

LENT 2017

March 1 - April 15



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From Our Lead Pastor



Lent is a 40-day period (excluding Sundays) lasting from Ash Wednesday to Holy Saturday. For hundreds of years, many churches would set aside time during Lent to remember Christ's death on Good Friday and celebrate His resurrection on Easter Sunday. This year, Lent will last from 1 Mar to 15 Apr.

Lent was originally established for believers to contemplate on the unfathomable love of God and the excruciating pains Jesus endured to bring forgiveness and salvation to His redeemed people. Christians would set aside their busy routines and make space to hear from God. It was a time of prayer, fasting, reflection and repentance. During this period, believers would often practise various spiritual disciplines to draw closer to God. Over the centuries, many saints experienced wonderful personal encounters with the Lord and grew deeper in love with Him as they observed Lent.

As part of this year's emphasis to grow closer to God, we want to invite you on a journey to observe Lent and experience for yourself how traditional devotion exercises can help to build and strengthen your spiritual life. We believe that by creating space in our daily routines to meditate on God's Word and seek Him, He will meet us in a very personal way.

Blessings,

Pastor Lionel Goh

Lead Pastor
RiverLife Church

How Can I Participate In Lent?

During Lent, you are encouraged to set aside time daily to practise these spiritual disciplines:

- **Scripture Meditation.** Meditate on a passage of scripture each day. Use the weekly plan in this devotional to plan your Bible readings. Allow the Holy Spirit to speak through His Word, and journal what the Lord has spoken to you.
- **Fasting.** Fast consistently e.g. a meal each day, or three meals every Friday. Use fasting periods to worship and pray. Fasting can be more than just abstaining from food. It can also be abstaining from social media, TV, unwholesome entertainment, and trivial pursuits amongst others. You can decide the length, type and frequency of your fast with the Lord.
- **Being Aware Of God's Presence.** Be conscious of the Lord's Presence and obey His prompting daily, no matter where you are – at work, at school, at home or with friends.

Friday Evenings During Lent

On the last evening before He was betrayed, Jesus spent several hours communing with His apostles at the Last Supper. In the Upper Room, He shared some of His deepest desires for His disciples and His coming Church. Much of Jesus' passions were recorded in the Gospel of John (Chapters 13-17). The meditation of these scriptural passages will reveal Jesus' innermost thoughts and help us to know Him more intimately.

For five consecutive Friday evenings starting 10 Mar, there will be a service from 8-10.30pm that is contemplative in nature. These services are designed for both individuals and cells to encounter the Lord Jesus through meditating on various Bible passages from John 13-17, as well as sharing and praying in cells. To prepare your heart to hear from the Lord, you are encouraged to fast at least one meal (preferably dinner) on Fridays.



Programme

8.00pm Worship

8.20pm Short Devotion

8.50pm Guided Personal Contemplation

9.10pm Personal Response & Communion

9.25pm Cell Breakout Time

10.00pm Supper



Pulpit Schedule



Pastor Lionel Goh
Lead Pastor



Pastor Ben KC Lee
Focus On The Family



Dr. Andrew Goh
Elder

Week	Friday Evenings	Sunday Services
Week 1	10 March: John 13:1-17 Love Expressed In Action Pastor Lionel Goh	12 March John 13 Pastor Lionel Goh
Week 2	17 March: John 14:1-6 Comfort for Troubled Hearts Pastor Ben KC Lee	19 March John 14 Pastor Ben KC Lee
Week 3	24 March: John 15:1-8 The Blessings of Abiding Pastor Lionel Goh	26 March John 15 Pastor Lionel Goh
Week 4	31 March: John 16:16-22 A Little While Pastor Ben KC Lee	2 April John 16 Pastor Ben KC Lee
Week 5	7 April: John 17:20-26 May We Be One in Jesus Pastor Lionel Goh	9 April John 17 Pastor David Peters
Week 6	14 April, 9am Good Friday Service Pastor Lionel Goh	16 April, 9am & 11.30am Easter Evangelistic Services Elder Andrew Goh

Gospel Of John: Important Facts

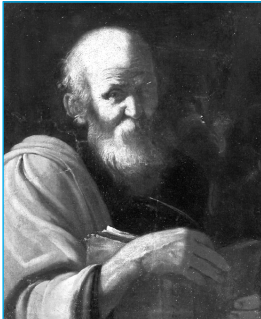
*Adapted from Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary, Volume 2 and
The NIV Application Commentary, Book 4.*

Occasion & Purpose

- To demonstrate that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, by presenting and commenting on seven selected messianic signs.
- To show that the Christian faith is universal, applying to Jews and non-Jews alike, and the only way to God.
- To equip believers for mission.
- To equip believers to share the good news with pre-believers.

