

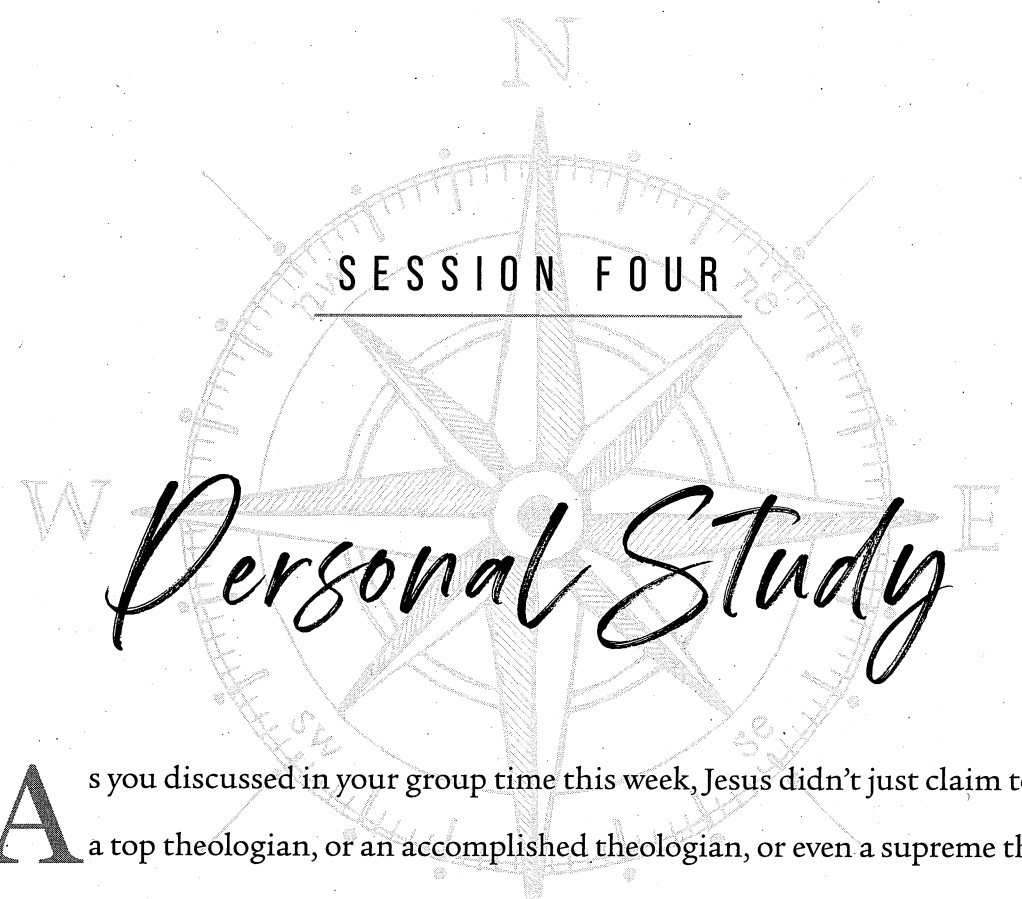
Respond | 10 MINUTES

Review the outline for the video teaching and any notes you took. In the space below, write down your most significant takeaway from this session.

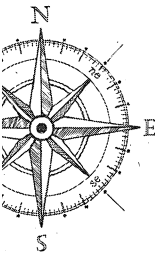
Pray | 10 MINUTES

End your time by praying together as a group, thanking the Lord for sending his one and only Son into this world. Ask if anyone has any prayer requests to share. Write those requests down in the space below so you and your group members can pray about them in the week ahead.

Name	Request
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____



As you discussed in your group time this week, Jesus didn't just claim to be a top theologian, or an accomplished theologian, or even a supreme theologian. He claimed to be the *only* theologian. He alone knows the Father . . . and he has chosen to reveal the secrets of eternity to us. As you explore this theme in this week's personal study, write down your responses to the questions in the spaces provided, as you will be given a few minutes to share your insights at the start of the next session if you are doing this study with others. If you are reading *In the Footsteps of the Savior* alongside this study, first review chapter 8 in the book.



- Day 1 -

THE CORNERSTONE

In the architecture of Jesus' day, a cornerstone was the most crucial element of a structure. The cornerstone was used to adjoin two walls together. It was much larger than the other stones used in the construction, as it had to serve as a firm foundation for the entire building. The cornerstone was also smoother than the other stones, so it was often used for inscriptions denoting who constructed the building—such as the architect or the king who funded it.¹⁶

A cornerstone is often employed in Scripture as a symbol for Christ. He is the one who holds together the church, his people, and the world. When we think about Jesus as the one and only, this imagery of the cornerstone is helpful. While we have Scripture to help us, pastors to guide us, and spiritual practices to develop us, only Christ is the foundation of these things. He is the cornerstone of our faith and our lives. Without him, everything would crumble.

