

October Answers

- 1) [October 1] Mary stayed with Elizabeth for **three** months after Gabriel announced the conception of Jesus, and when she returned home, it wasn't long before her family and friends realized she was pregnant. Joseph also learned of her pregnancy, and he was very upset. He and Mary were **betrothed**, a legal pledge to marry that only a divorce writ could break, and infidelity at that stage was considered **adultery** (cf. Deut 22:23–24). He finally decided to divorce her privately, and as he was thinking about it, God revealed what he should do. This teaches us several lessons: (1) When we don't know what to do, we can count on God to guide us and keep us from making a **mistake**, (2) When we're wronged, we should search for a way to be both just and **merciful**, (3) When we're frustrated and anxious about a decision, we can **rest** in knowing that God is working behind the scenes to accomplish His will. Joseph took Mary as his wife, and she remained a **virgin** until she gave birth. The only fanfare for this momentous occasion was an announcement to some nearby **shepherds**. Joseph named his son Jesus, a common name that came from "**Joshua**" (lit. "Yahweh saves"). Never had that name been more fittingly given, for Christ came to seek and to save those who are lost! (Luke 19:10). Matthew and Luke both recorded Jesus' ancestry. Matthew's genealogy showed that Jesus was qualified to be the Messianic King—He was a Jew, a descendant of Abraham, and He was from the **royal** line of David (cf. Isa 9:6–7). Luke's genealogy showed that Jesus was qualified to be our Kinsman Redeemer—He was a **man**, a descendant of Adam, but He was also the son of God (Luke 3:22–23).
- 2) [October 2] Of all the stories God could have told us from Jesus' childhood, He chose to share the one about Jesus being separated from His parents. This story shows us that: (1) from an early age, Jesus recognized that He was God's **Son**, (2) Jesus had a desire to **learn** everything he could about God, and (3) Jesus was **submissive** and obedient to his parents. Even as a boy, Jesus was leaving us an **example** so we could follow in His steps. The years flew by, and finally, in the spring of 29, John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness preaching a baptism of **repentance** for the forgiveness of sins. John was the messenger written of by **Isaiah**, "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight'" (Luke 3:4). The connection between repentance and straight paths teaches us that sin **hinders** God's work in our lives. John challenged his fellow Jews: 'You claim to be God's people, but your lives don't show any **fruit**!' When they asked him what they should do, John told them to clothe the naked, feed the poor, deal honestly with others, and love their neighbor. This is exactly what God had been calling them to do for hundreds of years (cf. Isa 58:5–6), and it reminds us to **love** our neighbor.
- 3) [October 3] The Spirit **led** Jesus to be baptized (Matt 3:13), and there are several reasons for this: (a) it allowed John to fulfill his role as the Messiah's **herald** (Isa 40:3–5), (b) it allowed Jesus to publicly **identify** with the outward sign of the inward work that He would soon accomplish, (c) it allowed Jesus to **endorse** John's baptism, bearing witness to it, that it was from God, and (d) it provided the setting for God to **announce** the beginning of the Son's ministry as the Suffering Servant (Luke 3:22–23) and for the Spirit to **empower** Jesus to fulfill his Messianic mission (Luke 4:1). Before Jesus began to preach, God **tested** Him and Satan **tempted** Him. If God tested His own Son and allowed Him to be tempted, we can expect no less. Even Jesus "**learned** obedience through what he suffered" (Heb 5:8), for as the God-man, he had a human nature which could resist the leadership of the Spirit (His **body** wanted to eat when the Spirit was leading Him to fast). Jesus' ordeal in the wilderness teaches us several lessons about temptation: (a) it often comes after a time of spiritual **victory** or renewal (Mark 1:11–12), (b) it strikes when we are **weak** and is aimed at our weaknesses (Matt 4:2–3), (c) it offers a **sinful** way to accomplish righteous ends (Matt 4:6), (d) it often contains a grain of **truth** that has been twisted in order to deceive us (Matt 4:6), and (e) it should always be resisted with the

truth of God's Word (Matt 4:7).