Key Themes

- Jesus as the pre-existent, incarnate Word, the fully divine and human Messiah, the crucified and risen Saviour of the world.
- The Jewish rejection of Jesus the Messiah and the universal offer of salvation to everyone who believes.
- Believers' need to follow Jesus through obedient, committed, and faithful discipleship, realised through love and unity in the Christian community and dependence on the Holy Spirit.



In the aftermath of the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in AD70, the apostle John writes to show Jesus as the fulfilment of Jewish as well as universal human aspirations. John's purpose in writing this gospel is bound up with believing in Jesus and having life in His name. By presenting certain startling events in Jesus' ministry as evidence that Jesus is the long-awaited Messiah, John seeks to lead his readers to place their faith in Jesus.

In the early church, the Fourth Gospel was given the highest place of honor. Since it was thought to originate with the apostle (the Beloved Disciple) who was one of the closest to Jesus, it was esteemed as the most valuable Gospel. John offered a depth of insight that was unparalleled in the first three Gospels. At the time of the early church, heresies were widespread among the Christian communities, as the Bible had not yet been formed. Early Church fathers such as Irenaeus (c. A.D. 175) recognised that John's incarnational theology was an important resource against the sort of heresies being spawned in Christian-gnostic circles.

How To Interpret Scripture

Adapted from Grasping God's Word (J. Scott Duvall, J. Daniel Hays)

Some parts of the Bible are easy to understand, but much of it is not. Most Christians desire to understand all of God's Word, not just the easy portions. Many of us want to be able to dig deeper into that Word. We want to see and understand more of the biblical text. We also want to know that we understand the Bible correctly. That is, we want to be confident that we can pull the actual truth out of a text and not just develop an arbitrary, fanciful, or incorrect interpretation. We do not create meaning out of a text; rather, we seek to find meaning that is already there. Therefore, the process or the journey of interpreting Scripture is an important one. It is definitely hard work, but the rewards are beyond this world.



"Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened."

Matthew 7:7-8

Steps To Correct Biblical Interpretation

1. Begin by reading the text thoroughly and carefully.
 - Don't rush through the Word of God.
 - Ask the Holy Spirit to illuminate the Word to you.
2. Ask: What did the text mean to the original Biblical audience?
 - Using a Bible dictionary or commentary would help. Also, search for online resources (eg. Background for Gospel of John)
3. Ask: What are the differences and similarities between the Biblical audience and us?
4. Ask: What is the theological principle in this text?
 - The principle should be reflected in the text.
 - The principle should be timeless and not tied to a specific situation.
 - The principle should not be culturally bound.

- The principle should correspond to the teaching of the rest of Scripture.
 - The principle should be relevant to both the Biblical and the contemporary audience.
 - For the principle to be valid, it ought to “fit” or “correlate” with the rest of the Bible.
5. From the principle derived, how should one apply this principle into one’s life?
- Ask the Holy Spirit to examine your life in light of this principle.

An Example Of Scripture Interpretation

Passage: Joshua 1:1-9

1. Ask: What did the text mean to the Biblical audience?
 - The Lord commanded Joshua, the new leader of Israel, to draw strength and courage from God’s empowering presence. Joshua was to be obedient to the law of Moses and meditate on the law so that he would be successful in the conquest of the Promised Land.
2. Ask: What are the differences and similarities between the Biblical audience and us?
 - I am not a leader of the nation of Israel.
 - I am not under the Old Covenant.
 - I am not embarking on a conquest of the Promised Land.
 - I am desiring to claim my inheritance in God.
3. Ask: What is the theological principle in this text?
 - To be effective in serving God and successful in the task to which He has called us, we must draw strength and courage from His presence. We must also be obedient to God’s Word, meditating on it constantly.
 - The rest of the Bible (OT & NT) clearly teaches on obedience to God’s Word. It also affirms that God’s people can draw strength and courage from His presence.
4. From the principle derived, how should one apply this principle into one’s life?
 - Spend more time meditating on God’s Word by dedicating 30 minutes a day.
 - I will not be afraid and answer the call to serve in the Children’s Ministry.

Week 1: 1-4 March

"And the Word became Flesh and dwelt among us,
and we have seen His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father,
full of grace and truth." - **John 1:14**



THIS WEEK'S FOCUS

Understanding the context and background leading up to John 13.

SCRIPTURE READING

WED	01 Mar	John 1	Purpose Of John & The Calling Of The Disciples
THU	02 Mar	John 2	Signs Of The Christ
FRI	03 Mar	John 3	Jesus & Nicodemus
SAT	04 Mar	John 4-5	Authority Of The Son



Questions For Observation

1. Read John 1:1-5. From these verses, what do they tell you about the purpose of this book?
2. John 2: What was the reason for Jesus cleansing the temple?
3. Read John 3:3. What does Jesus mean when He tells Nicodemus, "You must be born again..."?
4. Read John 4:39-42. What was the reason for the Samaritans believing in Jesus?

Questions For Reflection

1. Jesus tells Nicodemus that he must be born again. Do you think that you are born again? Why or why not?
2. Read John 4:13-14. Are you still thirsting for water that does not come from Christ? Where are the alternative water sources in your life?
3. Many Samaritans were saved because of the woman's testimony. When was the last time someone connected to Christ because of your testimony?

Week 2: 5-11 March

"I am the Good Shepherd.
The Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep." - **John 10:11**

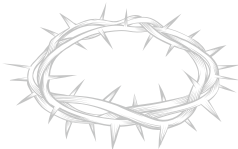


THIS WEEK'S FOCUS

Understanding the context and background leading up to John 13.

SCRIPTURE READING

SUN	05 Mar	Sabbath Rest	
MON	06 Mar	John 6	Further Signs
TUE	07 Mar	John 7	Who Is This Man?
WED	08 Mar	John 8-9	The Truth Will Set You Free
THU	09 Mar	John 10	The Good Shepherd
FRI	10 Mar	John 11	The Resurrection & The Life
SAT	11 Mar	John 12	The Triumphal Entry



Questions For Observation

1. John 8: What was the occasion for Jesus to make the remark, "the truth shall make you free..."? (8:32)
2. John 9: Do a bit of research on the history of a Pharisee.
3. John 10: What do you think is the role of a shepherd in the sheep's life?
4. John 11: Why do you think the Son of God wept? What do you think were His thoughts and emotions?
5. John 12: Imagine Jesus going into Jerusalem (vs. 23-13). What do you think were His thoughts as He entered into Jerusalem.

Questions For Reflection

1. Read John 6:66-68. If your prayers are not answered, if the life you dream about doesn't turn out the way you desire it to, if you lost something really precious to you..... if these things happened to you and God doesn't give you answers, would you still follow Jesus? Why?
2. Read John 10:10. What do you think this abundant life means for you? Do you think you are living this abundant life? Why and why not?
3. John 10:27 tells us that as the sheep in the sheepfold of Christ, we have the ability to hear His voice. Are you able to hear His voice?

Week 3: 12-18 March

"If you know these things,
blessed are you if you do them." - **John 13:17**

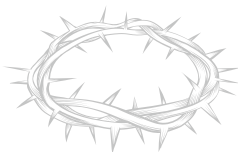


THIS WEEK'S FOCUS

Loving and serving one another.

SCRIPTURE READING

SUN	12 Mar	Sabbath Rest	
MON	13 Mar	Review the major events in the previous chapters	
TUE	14 Mar	John 13:1-6	The Washing Of Feet
WED	15 Mar	John 13:6-12	Peter's Response
THU	16 Mar	John 13:12-20, 34-35	Imitate My Love
FRI	17 Mar	John 13:21-30	Judas' Betrayal
SAT	18 Mar	John 13:31-38	Peter's Denial Predicted



Questions For Observation

1. What was the feast that Jesus and His disciples were celebrating? What is significant about this feast?
2. Read Luke 22:24-30. This incident happened during the passover, just before the washing of feet. Why do you think the disciples were arguing about who is the greatest?
3. According to Jesus, how are the disciples to love one another? What will the subsequent result be?
4. The apostle Peter was known as an important figure in the early church and the leader of the group of apostles. Why do you think John included the account of Peter's denial?

Questions For Reflection

1. Peter was extremely sure about his loyalty to Christ but yet he betrayed Jesus three times. What does this tell you about Peter's self-perception? Take some time to evaluate your commitment to Christ. Are there any blind spots of commitment?
2. We no longer practise the custom of feet washing today. What are some modern ways that we can "wash one another's feet"?
3. Judas would turn out to be the disciple who betrayed Christ. What do you think went through the mind of Christ as He washed Judas' feet? How can you follow the example of Christ towards someone that you struggle to love?

Week 4: 19-25 March

"Let not your hearts be troubled.
Believe in God; believe also in Me." - **John 14:5**



THIS WEEK'S FOCUS

Focusing on what it means to be rooted in Christ.

SCRIPTURE READING

SUN	19 Mar	Sabbath Rest	
MON	20 Mar	John 14:1-7	The Way, The Truth, The Life
TUE	21 Mar	John 14:8-11	Revelation Of God
WED	22 Mar	John 14:12-14	Greater Works
THU	23 Mar	John 14:15-17	The Promise Of The Holy Spirit #1
FRI	24 Mar	John 14:18-24	Christ's Death & Resurrection
SAT	25 Mar	John 14:25-31	Peace



Questions For Observation

1. What do you think Jesus meant when He said He is the Way, the Truth and the Life?
2. Read John 14:27. What is the difference between the peace of Christ and the peace of the world?
3. What is the title given to the Holy Spirit by Jesus in John 14:17? Why do you think Jesus gave the Holy Spirit that title?
4. Read John 14:23. The presence of God is assured when we keep the words of Christ. According to 14:26, how are we able to remember the words of Christ?

Questions For Reflection

1. Read John 14:13. In your opinion, is this a blank prayer cheque that Jesus mentioned here? Which of your prayers then, do you think is acceptable to God? Examine some of the prayers you have made over the years. Why do you think God has answered or not answered some of them?
2. Jesus promises the Holy Spirit to all believers. How has your relationship with the Holy Spirit been? What can you do to improve this relationship so that the words of Christ can be brought to remembrance each day?
3. In John 14:6, Jesus mentions that He is "the Life". What do you understand about having "the life"? Is there much difference between your understanding of "the life" and your reality? Why is that so?
4. In John 14:12, Jesus declares that those who believes in Him will do greater works than Christ. What do you think are some of the greater works which can happen in your life?

Week 5: 26 March - 1 April

"...apart from Me you can do nothing." - **John 15:5**

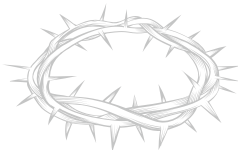


THIS WEEK'S FOCUS

Living in the Vine.

SCRIPTURE READING

SUN	26 Mar	Sabbath Rest	
MON	27 Mar	John 15:1	The Vine & The Branches
TUE	28 Mar	John 15:2-5	Attachment To Christ
WED	29 Mar	John 15:6	The Warning
THU	30 Mar	John 15:7-11	Asking & Joy
FRI	31 Mar	John 15:12-17	Love One Another
SAT	01 Apr	John 15:18-25	Relationship With The World



Questions For Observation

1. Jesus talks about the Father being the vinedresser. According to verse 2, what is the role of the vinedresser?
2. What is the context of "ask what you desire" in verse 7? (Look at 15:1-5)
3. What are the consequences of not abiding in Christ? (vs. 6)
4. Why did Jesus say the world would hate us? (vs. 19)

Questions For Reflection

1. "Greater love has no one than this - than to lay down one's life for his friends" How do you think you can emulate the love of Christ in your family, friendships and work place?
2. According to verse 6, branches that do not abide in Christ will wither. What does a "withered branch" look like for your life? What are some practical steps that you can take to ensure that that does not happen?
3. How can you practically abide in the love of Christ? (vs. 10)
4. Are you a servant, or a friend of Christ? What is the difference? (vs. 15)
5. "If you were of the world, the world would love its own." (vs. 19). In your life, are there areas that reflect more of the world than of Christ?

Week 6: 2-8 April

"I have told you these things, so that in Me you may have peace.
In this world you will have trouble. But take heart!
I have overcome the world." - **John 16:33**

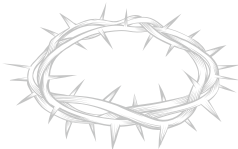


THIS WEEK'S FOCUS

Living as Christians in the world.

SCRIPTURE READING

SUN	02 Apr	Sabbath Rest	
MON	03 Apr	John 15:26-27	The Promise Of The Holy Spirit #2
TUE	04 Apr	John 16:1-4a	The Coming Suffering Of The Early Church
WED	05 Apr	John 16:4b-15	The Promise Of The Holy Spirit #3
THU	06 Apr	John 16:16-22	The Cross & Resurrection: Our Response
FRI	07 Apr	John 16:23-24	Asking In Jesus' Name
SAT	08 Apr	John 16:25-33	Courage In The World



Questions For Observation

1. According to verses 7-15, what is the role of the Holy Spirit?
2. Why do you think Jesus has to speak to His disciples figuratively? (vs. 25)
3. What do you think the context is for verses 22-24? Is this a universal principle that can be applied to all Christians? Why and why not?

Questions For Reflection

1. Jesus says that the Holy Spirit will convict the world of sin and of righteousness. When was the last time the Holy Spirit convicted you? What can you do to improve your relationship with the Holy Spirit?
2. In verse 33, Jesus tells His disciples that they will experience tribulations. This came to pass when the early church underwent an enormous amount of persecution from the Jews and the Romans. In our modern life, what does "persecution" look like? How do you think you should approach it?
3. What do you think Jesus meant when He says, "I have overcome the world..."? What is the implication of this statement to our everyday living as Christians?

Week 7: 9-15 April

"It is finished!" - John 19:30

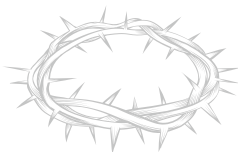


THIS WEEK'S FOCUS

Looking at His heart, His sacrifice and His ultimate victory.

SCRIPTURE READING

SUN	09 Apr	Sabbath Rest	
MON	10 Apr	John 17:1-19	Glorify Thy Son
TUE	11 Apr	John 17:20-26	Those Who Would Believe
WED	12 Apr	John 18:1-14	The Betrayal
THU	13 Apr	John 18:15-40	The Denial Of Peter
FRI	14 Apr	John 19:1-42	The Crucifixion
SAT	15 Apr	John 20:1-31	The Resurrection



Questions For Observation

1. In 17:4, Jesus said that He has "finished the work the Father has given Him to do...", and yet He has not gone to the cross. In your opinion, what was this "finished work"?
2. Read 18:15-18, 18:25-27. If you were Peter, how would you feel having denied Christ three times? Why?
3. According to 19:26, who was the only disciple at the crucifixion? Why do you think He came to the crucifixion and not the others?
4. Read 20:1-10. What do you think Scripture meant when it says, "he saw and believed"?
5. What do you think were the thoughts and emotions of the disciples when they first saw Christ after the crucifixion?

Questions For Reflection

1. John 17 happened just before the arrest of Christ and His subsequent crucifixion. What does it reveal to you about the heart of Christ? What consumes Him the most? How can you emulate this in your daily life, your family and friendships?
2. Read 18:3. This scenario describes Judas coming with troops and officers to arrest Jesus. After witnessing all the miracles of Christ, and hearing all His teachings, Judas still betrayed Him. How do you think Judas came to this point? What can we learn from Judas to apply into our everyday life?
3. There will come a day when all of us will stand before Christ and see Him face to face. In that day, all that we have believed in and all that we have lived for will prove to be true. Reflect on that very moment when you will meet Jesus face to face. What do you think will be your thoughts and emotions?

Alternative Bible Reading Schedule

This is an alternative Bible Reading Schedule for those who wish to cover all four Gospels during the Lent period.

WED	1 MAR	Matt 1-3	FRI	24 MAR	Lk 7-9
THU	2 MAR	Matt 4-6	SAT	25 MAR	Lk 10-12
FRI	3 MAR	Matt 7-9	SUN	26 MAR	Sabbath
SAT	4 MAR	Matt 10-12	MON	27 MAR	Lk 13-14
SUN	5 MAR	Sabbath	TUE	28 MAR	Lk 15-16
MON	6 MAR	Matt 13-14	WED	29 MAR	Lk 17-18
TUE	7 MAR	Matt 15-16	THU	30 MAR	Lk 19-20
WED	8 MAR	Matt 17-18	FRI	31 MAR	Lk 21-22
THU	9 MAR	Matt 19-20	SAT	1 APR	Lk 23-24
FRI	10 MAR	Matt 21-22	SUN	2 APR	Sabbath
SAT	11 MAR	Matt 23-24	MON	3 APR	John 1-2
SUN	12 MAR	Sabbath	TUE	4 APR	John 3-4
MON	13 MAR	Matt 25-26	WED	5 APR	John 5-6
TUE	14 MAR	Matt 27-28	THU	6 APR	John 7-8
WED	15 MAR	Mk 1-3	FRI	7 APR	John 9-10
THU	16 MAR	Mk 4-6	SAT	8 APR	John 11-12
FRI	17 MAR	Mk 7-9	SUN	9 APR	Sabbath
SAT	18 MAR	Mk 10-12	MON	10 APR	John 13-14
SUN	19 MAR	Sabbath	TUE	11 APR	John 15-16
MON	20 MAR	Mk 13-14	WED	12 APR	John 17-18
TUE	21 MAR	Mk 15-16	THU	13 APR	John 19-20
WED	22 MAR	Lk 1-3	FRI	14 APR	John 21
THU	23 MAR	Lk 4-6	SAT	15 APR	1 Cor 15

The Nicene Creed

In a time when the Bible was not yet available, creeds were used and recited in the early churches to remind believers of their beliefs and to protect the church from heresies.

WE BELIEVE in one God, the Father, the Almighty,
Maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father.
Through him all things were made.

For us and for our salvation
He came down from heaven:
by the power of the Holy Spirit
He became incarnate from the Virgin Mary,
and was made man.

For our sake He was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
He suffered death and was buried.
On the third day He rose again
in accordance with the Scriptures;
He ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and His kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son.
With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified.
He has spoken through the Prophets.
We believe in one holy catholic (universal) and apostolic Church.
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come.

Amen.

Recommended Resources

An Introduction To The Gospel Of John

<http://www.biblica.com/bible/online-bible/scholar-notes/niv-study-bible/intro-to-john/>

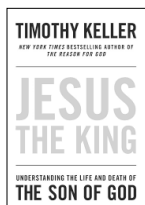
<http://www.york.edu/fewheel/John/Essays/PDF/johnback2.pdf>

Christology Resources

<https://www.biblicaltraining.org/library/christology-synoptics/biblical-theology/van-pelt-blomberg-schreiner>

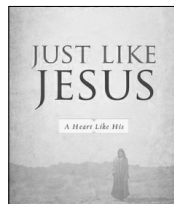
<https://thoughtsofalivingchristian.wordpress.com/2011/09/27/christology-in-the-fourth-gospel/>

Resources Relating To The Life Of Christ



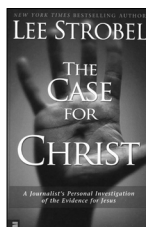
Jesus The King

This book takes an in-depth look at the gospel of Mark on the life and death of Christ.



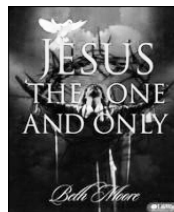
Just Like Jesus

The author skillfully applies humorous analogies and down-to-earth wisdom to reflect on what it means to become more Christlike.



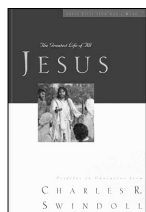
The Case For Christ

A journalist's personal investigation into the evidence for Christ. A powerful book written by an atheist-turned-Christian journalist.



Jesus - The One & Only

Based primarily on the book of Luke, this Bible Study is a careful examination of the life of Christ, done in 11 sessions over 77 daily studies.



Jesus: The Greatest Life Of All

This fascinating biography, filled with biblical and historical insights, takes you on an unforgettable journey through the complex and provocative life of Jesus of Nazareth.