



Beyond the Miracles of Jesus

During His life, Jesus performed some incredible miracles, some of which we are blessed to be able to read about and study. He healed the sick, gave sight to the blind, fed the hungry, and even raised the dead. When we study the life of Jesus we quickly learn that He has power over everything!

The simplified vision and mission of Pathway is to live and love like Jesus. It comes from our greatest commands to love God with all that we are and to love our neighbors as we love ourselves. His new commandment is to love as He loved. What we as a church have to realize is that while we may not be able to perform miracles the same way Jesus did (maybe we can with faith the size of a mustard seed!) that does not stop us from being able to love the same way that He did.

As we study these miracles we want to look at the obvious lesson in seeing what God has the power to overcome. But we also want to take time to look beyond the miracle itself to see what Jesus communicated while He performed the miracles. His actions in healing, His words, His timing, and His heart all communicate intimate love for the person that was standing in front of Him. Our goal this series is to learn from each miracle to better understand how we can love people everyday like Jesus loved.

Jun	Series
06-07	Beyond the Miracles of Jesus: Intro and Water to Wine: John 2:1-11
06-14	Beyond the Miracles of Jesus: Drives Out an Evil Spirit: Mark 1:21-27 and Luke 4:31-36
06-21	Beyond the Miracles of Jesus: Official's Son at Capernaum: John 4:46-54
06-28	Beyond the Miracles of Jesus: Jesus heals many: Matt 8:14-17, Mark 1:29-34, Luke 4:38-41
Jul	Series
07-05	Beyond the Miracles of Jesus: Miraculous Catch of Fish: Luke 5:1-11
07-12	Beyond the Miracles of Jesus: Heals the Leper: Matthew 8:1-4, Mark 1:40-45, Luke 5:12-14
07-19	Beyond the Miracles of Jesus: Jesus Heals the Paralytic: Matthew 9:1-8, Mark 2:1-12, Luke 5:17-26
07-26	Beyond the Miracles of Jesus: Jesus Heals on the Sabbath: Matthew 12:9-14, Mark 3:1-6, 6:6-11
Aug	Series
08-02	Open Mic: Sharing Sunday
08-09	Beyond the Miracles of Jesus: Jesus Calms the Storm: Matthew 8:23-27, Mark 4:35-41, Luke 8:22-25
08-16	Beyond the Miracles of Jesus: Woman in the Crowd: Matthew 9:20-22, Mark 5:25-34, Luke 8:42-48
08-23	Beyond the Miracles of Jesus: Jesus Raises Jairus' Daughter: Mt 9:18-26, Mk 5:21-43, Lk 8:40-56
08-30	Beyond the Miracles of Jesus: Invalid at Bethesda: John 5:1-15
Sep	Series
09-06	Beyond the Miracles of Jesus: Jesus Feeds 5,000: Mk 14:13-21, Mk 6:30-44, Lk 9:10-17, Jn 6:1-15
09-13	Beyond the Miracles of Jesus: Jesus Walks on Water: Mt 14:22-33, Mk 6:45-52, Jn 6:16-21
09-20	Beyond the Miracles of Jesus: Jesus Heals Multiple Blind Men: Mk 8:22-26, Jn 9:1-12
09-27	Beyond the Miracles of Jesus: Jesus Heals Servant's Ear: Lk 22:50-51

Beyond the Miracles of Jesus:

Miraculous Catch of Fish: Luke 5:1-11 (NET)

The Call of the Disciples

1 Now Jesus was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret, and the crowd was pressing around him to hear the word of God. 2 He saw two boats by the lake, but the fishermen had gotten out of them and were washing their nets. 3 He got into one of the boats, which was Simon's, and asked him to put out a little way from the shore. Then Jesus sat down and taught the crowds from the boat. 4 When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into the deep water and lower your nets for a catch." 5 Simon answered, "Master, we worked hard all night and caught nothing! But at your word I will lower the nets." 6 When they had done this, they caught so many fish that their nets started to tear. 7 So they motioned to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both boats, so that they were about to sink. 8 But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!" 9 For Peter and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish that they had taken, 10 and so were James and John, Zebedee's sons, who were Simon's business partners. Then Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people!" 11 So when they had brought their boats to shore, they left everything and followed him.