It can be tempting to want to replace our cornerstone with something or someone other than Jesus. We rely on our partner as our foundation, or our physical health, or our wealth. But what if you lose your partner? What if your health struggles? What if you have to file for bankruptcy and lose your wealth? If these things represent your cornerstone, your life will crumble. But if *Christ* is your cornerstone, you, your life, and your faith will remain intact.

Of course, this doesn't mean that you won't have struggles in life. This doesn't mean that part of the house won't need to be rebuilt at times. But the structure as a whole will survive because Jesus—your one and only—is the one holding it all together.

READ | Psalm 118:22–24 and Ephesians 2:19–22

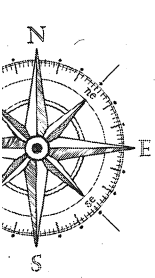
REFLECT

1. The psalmist prophesied the arrival of Christ in this passage. He wrote that Jesus would be “the stone the builders rejected” but that he would ultimately “become the

cornerstone” (verse 22). What are some of the ways that Jesus was rejected during his time on earth? How did he prove himself to be the cornerstone?

2. According to the apostle Paul in the Ephesians passage, how is Christ the cornerstone for the holy temple of the Lord? How is he the cornerstone for us individually?
3. What would you say is serving as the cornerstone of your life right now? Is it Jesus or something or someone else? Explain.
4. How could you better rely on Jesus as your one and only cornerstone? What would change in your life if you chose to only rely on Christ as your foundation?

PRAY | End your time in prayer. Thank Jesus for offering to be your cornerstone in this life. Ask him to help you rely on him—and only him—and center him as the foundation of your life.



- Day 2 -

THE ULTIMATE AUTHORITY

We all have mixed experiences with authority figures. Some of us have had respectable authority figures in the past who were easy to follow and trust. Many of us have had an authority figure or two whom we didn't respect or trust. We've seen some people choose to use their authority for good while others have chosen to use it for their own benefit.

Given this, thinking about Jesus as an authority over your life might be a difficult concept for you to grasp or accept. However, when we look at the Gospels, we find that the type of authority Jesus exhibited did not belittle others or hurt them. He did not exercise authority for his own gain. He did not abuse his power. He used his authority to heal, to speak up for the powerless, and to point others toward the Father.

Jesus also used his authority over the spiritual realm. He cast out demons and set people free. While we may not encounter demon possession in the same way today, as one commentator pointed out, all the demons that Jesus confronted in Scripture had three things in common: "They caused self-destructive behavior in the victim, the victim felt trapped in that condition, and they separated the victim from normal living in the family circle."¹⁷

You've probably encountered something like this in your life. A sin pattern, circumstance, or habit that kept you trapped, that was self-destructive, or that ostracized you from your friends and family. Know that *Jesus has power over these things*. He has *authority* over them. Take comfort in this truth. Even for someone with authority issues, that's the type of authority we could all use in our lives—one that frees us from our demons, protects us from the darkness, builds us up in the Father, and heals our brokenness.

READ | Luke 8:26–39

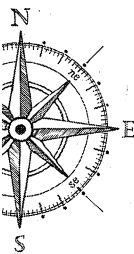
REFLECT

This story occurred right after Jesus calmed a storm on the Sea of Galilee. His power caused his disciples to ask, "Who is this? He commands even the winds and the water,

and they obey him" (Luke 8:25). When the disciples made it safely to shore, Jesus continued to display his power in this passage. What did the demon-possessed man call Jesus in verse 28? Why do you think he saw Jesus as an authority figure?

2. What did the man want from Jesus after he was set free (see verse 38)? What does this tell you about the impact that Jesus' authority had on this man?
3. What are some of the issues you are struggling with right now and need Jesus to set you free? How are these things affecting your life, faith, and relationships?
4. How does this story give you hope about Jesus' authority over these things? How would it feel—and what would it look like—to be free from these demons?

PRAY | Come before Jesus with humility. Ask him to free you from the sin, struggles, and unhealthy habits that are causing havoc in your life. Confess that you are tired of facing these struggles alone. Trust that he has the authority to get rid of them once and for all.



- Day 3 -

THE GREAT REVEALER

The rabbis of Jesus' time (and still today) were authorities on the Torah. They studied it, they preached it, and they commentated on it. If you had a question about the Scriptures, you went and asked the rabbi.