- 4) [October 4] The temple courts were crowded with thousands of visitors during the Passover, and the religious leaders allowed money changers (the temple tax had to be paid in silver **Tyrian** coins) and merchants (many people could not bring their own **animals**) to set up shop in the Court of the Gentiles. Eventually the court was so full of merchants that the Gentiles found it difficult to worship and pray. No wonder Jesus was angry! The Spirit **led** him to forcibly clear the temple court, but the fact that the Romans did not intervene shows that he did not start a **riot**. He was firm and forceful, but he was not cruel or hateful or out of **control**. This teaches us that if we have zeal for God's house, we will not remain **silent** when others pervert its purpose. Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus teaches us several important truths about God's Kingdom: (a) it is proclaimed by the **prophets** (cf. Ezek 11:19–20; 36:25–27), (b) it is entered by spiritual **rebirth**, not physical descent, (c) its citizens **believe** in the Son of God and **practice** the truth, and (d) it is present now in the **hearts** of those who are born of the Spirit. Jesus' conversation with the Samaritan woman teaches us a lot about witnessing: (1) Jesus followed the leadership of the Spirit and **initiated** contact (she would have ignored him), (2) he didn't allow his **weariness** to keep him from talking to her, (3) he used the **physical** setting (well water) as a stepping stone to present spiritual truth (living water), (4) he appealed to her **curiosity** and focused on her need at the same time, (5) he didn't argue with her about their ethnic and **theological** differences, (6) he presented her with the good news of the **gospel**, (7) he spoke candidly to her about her spiritual **condition**, (8) he explained the spiritual **unity** that exists between those who worship in the Spirit, (9) he didn't allow her to **procrastinate**, (10) he didn't let his **disciples** keep him from witnessing, and (11) he didn't mind that his **plans** were changed, for he stayed and ministered in Samaria.
- 5) [October 5] From the beginning of His preaching ministry, Jesus challenged the Jew's assumptions about God's kingdom. He said, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; **repent** and **believe** in the gospel" (Mark 1:15). This was troubling because the call to repent seemed out of place. The Jews were the descendants of Abraham; surely their inclusion in the kingdom was **certain**. Why did they need to repent? Jesus explained to them, as he did to Nicodemus, that the kingdom is first and foremost a **spiritual** kingdom in which the Messiah rules in the hearts of those who believe Him and accept Him as Lord. Only those who were born of the **Spirit**, as Ezekiel prophesied, would **enter** the kingdom and be a part of its establishment on earth in the last days (Ezek 11:17–20). The earthly kingdom was coming, and it would indeed be a worldwide kingdom of peace, but it was "at hand" in the sense that the Messiah had come to **suffer** and **bear** the sins of many (Isa 53:3–6). This must be done first, for Isaiah had prophesied that the Messiah would pour "out his soul to **death**" before Jerusalem would sing for joy over her children (Isa 53:12; 54:1).
- 6) [October 6] Jesus had a **healing** and exorcism ministry in the region of Galilee. This fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah: "He took our **illnesses** and bore our **diseases**" (Matt 8:17; Isa 53:4a). This teaches us that certain aspects of Jesus' earthly ministry were **unique** to his role as the **Servant** spoken of by Isaiah (Isa 42:1–4; 49:1–6; 50:4–9; 52:13–53:12). As Jesus' disciples, we're not called to **duplicate** Jesus' ministry. Instead, we're called to **follow** the leadership of the Holy Spirit and **do** the work God has for us to do. In the middle of a successful ministry in Capernaum, Jesus left early in the morning, while it was still **dark**, and went away to a secluded place where he could **pray** (Mark 1:35). He did this **regularly** (Luke 5:16), and his example is something we should follow. As disciples, it's imperative that we **listen** to God's Word each day and **respond** to what He has said. This is how to have a vibrant, healthy relationship with God.
- 7) [October 7] Jesus' third **sign** was the healing of a sick man at the pool of **Bethesda**. The man's sickness was the result of his **sin**, for Jesus later told him, "Sin no more, that nothing **worse** may

happen to you” (John 5:14). This teaches us that one of the ways God deals with sin is with **sickness** and physical infirmity. We need to take sin as **seriously** as God does; otherwise, we may end up like the man at the pool. Note that Jesus healed the man in **spite** of his sin. This shows us that God is merciful and compassionate, not willing that any should perish. Jesus also dealt with the root **cause** of the man’s sickness. This teaches us that God never leave us in our sin. He forgives and restores, and then He **enables** us to live a holy life. When the Pharisees accused the disciples of breaking the Sabbath by plucking **grain** (they considered this to be **reaping**), Jesus gave them two OT examples of someone who broke the Sabbath law and yet was blameless (1 Sam 21; Num 28:9–10). In both cases, the Sabbath law was superseded by something **greater** which took precedence. In David’s case, it was a matter of **survival**, for he and his men needed their strength to escape from Saul. In the priests’ case, it was a matter of **duty**, for they were required to offer daily sacrifices in service of the temple. If temple service took precedence over Sabbath law, then service to **Jesus** took even greater precedence, for He was greater than the **temple** (Matt 12:6). Jesus wanted the Pharisees to understand that the Law was made for **man**, not man for the **Law**, and there were times when the Law rightly stepped **aside** to make room for something greater.

