

The Day they met Jesus
By Brian Berger

One:

*The Magi Met Jesus
and WORSHIPPED*

Two:

*John the Baptist met Jesus
and POINTED EVERYONE TO HIM*

Three:

*Simon met Jesus
and CONFESSED HIS SIN*

Four:

*A woman caught in sin met Jesus
and IS SAVED*

Five:

*A woman met Jesus at a water well
and STARTS A REVIVAL*

Six:

*A rich young man met Jesus
and WALKED AWAY SAD*

The Inspiration

The Goal

*Adults connecting with children through story
 Children introduced to the real Jesus through story
 Adults learning how to receive the kingdom as a
 child*

*...He said to them,
 "Let the little children come to me,
 and do not hinder them,
 for the kingdom of God
 belongs to such as these.*

*Truly I tell you,
 anyone who will not
 receive the kingdom of God
 like a little child
 will never enter it."*

*And he took the children in his arms,
 placed his hands on them
 and blessed them.*

Mark 10:14 NIV

The Magi met Jesus and worshiped

Have you ever been to a birthday party and brought a really great present! I bet when it came time for the birthday girl or boy to open their gifts, you were probably SO excited for them to see what you got them!

Those are the kind of gifts you give to someone really close to you, someone you really know and really like!

Can you imagine giving the most valuable thing you own to someone for their birthday? What if I said you'd give it to someone you had never met before?

Does that sound crazy? That's exactly what happens in our Jesus-story today.

Let's find out what happened on the day when a group of men called **“the Magi” met Jesus.**

In a land far east of Isreal—there lived some very wise men called Magi.

These were the smartest, most educated men in their country. They studied the stars and read ancient scrolls. They observed the world and its religions so that they could gain wisdom and to try to help people know god.

The Prayer

*Father,
we want to let the children come to you.
Show them your glory.
And let the children teach us adults
how to receive the Kingdom of God.
Amen*

If Kings in their land had to make important decisions, they would ask for advice from the Magi. If people had questions about god or needed guidance in their life, they would ask the Magi.

Year after year, their wisdom and knowledge grew as they studied, observed and added more and more notes to their library of knowledge.

Now one of the scrolls in their library had a very interesting history.

The King of Persia and the king of Babylon had both written decrees that were sent out to all people in their kingdoms. Both decrees said that their people should never disrespect the God of Israel. All people were to honor this God, always.

So the Magi were familiar with the Israelites and the honor that their God had earned.

In these scrolls, it told of an Israelite slave named Daniel who became the trusted advisor to the king of Babylon. Daniel wrote many things about a powerful king who would some day be sent from his God, the "Son of Man" he called him.

Daniel had written that God had promised that his kingdom would last forever and that the Son of Man would rule over all nations and all people in every part of the world!

One quiet night, as the Magi were looking up at the stars, they saw something different- something that made them wonder, "what is God trying to tell us?"

There was a new star in the sky, but not just a regular star. This one was different—more brilliant than the others.

One of the Magi grabbed his scroll and began reading frantically. His finger traced down the ancient words from a prophet of Israel: "A star will come out of Jacob; a scepter will rise out of Israel."

Another Magi heard this and looked up from his notes, his eyes wide. "A King's scepter?" he said. "A star out of Israel?" He hustled to the window to see the star again. It sat in the sky to the west, right...over...Israel.

"This is it," one of them whispered. He looked up to the sky, "This is the sign - The King has been born!"

Another Magi looked at the others and said "The Son of Man."

After all of these years of wondering if this was true. After all of the anticipation. They were convinced that the God of Israel was telling them: *My King has come!*

"The promised king that will rule forever and for all people has been born?" they said. "We must go to Him. We must worship!"

So they began to prepare for the long journey to the west. To Jerusalem, the capital city of Israel. They packed up their

food and chose their most precious treasures to bring as gifts.

The journey would be dangerous and long— but if they weren't stopped by bandits or buried by the sandstorms, they would get to see and give their gifts to the Son of Man, the Savior of the World.

The journey was very long.

The days were hot, and the nights were lonely, but the star remained in the west and it kept their hopes alive through the difficult trip.

Week after week, they traveled. Each night around the fire, they'd pull out their scrolls and discuss what they've read.

"He will be a light to the nations," one would say.

"He will bring peace," another would add.

"He will rule forever,"

After months of traveling, they finally saw a city on the horizon.

"Jerusalem!" one of the Magi cried out, pointing.

They steered their camels towards the city, excitement building in their chests.

Surely the celebration had already begun. They imagined the streets filled with hope and laughter and worship and songs.

The great temple in Jerusalem was likely filled with sacrifices and gifts for the king.

With hopeful hearts, they entered the city gates.

Confusion hit them as they entered the streets. People were going about their normal lives—buying food, working. Nobody seemed excited, in fact, the opposite. People looked beat down and were talking to each other as those who were suffering. There was not even a hint of celebration.

The Magi stopped people in the marketplace. "Excuse me," they said. "Where is the one who has been born King of the Jews? We saw His star when it rose and have come to worship Him."

People stared at them in confusion. "A new King? No. There's no new king here but King Herod. He lives there in the palace."

The Magi looked at each other, concerned. How could these people not know?

Word spread quickly through the city: foreign wise men were asking about a new king. And when King Herod heard about it, he was NOT happy.

Soldiers came and escorted the Magi to the palace. They were brought before King Herod himself—an old man with a cruel face.

"Welcome" Herod said with a fake smile. "Tell me about what brings you to the west."

The Magi, not understanding the danger of Herod's power and jealousy, told him everything. "We've seen His star! The prophecies said a King would be born—the Son of Man! We've traveled for months to find Him and worship Him!"

Herod's jaw clenched as he listened.

"How fascinating," he said smoothly. "Let us help you find him." He turned to his own advisors—the priests and teachers who knew the Jewish Scriptures. "Where is the Messiah to be born?"

The priests answered immediately, "Bethlehem, your majesty. The prophet Micah wrote: 'But you, Bethlehem, though you are small, out of you will come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.'"

Herod's hands clenched the arms of his chair. Wanting to yell in anger at hearing these words read aloud, he was smarter than that. He put on a fake smile and turned to the Magi.