• With each miracle, we want to understand what is clear and obvious in the text, and then we want to reread each story to see if there are things to be understood that might not be easily seen. What do you see and understand from a straightforward reading of this story?

Here are some basic observations:

(1-3) The people were so captivated by Jesus that they pressed towards Him to learn His teachings. His main escape was to push out onto a boat to get space so that He could teach the crowds. He went out onto the water along with Simon, while other fishermen were washing their nets after fishing during the night.

(4-7) The nets that the fishermen used were linen, which made them visible to the fish during the day. If they were not able to catch anything during the night, they must have thought there was less of a chance during the day. Simon Peter's response shows his respect for Jesus, calling Him "Master" and listening to His command despite the doubt based on the night's experience. The nets caught so many fish, other boats (see verse 2) had to come out. With the nets tearing, they were able to pull up enough fish to fill up both boats, weighing them down in the water.

(7-9) Look at how Simon Peter responds. His address changes from "Master" to "Lord." The miraculous catching of the fish drove Simon Peter to fall before Jesus and confess his sins. "Even Peter who in Luke's time was known for his obedience to the Jewish laws must take his place as a sinner." (Expositor's Comm.) Peter realized that Jesus was much more than he was himself as a human and he responded in humility, faithfully following his master's teachings first then prostrating himself before the Lord.

(10-11) Here is the famous call to now be fishers of men. It followed one of their businesses most successful hauls of fish (see v.9 and how they were astonished) and now they

are being called to leave. Seeing what Jesus could do leading them to catch fish, they must have been excited by the fact that Jesus told them that He had even more in store for them. "Fishermen caught live fish to kill them, but the disciples would be catching people who were dead to give them life." (Constable's Comm.)

• With these things in mind, reread the passage. Consider perspectives and angles you may not have noticed before. Consider the faith of Simon Peter, James and John. Do you notice anything different now?

Simon Peter was running his business, but was quickly learning who Jesus was. He saw miracles happen outside of his own home, his mother-in-law healed, and now, after an unsuccessful night of fishing, saw a man lead his business to an astonishing catch. They had experienced and skilled fishermen working all night to "catch nothing" and yet his understanding of Jesus moved him to lower the nets anyway. It is this attitude that allows Peter to be such a powerful tool to advance God's kingdom. His willingness to try things, move impulsively, but always do so while trusting in Jesus' leadings are a big part of how God opened up the church to the world.

Now we have all the business partners, Simon Peter, James and John sons of Zebedee, who all willingly leave "everything and follow him." Stepping away from a job is one thing, but leaving a successful business is another. This gives extra testimony to how Jesus was viewed, even early in His ministry, that business owners would leave their work to follow after this man.

• Looking Beyond the Miracle to Love like Jesus: While we may not be able to perform this miracle the way Jesus did, we are called by His new commandment to love as He loved. So what can we learn and apply to our lives? (Discuss your thoughts first)

Jesus saw potential in people and found ways to redirect their experience and resources for God's glory. He was able to use the boats of Simon Peter to be able to speak to the entire crowd more efficiently. Then, he called fishermen to be His disciples. He didn't need to call the best speakers of the day, the most well known authors, the spiritual leaders. He saw a humble Peter, who had the faith as a skilled fisherman, to catch fish, even when the situation was not ideal. Peter may not have been the first choice of any person building a team of church builders, but Jesus knew that Peter's faith and willingness to act would be a catalyst for the global church. He connected with Peter by showing Him how He could help catch fish in a less than ideal situation, and that was enough to help Peter answer the call to be a fisher of men even though that was not the trade he was trained for. Seeing the potential in people and connecting to them in ways they would understand is one way we can lovingly guide people from their experiences and passions to being kingdom focused servants.

• What gifts, trades, experience, do you see in yourself or people around you? How can you relate to others and their work? How do you think those skills or that knowledge can be used to share God's love? Share and Pray:



Beyond the Miracles of Jesus:

Heals the Leper: Matthew 8:1-4, Mark 1:40-45, Luke 5:12-16

Mark 1 (NET)

Cleansing a Leper

40 Now a leper came to him and fell to his knees, asking for help. "If you are willing, you can make me clean," he said. 41 Moved with compassion, Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, "I am willing. Be clean!" 42 The leprosy left him at once, and he was clean. 43 Immediately Jesus sent the man away with a very strong warning. 44 He told him, "See that you do not say anything to anyone, but go, show yourself to a priest, and bring the offering that Moses commanded for your cleansing, as a testimony to them." 45 But as the man went out he began to announce it publicly and spread the story widely, so that Jesus was no longer able to enter any town openly but stayed outside in remote places. Still they kept coming to him from everywhere.