- 8) [October 8] The first part of Jesus’ sermon on the mount. Jesus began with a series of blessings and woes which showed the people **who** would be a part of the kingdom of God. It would not be the rich, the well-fed, the laughing, or the popular. Instead, it would be those who were poor in **spirit**, hungry for **righteousness**, weeping over **sin**, and **persecuted** for their faith. From the beginning of His sermon, Jesus wanted the people to understand that it was the condition of their **hearts** that really mattered. Inner purity, not outward appearance, was the mark of a true citizen of the kingdom. Jesus then encouraged the people to be **salt** and **light** to the world. They were to act in such a way that their faith would be seen by all. At this point, Jesus could no doubt sense the people’s silent question: ‘Aren’t those who keep the Law approved of God and sure to enter the kingdom?’ Jesus addressed this question, for He wanted them to understand that He had not come to abolish the Law but to **fulfill** it, and He prefaced His answer with a startling statement: “Unless your righteousness **exceeds** that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matt 5:20). Jesus explained that the Pharisees indeed kept the Law, and even added laws of their own, but their **hearts** were far from God. They didn’t murder, but they did **hate**; they didn’t commit adultery, but they did **lust** after their neighbor’s wife; they didn’t divorce illegally, but they did **twist** the Law in order to get rid of a wife they didn’t like; they didn’t make false vows, but they did craft their speech to **avoid** keeping their word; they didn’t let crime go unpunished, but they did return **evil** for evil; they didn’t hate those who were good to them, but they did hate their **enemies**. In each case, Jesus revealed how the scribes and Pharisees missed what the Law was all about. The Law was meant to show them how to love God and others, but they had twisted it to suit their own selfish desires.
- 9) [October 9] The rest of Jesus’ sermon on the mount. First, Jesus told the people not to practice their righteousness before men to be **noticed** by them. Instead, they should give and pray and fast in **secret**. This teaches us that good deeds should flow out of **gratitude** for what God has done for us, not out of a desire to be praised by men. If we’re not doing good to please God, then we’re doing it to please **ourselves**. Second, Jesus told the people not to **worry** about their lives, what they would eat or drink or wear. Instead, they should seek first God’s kingdom and His righteousness, and all the rest would be given to them. This teaches us to overcome the worries and anxieties of life by remembering that God has **promised** to meet our needs. If we put Him **first** and remain committed to Kingdom ministry, God will take care of our physical, earthly needs. Third, Jesus told the people not to judge and condemn each other. Instead, they should pardon freely and give abundantly. This teaches us not to have a **critical** spirit toward others. Instead of finding fault with them and refusing to pardon their offenses, we should treat them with the **mercy** and kindness that we would want

them to treat us. Fourth, Jesus told the people to be fruit **inspectors**, for there would be many false prophets who would come to them “in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves.” This teaches us that it’s both necessary and appropriate to **judge** whether a person’s behavior and teaching is right or wrong. There’s a big difference between spiritual vigilance and a harsh, fault-finding spirit. We should be as loving as we can, while at the same time we should be careful to avoid false doctrine. Lastly, Jesus told the people that they should not call Him ‘Lord’ and then **ignore** his commands. They could do many great deeds in His name, but if they didn’t heed his words, they would never enter the Kingdom of heaven. This teaches us that it’s easy to claim to be a disciple of Jesus, but the proof is found in faithful **obedience** to His commands.

- 10) [October 10] When Jesus “marveled” at the **great** faith of the centurion, He was amazed by the **quality** of the man’s faith, not the quantity. Many people believed Jesus could heal, and large crowds followed Him, but the centurion not only believed, he **reasoned** correctly about the implications of Jesus’ power. He recognized that when Jesus spoke, it was with God’s **power** and **authority**. That meant that Jesus didn’t need to **come** to his house. Jesus could simply **say** the word and his slave would be healed. This teaches us that “great” faith reasons correctly and draws necessary **inferences** from what God has said. John the Baptist struggled with **doubt** while he was in prison. His doubt came from the fact that Jesus’ ministry did not meet his **expectations** (cf. Matt 3:10). Jesus responded by telling John that the Scriptures concerning the Messiah were being fulfilled, for **healing** and **salvation** must precede judgment (cf. Isa 61:1–2). This teaches us the importance of keeping our expectations grounded in God’s **Word**. The remedy for doubt is to **soak** ourselves in Scripture. We must allow what God has said to permeate our minds and **transform** our thinking.
- 11) [October 11] The story of the sinful woman and the Pharisee is fascinating. At some point in the recent **past**, the woman had encountered Jesus and her “many” sins had been **forgiven** (cf. Luke 7:47a). When she heard that Jesus was at Simon’s house, she showed her **love** and **gratitude** by anointing Jesus’ feet. Simon condemned Jesus in his heart for not seeing what the woman was, but Jesus revealed that Simon was the one who was **blind**. He told Simon a parable to illustrate that those who have been forgiven **show** it by their gratitude and love. Simon had not offered Jesus the common courtesies due a guest, yet the woman had. Jesus’ point was clear: the woman’s love was a **sign** that her sins had been forgiven, while Simon’s **rudeness** was a sign that his sins had not been forgiven. This teaches us that love and gratitude **flow** out of a heart that has been cleansed from sin. If there’s no love and gratitude, it’s a sure sign that there has been no **forgiveness**. It also shows us the seriousness of sin. Some have sinned more than others, but in the end, we have all sinned, and thus we have all been forgiven much. We should therefore all love **much**.
- 12) [October 12] Jesus taught the people using **parables**, not because they were the clearest form of teaching, but because parables were not readily **understood**. He did this in order to fulfill Scripture: “I will open my mouth in parables” (Matt 13:35; Ps 78:2) and “You will indeed hear but never understand, and you will indeed see but never perceive” (Matt 13:14–15; Isa 6:9–10). Jesus was led by the Spirit to speak in parables so the truth would be **hidden** from those who didn’t want to see, yet **open** to those who did. Although Jesus’ disciples didn’t always understand every parable, they got better with **practice** (Matt 13:51), and Jesus told them, “To you has been given the **secret** of the kingdom of God, but for those outside everything is in parables” (Mark 4:11). This teaches us the importance of having a heart that is open to the truth. Indeed, the parable of the soils makes that very point, and it teaches us that there are forces at work which try to keep God’s Word from bearing fruit. First, Satan and his demons try to keep the Word from taking **root** in people’s hearts. This shows us that we must be **persistent** in our efforts to win the lost. Second, affliction and persecution try to **uproot** the faith of new believers. This shows us that we must be diligent to

