

# SESSION 4: JESUS THE LIFE

## 4.0 OVERVIEW AND INTRODUCTION

Welcome to this course called *Walking the Good Path*.

In this course, we are looking, we will be looking at Jesus, not in a religious or “churchy” way, but as a real person who walked the good path of God the Creator whom He called Father.

From early times, the people who followed Jesus became known as ***people of the way*** because they lived and acted in the ways that Jesus lived and acted in relation to God and to others. What Jesus taught and how He lived was all about helping people and showing people how to walk the good path of life with God their Creator and Father. He said, “I am the Great Spirit’s pathway, the truth about who He really is, and the life of beauty and harmony He offers to all. There is no other guide who can take you to the Father. To know Me is to know My Father” (John 14:6 FNV).

We read about this in the Gospel of John which is in the Bible and contains stories about the life and teachings of Jesus. It is called the Gospel of John because it was written by John, one of the earliest followers of Jesus. The word gospel means good news. For John, the life of Jesus was good news because Jesus showed him how to walk the good path of life. In this course we will be looking at what John discovers about Jesus.

During our previous session we discussed John’s descriptions of Jesus as:

1. The Word – Jesus was sent by God the Creator to us. He is the message of God’s love.
2. The Truth – Jesus speaks the truth and is the truth. He is trustworthy.
3. The Way – Jesus taught and showed us the way of living in God’s love.

## 4.1 REVIEW SESSION 3

In the last session, we talked about Jesus offering and showing us a way out of the darkness, out of aimless, disastrous, and dead-end living. We described Jesus as being the Way. Jesus, the Word, is good news, because He brings the message of how we can live in harmony with the Creator and others. He shows us the way and leads us through it. He is the only one who can do this because He is the Way.

At the end of the last session there was an assignment to choose one story from John's Gospel about Jesus' influence or impact on a person. Which story did you choose and what stands out for you?

**Discussion:**

- *How do you think the people in the story changed because of Jesus?*
- *How would you imagine yourself as the person in the story?*
- *How would your life change and what would your life be like?*

## 4.2 ENCOUNTER WITH JESUS

John's story about Jesus contains many examples of people in different circumstances who met Jesus. Their lives were changed because of their encounter with Him. Consider the following stories and questions:

- **Nathaniel** did not believe what his brother Philip told him about Jesus (John 1:43-49). *When Nathaniel met Jesus, how did his attitude change?*
- Jesus turned water into wine at a **wedding party in Cana** when the wine had run out and the guests were still there (John 2:1-11). *What was the reaction or response of the disciples?*
- **Nicodemus** visited Jesus at night, and they had a conversation about life (John 3:1-21, John 7:50-51, and John 18:38-40). *What impact do you think the conversation had on Nicodemus? What did he learn about life? Do you think knowing about God's great love changed anything for Nicodemus?*
- Jesus met a **Samaritan woman** and asked her for a drink of water. She was a Samaritan and a woman (minority) with a bad reputation, but Jesus showed her respect and had a lengthy conversation with her about life (John 4:1-26, 39-42). *What impression did that make on her? Do you think anything changed for her?*
- A **high ranking official** whose son was extremely sick begged Jesus to come and help. Instead, Jesus just told him that his son would be OK, and the son recovered from his illness (John 4:43-53). *How did the official respond when he returned home and found his son well?*

- There was a **sick man** who had been unable to move for a long time. When Jesus saw him, He asked him if he wanted to get well. Instead of answering the question, the man said he had no one to help him. So, Jesus told him to get up on his feet and walk. The man did not know it was Jesus who was speaking to him (John 5:1-15). *How did the sick man respond? What happened to him then?*
- A **woman caught in an immoral act** was accused by the authorities who demanded that she be punished severely (death by stoning). They dragged her to Jesus to see if He agreed with them, as it was the law. Jesus did not respond like they expected and did not respond as the woman feared He would (John 8:2-11). *How did Jesus respond to the accusers? What did they do? How did Jesus respond to the guilty woman? What difference did it make for her?*
- Jesus and his disciples met a **man born blind** who was a beggar on the roadside. In those days, it was assumed that a defect like that was God's way of punishing a person or their parents for sin. When the disciples noticed him, they wanted to know who was at fault - whose sin was to blame for the man's blindness (John 9:1-41). *What point was Jesus making by curing his blindness? How do you think that man's life changed? Why were the Pharisees upset?*
- Jesus' friend **Lazarus died**. When Jesus arrived at the place where the man lived with his two sisters, Mary and Martha, the funeral was in progress. Lazarus' body was in the grave and everyone was in mourning. Jesus also wept. When He went to the gravesite (tomb), He asked for the grave to be opened and then called for Lazarus to come out. The man who had been dead came stumbling out alive (John 11:17-44). *What impression did this make on the mourners? Lazarus' sisters? How do you think Lazarus felt when he got his life back? How do you think his life changed after that?*

**Discussion:**

*If you were to encounter Jesus, what do you think would change in your life?*

*Perhaps you have had an encounter with Jesus and your life has changed - what is your story?*

### 4.3 LIFE STORY

Each of us has a life story, and our stories have not yet ended. The past is not our complete story, nor do our present circumstances give the full picture of our lives. Just as the stories of the people who encountered Jesus changed dramatically, there is always the possibility for change in our lives as well.

Of course, life can be extremely complicated. There are things we can control and a lot of things we have no control over. Terrible things can happen to good people and good things can happen to people who don't deserve it. During it all, as we grow from childhood, through youth, into adulthood, there are things we initiate and many things we just respond to. In the process, we make a lot of decisions. Some of those decisions are easy, and others are painfully difficult. But all our decisions affect our lives and shape our life story, and so do the people in our lives, our experiences, our hopes, and dreams, as well as our habits and our beliefs.

Each of our stories has a trajectory. That means our lives are moving in some direction and are following along a path. Let's think about our life story and the direction of that story. Think about specific things that have happened and people you have met who have influenced the direction of your life.

#### **Exercise:**

The diagram below shows two extremes of where a person's life story may be heading (meaningful life vs. emptiness). Starting from "We are born" draw in where you think your life is heading right now (it does not have to be a straight line and it can be as long or as short as you like). Then make another line representing the direction you would like your story to take.



### **Group Exercise**

Each of four groups can pick a different question below and imagine what the good life would look like for that person. Each group can share their response when we come back together.

1. *If you were a person with a disability who were unable to help themselves, what would the good life look like for you?*
2. *If you were the person born blind, what would the good life look like for you?*
3. *If Lazarus your favourite brother died, what would the good life look like for you?*
4. *If you were humiliated publicly over something you had done, what would the good life look like for you?*

What do you think is most important for anyone to have a good life, regardless of their situation (even if they stay blind, disabled, lose a loved one, or are humiliated)?

John's Good News about Jesus is that through Him, the Creator brings new life to humanity. His story is all about life through Jesus – light in place of darkness and new life, fullness of life and eternal life instead of death.

***“In Him was life...”*** (John 1:4 NIV) or ***“Creator’s life shined out from the Word, giving light to all human beings”*** (John 1:4 FNV).

***“...Whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life”*** (John 3:16 NIV).

***“I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full”*** (John 10:10 NIV).

***“I am the way and the truth and the life...”*** (John 14:6 NIV).

In the story of Nicodemus encountering Jesus (John 3:1-21), Nicodemus came to Jesus looking for something. He was an educated and successful man who was respected in the community. Many people would have envied him. He seemed to “have it made.” Yet he came to Jesus because he felt he was missing something in his life. Despite his status, and everything he knew, and all his accomplishments, he came to Jesus looking for something. *What do you think he was looking for?*

Nicodemus did not even have to put his question into words. Jesus understood his deep yearning for satisfaction and purpose. So, Jesus told him *“Only one who has been born from above can see Creator’s Good Road” (John 3:3 FNV)*. In other words, no one can find their way to the destination of life (harmony with the Creator), unless they are born again.

Born again?! Nicodemus wanted to know what that meant. How is it possible for a person who is already born to go back to the beginning and be born all over again. But that was not what Jesus was talking about. What Jesus was talking about was not physical birth, but spiritual birth. There is more to life than physical existence with all its challenges, aches and pains, and problems. Physical life is important because it comes from the Creator, but it is not complete without spiritual life even though spiritual life, like the wind, cannot be seen. Like physical life, spiritual life also comes from the Creator to those who are seeking the way and are open. It is Jesus the Creator who makes and shows the way.

*What do you make of this conversation? What did Jesus ask Nicodemus to believe?*

Jesus invites Nicodemus to believe the truth in order to find fullness of life. In John 3:15 it says, ***“...that everyone who believes may have eternal life in Him.” (NIV)*** or ***“...people will put their trust in Him and have the life of the world to come that never fades—full of beauty and harmony” (FNV)***.

#### 4.6 FULNESS OF LIFE

One way Jesus describes the life of harmony with the Creator is by calling it eternal life. This does not simply mean life after death or life in the hereafter, although that is part of it. What it means is fullness or completeness of life now. That is what Nicodemus is looking for. He is not so much concerned about life after death. He is concerned about satisfaction in life, here and now, living in harmony with the Creator and the Creator’s purpose now. Walking the good path through this life now will lead us to the eternal life hereafter.

Jesus tells Nicodemus that to be on the good path is not a matter of physical life and effort but of spiritual life as well. The good path is the way to life as it is meant to be – filled with love, justice, truth, and peace. The good path leads in the direction of those things, toward the destination of complete satisfaction. A person does not get to that destination all at once just by being on the good path; but a person cannot get to that destination by not walking on the good path.

John's Good News is that Jesus is the answer (The Word). He can be trusted, He knows the way, and to follow Him is the way to eternal (complete) life. When Jesus was responding to the grief of Lazarus' sisters, He told them that there is more to life than only the here and now:

***"I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die."*** (John 11:25 NIV)

***"I am the rising up from the dead and the life that follows...the ones who trust Me will live again, even after death. Death will never be the end of the ones who are alive and trust in Me."*** (John 11:25 FNV)

***Discussion:***

*What is the highest aim or purpose of life? (Use just four or five words that best describe it.)*

*What would you say to someone who wants to find complete satisfaction in life?*

## **4.7 WRAP-UP AND ASSIGNMENT**

*What have we learned about Jesus the life?*

*What path does Jesus mean when he talks about eternal life?*

*What might that look like in practical day-to-day terms?*

Between now and our next session (5), look through John's Good News to find some of the important things that Jesus says about life.

Think carefully about what Jesus is saying in the Gospel of John. Pick a reference that seems important and think about how that might be relevant to your own life.