"Go to Bethlehem and find the child." And when you find Him..." Herod paused, carefully choosing his next words, "Come back and tell me exactly where He is, so we can worship the new king."

The Magi bowed respectfully and left.

Bethlehem was a short trip from the city. The Magi arrived shortly after speaking with the king.

"There!" one of the Magi shouted, pointing. The star rested above a humble stable. It was not the kind of house you'd expect for a king. In fact, it was the opposite. It was a house for animals. There were sheep and donkeys and a floor covered in dirt and hay.

They dismounted from their camels, hearts pounding. They glanced at each other with a bit of fear in their eyes.

They opened the door and saw a young mother, holding her child. Smiling. Her husband stood up to greet the men. "Did the shepherds send you?"

"No." they shook their heads. "We saw his star. A star will rise from Jacob, a scepter..." the magi stopped speaking when he caught a glimpse of the child. He went to his knees immediately.

The others joined him, bowing their heads. It was quiet. You could hear one of the men begin to cry.

The young mother smiled, not surprised by the reaction. She'd seen it before when she was visited by the shepherds. She got up and brought the child to him. "He is Jesus" she said proudly. "In our language, it means 'God's Salvation'"

One of the men began to recite the words of Daniel concerning the child as he laid his gold before him. "He was given authority, glory and sovereign power;"

The other magi followed, laying frankincense before the child, he continued reciting the scriptures as he laid his gift

before Jesus. "all nations and peoples of every language worshiped him."

Another of the magi brought myrrh to the child. "His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed."

The child's mother, Mary watched all of this with wonder, tears streaming down her face. Her husband came to embrace her.

God was really doing exactly what He said He would do.

That night, as the Magi rested in Bethlehem. In a dream that night, one of the Magi was warned by an angel, "Do not go back to Herod. He wants to kill the child. Go home a different way."

So the men traveled home without revisiting Jerusalem.

Weeks later an army of King Herod's soldiers entered the small town of Bethlehem to destroy Jesus, but Mary and Joseph had already taken him to safety.

This is what happened when

THE MAGI MET JESUS...AND WORSHIPED.

Time for Wonder

Adults:

Allow the children to reflect on the story

Freely and honestly.

Try not to teach them how to think about Jesus as an adult.

*Rather, think about what you can learn from
how this child sees Jesus.*

How did that story make you feel?

What parts did you really like?

*What do you think Mary was feeling when she saw
the Magi worshiping her baby?*

*How do you picture the Magi's faces when they
came all that way and finally saw the child that
they were searching for?*

*What would you think if you saw a bright new star
in the sky?*

*Why did king Herod get so mad when he heard
why the magi had come to Jerusalem?*

What else did you learn from the story?

Hide these verses in your Heart

*He was given authority, glory
and sovereign power;
all nations and peoples of every language
worshiped him.*

*His dominion is an everlasting dominion
that will not pass away,
and his kingdom is one
that will never be destroyed.*

Daniel 7:14

*They saw the child
with his mother Mary,
and they bowed down
and worshiped him.*

Matthew 2:11a

*That at the name of Jesus every knee
should bow, in heaven and on earth
and under the earth,
and every tongue acknowledge
that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.*

Philippians 2:10-11

John the baptist met Jesus... and pointed everyone to him!

Have you ever had the thoughts, "I want to be famous when I grow up," or "I want to have a lot of followers," or "I want the people at school to pay attention to me" ?

Well, today's story is about a man who became incredibly famous—thousands and thousands of people followed him and everyone was paying attention to what he had to say—but he did something that nobody ever does.

He gave it all away. He pointed all of his followers towards someone else. Can you imagine?

Today, we're going to hear what happened on the day that **John the Baptist met Jesus.**

Remember the story of Jesus being born in Bethlehem? How the wise men—the Magi—came to worship him? Well, King Herod wanted to kill baby Jesus, so Mary and Joseph took him and escaped to Egypt. They lived there until it was safe to come back. Then they settled in a tiny, unimpressive town called Nazareth, way up in the northern part of Israel.

But all along, there was another story happening. Another miraculous baby had been born around the same time. His name was John.

And now, about thirty years later, these two babies had grown into men with special callings from God—special jobs that God was sending them to do.

And they were about to meet.

Out in the wilderness, east of Jerusalem, near the Jordan River, people started talking.

"Have you seen him?" they whispered in the markets.

"Have you heard of him?" they asked at the synagogue.

There was a preacher. And he seemed to come out of nowhere.

He didn't dress like the teachers in the city. He didn't wear the fine robes of the priests. He wore clothes made of camel hair—rough, scratchy animal skins—and a leather belt around his waist. He looked like he'd been living in the mountains, surviving on locusts and wild honey.

Some people thought he might be one of the Essenes—the "mountain people" who had left the cities years ago to wait for the Messiah. They lived with almost nothing, way up in the hills, away from the Romans who controlled everything, away from the temple and the markets.

The Essenes had made a vow: they wouldn't come down from the mountains until the Messiah arrived.

So when this wild preacher showed up near Jerusalem, people wondered: *Why is he here? What does his message mean?*

And then they heard him preach.

"Repent!" his voice boomed across the wilderness. "The kingdom of heaven is near! The light that gives light to everyone is coming into the world!"

People stopped what they were doing. They left their homes, their shops, their fishing boats. By the hundreds—no, by the *thousands*—they traveled out into the wilderness to see this man and hear his message.

It had been 400 years since Israel had heard from a prophet of God. Four. Hundred. Years. Some people wondered if God had given up on them. If he'd forgotten his promises.

But now? Now there was this preacher, this man named John, and he was saying that God was about to do something BIG.

Some people even wondered if John himself might be the Messiah. His reputation was growing so fast! Could he be the promised king who would save them from the Romans? The one who would lead Israel to be faithful to God without fear of war and violence?

But John was quick to set them straight.

"No!" he said. "I am not the Messiah. I am the one Isaiah the prophet spoke about—'A voice of one calling in the

wilderness, make straight the way for the Lord!' The Messiah is coming, and I'm here to prepare you for him!"

John's message was simple but powerful: *Repent. Turn away from your sin. Get ready to meet the King.*

"There's good news coming," John told them, "but you must be ready to receive it! You don't want to be stuck in sin and rebellion when the righteousness of God arrives! You don't want to be afraid of him—you want to celebrate him!"