Jesus is often called a rabbi in Scripture (see, for example, Mark 9:5, Mark 11:21, and John 1:49). This is how his disciples would have viewed him: as an authority on the scriptures. They asked him hard questions. They followed him and learned from him. In one story, we read that a woman named Mary sat at Jesus' feet. In so doing, she was assuming the role of a disciple with her rabbi (see Luke 10:38-42).¹⁸

Today, we often take this role of Jesus for granted. We don't think of him as a teacher who could command his classroom with authority. We also don't consider how radically different he was from other rabbis of the time. "Do not resist an evil person," he said. "If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also" (Matthew 5:39). "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy,'" he added. "But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" (verses 43-44).

As we discussed in the group time, Jesus is the one and only revealer of all things. He is ready and able to teach us all these spiritual truths if we are ready and able to listen. Sadly, all too often we are *not* ready and able to listen. We are afraid of what Jesus will tell us. We are afraid of his instruction. What if he demands more of us? What if he tells us that we are falling short? But this is not the way of rabbi Jesus! When he teaches us, the lessons are of love, grace, and acceptance. They are not lessons to fear. They are lessons that will set us free from fear.

READ | Matthew 11:25-30

REFLECT

Jesus began this teaching with a prayer: "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed

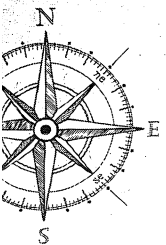
them to little children" (verse 25). What does Jesus go on to say about his authority and his knowledge of the Father? To whom does he reveal this knowledge?

2. In Judaism, a yoke was used as a metaphor for how the Pharisees saw God's law: as a weight they carried on their shoulders.¹⁹ How was Jesus' yoke different from the Pharisees'? What did Jesus say we would find when we take up his yoke?

3. What questions do you have about your life? Have you brought them to Jesus? If so, what has he taught you?

4. How could you make a practice of sitting at Jesus' feet, just as Mary did, and learning from him? What would that look like for you practically?

PRAY | Put this teaching into practice in your prayer time. Bring any questions that you have about your life before Jesus. Sit at his feet and listen for him to speak to you.



- Day 4 -

THE ONE AND ONLY WAY

We don't live with much certainty in life—and certainty is not encouraged in our culture. We live in a world of many religions, many ways, and many truths. If you've been around Christianity for any amount of time, you know it can be a bit countercultural. Jesus was countercultural in his time, so this only makes sense. He claimed to be the one and only Son of God. Not one of many. Not one of a few. He claimed to be the *only* way to salvation.

Most likely, as you have progressed in your faith, you've been on a journey with this question: *Is Jesus really the one and only way to salvation?* Perhaps you believed this wholeheartedly as a new Christian . . . but now you're not so sure. Maybe you didn't believe this about Christianity at first, but now you're a fervent believer in Jesus as the only truth and way to the Father. Maybe your beliefs are unclear right now . . . somewhere in between certainty in Christ and considering other possibilities.

Questioning the ultimate authority of Christ is a quite common experience on the Christian journey. It is not a tension to ignore or a doubt to suppress. Yet sadly, that is often what we choose to do—we let the question just fester inside of us. But keeping it suppressed won't make it go away. Maybe you've heard the phrase, "*what we resist persists*," and that is certainly true when it comes to the question of whether Jesus is *the* way or one of many ways.

So, as you read the passage below, allow yourself to sit with any tensions you feel. Don't superficially claim to believe what Jesus says. Don't feel shamed by them. Simply sit with them. See what comes up as you allow yourself to honestly explore this question.

READ | John 14:5–11

REFLECT

Jesus' conversation with Thomas and Philip took place on the night before his crucifixion. He had just told his disciples that he would be leaving them, saying, "If I go

and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am" (John 14:3). But the disciples didn't understand what he meant. They wanted to know where Jesus was going. How does Jesus respond to them? What does he claim to be in this passage?

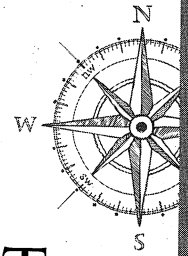
2. According to Jesus, how do we get to the Father? What does Jesus say that his relationship is to the Father?

3. When you read Jesus' words, "I am the way and the truth and the life" (verse 6), what thoughts and feelings does this bring up for you?

4. Assessing your belief today, do you believe Jesus is the *only* way, truth, and life? If so, how have you experienced this in Christ? If not, what are you hesitant about?

PRAY | As you end your time in prayer, be honest with Jesus about your belief in him. Tell him if you are hesitant to believe that he is the only way and ask him to reveal the truth to you.

Days



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 chapters 9-10 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.