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INTRODUCTION

This five-part small group study introduces a Jesus so personal, so rich in love, that participants are captivated heart-first. Paul Miller's winsome insights—conveyed through an energetic, interactive format—lead participants to discover Jesus' beauty for themselves. In watching Jesus, participants find their eyes opened to a rich encounter with God's love and their hearts empowered to love others.

This interactive study is divided into five units. Since the concepts build upon one another, it is ideal to go through it in sequence. For example, the more you study compassion (Unit One), the more you wonder what the boundaries of compassion are. Units Two and Three (*Honesty* and *Dependence*) provide those boundaries. Finally, the last two units show us what love leads to (oneness) and what the journey entails (humility, sadness, and joy).

Unit One: Compassion

We watch Jesus interact with people to discover the three steps of love: looking, feeling compassion, and acting.

Unit Two: Honesty

We study how Jesus relates to different people during meals to find that a commitment to truth and justice must balance compassion.

Unit Three: Dependence

We see how Jesus' dependence on his Father, rooted in a deep understanding of Scripture and a life of prayer, shapes all of his relationships and allows him to say no to others' attempts to control him.

Unit Four: Faith

Are compassion, honesty, and dependence enough? Jesus reveals to his disciples how faith in God gives us the energy to love.

Unit Five: The Passion

Death is at the heart of love. The final unit of *The Person of Jesus* traces Jesus' journey to the cross and shows how, in the low place of humility, we learn to see clearly because God lives there.

UNIT THREE: DEPENDENCE

SUMMARY

This unit introduces us to a third aspect of Jesus' love: his dependence on his heavenly Father. Jesus' dependence on his Father is rooted in a deep understanding of Scripture and a life of prayer.

Jesus summarizes his dependence on his Father when he says, "I do nothing on my own. I only do what I see my Father doing" (John 5:19, 30). This dependence allows Jesus to say "no" to others' attempts to control him. Jesus even says "no" to his family's request that he go to the Feast of Tabernacles, because his "time" had "not yet come." Jesus' family is driven to be great, while he is driven to fellowship with his Father.

Jesus' relationship with his mother is a study in saying "no." We look at three incidents when Mary tries to control Jesus. In each situation, his actions are controlled and shaped by his submission to his Father.

In Satan's three temptations of Jesus, Jesus refuses to act in any way that denies his fellowship with his heavenly Father or to separate his power from his love. Satan returns to tempt Jesus in the Pharisees' request for a sign. But Jesus refuses. Doing a sign would ease the pain of God-becoming-man. Jesus' communion with his Father also gives him the freedom to lovingly intrude into people's lives. He intrudes into Zacchaeus' life by inviting himself to his house for dinner.

Jesus is constantly touching people as he heals them, which is gentle intrusion into their lives to love them. He also lets others intrude into his life, as with the bleeding woman who touches him in a crowd.

Chapters in *Love Walked Among Us*—11 through 14

LESSON 1: THE SECRET TO LOVE

Chapter in *Love Walked Among Us*—11a: The Secret to Love

OUTLINE

1. The Powerlessness of Jesus 10 mins
 2. Jesus Says “No” to His Brothers 20 mins
 3. Our Self-Will 20 mins
- Total: 50 mins*

1. If you were in a restaurant and you overheard this snippet of conversation from a man at a table next to you, what would you think about him? What might he be like as a person? What concerns would come to mind about him?

Read: John 5:19, 30

¹⁹ “I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does.”

³⁰ “By myself I can do nothing...”



Insight: Jesus Speaking

- What’s written here is almost a verbatim summary of Jesus’ reflections on himself.
- I didn’t say this to trap you. If I hadn’t known this was Jesus speaking, I would’ve answered the question exactly the same way.



Insight: Jesus’ Dependence

Powerlessness Theme. This isn’t just a minor theme in Jesus’ life. He shows a remarkable dependence on his heavenly Father. Notice that on the one hand Jesus is confident and bold with people, yet when he talks about his heavenly Father, he is childlike and dependent.

Childlike Theme. Notice the childlike tone of Jesus’ comment. Once when the disciples were arguing in Matthew 18:1-3, Jesus said they needed to be like little children. So Jesus both tells us to be like little children and models for us what it means to be a little child.