The prophet Malachi had promised that God would send a messenger before the Messiah came, someone who would "turn the hearts of the parents to their children, and the hearts of the children to their parents."

That messenger was John.

Month after month, people kept coming. Those who responded to John's message—those who wanted to make themselves ready—went out into the Jordan River where John was preaching, and he baptized them. It was a symbol of repentance, a pledge to follow the coming King.

The rich and powerful people thought John was foolish and offensive. But the poor, the ordinary people, the fishermen and farmers and tax collectors—they found him inspiring.

And all along, John kept saying the same thing:

"I'm not the one you're waiting for. There is someone coming after me who is better than I am. He was before me—he's been here since the beginning. He has a more important job than I do. He's the one who will save the world from sin."

John would look out at the crowds and say, "I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire! I'm not even worthy to untie his sandals! When he comes, I must become less so that he can become greater. You must not follow me—you must follow *him*."

The crowd would listen, hanging on every word, wondering: *Who is this person John keeps talking about?*

Then one day, everything changed.

John was busy preaching and baptizing in the Jordan River, as usual. The crowd was gathered on the banks, some wading into the water to be baptized, others watching and listening.

And then a man showed up at the edge of the water.

John stopped mid-sentence.

He just... stopped. And stared.

The crowd looked at each other, confused. Some of them had been following John for months, and they'd never seen him like this. His eyes were wide. His mouth hung open slightly.

Who was this man who could make John the Baptist stop preaching?

Then John's eyes filled with tears.

"Here he is," John said, his voice shaking with emotion. He pointed at the man. "He's the one. When I said that someone

was coming, someone so great that I'm not even worthy to untie his sandals—*this is him.*"

The crowd turned to look. The man didn't look that impressive. He was about thirty years old, dusty from traveling, ordinary-looking.

But John kept talking, his voice getting louder, more excited.

"Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! The one who is the light that gives life to all people! I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit! I must decrease so that he can increase!"

The man John was pointing to was Jesus of Nazareth.

The Messiah.

The same baby the wise men had worshiped in the manger was now a thirty-year-old man, and it was time for him to begin the mission God had sent him to earth to complete: to save the world from sin. To bring God's kingdom to earth.

Jesus walked down to the water's edge.

"John," Jesus said calmly, "I want you to baptize me."

John's eyes went even wider. "What? No! Jesus, I need to be baptized by *you*! Why are you coming to me?"

But Jesus insisted. "Let it be this way for now. It's right for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness."

So John agreed.

Jesus waded out into the Jordan River. John baptized him, lowering him under the water and raising him up again.

And then—something incredible happened.

As Jesus was praying, heaven opened up. The Holy Spirit descended on him in the form of a dove—a real, visible dove that everyone could see.

And then a voice—a VOICE—came from heaven. Deep. Powerful. Unmistakable.

"You are my Son, whom I love. With you I am well pleased."

The people on the banks of the river stood frozen, their mouths hanging open. Some fell to their knees. Others backed away in fear.

Who *was* this man? What was he here to do?

John stood in the water, tears streaming down his face, his heart full of joy.

This was the moment he'd been preparing for his entire life. The reason God had sent him into the wilderness to preach. The reason he'd lived such a strange, difficult life.

Not to be famous. Not to build a following. Not to become rich or powerful or successful by the world's standards.

But to point people to Jesus.

Time to Wonder

*How did that story make you feel?
 Were there any parts that you really liked?
 What do you think you would have thought
 of John if you went out to see him?
 What would your friends think of John if he
 showed up at your school?
 How do you picture John's face when saw Jesus?
 Why was John so impressed with Jesus?
 How do you think he felt when Jesus asked him to
 baptize him?
 Why did he say, "he must decrease so that Jesus
 would increase?"*

Hide these verses in your Heart

*A voice of one calling:
 "In the wilderness prepare
 the way for the LORD;
 make straight in the desert
 a highway for our God."
 Isaiah 40:3*

*The next day John saw Jesus
 coming toward him and said,
 "Look, the Lamb of God,
 who takes away the sin of the world!"
 John 1:29*

*We are therefore Christ's ambassadors,
 as though God were making
 his appeal through us.
 We implore you on Christ's behalf:
 Be reconciled to God.
 2 Corinthians 5:20*

Simon Peter meets Jesus and confesses his sin!

Have you ever done something bad and you really don't want people to know? Especially people you respect!

Maybe you said something mean to your sister and she yells out, "Mom!" You're immediately scared because you don't want your mom to hear about the bad thing you said. You respect her.

Or maybe you do something embarrassing at school and you don't want the other kids to know, especially the kids you want to impress!

Well the strange thing about today's Jesus-story is, someone meets Jesus and is incredibly impressed with his power and goodness, but instead of hiding his failures, he blurts it out straight to Jesus. "I'm a failure!"

Who is this man that met Jesus? He was a fisherman. His name was Simon.

All night long, Simon had been on the sea fishing. It's what they knew best. They knew where the fish were, and they made their living, finding those fish, dropping their nets, and hauling in the fish so they could sell them at the market.

Simon and his friends had been out on the sea all night. They hit all their spots but they couldn't find the fish. Not a single one.

As Simon pulled up empty nets time and time again he had a lot on his mind. One, where are we going to find fish tonight? But another thought that kept running through his mind was, who is Jesus?

You see, a few weeks ago, something strange happened. Simon's younger brother Andrew had been following a wild preacher named John the Baptist—a mountain man who wore camel hair and ate bugs and told everyone that God was about to do something BIG.

One day, Andrew came running to find Simon, completely out of breath, his eyes wide with excitement. "Simon! SIMON!" Andrew grabbed his brother by the shoulders. "We found him! The Messiah! The one John's been talking about! His name is Jesus!"

Simon and his brother had heard the stories their whole lives. God was going to send a king—THE KING—who would change everything. Set the world right. Defeat their enemies. Bring God's kingdom to earth.

Could it really be happening? Now? In THEIR lifetime?

Andrew dragged Simon to meet Jesus. And when Jesus looked at Simon, Simon felt known. Like Jesus knew everything about him. The good and the bad. Without even

saying a word Simon felt awkward feeling so known, but there was something else he was feeling. Love. Being seen by Jesus felt like being loved.