disciple and care for those who are newly saved. Third, the worries and riches and pleasures of life try to **choke** the faith of believers. This shows us that we must be on **guard** against the deceitfulness of riches and the busyness of life. If we want to be good soil, those who hear the Word with an honest and open heart, then we must hold fast to the Word, water it with obedience, and persevere to the end by faith.

- 13) [October 13] After Jesus calmed the storm on the Sea of Galilee, He turned to His disciples and said, “Why are you **afraid**, O you of little **faith**?” (Matt 8:26). To our way of thinking, it’s perfectly natural to be afraid when you realize your boat is about to sink in a huge storm in the middle of a lake! Jesus, however, rebuked their fear and attributed it to a lack of faith, for faith **reasons** correctly and draws necessary **inferences** from what God has said. Jesus told them, “Let us go across to the other side” (Luke 8:22). That meant they would get there safely, for Jesus would not command them to do something that He would not **enable** them to perform. Just as Jesus later told Peter, “Come” and rebuked him for his lack of faith (Matt 14:29–31), so Jesus told His disciples “**go**” and rebuked them for their lack of faith (Mark 4:35–41). Faith draws the right **conclusions** from what God has said. Faith believes that when God says “go,” there is no need to **fear**, for God will make a way. When they reached the shore, they were met by two men who were demon-possessed. The demons controlled their bodies and provoked them to **violence, nakedness**, and self-mutilation. Satan strips his victims of their clothes, for he knows that nakedness is **shameful** (cf. Gen 3:7, 21; Isa 47:3). After Jesus cast out the demons, the men were at rest, clothed and in their right minds. This teaches us to be modest in what we wear, for if we’re not careful, we will be tempted to dress in a way that brings shame to us and to **Christ** (1 Tim 2:9).
- 14) [October 14] It had been about a **year** since the people of Nazareth tried to murder Jesus. In love and mercy, he returned one last time to preach the gospel. This shows us that God is **longsuffering**, not willing that any should perish. Sadly, the people took **offense** and refused to believe. Jesus couldn’t do any miracles except for healing a few sick people. This teaches us several important lessons. First, **pride** can keep us from accepting the ministry of others. We need to be careful lest we be offended when someone who was no different than us yesterday becomes something **more** today (Mark 6:3). Second, false **expectations** can be our downfall. We need to make sure our assumptions and beliefs about God are **grounded** in the Word. If they’re not, we can be staring truth in the face and never see it. Third, unbelief can frustrate God’s grace. If our hearts are not humble and submissive to God’s will, we can **prevent** the Spirit from working in our lives. After leaving Nazareth, Jesus sent the twelve disciples out to preach the gospel to “the lost **sheep** of Israel.” This commissioning story has much to teach us about ministry. First, our ministry must be motivated by **compassion** (Matt 9:36). If we don’t have love and compassion for people, we will not be successful in ministry. Second, our ministry will involve **suffering** (Matt 10:22). We shouldn’t be surprised when we experience **persecution** and mistreatment, even by those who claim to be disciples. Third, our ministry must not be controlled by **fear** (Matt 10:28). We must stand **boldly** for the truth and not to be intimidated into saying only what people want to hear.
- 15) [October 15] The feeding of the five thousand. Jesus and His disciples were so busy they didn’t have time to **eat** (Mark 6:31). When they tried to get away for a rest, the crowds figured out where they were going and got there ahead of them! Instead of being angry or frustrated, Jesus had **compassion** on them. He began to teach and heal the sick. This teaches us that ministry requires a **sacrificial** giving of ourselves to others. There will be times when we must put our own needs and desires on hold in order to help those God sends our way. When evening came, the disciples asked Jesus to send the crowds away so the people could find food in nearby towns. To their astonishment, Jesus said, “They need not go away; **you** give them something to eat” (Matt 14:16). As they stood there in consternation and confusion, Jesus asked **Philip**, who was from nearby

Bethsaida, “Where are we to buy bread so that these may eat?” Jesus knew what He was going to do, but He asked the question in order to **test** Philip and the other disciples. Jesus was hoping they would say, “Master, we can’t feed all these people. We don’t have the money or the resources. But we do have **you**, and we know that with you **all** things are possible. Tell us what you want us to do, and we’ll do it.” (Lord, give me such faith!) Instead, the disciples focused on what they **didn’t** have, and they missed the fact that the Creator of the universe was standing right in front of them. This shows us how easy it is to forget that we have God. In Him is all the grace and power and strength we need to be victorious.