Faith. What we’re seeing here is a description of Jesus’ faith. We think of Jesus as a model for love but not for faith. But Jesus models what faith feels and looks like! Faith feels like weakness with

regard to ourselves. Listen to these other comments of Jesus:

- John 6:38— “For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me.”
- John 7:28— “I am not here on my own, but he who sent me is true. You do not know him, but I know because I am from him and he sent me.”
- John 8:28— “When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am the one I claim to be and that I do nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has taught me.”
- *Optional—Other verses: John 7:18, 12:49–50*

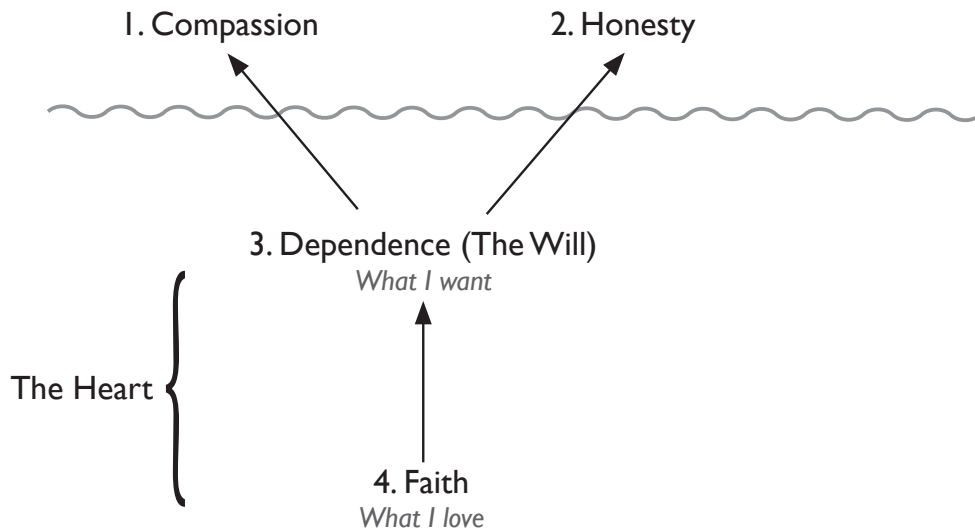
Dependence shapes and empowers honesty and compassion. The opposite is also true. Self-will twists and distorts our honesty and our compassion.

In *The Person of Jesus* study, we look at four character qualities of Jesus and how they interact. The numbers 1-4 below indicate which unit of the study focuses on that particular quality. (The fifth unit of the study is on the Passion of Jesus.) The chart below depicts what those qualities look like in our lives. What is above the wavy line is what is seen, what is below is our hearts and is unseen. The wavy line represents the “water line” or our hidden motivations.

1. Compassion: Caring for people, entering their world.
2. Honesty: Caring for the truth, disrupting people’s worlds.
3. Dependence: Caring about God’s heart, entering God’s world.
4. Faith: The power for love.

Y-Chart

What I love (Faith), shapes what I want (Dependence), which allows the Spirit to direct me either to Compassion or Honesty.

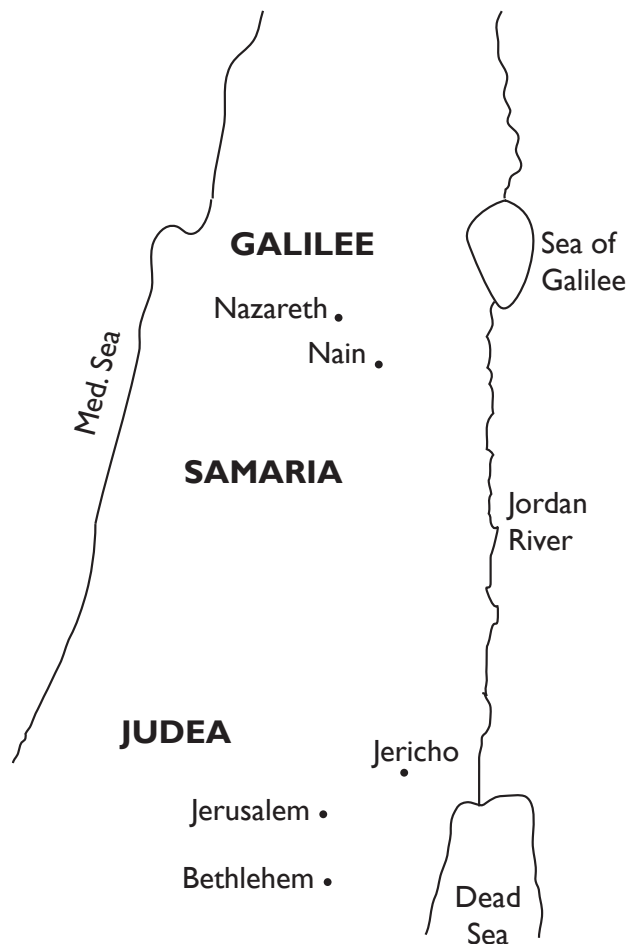


Read: John 7:1–9—The Feast of Tabernacles

¹ After this, Jesus went around in Galilee, purposely staying away from Judea because the Jews there were waiting to take his life. ² But when the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles was near, ³ Jesus’ brothers said to him, “You ought to leave here and go to Judea, so that your disciples may see the miracles you do.

⁴ No one who wants to become a public figure acts in secret. Since you are doing these things, show yourself to the world.” ⁵ For even his own brothers did not believe in him. ⁶ Therefore Jesus told them, “The right time for me has not yet come; for you any time is right. ⁷ The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify that what it does is evil.

⁸ You go to the Feast. I am not yet going up to this Feast, because for me the right time has not yet come.” ⁹ Having said this, he stayed in Galilee.





Historical Background: The Feast of Tabernacles

- The feast that his brothers are talking about is the Feast of Tabernacles.
- There were three great feasts in Israel: (1) Passover, (2) Pentecost, and (3) Tabernacles. During the three feasts the population of Jerusalem would swell to as much as a million people, according to Josephus (although most scholars question this high number). This would certainly have been the largest concentration of Jews anywhere in the world.
- The Feast of Tabernacles, or Booths, was the greatest of the three feasts. It was celebrated to commemorate the Israelites' deliverance from Egypt and wanderings in the desert. The Jews would make little booths or "tabernacles" and live in them for seven days. Stricter Orthodox Jews still practice this today.

2. Why do Jesus' brothers want him to go up to Jerusalem? Why, in particular, would they mention the Feast of Tabernacles?

3. What do they assume Jesus wants?

4. Why do you think they are making this assumption?

5. Why might this be a wrong assumption where Jesus is concerned?

6. What other motives might Jesus' brothers have for wanting him to become famous? What might be in it for them?



Insight: Associated with Jesus

If Jesus becomes famous, his brothers might get some cushy jobs in the "administration," like "Head Apostle" or "Leader of the Prophets." They would reap a benefit from being associated with Jesus.



Insight: Why John says "For even his brothers did not believe in him."

If they believed in him, they wouldn't be pushing him to be famous. They wouldn't be trying to create a human idol. They are trying to make Jesus into a celebrity.



Historical Background: Shame/Honor Culture

This natural tendency of the human heart is further reinforced by the shame/honor culture of the Ancient Near East, in which one's identity was intertwined with one's family. Individuals had no

separate identity apart from family. Every social transaction accrued either honor or shame on the family. Honor has always been in short supply. If Jesus became famous, then his brothers would get free honor for themselves.

7. Let me explain part of what’s behind their prodding of Jesus to go to Jerusalem. If I said that the Pope was coming to the United States, and his main stops were to be in Ripon, CA; Gold Beach, OR; and Jenkintown, PA, what would surprise you?



Historical Background: “Middle of Nowhere” Towns

The places that Jesus goes—such as Bethsaida, Nain, Nazareth, and Capernaum—are middle of nowhere towns. The biggest cities in Galilee, Tiberius and Sepphoris, aren’t even mentioned.¹ He’s clearly avoiding the limelight.



Insight: Time in the Gospel of John

John, in particular, records Jesus’ usage of this phrase. According to John, Jesus’ time is shaped and controlled by his heavenly Father. He does nothing on his own. All through the book of John, in almost every chapter, a clock is ticking. The clock stops at Jesus’ death when Jesus says, “It is finished.” The time when Jesus is on the cross—not some man-centered seeking of fame—is his time of glory.

8. What does Jesus mean when he tells his brothers, “For you any time is right”?



Insight: Marketing 101

It’s amazing to see Jesus’ response to his brothers’ Marketing 101 strategy. Jesus is the most controlled person who ever lived. While all of us hate anything that smacks of control, Jesus couldn’t imagine life without it. In fact, he doesn’t “do life” unless he’s completely in tune with his Father.

9. While the brothers appear to be free, what are they in bondage to? What is behind their desire that Jesus go to Jerusalem?

10. While Jesus appears to be in bondage, how is he in fact free?

¹ It is true that Tiberius and Sepphoris were Greek cities and presumably Jesus could be avoiding them for that reason, but his venture in the Decapolis and Tyre-Sidon reflect a willingness to interact with Greek culture.