"You are Simon, son of John," Jesus said with a smile. "But you will be called Cephas"—which means Rock.

In English, Cephas is called Peter. Jesus had given Simon a new name. Like God was starting something new in his life.

But then... Jesus left to travel around Galilee. And Simon went back to fishing.

And now, as the sun began to rise over the water, the sky turned pink and orange with the sunrise, Peter was pulling up yet another empty net and he wondered about this man Jesus: *Could Jesus really be the Messiah? Could God really be about to change the entire world?*

"Simon! It's time to call it a day!" his fishing partner James called out. "We need to clean these nets."

Simon guided the boat toward the beach, embarrassed that he'd be coming in with no fish to show for a whole night of work. As they got closer to land, Simon noticed something unusual.

A huge crowd of people, and they were all moving together like a wave, heading straight for the beach.

And in the middle of them—*was him*. Jesus.

People were pressing in on him from every side, leaning in to catch every word he said. There were families with little

children. Old men with gray beards. Young women. Fishermen and teachers.

As the crowd reached the water's edge, Jesus had nowhere to go. He was backing up right into the water! Then Jesus looked over his shoulder and saw Simon in his boat.

"Peter!" Jesus called out with a grin.

Simon hadn't been called that by anyone else and he wasn't sure how he felt about it, but he did feel loved when Jesus called him by that name. "Can I come into your boat?"

Peter's heart jumped. He quickly grabbed the pile of nets he'd been sitting on and shoved them to the side, making room. "Yes! Of course!"

Jesus climbed into the boat "Push out a little bit from shore," Jesus said. "So I can keep teaching. The boat will carry us across the water so everyone can hear better.

Peter grabbed the oars and rowed. Not far—just enough so that Jesus could sit in the boat and speak to everyone on the beach. Peter had a front-row seat.

"The kingdom of God is here!" Jesus announced, his voice clear and strong. "Repent and believe the good news!" Peter's breath caught in his throat. *He's saying it. The kingdom is HERE. NOW. Not someday in the distant future. Right now.* could it really be true?

Peter listened as Jesus taught. He'd heard rabbis and teachers his whole life, but Jesus was... different. He didn't

talk about the Scriptures like he was guessing or debating. He talked like someone who *knew*—like he'd written them himself.

The crowd was completely silent, hanging on every word. He answered their questions calmly and confidently, with such wisdom that even the teachers couldn't argue.

Peter found himself feeling so blessed that he got to sit with Jesus in the boat, and that Jesus knew him and had even given him a new name. Peter - The Rock! He liked it.

Finally, after hours, Jesus finished teaching and told the people to head home so the crowd began to break up. Jesus turned around in the boat to face Peter.

He smiled. "Drop me off on shore and get back out there." he said, "Put out into the deep water, and let down your nets for a catch."

Peter wondered if Jesus knew that he'd actually been out all night and hadn't caught a thing. He started to explain to Jesus, "Master, we've already been out fishing...all night and we didn't catch a thing. He looked at his embarrassing empty nets. Maybe Jesus saw the empty nets and thought the boys were just heading out that morning. But Jesus just looked at Peter with a smile. Peter could see that Jesus knew what was going on. Peter spoke without thinking "But because you say so, I'll let down the nets."

He rowed out into deeper water. His partners James and John followed in their boat, probably thinking Peter had lost

his mind. Peter grabbed the net and tossed it overboard. After a short while the rope that was holding the net began to get pulled into the water.

"What!" Peter grabbed the ropes. They were straining in his hands! "James! John! HELP!" Peter yelled with real concern in his voice.

The boys came to rescue their friend, all Together, pulling on the ropes and bringing up the heavy net. As it neared the surface you could see the movement of a full net of fish, shiny flashes of light reflecting all over as they jumped around in the net which was now causing the boat to sink dangerously low.

"Get the other boat, John!" Working together the boys filled both boats and each boat was filled so full they both looked like they could sink.

It was chaos, and then it hit Peter what was really happening. He looked to the shore and saw Jesus standing looking out at the boats. He was smiling and laughing. "Nice catch!"

Peter went from excited to scared. Jesus was special. He was so good and so smart. And now Peter knew he was so powerful. And he could see Peter.

Whatever feeling it is that we get when we are afraid that someone we respect will find out our biggest failure, that's how Peter felt. I want him to know me because it feels so good, but I don't want him to know me because I feel so embarrassed by who I am. He knows my failures. My sin.

The boys rowed the boats in and Peter stepped onto the beach. He approached Jesus and his shame grew greater and greater. He couldn't take it. He knew that Jesus knew everything. He fell to his knees in the sand before Jesus.

"Go away from me, Lord!" he cried out. "I'm a sinful man!" His eyes were filled with tears.

John the baptist would ask, do you want to celebrate when the Messiah arrives? Or do you want to be filled with shame? Peter was filled with shame.

Jesus touched Peter's shoulder. "Rock." He said in a compassionate voice.

"Don't be afraid, Rock," "From now on, you will fish for people."

Peter looked up, Jesus wasn't angry - he had his hand stretched out to pull Peter up off the sand.

"We're going fishing. But from now on you'll fish for men." Peter got up. His friends and him left the boats, the nets and all of the fish, and they followed Jesus, not really knowing what would happen next.

Time to Wonder

Did you know Peter was a fisherman before he followed Jesus?

Did you know his name was Simon?

I wonder how it felt to fish all night without catching a fish?

Have you ever had a day like that?

What was Jesus like in this story?

I wonder if Jesus has a special name for each of us?

I wonder how Simon felt when he heard his special name?

I wonder why Peter fell to the ground?

I wonder why Jesus chose Peter?

How does this story make you feel about Jesus?

***A Woman caught in sin meets
Jesus and is saved.***

Hide these verses in your Heart

*Then I acknowledged my sin to you
and did not cover up my iniquity.*

*I said, "I will confess
my transgressions to the LORD."*

*And you forgave
the guilt of my sin.*

Psalm 32:5

*When Simon Peter saw this,
he fell at Jesus' knees and said,*

*"Go away from me, Lord;
I am a sinful man!"*

Luke 5:8

*If we confess our sins,
he is faithful and just and
will forgive us our sins
and purify us from all unrighteousness.*

1 John 1:9

I think we all can agree that it's a horrible feeling to hold onto a secret about something you've done wrong. We often feel shame that we did it, and we feel fear that people will find out.