- 16) [October 16] Jesus’ discourse in the synagogue in Capernaum. The crowds asked Jesus, “Rabbi, when did you get here?” Jesus could have told them that he got there early in the morning by walking across the Sea of Galilee (a sign if ever there was one). Instead, he exposed their true motive. They were seeking him, not because they saw the sign of the loaves and believed, but because they had been filled and wanted more bread. Jesus challenged them to work “for the food that endures to eternal life.” This teaches me that my motive in seeking Jesus is important. If I come wanting him to make my life easier and more comfortable, I’m in for a big surprise. I must come in faith and repentance, not in greed and self-centeredness. The crowds then tried to bait Jesus into performing another miracle: “Then what sign do you do, that we may see and believe you? Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness” (hint, hint)! Jesus answered by telling them that he was the “true bread from heaven.” In reply they said, “Sir, give us this bread always!” Jesus then told them how they could have this bread. First, they must be drawn by the Father, for “no one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him.” At that very moment, the Father was drawing them, for Jesus had just said that he was the one “who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.” Second, they must respond in faith to the Father’s call. Jesus had given them a sign that he was the Messiah, but they would not believe: “You have seen me and yet do not believe” (John 6:36). Third, they must obey the will of the Father. They must be looking on the Son and believing in him (John 6:40). If they would believe in the Son, they would be accepted by the Father. The Father would then give them to the Son, and they would never be lost or cast out, and the Son would raise them up on the last day (John 6:39). This teaches me that your grace is offered to everyone. You are drawing the entire world to yourself through Christ (1 Tim 2:4; Tit 2:11). Those who believe in Jesus and have a present, living faith are held in your mighty hand, and “no one is able to snatch them out” (John 10:29).
- 17) [October 17] Jesus told the Pharisees: “You are **experts** at setting aside the commandment of God in order to keep your **tradition**” (Mark 7:9 NASB). The traditions of the elders had originally been put in place as **guardrails** to keep people on the road of **righteousness**. As time passed, the elders emphasized their traditions more than God’s commands, and soon they took **precedence** over the Word. At that point, rather than keeping people on the right path, the traditions **invalidated** Scripture and **guided** people away from God’s will. This teaches us that people have a tendency to **honor** their own rules above God’s Word. If we’re not careful, we can fall into this same trap, and it will lead to what Isaiah said: “This people honors me with their **lips**, but their **heart** is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrine the commandments of **men**” (Mark 7:6–7). The **Gentile** mother with the demon oppressed daughter stands in sharp contrast with the **Jews** who refused to believe in Jesus. Imagine, here was a “**Canaanite** woman,” someone the Jews considered unclean, yet she called Jesus, “Son of **David**,” showing that she believed him to be the **Messiah** (Matt 15:22)! Jesus had just spent months reaching out to the Jews, teaching and preaching in their synagogues, healing their sick, and they had rejected him in **unbelief**. Here, in Gentile country, he ignored the woman’s cry for help, called her a “**dog**,” refused to give her the “children’s bread” (Mark 7:27), and instead of leaving in anger or unbelief, the woman **persisted** in faith. She agreed that the Jews must come **first**, but she added that the Gentiles should **benefit** from their blessings

(Matt 15:27). Jesus must have been smiling as he said, “O woman, **great** is your faith! Be it done as you desire.”