• With each miracle, we want to understand what is clear and obvious in the text, and then we want to reread each story to see if there are things to be understood that might not be easily seen. What do you see and understand from a straightforward reading of this story?

Here are some basic observations (Using the passage from Mark):

(v.40) Lepers were not allowed to approach others or come in contact with them (Read Lev 5:3 and Lev 13:45-46). Yet this man approached Jesus confident in His power to heal. He did not question His ability with "Can you heal me?" just His willingness to heal him in that moment.

(v.41-42) Jesus healed the man instantly. He could have done it with a word, or even from a very far distance as He did when He healed the official's son. Instead, Jesus decided to touch the leper to perform the miracle. Through His power, the leper was healed.

(v.43-45) The now former leper was to finish the purification process by visiting the priests to be inspected and with the proper offerings (Lev 13:1-44). Jesus strongly warned the man not to say anything to anyone other than the priests. After however long this man was in isolation because of his unclean condition of leprosy, separated from those that were clean, he was too excited to hold it in. His sharing pushed Jesus out to remote places to get away from large crowds coming to be healed.

• With these things in mind, reread the passage. Consider perspectives and angles you may not have noticed before. Consider the faith of the leper. Do you notice anything different now?

We see a great exercise in faith and a great mistake in faith. First, the leper approached Jesus in a time of need, believing in His power to heal. In His desperation, He approached Jesus, without calling out "Unclean" as far as we know, and fell at His feet in humility. We should



approach Jesus with the same confidence that He not only has the power, but the willingness to heal us.

The great mistake in the lepers faith came when Jesus strongly warned him not to share with anyone. It is a strange thought to think we should NOT say something that would reveal Jesus' glory. So we do what we think is right, we testify or share what God is doing. But this may hinder, stunt, or redirect God's plan (we are confident, however, that it will never stop or thwart Him). This testimony pushed Jesus out of the towns, who just a few verses earlier in Mark 1:38-39, said that He wanted to be in the villages to preach because that is why He came. God's plan may not always make sense to us, but we have to trust the way that He works, even if it is different than what we think should be happening.

• Looking Beyond the Miracle to Love like Jesus: While we may not be able to perform this miracle the way Jesus did, we are called by His new commandment to love as He loved. So what can we learn and apply to our lives? (Discuss your thoughts first)

Jesus saw the heart of the leper. The leper wanted to be healed of his leprosy. It was probably uncomfortable, even painful. There were physical issues related to it. But leprosy in this time also had spiritual and emotional implications. The law stated that anyone with open sores needed to be isolated from the camps, from those that are clean, and kept away. Initially, they were kept from camp and away from the tent where God's presence resided. In the New Testament times, there was an added zeal to listen to all the laws as Israel worked to reestablish themselves after the period of exile. This physical disease would render it's host unclean, and lead to isolation and loneliness.

Jesus could have healed the leper with a word, but instead used His touch. The leper wanted to be healed so that he could return to his community. He did not want to be alone anymore. Jesus saw one need in the disease, and the greater need in the heart. He let the leper know that His life had value whether he was ceremonially unclean with leprosy, or clean and restored.

Who in our society gets pushed out? What definition of people is constantly tossed aside and what are they looking for the most? Can we sit with people that might make society uncomfortable, or even at risk to ourselves and how people perceive us? Can we act in a way that shows that the person in front of us matters no matter how society, or more specifically the church and the religious, view them?

• Who in your life has God called you to touch? It is easy to reach out to people we know and are connected with. Who is pushed to the edges that needs healing, contact, support, or community? What can you do to reach out to that person? Share and Pray:

Beyond the Miracles of Jesus:

Jesus Heals the Paralytic: Matthew 9:1-8, Mark 2:1-12, Luke 5:17-26

Luke 5:17

17 Now on one of those days, while he was teaching, there were Pharisees and teachers of the law sitting nearby (who had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and from Jerusalem), and the power of the Lord was with him to heal.