Simon-Peter, the Rock, just blurted out his sin to Jesus. We call that confession, to tell someone about what you did wrong - instead of hiding it.

The Bible tells us that if we confess our sins, you can be sure that God will forgive you AND he will cleanse you from all kinds of things that you're doing that are wrong.

Jesus's response to Peter is called Grace.

I wonder if Jesus is always gracious? What would happen if someone did something REALLY bad? Would Jesus still give grace?

Today's story is about a woman who does something really bad. She doesn't confess her sin to Jesus, actually somebody else is the one blurting it out so everyone can hear what she did. And Jesus hears it.

Let's see what happens on the day that a woman caught in sin meets Jesus.

When Jesus was in Jerusalem, he had a favorite place where he liked to hang out with his friends and disciples. It was a garden on the Mount of Olives, a short distance from the city gates of Jerusalem. This was his place of prayer, rest, and oftentimes camping out overnight.

One morning, after a campout on the mountain, Jesus and his disciples woke up early when the sun was just beginning to rise. They gathered their things and made their way towards the city gates.

The disciples were curious. "What's the plan for the day, Jesus?" they asked, anticipating another action-filled day of ministering and teaching.

Jesus answered as he kept walking and looking ahead, "Commit to the LORD whatever you do, and HE will establish your plans."

The disciples were quiet as they thought about the Proverb Jesus quoted. Peter, the Rock, spoke up, "So what are we committing to the Lord today, Jesus?"

Jesus laughed and Peter's clever response. "We're going to start in the temple today. I will teach for a while, and then we will see what the Father has for us next."

As they walked towards the temple, the disciples had lots of questions, as they usually did. They passed a blind man and one of them asked, "Who sinned that this man was born blind?" They passed a tax collector, "What's going to happen to him?"

With every answer Jesus gave them, another question arose, "What about these zealots?" one of them whispered as they passed by a group of warriors. "What happens to them?"

You see, the disciples had been taught what is right and wrong from God's law so they could walk through the city and easily pick out lots of people who were doing stuff that was wrong.

They wondered, if Jesus is the Messiah, if God's kingdom is coming now, what would he do about these people who were in sin? They knew what the Bible said about sin "*if they do not obey my decrees and fail to keep my commands, then I will punish their sin with the rod.*"

But they wanted to know what Jesus thought.

Jesus answered their curiosity with a question. "Do healthy people need a doctor?" he paused to let them think. "Or is it the sick?" he asked.

"The sick need a doctor," they replied.

"Correct." Jesus said, still looking ahead to the Temple. "Do the righteous need a savior?" He paused again.

One of the Disciples said, "No, the sinner needs a savior."

Jesus said, "I have come like a doctor. And there are a lot of people who need healing from sin."

Jesus continued, "God did not send his son into the world to condemn the world, but to save it through him."

They'd arrived at the entrance into the Temple. Jesus stopped and faced his students. "All have sinned and all have fallen short of the glory of God. All people are sick. All people need a savior."

This turned out to be a very important lesson for them to learn before they entered the temple that day.

Jesus found a place in the temple and sat down. A crowd gathered around him, ready to hear his teaching.

Some people gathered because they had a lot of questions and they wanted to hear Jesus's answers. Some people gathered because they wanted to be inspired to live a holy life, and they wanted to hear Jesus preach.

But there were also some people gathering who hated Jesus. They wanted to trap Jesus with a hard question that Jesus would answer incorrectly. They wanted the crowds following Jesus to know that Jesus of Nazareth, COULD NOT be God's Messiah.

A few moments after Jesus began teaching, there was a great commotion in the back of the crowd. People were being shoved out of the way and the voice of an angry man could be heard yelling. As the crowd opened up a pathway for him, Jesus saw a teacher of the law, with his hand gripping a woman's arm tightly, pulling her through the crowd towards Jesus.

The woman was crying. "Have mercy on me! I'm sorry! Please! forgive me! Have mercy on me!" But the man showed no mercy. Looking forward to Jesus it was as if he couldn't even hear the woman's cries.

An even larger crowd gathered as people moved closer to see what was going on.

The teacher reached the front of the crowd and presented the woman to Jesus who was sitting on the ground. She hid her face in shame. Jesus's eyes were not on the teacher, he was looking at the woman.

The teacher faced the crowd and shouted out so everyone could hear, "We've caught this woman in a horrible sin! We all know what the law says. She must be punished!" With that, many in the crowd began to pick up stones. The teacher looked down at Jesus. "What do you say?" The teacher was almost smiling.

The trap was set. If Jesus said to punish her, the people could no longer be drawn to his message of love, mercy and forgiveness. If Jesus said that she shouldn't be punished, the people would not respect him because he was not following God's law. All eyes were on Jesus, wondering what he would do.

With no panic in his face, Jesus stood up and stared at the crowd, not even acknowledging the teacher. The people stood with stones in their hands, ready to throw them at the woman. Her sin was so great, the punishment was death.

As she continued to weep, Jesus bent down and started writing in the dirt with his finger.

The crowd went silent. Few could read what he was writing.

They let him write for a while before they became impatient and the questions started coming. "Which is it gonna be, Jesus? Are you gonna ask us to disobey the law? Is the Messiah telling us to sin?" Jesus looked up from his writing. "Or should we throw our stones at this filthy sinner?"

Jesus looked at the woman they called "filthy". He saw her. He could see who she was and what she had done. He knew everything about her, even more than the crowd knew. He looked back down at the dirt and continued to write.

"Okay," he said to calm the crowd down. Jesus stood up to give his answer. "Let the one who has NO SIN throw the first stone."

The people stared at him, still holding their stones. Jesus bent down and began to write some more. Some of the people moved close to try to read the words on the ground.

Peter stood nearby with the disciples watching every move. He remembered what Jesus had just taught them on their way to the temple. ALL have sinned. ALL are sick with sin.

He turned to his brother and whispered, "Nobody can throw the first stone." he whispered to his brother.