- 18) [October 18] No sooner had Jesus returned to Jewish territory than the Pharisees and Sadducees again asked for a **sign**. Their question revealed their unbelief, for Jesus had performed **many** signs. What made it even worse was that they understood the signs which predicted the **weather**, but they refused to see the signs which confirmed Jesus to be the **Messiah** (cf. Isa 53:4). This teaches us that unbelief is not due to a lack of **evidence**. Rather, it is due to the sinfulness of the human **heart**—people don’t **want** to believe. Jesus warned his disciples about the “leaven” (the insidious **teachings**) of the Pharisees, but they thought he was rebuking them for not bringing any **bread**. Their lack of **faith** frustrated Jesus, for they had seen him feed the crowds **twice**, yet they were still worried about running out of food! This teaches us that we need to recognize the connection between what God has **done** and what He will **do**. He has met our needs in the **past**, and we can trust Him to take care of us in the **future**. At Caesarea **Philippi**, Jesus asked his disciples, “Who do **people** say that I am?” After hearing the various opinions, Jesus asked, “Who do **you** say that I am?” Peter answered, “You are the **Christ**, the **Son** of the living God” (Matt 16:16). Jesus responded, “You are Peter (**petros**), and on this rock (**petra**) I will build my **church**.” Jesus agreed with Peter’s confession and declared that his church would be built on that foundation, that is, on **himself** as Messiah and Son of God (the cornerstone) and also on **Peter** and the **apostles** (who bore witness that Jesus was the Christ; see Acts 4:11; Eph 2:20; 1 Pet 2:5–7).
- 19) [October 19] The transfiguration was significant for several reasons: (1) it was the **fulfillment** of Jesus’ prophecy that “there are some standing here who will not taste **death** until they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom” (Matt 16:28); (2) it was the only visible display of Jesus’ **divinity** during his earthly ministry, and it was seen by **three** men who then testified as “**eyewitnesses** of his majesty” (2 Pet 1:16; Deut 17:6); (3) it showed Jesus’ supremacy over **Moses** (the Law) and **Elijah** (the prophets); (4) it confirmed Jesus as God’s final and superior **Spokesman** (Heb 1:1–2), for he was the culmination and fulfillment of everything that had come before (Matt 5:17). For all the grand theological and Christological motifs that are present in the transfiguration, there is also a strong emphasis on **discipleship**. God said to the three disciples, “This is my Son, my Chosen One; **listen** to him!” (Luke 9:35). The revelation of Jesus as God’s Son means that we owe him our **attention**, our **allegiance** and our **obedience**. Those who have the privilege of hearing Jesus’ message must **heed** his words! (Heb 2:2–3; 10:28–29). After Jesus exorcised the demon which the disciples could not cast out, they came to him **privately** and asked what they had done wrong, for they had cast out demons before (Mark 6:7, 13). Jesus’ answer, the need for more **faith** and **prayer**, teaches us not to give up in the face of **resistance**. The disciples expected the demon to come out **immediately**, and when it did not, they faltered. They needed to learn the importance of **persisting** in faith and invoking God’s power through prayer. If they did, their faith, like a mustard **seed**, would grow from a tiny speck into a large tree, and it would enable them to accomplish great things for God.
- 20) [October 20] The disciples began to argue about who was the greatest soon after Jesus told them about his coming **passion**. Jesus was thinking of suffering and **death**; the disciples were thinking of prestige and **position**. Jesus spoke of laying down his **life**; the disciples spoke of gaining future **power**. As an object lesson, Jesus called a little **child** and set him in their midst. “Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matt 18:3). Jesus was not calling them to childishness of thought, but to **humility** of mind, for children are not caught up in debates over greatness, nor do they have lofty dreams of power. This teaches us that **greatness** is defined in terms of humility. The model for true discipleship is the simple humility of a child. In the same way that a child exemplifies a lack of **pride** and concern for **status**, we must put thoughts of greatness aside and labor to serve others. When Jesus wanted to illustrate **forgiveness**,

he told his disciples about a man who had been forgiven a great **debt**. He wanted them to understand that they should forgive others because **God** had forgiven them. When we refuse to forgive, we **despise** God's forgiveness and **scorn** His love. Is there anyone we need to forgive?

- 21) [October 21] Jesus said, "If anyone's **will** is to do God's will, he will **know** whether [my] teaching is from God" (John 7:17). This teaches us that submission to God's will is the foundation for understanding **truth**. If we're committed to **obeying** God's Word, then the Spirit will **guide** us to the truth (John 16:13). Jesus told those who believed him, "If you **abide** in my word, you are truly my **disciples**, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you **free**" (John 8:31–32). This teaches us that abiding in Christ means **obeying** what he says (John 15:10). A true disciple of Jesus **accepts** his teaching and faithfully **carries** out his commands.
- 22) [October 22] Jesus sent **72** of His disciples to preach in the towns He was about to visit. When the disciples returned, they excitedly told Jesus that "even the **demons** are subject to us in your name!" Jesus' reaction is fascinating. Instead of asking how many had believed or how many demons they had cast out, Jesus told them to rejoice in their **identity**, not their activity. This teaches us that **who** we are in Christ is more important than what we achieve in ministry (Luke 10:20). Success is not about numbers or position; it's about faithfully **obeying** the One who called us to labor for the kingdom. Jesus' interaction with the lawyer who came to test Him teaches us several important lessons: 1) the Law can be summed up in two commands: love **God** and love **others** (Matt 22:40); 2) it's not enough to know what is right; we must also **do** what is right (Luke 10:28); 3) the Law is more concerned with showing **love** than strict adherence (Luke 10:31); 4) being a neighbor is about loving others, not about setting boundaries; when we see a need, we should take **action** (Luke 10:37).
- 23) [October 23] The Pharisees consistently received Jesus' harshest rebukes, for they were the religious leaders of the people, and they were leading them **astray**. Jesus' woes to them teach us that: a) if we disregard **love** for God and **justice** for others, then our strict adherence to God's other commands is vain; b) if we refuse to seek **inward** cleansing and purity, then our outward washing is useless; c) if we act like a godly person while still clinging to self and sin, then our influence will **contaminate** others; d) if we honor those who reject God's Word, then our praise **endorses** their wickedness; e) if we demand **more** than God's Word requires, then our teaching hinders others; f) if we proclaim our own **ideas** instead of expounding Scripture, then our preaching has taken away the key to knowledge—God's Word.
- 24) [October 24] Jesus gave sight to a man who had been blind from birth (John's **sixth** sign). This story teaches us several important lessons: 1) While all physical defects can be traced back to the **fall**, not every infirmity is the direct result of an individual's sin. The disciples' question about the man's guilt revealed their thinking to be as wrong as Job's **friends** (Job 4:7–8). 2) God delights to heal the damage caused by sin, but not every infirmity is meant to display His power. Some ailments are **frequent** and recurring (1 Tim 5:23), while others are for God's **glory** (John 9:3). 3) Jesus put clay on the man's eyes, but his sight was not restored until he **went** to the pool and **washed**. True faith always demonstrates itself by **obedience** to what God commands (James 2:22). 4) Jesus deliberately "**worked**" on the Sabbath (He made clay) in order to restore the man's sight. He did this to expose the spiritual **blindness** of the Pharisees, who refused to believe in him as the Messiah (John 9:22). There are none so blind as those who will not **see**. 5) The Pharisees threw the man out of the **synagogue**, but the One who was greater than the synagogue welcomed him in. Those who are seeking the truth will find to their delight that the **Truth** is seeking them!
- 25) [October 25] Jesus ministered in **Perea**, the region of Israel to the east of the Jordan River. As He was passing through the towns and villages, teaching and making His way back toward Jerusalem,