Mark 2:1-12

Healing and Forgiving a Paralytic

1 Now after some days, when he returned to Capernaum, the news spread that he was at home. 2 So many gathered that there was no longer any room, not even by the door, and he preached the word to them. 3 Some people came bringing to him a paralytic, carried by four of them. 4 When they were not able to bring him in because of the crowd, they removed the roof above Jesus. Then, after tearing it out, they lowered the stretcher the paralytic was lying on. 5 When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven." 6 Now some of the experts in the law were sitting there, turning these things over in their minds: 7 "Why does this man speak this way? He is blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?" 8 Now immediately, when Jesus realized in his spirit that they were contemplating such thoughts, he said to them, "Why are you thinking such things in your hearts? 9 Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Stand up, take your stretcher, and walk'?" 10 But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins," - he said to the paralytic - 11 "I tell you, stand up, take your stretcher, and go home." 12 And immediately the man stood up, took his stretcher, and went out in front of them all. They were all amazed and glorified God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this!"

• With each miracle, we want to understand what is clear and obvious in the text, and then we want to reread each story to see if there are things to be understood that might not be easily seen. What do you see and understand from a straightforward reading of this story?

Here are some basic observations (Using the introduction from Luke and story of the Miracle itself from Mark):

(Luke 5:17) Notice that pharisees and scribes have come in to find out more about Jesus. His name and reputation were spreading, not only to people in need, but also the religious leaders.

(Mark 2:1-2) Jesus returned "home" which was most likely a return to Simon's house from Mark 1:29. After the healing of the not so quiet leper, Jesus had to be in more remote places to find space. Coming back home, the house was immediately surrounded by those seeking Him. In the house, Jesus was fulfilling His purpose to teach (see Mark 1:38-39) not just to perform miracles. The healings must have been a big part of the draw to bring in such large crowds, but Jesus used that opportunity to teach about eternal healing.

(v.3-4) A paralytic was brought in by four of his friends. With a large crowd around the house, there was no way to get him next to Jesus. “They dug up the compacted thatch and earth (no doubt dirt showered down on those inside the house below), removed the tiles, and lowered the man through the now-exposed beams to the floor below.” (Expositor’s Comm.) In just a few weeks, we have seen a growing faith of people in Jesus’ power: Mary at the wedding, the official travelling for His son, the many after sunset on the Sabbath, the Leper.

(v.5-11) Jesus had His focus on teaching, not just healing. He offered forgiveness of sins, which only God could do. This extension of forgiveness was an immediate red flag for the religious leaders. Jesus read and understood this then offered a difficult question.

Which is easier to do? Heal a paralytic or forgive sins? “Both were alike impossible to men and equally easy for God. To the teachers of the law, it was easier to make the statement about forgiveness because who could verify its fulfillment? But to say, ‘Get up ... and walk’--that could indeed be verified by an actual healing that could be seen.” (Expositor’s Comm.) The visible healing confirmed the unseen forgiveness of sins.

(v.12) They were “all” amazed. All includes the teachers of the law. This was something that even they had not seen nor expected.

• With these things in mind, reread the passage. Consider perspectives and angles you may not have noticed before. Consider the faith of the paralytic and his friends, and the religious leaders. Do you notice anything different now?

1) Faith of the friends: They had a confidence in the power of Jesus to be able to heal and went at great lengths to make sure their friend made it to Jesus. Sometimes we have to realize that our own friends may want to find Jesus for healing, but because of their burdens or situations, they may not be able to make it there on their own. It took four friends working together to help make this happen. When someone is in need, we can gather as a community to provide for them and work together to bring them to God’s healing, and more importantly, forgiving power.

2) The paralytic: We know that the friends in this story had great faith, but the paralytic must have too or else he would not have allowed them to take him at such great lengths. It does take a humble attitude to accept help when it seems like it would be a big ask to be restored. Many people today ask for “big favors” when it is of little inconvenience, and then prefer not to ask for help when it might be a burden. We, like the paralytic, must realize that we cannot solve all of our problems, and that we often need a community around us to help us get to where we need to be.