11. How might Jesus’ brothers have interpreted his freedom to say “no” to his family, especially given the cultural values and beliefs of the first-century?

Surrender to God: “I do nothing on my own”	→	Freedom
Freedom from God: “If it feels good, do it”	→	Bondage to our own lusts

 **Insight: A Slave to Sin**

If you doubt this truth, just try to stop a bad habit you have. Paul the Apostle tells us that the person who sins is a slave to sin (Romans 6:20ff).

Read: John 5:41–42, 44— The Praise of Men

⁴¹“I do not accept praise from men, ⁴² but I know you. I know that you do not have the love of God in your hearts.... ⁴⁴ How can you believe if you accept praise from one another, yet make no effort to obtain the praise that comes from the only God?”

12. How is Jesus’ description of himself in 5:41 (“I do not accept praise from men”) consistent with his refusal to go to Jerusalem and build his name recognition by doing a few miracles?

13. By implication, what is at the core of Jesus’ being (vv. 42, 44)?

14. What’s the connection between having “the love of God in your hearts” and not accepting praises from people?

 **Insight: Jesus’ Helplessness**

Look at John 5:19 again. Jesus is helpless only under certain conditions. Jesus would be helpless only if he were on his own.

15. If Jesus were to go to Jerusalem with the goal of doing miracles and becoming famous, what would happen to his ability to love others?

16. How are Jesus’ values different from our world’s views of strength, power, and helplessness?

**Illustration: Taking Out the Trash**

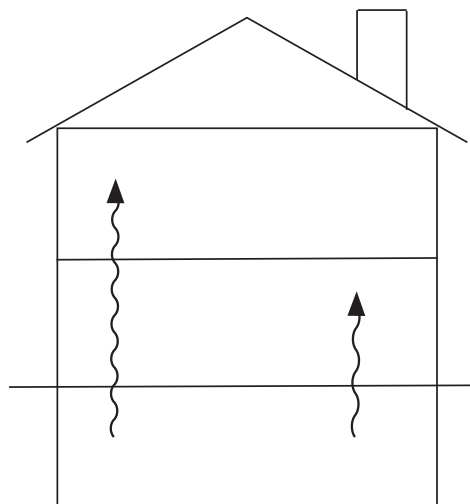
James takes out the trash each week, but he forgot to do it last week, and then again this week. He's usually good about taking out the trash, but Carolyn tells him, "Honey, you forgot to take out the trash *again*." She says the word "again" with emphasis and a little irritation. This is a small, insignificant story, but most of our lives are lived in small moments like this. As with any story, there are two sides to it, but for the sake of this discussion, let's focus on Carolyn.

17. Why does Carolyn say "again"? What might she be afraid of?

18. Who is completely absent from Carolyn's comment?

**Insight: "It All Depends on Me"**

Her frame of mind is, "If I don't say 'again,' then he will keep forgetting. If I don't show him this is becoming a pattern, I'll be doing the trash regularly." Notice the underlying assumption: "It all depends on me. If I don't show him, no one else will." God is completely absent from her thinking. In the absence of God's active intervention, she believes her husband must hear her words; otherwise, it feels like she will be swallowed up by her husband's forgetfulness. She speaks on her own, using the word "again" to control her husband.





Insight: Self-Will

Self-will is like a skunk in the basement of a beautiful house. No matter how beautiful the living room, or how fun the party, the smell permeates the whole house. Self-will, like a skunk in the basement, pollutes love. Love must be pure.

19. Why does it feel good to say “again”?

20. How does saying the word “again” fill the same need in our lives that having “the love of God in your heart” is intended to fill?

Read: John 12:49

“For I did not speak of my own accord, but the Father who sent me commanded me what to say and how to say it.”

21. How does Carolyn’s approach differ from Jesus’ saying, “I did not speak on my own accord”?

22. How might her word “again” affect James?

23. How could Carolyn have been honest, yet not self-willed, in this situation?

What would life be like for you if you did nothing on your own? Can you think of a specific example from this last week when you did or said something on your own?

LESSON 1 APPLICATION

1. What did the Spirit help you see about either Jesus or yourself through this lesson?
2. In what areas are you willful (wanting your own way)? Ask the Spirit for help in answering this question, but also don't be afraid to ask your spouse, parent, sibling, or a close friend.
3. In what ways would you want the Spirit to change you in the area of willfulness? (Be specific.)
4. How have you felt trapped by other people's agendas? What would it look like to say no to them and yes to your Father?
5. Write out a prayer, asking for help in this area.