Older men in the crowd holding stones moved to the front to throw, but they stopped to read what Jesus had written in the dirt. They read the words, looked up at Jesus and turned to leave, dropping their stones. Soon, others would follow, moving to the front, reading Jesus's words and dropping their stones. After a while, all had left, including the teacher.

Jesus looked at the woman. She was still crying and still hiding her face in shame.

"Where are they?" Jesus asked her, causing her to look up and see what had happened to the angry crowd. "Has no one condemned you?" He asked.

"No one, sir," she said in amazement, realizing that the entire group of people had left.

"Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus said.

She was in shock. She stared at Jesus. She could see that He knew her, not just this sin, but everything about her. It was uncomfortable because there were so many sins that she had hidden from others. But she also felt compassion coming from Jesus. His eyes were kind. He knew her worst sins and he still loved her.

Jesus was filled with "Grace and Truth". He knew what was true but he showed her grace.

Not knowing what to do or say, she turned to walk away. Jesus said, "Woman," and she turned to face him.

With kindness in his eyes, he said, "Go and leave your life of sin." He spoke like a father looking out for his daughter - like he didn't want her to end up in this position again.

She shook her head yes, and she walked away.

There were still some people standing by in the temple who'd watched the whole scene unfold. Jesus looked at them. "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

Jesus turned to his disciples and signaled them to leave the temple with him. One of the disciples named John walked up next to Jesus. "You saved her."

Jesus looked at John, who he loved dearly. "God did not send his son into the world to condemn the world, but to SAVE the world through him."

And that's what happened the day when the woman caught in sin met Jesus...and was saved.

Time to Wonder

*What did you like about the story?
Which person did you think about most
as you heard the story?*

*I wonder who Jesus was thinking about most.
How did you feel about the man pulling
the woman to Jesus?*

*I wonder what the woman felt when the people
picked up rocks.*

I wonder if Jesus was scared for her.

I wonder what he wrote in the dirt.

I wonder why some people hated Jesus.

How is Jesus like a doctor?

Why are there punishments for breaking the law?

I wonder if she became a Christian.

The Woman Who Was Left Out Met Jesus and started a revival!

Hide these verses in your Heart

*LORD, you are the hope of Israel;
all who forsake you will be put to shame.
Those who turn away from you will be
written in the dust
because they have forsaken the LORD,
the spring of living water.
Jeremiah 17:13*

*Jesus straightened up and asked her,
“Woman, where are they? Has no one
condemned you?” “No one, sir,” she said.
“Then neither do I condemn you,” Jesus declared.
“Go now and leave your life of sin.”
John 8:10-11*

*Therefore, there is now no condemnation
for those who are in Christ Jesus,
Romans 8:1*

Have you ever heard kids talking about a birthday party that you weren't invited to? Maybe you wondered why you were left out. Or maybe you've walked onto a playground and it seemed like everyone out there had a friend except you.

It can be easy to start to think that nobody wants to be your friend — that you're not good enough to be invited to the parties.

Today's story is about a woman who is left out of all of the friend groups. When she meets Jesus she does something so amazing that people have been telling her story for the past 2,000 years!

Let's find out what happens when the woman who was left out met Jesus.

In the kingdom of Israel there was a land to the south called Judah where many Jewish people lived and worshiped in the temple.

There was a land in the north part of the kingdom called Galilee. This is where a lot of Jewish people lived and owned farms.

And there was a land in between Judah and Galilee called Samaria. And Samaria was the land that was "left alone."

Israelites would not touch someone from Samaria. They would not even talk to someone from Samaria. In fact, most Israelites wouldn't even use a road that went through Samaria!

Many people have wondered why the Israelites felt so strongly about Samaritans. What did they do? Why were they left alone?

Samaria was a land filled with people that made a lot of mistakes. In the past, the Samaritans were Israelites! But they didn't obey God's law. They married the wrong people. They believed the wrong things. They worshiped in the wrong temple. Samaritans were **WRONG!**

So the Israelites left them alone.

There was a woman in Samaria whose name the Bible does not mention, but many people recognize her story. A long time ago, people would read her story and give her a name. They called her Photine, which means "one who has the light." They gave her this name because of the incredible thing she did when she met Jesus.

The day she met Jesus was pretty ordinary. Photine woke up early and prepared herself for a long trip to the water well.

Life was difficult for her. She did not have a husband, and it was hard for women to live without a husband in Samaria.

A husband would provide food and a home. A husband would protect her. Most importantly, in Samaria, a husband

would show the other women that she was valuable, that she was desirable, that she was worthy of being loved.

For a long time, Photine would go to the water well in the mornings with the other women. It was much better to travel in the mornings. The temperatures in the desert were cooler in the morning. The large group of women traveling together made it safer in the morning. And the mornings... were just more fun! All of the women enjoyed friendship and catching up with each other on the trip to the well.

Photine enjoyed those days, but it had been a long time since she was welcome among the women.

She had made many mistakes and she was wrong. And just like the land of Samaria, being wrong meant being left alone.

Photine would watch the women greet each other in the morning and leave the city gates together to get their water. She longed to be back in that group.

But she'd wait. Each morning, she'd wait til all of the women had returned to the city with their jars full. Then she would set out on her journey to get water alone, in the heat of the day.

The day she met Jesus, she approached the well and she could see that someone was sitting near the well. The closer she got, the more confused she became. It wasn't a woman, it was a man. And it wasn't a Samaritan, it was an Israelite.

It was sure to be another awkward moment at the well and she was prepared to be ignored. But she was thirsty and she needed this water, so she approached the well, avoiding eye contact with the Jewish man sitting in the shade.

He looked at her. She looked away. He had a smile on his face. She thought that was strange.

The man...was Jesus. He was traveling from Judah to Galilee and instead of taking the road around Samaria like most Jewish people did, he took the road that went straight through the land that was wrong and left alone.

He looked at her as she drew water. He knew she was left alone, for she had no friends with her and she wasn't drawing water in the mornings. He knew she was wrong.

But Jesus wasn't bothered by her. In fact, he wanted to talk to her. To show her she is a real human. Valuable and seen. So he spoke to her.

"Woman," he said in a kind voice.

She stopped what she was doing and just stared into the well with her eyes wide open. "Why in the world is this man talking to me? What should I do? What should I say? Is he going to humiliate me or hurt me?" she thought to herself silently.