someone asked Him, “Lord, will those who are saved be few?” Jesus’ answer teaches us: 1) we must be actively **striving** to enter the Kingdom. Saving faith is the **attitude** of a lifetime, not merely the act of a moment. Eternal life in Christ is the present possession of those who have a present, **living** faith; 2) the many who “will seek to enter and will not be able” refers to those who witnessed Jesus’ **earthly** ministry and yet did not believe (Luke 13:26). It also refers to the **Jews** throughout history who trusted in their ancestry and law-keeping to be right with God. The Jews were indeed “first” in the sense that they had been chosen from among the nations to be God’s special people. Yet they would find themselves “last” and the **Gentiles** first if they did not repent and put their faith in Jesus.

- 26) [October 26] The parable of the dishonest manager teaches us: 1) a final reckoning is coming, and we must act **now** in order to be prepared; 2) our money can be used to bring others into the Kingdom (e.g., **tithing**, giving to **missions**, **supporting** those who labor for the Kingdom, being **hospitable**, etc.; Gal 6:6; 3 John 1:8). These brothers and sisters will encourage and **support** us as we follow Christ, and at the judgment, they will bear witness that we used our money wisely; 3) only those who show themselves trustworthy with very **little** (earthly riches which are passing away) will be trusted with much (eternal riches); 4) serving **God** means using our money to advance the Kingdom, while serving **money** means hoarding our wealth and spending it on ourselves. The parable of Lazarus and the rich man teaches us: 1) those who are **wealthy** are not necessarily right with God. Indeed, the **poor** are more likely to be righteous, for it is hard for the rich to enter the Kingdom; b) there is a real place of **torment** that awaits the wicked. It is full of **fire**, **thirst**, and **darkness**, and those trapped within gnash their teeth in an anguish of **memory** and regret; c) there is a real place of **peace** that awaits the righteous. It is full of **comfort**, **joy**, and good things, and those who rest there are filled with happiness and **delight**; d) the key to convincing the ungodly to repent is the truth of God’s Word, not a supernatural **event** or **sign** (Luke 16:30; 1 Sam 28:8–25). People reject God, not because they can’t see the light, but because the light reveals their **sin**.
- 27) [October 27] In the story of Jesus healing ten lepers in a border town between Galilee and Samaria: 1) The racial and social **barriers** between Jews and Samaritans had been set aside because of the affliction the lepers shared. Everyone is **equal** at the foot of the cross, for we all need Jesus’ cleansing touch; 2) Jesus didn’t heal the lepers and then send them to the priest. Instead, He told them to **go**, and “as they **went** they were cleansed.” His command carried the implication that they would be healed, but they had to **believe** and **act** before they were cured. True faith takes action in **obedience** to God’s Word; 3) Only a Samaritan, a “foreigner,” returned to give thanks and praise to God. The other lepers were glad for the gift, but they did not value the **giver**. A grateful heart comes from recognizing how **unworthy** we are and how worthy God is. The Pharisees tested Jesus by asking him about divorce. His response teaches us that: a) Genesis is a record of **actual** historical events; b) Adam and Eve were a **real** man and woman; c) God designed marriage to be the **union** of one man and one woman—they become “one **flesh**”; d) Marriage is meant to last for **life**; e) Certain sins can **shatter** a marriage; f) Divorce is a last **resort**, and it must be never be done lightly or without explicit grounds; g) Moses’ law concerning divorce was meant to **protect** women, not give men an excuse to satisfy their flesh.
- 28) [October 28] The rich young ruler believed eternal life could be obtained by what he **did**, and he was especially interested in some good **deed** that would guarantee his place in the Kingdom. Jesus asked him: “Why do you call me good? No one is good except **God** alone.” Jesus was trying to help him see that goodness is not something that can be achieved by an effort of the **will**. It comes only by being **united** with the source of goodness—God. If the man truly believed the **implication** of his words—if he really thought that Jesus was God—then he would want to be Jesus’ **disciple**. But the young man didn’t see Jesus’ point, and so Jesus continued by talking in terms of what the man was focused on: “what must I do.” Jesus told him to “**keep** the commandments” and listed those which dealt with

relationships with others. He concluded with a summary statement, “You shall **love** your neighbor as yourself” (Lev 19:18). Jesus used the **law** to remind the young man of the importance of love, for his real problem lay in the fact that he loved his **possessions** more than he loved God and others.