3) Skepticism of the religious leaders: This is the first of a series of 5 run-ins with Jewish leaders (Mark 2:1-3:6) Luke (5:17) says that they had come from “every village of Galilee and from Judea and Jerusalem.” “Obviously they were there out of more than curiosity; they hoped to be able to ensnare him on some theological point. Jesus’ statement about forgiveness gave them their opportunity... For anyone but God to claim to forgive sin was blasphemy. Since for the teachers of the law Jesus was not God, therefore he blasphemed. If they were right about who Jesus was, their reasoning was flawless. In Jewish teaching even the Messiah could not forgive sins. That was the prerogative of God alone. Their fatal error was in not recognizing who



Jesus really was--the Son of God who has authority to forgive sins. (Expositor's Comm.) Even in their skepticism and doubt, they saw what Jesus did and were amazed. There is a balance in looking at the world with a discerning eye, versus allowing our own knowledge and pride block our understanding of how God is working.

• **Looking Beyond the Miracle to Love like Jesus: While we may not be able to perform this miracle the way Jesus did, we are called by His new commandment to love as He loved. So what can we learn and apply to our lives? (Discuss your thoughts first)**

Jesus shows what is more important. Jesus' purpose was to teach, but He was empowered by His Father to perform great miracles (Luke 5:17). The miracle here is a gateway to telling truth. Sometimes we need to open doors through compassion, grace, unexpected forgiveness or humble, polite responses to anger. In doing those things, we create an opportunity to preach the gospel, which is our purpose.

While we may not help a paralytic to walk out of a room, we can help someone paralyzed with anger, fear, bitterness, sadness, loneliness, hopelessness, etc. find the strength to move again. With the help of friends walking them to the feet of Jesus, being a catalyst in them finding a way to release their past hurts and burdens, they will open up their hearts to receive the greater gift of being redeemed by the blood of Jesus. Forgiveness includes full restoration (Constable's Comm.) and while our purpose is the eternal life change, starting with a small miracle in the tangible life of a friend may open up the doors of their heart to the gospel.

• **What is it like when someone is paralyzed by hurts, past experiences, strong emotions? Have you experienced this or do you know someone who has? How can we walk with people through this and how do we bring them to the feet of Jesus? How can we get others involved? Share and Pray:**

Beyond the Miracles of Jesus:

Jesus Heals on the Sabbath: Matthew 12:9-14, Mark 3:1-6, Luke 6:6-11

Matthew 12:9-14

9 Then Jesus left that place and entered their synagogue. 10 A man was there who had a withered hand. And they asked Jesus, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?" so that they could accuse him. 11 He said to them, "Would not any one of you, if he had one sheep that fell into a pit on the Sabbath, take hold of it and lift it out? 12 How much more valuable is a person than a sheep! So it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath." 13 Then he said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out and it was restored, as healthy as the other. 14 But the Pharisees went out and plotted against him, as to how they could assassinate him.

Mark 3:1-6

Healing a Withered Hand

1 Then Jesus entered the synagogue again, and a man was there who had a withered hand. 2 They watched Jesus closely to see if he would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they could accuse him. 3 So he said to the man who had the withered hand, "Stand up among all these people." 4 Then he said to them, "Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath, or evil, to save a life or destroy it?" But they were silent. 5 After looking around at them in anger, grieved by the hardness of their hearts, he said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and his hand was restored. 6 So the Pharisees went out immediately and began plotting with the Herodians, as to how they could assassinate him.

Luke 6:6-11

Healing a Withered Hand

6 On another Sabbath, Jesus entered the synagogue and was teaching. Now a man was there whose right hand was withered. 7 The experts in the law and the Pharisees watched Jesus closely to see if he would heal on the Sabbath, so that they could find a reason to accuse him. 8 But he knew their thoughts, and said to the man who had the withered hand, "Get up and stand here." So he rose and stood there. 9 Then Jesus said to them, "I ask you, is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath or to do evil, to save a life or to destroy it?" 10 After looking around at them all, he said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." The man did so, and his hand was restored. 11 But they were filled with mindless rage and began debating with one another what they would do to Jesus.

• With each miracle, we want to understand what is clear and obvious in the text, and then we want to reread each story to see if there are things to be understood that might not be easily seen. What do you see and understand from a straightforward reading of this story?

Here are some basic observations. There are 3 versions across the synoptic gospels all with different details to note:

(Mt 12:9-10) All 3 accounts follow the disciples of Jesus picking grain to eat on the Sabbath. The work of harvesting was not allowed on the day of rest, but Jesus pointed out that the Son of Man has authority over the Sabbath. To follow up, the Pharisees wanted to see if Jesus would break Sabbath law again by healing.