"Would you give me a drink of that water?" Jesus asked.

The woman turned to look at him. He looked sweaty, dirty, tired and thirsty — which he was. It had been a long trip

from Judea. But he also looked kind. Her fear of humiliation went away and now she was curious.

"How are you, a Jewish man, talking to me, a Samaritan woman?" Talking was not allowed, let alone drinking out of a jar that was touched by a Samaritan.

None of those things bothered Jesus. He was just looking at a woman who had a story and who needed God's love.

Jesus responded. "You know, if you only knew who it was that asked you for this drink, if you really knew the gift of God that is sitting in the shade with you," he smiled thinking about how she would respond when she figured it out. "You would ask him for a drink."

She looked at him like he was a little crazy. First, a Samaritan woman would never ask a Jewish man for a drink. Second, if he had water, why wasn't he getting a drink for himself?

Jesus continued. "And he would give you living water." He stood up and walked over to the well where she was standing. He looked down into the well. The water was way down below. "Anyone who drinks this water will become thirsty again."

Now the woman is staring at Jesus. There is something about the way he speaks and the way that he looks at her that is drawing her in. She watched his face as he spoke to her looking at the water. Then he looked up at her.

"If you drink my water you will never thirst again," Jesus told her.

"You have no jar to get water," she said nervously and confused.

"The water I'm offering will turn into a spring of water within you and take away your thirst." Jesus was staring at her with those eyes that made you feel known.

She was starting to feel like he wasn't talking about a thirst for water. He was talking about a greater thirst that she had. A longing for friends. A longing to be in community. A longing for God to come and rescue the world. She had a lot of thirst within her. Jesus was offering her a different kind of drink.

She admitted to him with a bit of sadness in her voice. "I don't want to come here anymore. I don't want to have to come to this well. I want the water that you're offering."

"First, go get your husband and come back," Jesus said.

His comment touched on her biggest source of pain. Her biggest source of thirst. Her biggest failure. He would surely ignore her once she told him that she had no husband.

She looked at Jesus, embarrassed to admit, "I have no husband."

"I know," Jesus said. He wanted her to know that he knew her. He knew she didn't have a husband, and he still wanted to talk to her, to bless her. "You've had five husbands and the man you're with now is not your husband." Jesus went on to tell her more about her story and why she'd been left alone.

Photine's heart nearly stopped in her chest. Her mouth became dry and it became hard for her to breathe. How in the world did this Jewish man know my story?

As her mind raced, like it was trying to put together the pieces to a puzzle — who is this man? He knows me but he's never met me?

"You must be a prophet!" she concluded, and without giving him a chance to respond she dove into the question that had been bugging her whole life. She had always been told that her people worshiped wrong, in the wrong place, in the wrong way. "Who's right? Us or them? Are we supposed to worship on our mountain or in the temple in Jerusalem?"

This was a good question, but Jesus gave her an answer that revealed a better truth. "You Samaritans worship what you do not know, but the time has come for true worshipers to worship in Spirit and truth."

Jesus explained that God is not on the mountain or in the temple, but in the Spirit. The place where you worship no longer matters. The Father wants people everywhere to worship in the Spirit and to worship in the truth.

She didn't understand. He didn't answer her question the way she was hoping. She still didn't get who was wrong and who was right.

"All I know is when the Messiah comes, he will tell us how to worship. He'll answer all of our questions. He'll tell us who's right and who's wrong," she said.

Jesus smiled and looked into her eyes. He shook his head agreeing with her statement. There was a pause in the conversation. Neither of them were talking now. Just silently staring.

"I am him," he said.

The woman lit up from the inside. She got it. She knew who he was. This moment is where she got her name — Photine, "the one who has the light."

She dropped her jars of water and took off running towards the city, passing Jesus's disciples as they were walking up to meet Jesus and see what was happening. The disciples looked at Jesus, confused. "You were talking to a Samaritan?" Jesus just smiled.

"He told me everything I ever did!" she yelled as she ran by. Her face was lit up with a big smile. Down the hill she went into the streets of her town. "The Messiah! I think I found the Messiah! He told me everything I've ever done!"

Many of the people in the town believed her. Many others followed her back to the well. Jesus was there waiting. He laughed as he saw Photine surrounded with people, in her community, with women talking to her again.

Jesus met them and answered their questions. The Samaritans begged him to stay in their town and teach them more.

Jesus and his disciples not only talked to these Samaritans, they lived among them, they ate with them, they laughed with them. In the end, many in the town believed.

There was a revival happening. More and more people kept coming and believing. The crowd exclaimed with confidence and praise, "Our friend has told us, but now we believe: This man really is the SAVIOR OF THE WORLD!"

Jesus and his disciples celebrated with the people who had received the light that gives light to everyone. And in the middle of the dancing, celebration and singing was Photine...back in the friend group. Her thirst was gone, her soul was satisfied.

And that's what happened the day that the woman who was left out met Jesus...and started a revival.

Time to Wonder

What did you like about the story?

What do you think it would be like to have to get water from a well?

How do you think it felt to be left out?

Why do you think it was so important to have a husband back then?

When Jesus first spoke to Photine, why was she so shocked?

How did you feel about the man pulling the woman to Jesus?

I wonder why Jesus asked her for water?

What do you think living water is?

Are there any similarities between this woman and the woman in our last lesson who was caught in sin?

When did she realize that this Jewish man was the Messiah?

What do you think this woman did to convince everyone to go to the well to meet Jesus?

Why is it surprising that the first community to embrace Jesus as savior of the world was the Samaritans?

What does this teach us about Jesus?

Hide these verses in your Heart

My people have committed two sins:

*They have forsaken me,
the spring of living water,
and have dug their own cisterns,
broken cisterns that cannot hold water.*

Jeremiah 2:13

Whoever believes in me,

*as Scripture has said,
rivers of living water will flow
from within them.”*

John 7:38

*For the Lamb at the center of the throne
will be their shepherd;
'he will lead them to springs of living water.'*

*'And God will wipe away every tear
from their eyes.'*

Revelation 7:17

The Rich Young Man Met Jesus and Walked Away Sad

Every single day you make decisions based on what you think is better.

Would you like a hamburger or a salad? I personally will choose the hamburger, thank you very much!

Do you want to take a nap or go swimming with your friends? Swimming, please!

We always pick the thing we think is better, right? It's not even hard most of the time. You just look at both options and pick the one you want more.

But what if I told you there was a guy who made the worst trade in history? What if I told you someone looked at two options — and picked the wrong one?

Picture this. You're wearing a plastic watch. It's not worth very much. Maybe you got it out of a cereal box or won it at an arcade. And someone walks up to you and says, "Hey, I'd like to give you this." And they hold out a gold watch — real gold, worth more money than you can imagine. All you have to do is take off your plastic watch and put on the gold one.

Can you imagine ever saying, "No thank you. I like my plastic watch"?

That sounds crazy, right? Nobody would ever do that.

But that's exactly what happens in today's story. Let's see what happens on the day that the rich young man met Jesus

Jesus and his disciples were traveling and teaching, as they often did. Crowds followed them everywhere. People brought their children to be blessed. People brought their sick to be healed. Everywhere Jesus went, people wanted something from him.

On this particular day, as Jesus was getting ready to head out on the road, a young man came running up to him. And this was no ordinary young man.

This guy was rich. Really rich. He had the nicest clothes. The nicest sandals. He probably had servants carrying things for him. In that time, being wealthy meant that everyone respected you. Everyone assumed that God had blessed you and that you must be living right. Rich people were treated like they had it all figured out.

And this rich young man had also been very religious. He had studied God's law since he was a kid — probably your age. He knew the commandments inside and out. He followed the rules. He did everything right. At least, that's what he believed.

But something was bothering him. Deep down inside, even with all of his money and all of his rule-following, something didn't feel complete. Something was missing. He had everything the world said you should want, but there was an emptiness that none of it could fill.

So when he heard that Jesus was nearby, he ran. The Bible says he ran to Jesus and fell on his knees in front of him. This wasn't a casual question. This was desperate.

"Good teacher," he said, catching his breath, "what must I do to receive eternal life?"

Now the disciples perked up. They were watching closely. This rich, important, religious young man was on his knees in front of Jesus. This was exciting! Surely Jesus would welcome him. Surely this guy was about to become the newest disciple. He had money, influence, and he followed all the rules. He was the Christ-follower everyone in the kingdom would want to see at their table.

Jesus looked at him. "Why do you call me good?" Jesus asked. "No one is good except God alone."

The young man just stared at him.

Jesus continued. "You know the commandments. Don't murder. Don't steal. Don't lie. Honor your father and mother."

The young man's face brightened. This was his moment. This was the part he was good at.

"Teacher," he said proudly, "I've kept all of these since I was a boy. Every single one."

The disciples were impressed. Peter might have elbowed Andrew and whispered, "This guy is good."

And then the Bible tells us something beautiful and heartbreaking at the same time. It says Jesus looked at him and loved him.

Let that sink in for a second. Jesus looked at this young man and loved him. He wasn't angry. He wasn't trying to trick him. He loved him. And because he loved him, he told him the truth.

"There's one thing you're missing," Jesus said.

The young man leaned in. One thing? Just one thing and I'm there? Tell me. I'll do it.

"Go and sell everything you have. Give the money to the poor. And then come and follow me."

Silence.

The smile slowly disappeared from the young man's face. Sell everything? Give it all away? His house. His land. His clothes. His servants. His reputation. His comfort. His security. Everything that made him important in the eyes of the world — just give it away?

And follow Jesus? Follow a traveling teacher with no home, no money, and no guarantee of what tomorrow would look like?

Jesus was holding out the gold watch. He was offering this young man the chance to follow the Son of God. To walk with him. To eat with him. To see miracles. To be part of the greatest story ever told. He was offering him eternal life — the very thing the man came running to ask about.

But the young man looked down at his plastic watch — his wealth, his stuff, his comfortable life — and he couldn't take it off.

The Bible says his face fell. He became sad. And he turned around and walked away.

He walked away from Jesus.

Not because Jesus rejected him. Not because he wasn't invited. Jesus looked at him with love and said, "Come, follow me." The invitation was right there.

He walked away because he loved his stuff more than he loved the invitation.

The disciples watched him leave and they couldn't believe it. "Who can be saved then?" they asked, stunned.

Jesus watched the young man disappear down the road and said to his disciples, "With man, this is impossible. But with God, all things are possible."

Here's what makes this story different from the other stories we've told. When the Magi met Jesus, they worshiped. When John the Baptist met Jesus, he pointed everyone to him. When Peter met Jesus, he confessed his sin and followed him. When the woman caught in sin met Jesus, she was saved. When the woman at the well met Jesus, she started a revival.

But this young man? He met Jesus. He heard the invitation. He looked into the eyes of the one who loved him. And he chose his plastic watch over the gold one.

Sometimes we hold onto things — not just money or stuff, but habits, friendships that pull us in the wrong direction, pride, the need to be popular, the fear of what people will think — and those things keep us from saying yes to Jesus.

The rich young man isn't a bad guy. He's a sad guy. Because he was so close. He was on his knees in front of Jesus. And he walked away.

And that's what happened the day that the rich young man met Jesus...and walked away sad.

Time to Wonder

*What did you like about the story?
 What do you think it feels like to be famous?
 Why did he feel jealous when people were
 Paying attention to Jesus?
 Why do you think the disciples were moving
 children away from Jesus?
 Why do you think Jesus liked children so much?
 What do you think Jesus meant when he said
 you have to become like a child to enter
 the kingdom?
 Why is it hard for a rich person to become
 like a child?
 How was Peter like a child when he came to Jesus?
 What questions do you have about the story?
 What do you think Jesus was like?*

Hide these verses in your Heart

*These wicked people, who refuse to listen
 to my words, who follow the stubbornness of
 their hearts and go after other gods to serve
 and worship them, will be like this belt—
 completely useless!
 Jeremiah 13:10*

*No one can serve two masters.
 Either you will hate the one and love the other,
 or you will be devoted to the one and
 despise the other.
 You cannot serve both God and money.
 Matthew 6:24*

*For the love of money is a root of all kinds
 of evil. Some people, eager for money,
 have wandered from the faith and pierced
 themselves with many griefs.
 from their eyes.’
 1 Timothy 6:10*