- 29) [October 29] Zacchaeus is a fascinating contrast to the rich young ruler. Jesus told the ruler to “sell **all** that you have,” while Zacchaeus was permitted to sell only **half**. Jesus told the ruler to “come, and **follow** me,” while Zacchaeus was allowed to **stay** in Jericho. Jesus told His disciples, “How **difficult** it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!” yet Zacchaeus, who was “rich,” entered with ease. Both men had taken the initiative to see Jesus, yet one went away sorrowful while the other was filled with joy. Why? What was the difference? Here are some that come to mind: (1) Zacchaeus had a keen awareness of his **need**, while the rich young ruler was focused on his good works, (2) Zacchaeus freely acknowledged his **sin**, while the ruler proclaimed his righteousness, (3) Zacchaeus was sorry enough to repent and make **restitution**, while the ruler was only sorry enough to leave in grief and self-pity, (4) Zacchaeus freely **shared** his wealth with the poor, while the ruler kept his wealth for himself, (5) Zacchaeus loved **God** more than his money, while the ruler loved his money more than God. What a contrast! Zacchaeus, more than many other characters in the NT, demonstrated the kind of attitude that God longs to see in the hearts of His children. If we want to be welcomed into the Kingdom, we must imitate the simple faith and love of Zacchaeus!
- 30) [October 30] Jesus’ entry to Jerusalem. We call it the “**triumphal** entry” because of the crowd who praised Jesus as the Messiah. Yet Jesus **wept** when He saw the city, and His disciples did not understand that He had come, not to expel the Romans, but to **die** a cruel death on the cross. Jesus took great care in fulfilling what **Zechariah** had prophesied about Him almost 550 years before (Zech 9:9). He did not enter Jerusalem on a white horse with an army marching behind Him, nor did He come in pomp and splendor. Instead, the righteous Savior came in **gentleness** and **peace**, and He came to do His Father’s **will**. His tears were not for Himself, but for the city who did not see the day of its salvation. When the Gentiles asked to see Jesus later that day, Jesus said, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be **glorified**.” He knew that like a kernel of wheat, He must die if His life and mission were to be fulfilled. The same is true for us. If we are to “bear much fruit” for the Kingdom, we must die to ourselves and our old **way** of living. Being a disciple of Jesus means rejecting the desires of the flesh and yielding each moment to the desires of the Spirit. If Jesus could say ‘Yes’ to a horrible death on the cross, how can we say ‘No’ when God calls us to follow in Jesus’ steps? Jesus told his disciples to “believe in the **light**, that you may become sons of light” (John 12:36). This teaches us that God wants us to be a disciples of the light. Our lives are to be a light to the world, and when we shine brightly for God, others will see the true Light **through** us.
- 31) [October 31] Jesus saw a fig tree in leaf and expected to find some **paggim** that would satisfy his hunger, but the tree had none. The tree looked like it was bearing fruit (it had leaves), but its appearance masked its **barrenness**. Jesus, led by the Spirit, cursed the tree, *not* because it had no fruit, but because it made a **show** of life that promised fruit, yet was bearing none. In this way the fig tree was a **symbol** of all who make a show of loving God but are spiritually barren. This is a stern reminder to us of the importance of **works**, for faith without works (without fruit) is dead (James 2:17). The disciples were amazed at how quickly the fig tree died (by the next **morning**). Jesus said, “Have **faith** in God...if you have faith and do not **doubt**...whatever you ask in prayer, you will receive, if you have faith.” (Mark 11:22; Matt 21:21–22). Jesus was not saying that we can have **anything** we want as long as we really believe, nor did He mean that we will receive **immediate** answers to all our prayers. Rather, Jesus was calling us to believe and obey God’s Word. If we act and pray in accord with the **Spirit**, God will grant our request. We must not doubt, for when we ask something in Jesus’ name and in **harmony** with God’s will, God will accomplish His purpose (John 14:12–14). But we

must also be patient and **wait** on God's timing, for as Abraham discovered, the time between God's promise and His answer may be long indeed (Gen 18:11–14). A study of the various Scriptures on prayer reveals that there are **conditions** to effective praying. We must **forgive** others (Mark 11:25), we must not pray with **selfish** motives (James 4:3), and we must ask only for those things that are in **harmony** with God's will (1 John 5:14–15). To pray effectively, our faith should be in **God**, not in the object of our requests.