(Mt 12:11-12 and Mk 3-5) Jesus uses the analogy of a sheep in danger on the Sabbath. No shepherd would leave their sheep in a pit just because it was the Sabbath. They would save their animal in need. Jesus is pointing to the importance of love and compassion over rules and regulation. When Jesus answered their question with a question that received no answer, He became angry at the hardness of their hearts. There was no room for compassion, no wiggle in their rules. In the Greek, His anger is in the past tense (He was angry when he looked at them) but His grief was in the present and ongoing (He was grieving because of the hardness of their hearts). "His question raised the issue of Sabbath observance from the level of what was legal to the level of what was moral. For Jesus not to heal the man would have been a violation of God's purpose for the Sabbath, namely, to bring blessing to people (cf. James 4:17)." (Constable's Comm.)

(Lk 6:10) All three accounts show Jesus healing instantaneously with a simple word. Notice that the faith of the man is not referenced in any version of this. He did not initiate, have to respond, or say anything of significance to be recorded.

(Lk 6:11) Luke is the only one that records the anger of the Pharisees. "He humiliated the religious leaders and healed the man all at the same time without even breaking the Pharisees' law. It is no wonder that the religious establishment was furious and sought a way to get rid of Him." (Constable's Comm.)

• With these things in mind, reread the passage. Consider perspectives and angles you may not have noticed before. Consider the faith of the Pharisees. Do you notice anything different now?

The pharisees operated in a faith that was the reaction to Israel's exile. They lost their promised land because God's people did not observe His law properly. The pendulum swung past a healthy observance of the law to a strict, over zealous regiment of obedience. The focus moved to the "what" must be done in the law and not "why" the laws were in place. While there was a command to observe the Sabbath, the call to do good, to save a life was an obvious priority above focusing the day on doing evil and destroying a life. Jesus is focusing on the restoration of a man, while the Pharisees were focused on defeating the momentum Jesus was building.

"There was only one answer that the religious leaders could give. It was lawful to do good and unlawful to do evil on the Sabbath. However, they refused to answer because their answer virtually would have given Jesus their approval to heal the man. They did not want to do that because they wanted to retain their traditional abstinence from Sabbath activities. Jesus proceeded to do good and healed the man's hand, but He did so without performing any physical work. There was nothing the critics could point to, as an act that Jesus performed, for which they could condemn Him." (Constable's Comm.)



• Looking Beyond the Miracle to Love like Jesus: While we may not be able to perform this miracle the way Jesus did, we are called by His new commandment to love as He loved. So what can we learn and apply to our lives? (Discuss your thoughts first)

Jesus not only had the ability to heal, as Lord of the Sabbath filled with God's power, but He did it without doing any physical work. A miraculous healing that miraculously left him blameless. It also left Him in a very negative light in the eyes of the pharisees. It was the work of a shepherd having no hesitation in caring for a sheep stuck in a pit that stood as an act of defiance to a leadership who maintained the letter and the culture of God's law.

In all three gospels, the passage before these stories show Jesus as the Lord of the Sabbath and the Lord over these laws. Following God's call to know what is good and to do it lovingly as He did may be an uncomfortable move against popular, and sometimes religious culture. Jesus was criticized for healing on the sabbath, sitting with sinners and tax collectors, and countered the religious culture by valuing the good Samaritan, protecting a woman caught in adultery, and more.

We can gain much guidance from spiritual leaders, lasting church culture, and a developed history. But even those things cannot, must not, become our priority. If maintaining our culture takes priority over God's call to love Him and others as Jesus did, something as beautiful as church itself can become an idol that deters us from being a light to the world. Our priority should always be God's call, the greatest commandments to love God with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength and to love our neighbors as we love ourselves. All the prophets and laws depend on these two things. Sitting with, healing, protecting people for God's glory as an example and extension of His love, this is what the laws were based on. If we focus too much on "what" the laws are, we miss seeing "why" the laws were put into place.

• What things do you see in the world that the church lives counter to? What things in church culture do you see that we are called to live past and break through? How have you felt called to do something that you were worried to do because of how it might be perceived? Share and Pray: