

## Day 4 JESUS AND A RESTORED FRIEND

**READ:** John 21:15-25. Jesus asks Peter the most piercing question he can ask anyone: “Do you love me (more than anything else in your life)?”

Remember that Peter had betrayed Jesus before Jesus’ death. He had denied following Christ to the crowd before the crucifixion (Mark 14:66-72). So, Peter was in great need of being restored.

Aren’t we all like Peter at one point or another in our lives? We stray from Jesus and he pursues us in order to restore us, grow us, and make us more and more into his likeness.

And then Jesus asks us to go deep with him—to love him fully and be fully committed (even when we stumble).

And then he calls us to serve our world, to be ambassadors and messengers of God’s grace to people. Jesus entrusts you and me with the greatest message the world will ever hear!

**REFLECT:** Now re-read John 21:15-25 and replace the name “Peter” with your name. Hear Jesus’ calling to you once again.

How will you respond to this call today?

What is stirred in you when you hear his question, “Do you love me?”

What is your prayer to God in response to this question?

When they had finished eating,  
Jesus said to Simon Peter,  
“Simon son of John, do you love  
me more than these?”

- John 21:15

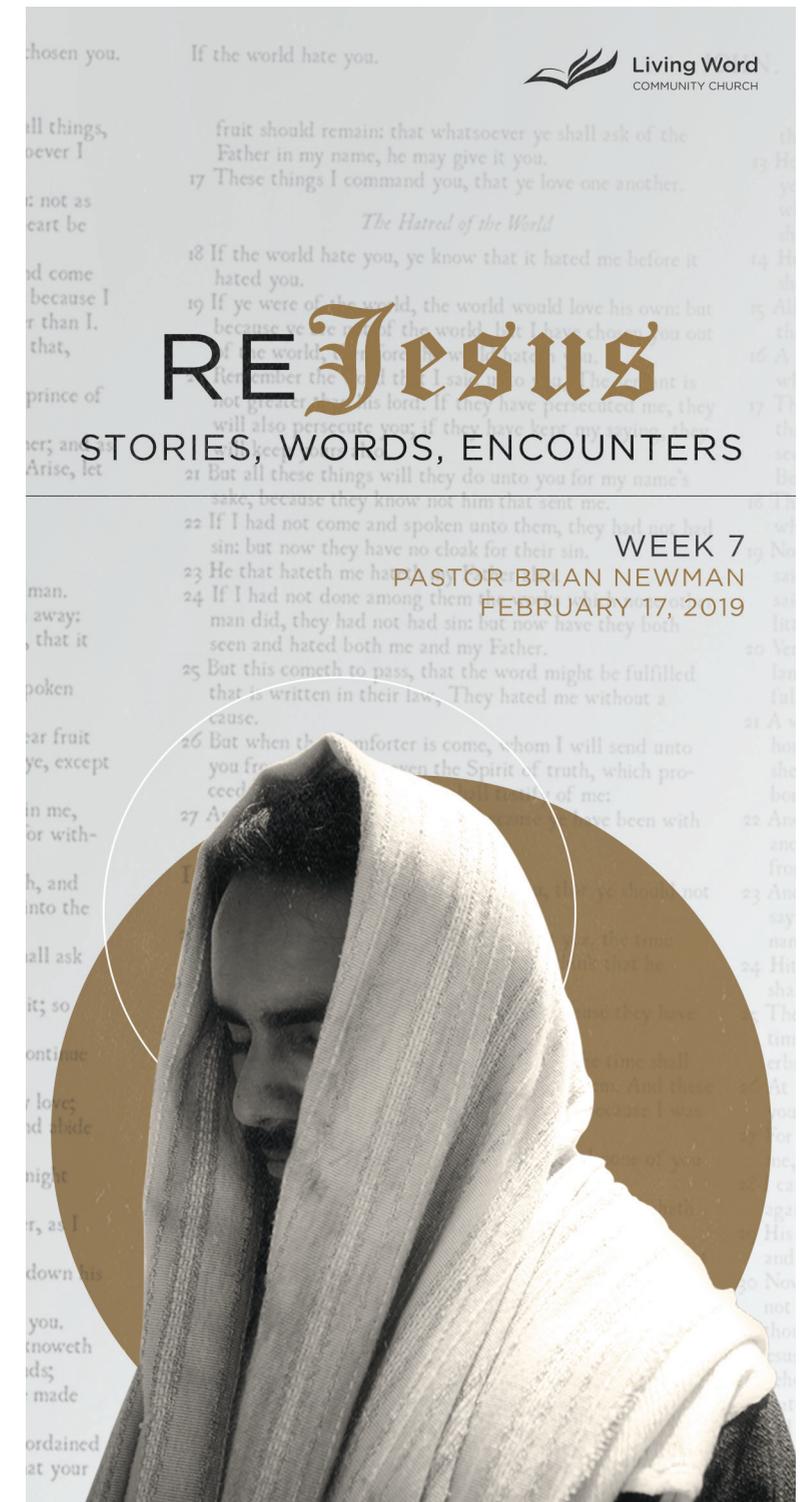
## Day 5 RESOURCES TO GO FURTHER

We are beginning to wind down this series on *reJesus*, but we must go further. We must continue to passionately follow Jesus and to become more and more like him.

This is our calling as his disciples. This is our calling as Christians. And this is counterintuitive in 21st century culture. So, we must be diligent and focused and persistent.

Here is a (very) partial list of resources to help you continue in following Jesus:

- Read one of the gospels over the course of a day. Read part of it in the morning when you wake up, over lunchtime, at dinner, and then before you go to bed.
- Recommended books:
  - A Doubter’s Guide to Jesus* by John Dickson
  - reJesus* by Alan Hirsch and Michael Frost
  - Simply Jesus* by N.T. Wright
  - The Jesus I Never Knew* by Philip Yancey
- Another good resource for Bible study is [www.biblegateway.com](http://www.biblegateway.com). They regularly post videos where one of the gospels is read verbatim and the scenes are acted out.



## Day 1 SINNER AND SAINT

We are sinners and saints at the very same time. This is one of the great paradoxical truths of Scripture.

Here is a first truth to begin your week: **You are a saint.** Depending on how you are feeling right now, that might seem strange. But it is true, because God has done everything to make you and me saints.

**Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? ... No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.**

- Romans 8:35, 37

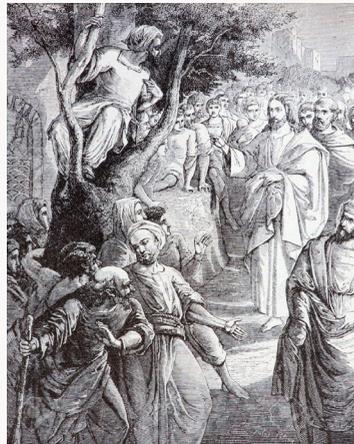
And now the other side of the coin: **You (and I) are sinners.** Great sinners.

We are sinful, according to Scripture. In our postmodern 21st century it is not hip or popular to be labeled a sinner. It's downright insulting and offensive.

**READ:** Mark 2:13-17 (which we looked at on Sunday). Let's call it "Jesus, Tax Collectors, and Religious Elite: Sinners and Saints All Together!"

As you reflect on this passage, also read Luke 19 and the story of Zacchaeus.

**REFLECT:** What qualities do these sinners (the tax collectors) have that qualifies them to follow Jesus?



The tax collectors were social pariahs. No one in Jewish culture would relate to them because they were seen as traitors. Jesus not only related to them, *he shares meals with them.* Consider how these outcasts must have felt welcoming Jesus into their homes as their honored guest.

Now reflect on Jesus' invitation for you to be with him, to follow him, to be his friend. Take some time to express your gratitude for God's grace extended to you.

## Day 2 CAUGHT IN ADULTERY

One of the most fascinating stories in the gospels is found in John 8, where Jesus comes across a scene of religious leaders who are about to stone a woman to death because she committed adultery. This practice was fairly common in first century Judaism, based on rabbinic teaching.

**READ:** John 8:2-11. Take a few minutes to visualize the scene. Think about each person in the picture: the religious leaders gathered, the shamed woman, Jesus bent down. They are in the temple courts.

Jesus' challenge to the religious leaders is for us today as well. *"Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her."* Of course, nobody throws a stone because the rabbis know that every human being is full of sin.

The climax of the story is in Jesus' final statement to the woman:

*"I don't condemn you either. Go and leave your life of sin."*

Here is the very essence of God's grace to each and every one of us, including those caught in adultery and other sins.

John 3:17 says, *"For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him."* God is not in the business of condemning his creation (we condemn ourselves by our actions); he is in the business of redeeming his creation.

So, God does not condemn you or me because of our sin. Great news!

**REFLECT:** One of the core tenets of the Christian faith is that God does not condemn his creation AND he does not give us license to allow sin to run amok.

Jesus challenges the woman caught in adultery to live in the tension that she is not condemned AND that she must leave her life of sin. *"I don't condemn you either. Go and sin no more."*

Jesus loves you too much to allow you to wallow in your sin. And he loves you too much to ignore it, because sin always destroys our lives.

Today may we hear this challenge of Jesus: *"I don't condemn you either. Go and sin no more."*

## Day 3 JESUS AND HIS DIVERSE FRIENDSHIPS

We may be tempted to think that Jesus only hung out with sinners such as lepers, tax collectors, and prostitutes. Certainly, he spent much time with them, but he also dined at the homes of Pharisees and Sadducees. He himself was a rabbi and must have been friends with rabbis. In fact, Jesus had a great diversity of friendships in comparison to first century Jews of his time.

**READ:** Matthew 10:1-8. Jesus called 12 men to be his first followers and to go and proclaim the Kingdom of God. Two of those first followers were Matthew (Levi) the tax collector and Simon the Zealot.

Matthew worked for an occupying force (the Romans) and collected taxes for them. He was despised by his own Jewish community.

Simon was part of a sometimes-radical political movement of the first century called the Zealots. The Zealots created a resistance movement to the Roman occupiers.

Jesus calls the tax collector and Zealot to follow him, to become his friends, and to be in community with each other. In order to do this they must *change their primary identity.* Levi is no longer the tax collector, he is the disciple of Jesus first and foremost. Simon is no longer the Zealot, he is the disciple of Jesus first and foremost.

**REFLECT:** What identity have you put before your identity as a fully committed follower of Jesus Christ?

What identity do you need to lay down, to make second to your allegiance and friendship with Christ?

