying a prophetic promise from God to his people. Even though they would be scattered by the Babylonian captivity, he

would bring them back from exile and redeem them. How does God relate to the Israelites in this passage? What does he call them? How does he describe them?

2. The Lord promises that he will be with his people when they “pass through the waters” and “walk through the fire” (verse 2). What do you think the “waters” and “the fire” represent? What is God saying to his people by making this promise?
3. God tells his people that they are “precious and honored in his sight” (verse 4). What does God say he is willing to do to redeem them from their captors?
4. This promise for the Israelites is also a prophecy for us. Christ will redeem us and call us by name. How does it feel to know that God considers you a part of his own family—that you are his son or daughter? How could this give you a sense of belonging?

PRAY | Read these words again in Isaiah 43:1–7 and pray through it for your prayer time. Personalize it as if God is speaking directly to you . . . because he is.



Day 3

TRUSTING CHRIST IN THE PAUSE

We talked in this session about “the pause” . . . that moment right after you hear the bad news. Your loved one is sick. You didn’t get the part. You’re being laid off. These are heavy moments in which you are trying to process some devastating news. A moment that Jairus experienced when a servant told him, “Your daughter is dead. . . . Why bother the teacher anymore?” (Mark 5:35).

This tends to be our reaction in the pause—to give up and stop trying. But it’s in the pause that Jesus springs to action: “Overhearing what they said, Jesus told him, ‘Don’t be afraid; just believe’” (verse 36). What did Jairus think of this? Perhaps he hardly heard Jesus, as he was running back home to see if the news was true. Perhaps he was frozen in disbelief and Jesus’ words simply reverberated in his head. Or maybe . . . he felt comforted. Maybe these words uttered by the divine gave him a glimmer of hope. Perhaps he trusted Christ.

We don’t know how Jairus felt about Jesus’ words. But we know what he *didn’t* do. He didn’t deny Jesus entry into his home or prevent Jesus from seeing his daughter. He allowed Jesus to return with him, and because of this, Jesus was able to prove that he *cared* about his daughter, that he *could* heal his daughter, and that he *would* heal her. This doesn’t always happen in our stories. Our pauses do not always turn into rejoicing. But that doesn’t mean that Jesus isn’t still with us, comforting us and whispering, “Don’t be afraid; just believe.”

READ | 2 Corinthians 1:3–7

REFLECT

1 The apostle Paul had seen his share of suffering. In other places in this letter, he talks about being persecuted for his faith and dealing with a “thorn” in his side—some type of physical, spiritual, or emotional affliction (or something else entirely) that kept tormenting him (see 12:7). His message to the church on comfort and suffering was

counter to the philosophy of the day that taught people should ignore their pain.⁴ What connection does Paul make between comfort and suffering in this passage?

- 2 Paul encourages the believers with his reassurance that God “comforts us in all our troubles” (verse 4). However, this is not just for our own benefit. What does Paul say we should do when we are comforted? How does this strengthen the body of Christ?
- 3 Paul says that his sufferings and distress serve a purpose. “If we are distressed, it is for your comfort and salvation; if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which produces in you patient endurance of the same sufferings we suffer” (verse 6). What do you think enabled Paul to view his trials and struggles in this way?
- 4 Think about the trials you are facing. Where do you need Jesus’ comfort today? How could his words—“don’t be afraid; just believe”—apply in that situation?

PRAY | Ask God for comfort, however you need it. Ask him to help you believe. Ask him to help you not be afraid. Feel comforted by Christ’s words today.

Day 4

DEALING WITH DOUBTERS

When Jesus arrived at Jairus' home, friends and family had gathered to mourn the death of Jairus' daughter. Jesus asked, "Why all this commotion and wailing? The child is not dead but asleep" (Mark 5:39). The mourners responded by laughing at him. Jesus responded by putting them out. The Greek word used here is *ekballo*, which means to cast out or drive out.⁵

Jesus didn't need their scoffing as he performed his miracle . . . and neither do we. We don't need to surround ourselves with people who scoff at our faith, at us, or at our hopes. You've probably been in groups like this before. It can affect your faith in God and in yourself. But the opposite is also true. When you're surrounded by people who have faith in God and have faith in you, you then have faith in yourself. You feel uplifted and encouraged.

Jesus surrounded himself with all kinds of people—fishermen, the poor, the sick, the doubters. But he didn't surround himself with those who laughed at him, doubted him, or had no faith in him. In the same way, who we spend our time with *matters*.

This doesn't mean we must always be surrounded by perfect people (which isn't possible) or we must always be surrounded by other Christians (which would be counter to Christ's teaching and actions). But it does mean we pay attention to our environment. Is it supportive? Is it encouraging? Does the group encourage you to grow in your faith? If the answer to these questions is *no*, then it's time to surround ourselves with people who will.

READ | Galatians 5:13–26

REFLECT

The church in Galatia was struggling with the tension of being Jews who followed the law and now being Christians who followed Jesus. A group of teachers (known as the "Judaizers") were preaching that followers of Christ still needed to be circumcised and

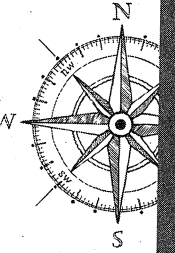
also follow the Hebrew law. Paul's goal in this letter was to put this argument to rest, remind the church of how they were to treat each other, and emphasize they no longer had to follow the law to receive grace. Instead, the grace they already received from Christ would produce the fruit needed to build a loving and secure community. How does Paul sum up the most important "law" for believers to keep (see verses 13–15)?

2. Paul makes a sharp contrast between the "acts of the flesh" and the "fruit of the Spirit" (see verses 19–23). What are some of the traits of the acts of the flesh? What are some of the traits of the fruits of the Spirit? How are these fruits developed?

3. When you look at your circle of friends and relationships, what kind of people are you surrounded by? How do you treat each other? How do these people affect you?

4. What fruit do you see in your church or community, if any? Would you like your community to produce more fruit? If so, what kind?

PRAY | Be honest with God about how the people you are surrounding yourself with are impacting your life. Thank him for a strong community that encourages you, or ask him to bring you an encouraging and supportive community to help you grow closer to Christ.



Day 5

CATCH UP AND REFLECT

Use this time to go back and complete any study and reflection questions from previous days this week that you weren't able to finish. Make a note below of any revelations you've had and reflect on any growth or personal insights you've gained.

Spend the next two days reading chapter 5 of *In the Footsteps of the Savior*. Use the space below to record anything in the chapters that stands out to you or encourages you.