Speaking with Jesus

Introduction

God wants following Jesus to be an amazing journey. God plans that you will have a long, awe-inspiring, breath-taking, dynamic adventure with Him. God has shown you a life-erupting new path of ultimate healing and wholeness, and does not want this first step of faith to be simply another item on a checklist. Potty trained? Check. Learn to ride a bike? Check. Survive middle school? Check. Made a commitment to Jesus? Check. Baptized? Check.

God's plan is so much bigger, wider, deeper, and longer than that. God's new life for you is meant to be all-encompassing, revolutionizing how you think about yourself, others, God, and the world around you. And that will change everything. Actually, 1 Corinthians 2:9 says, "*God has prepared things for those who love him that no eye has seen, or ear has heard, or that haven't crossed the mind of any human being.*" (CEB) You are not even able to imagine all of the goodness and awesomeness that God will show you and lead you (and those around you) into.

This path that God has opened for you is still going to be your life, with all its ups and downs, plus the power and fire of being in a close friendship with the creator of the universe. So it goes without saying that your new life will be vastly different when you journey with Jesus than if you had been cut off from that power and continued to go along in your own strength. In order to remain on this path and stay close to the Source of Life, God wants you to do what you do to deepen any relationship in your life – 1) talk to God and 2) learn more about God, and to 3) make mutual friends. This means mainly 1) prayer, 2) read the Bible, 3) participate in church. God does not want you to do journey alone. God's design is that you would enter into this journey with other people in your Christian community. This book is going to help you take all three of these steps into deepening your relationship with God.

As you use this book, *Speaking with Jesus,* it will guide you into your conversation with Jesus. There are many stories in the Bible that tell us how Jesus spoke with people who wanted to follow him and become his disciple. Out of the 307 questions Jesus asked in the gospel stories, we have chosen to focus on 12 specific questions that Jesus asked his disciples. Why did Jesus ask his disciples questions? In order to get to know them more deeply and challenge them to grow into the people he created them to be. We believe that Jesus is still asking these same questions of his followers today – including you.

Jesus asks difficult questions. Questions that make you really think. Questions that can change you as you speak with the Creator of the Universe. In some of these stories, the would-be follower or disciple gave an answer, in others, they did not. Because we believe that Jesus is alive and with us now, when we answer these ancient questions that Jesus still asks, we are finally joining a conversation that Jesus began with us long ago. We choose not to ignore Jesus any longer! **We also encourage you to ask another Christ-follower/mentor to take this journey with you.** It could be your youth pastor, a youth leader, a Christian friend or even a parent or a friend's parent. Journeying together in newness of life and speaking with Jesus will bless both you and your mentor.

1. Jesus asks you: "What are you looking for?"

"[35] The next day John [the Baptist] was standing again with two of his disciples. [36] When he saw Jesus walking along he said, "Look! The Lamb of God!" [37] The two disciples heard what he said, and they followed Jesus. [38] When Jesus turned and saw them following, he asked, **"What are you looking for?"** (John 1:35-38, CEB)

So here is the scene: John the Baptist is a spiritual teacher at the same time Jesus began his ministry. John the Baptist has his own followers/disciples. Suddenly John the Baptist publicly honors Jesus above himself by telling everyone that Jesus was really the true Messiah. A couple of his disciples immediately leave John and began to follow Jesus. (Side note: John the Baptist is also Jesus's relative (Luke 1:36) – talk about potential family competition!) What does Jesus do? Jesus, who has great respect for John's ministry, turns around and asks his brand new followers a question: "What are you looking for?" In another translation, he asks, "What do you want?" (NIV) Does this sound a little uninviting? Not too flashy for the first words Jesus speaks to his first potential disciples, the first words even that Jesus speaks in the gospel of John. But this question tells us that Jesus wants to discuss our motives with us - what drives us, our goals and desires - as we begin following him. *From the very beginning, Jesus is interested in the contents of our hearts.* The depth and importance of this question is immediately lost in this particular story, because those two disciples don't even answer…they change the subject instead. But Jesus asks the same question of each of his disciples as we begin our journey and decide to follow him. Jesus is here with you now, and he is asking you, too. Why? Because Jesus wants to know you and be in a relationship with you. There isn't a right or wrong answer. Jesus can work with any answers that are honest, and a conversation can begin. So instead of avoiding the question like those two disciples, we want to truly begin to speak with Jesus.

Imagine that Jesus is sitting with you now. You've told him that you want to follow him, and he asks you, "What are you looking for?" Write your answer here:

…

Share your answer with your spiritual mentor and pray together about it.

2. Jesus asks you: "Do you want to get well?"

After this there was a Jewish festival, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. [2] In Jerusalem near the Sheep Gate in the north city wall is a pool with the Aramaic name Bethsaida. It had five covered porches, [3] and a crowd of people who were sick, blind, lame, and paralyzed sat there.[5] A certain man was there who had been sick for thirty-eight years. [6] When Jesus saw him lying there, knowing that he had already been there a long time, he asked him, **"Do you want to get well?"** (John 5:1-6, CEB)

What a bizarre question! Before we answer, "Of course!" let us put this in perspective. Humans tend to be creatures of habit, and we feel most comfortable with familiar people, places, sights, and sounds. The disabled person to whom Jesus was speaking had grown accustomed to a certain lifestyle. He probably had developed several friendships at the pool of Bethesda, and was an accepted part of the community of the sick. He may have grown to enjoy certain aspects of that place – laying in the shade of the porches, the comfort of his mat, the sounds of discourse. We aren't sure. But we do know that he kept coming back to the same place for 38 years before Jesus encounters him. Jesus wants to know why he is really there, and what is most important to him. If this man got well, he would have a dramatic lifestyle change. He wouldn't need to go to the pool of Bethesda during the festivals anymore. He wouldn't be a part of the community of the sick anymore. Jesus wants to know if walking and being healed of his disease is more important to him than what he has been used to. Even though Jesus is able to make us well, he wants us to have the *desire* to be made well, to be made whole. *He wants us to desire wholeness more than the lifestyles, habits, and communities that we have grown accustomed to.* Do you go to church because of the familiar people, sights, and sounds, or because you are expecting to encounter Jesus and be made well? Do you really want healing and wholeness, knowing that it will upset the old ways of your life? Jesus heals the man in the story, and that man immediately had to face the new challenge of intense interrogation from the religious leaders – but he could walk. Healing may bring with it its own set of challenges for you, too – jealousy from others, being made fun of, discrimination, being left out, or persecution.

Look over the whole life you've known up to this point, and compare it with what healing and wholeness might mean for you. Imagine Jesus asking you, "Do you want to get well?" Write your answer to Jesus here:

…

Share your answer with your spiritual mentor and pray together about it.

3. Jesus asks you: "Who do you say that I am?" Matt 16:15

[13] Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" [14] And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, but others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." [15] He said to them, **"But who do you say that I am?"** [16] Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." [17] And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven. (Matthew 16:13-18, NRSV)

What do you do with Jesus? Throughout the gospels, which are the earliest recorded memoirs of Jesus's life, Jesus makes bold claims that he is truly the Messiah, the Savior, the One who comes from God, the One who is in fact God. But there is danger for us in believing and confessing that Jesus is God. This particular confession is a game-changer. If Jesus is nothing more to you than a wise ancient teacher, like Buddha or Plato, or another prophet in the Jewish tradition, like Moses or Elijah, you are safe. You can choose to take what you like from Jesus's life and teaching and leave the rest. Jesus is just another human, nothing more than you or me. You are still in charge of your own destiny and you can decide what suits you and filter out what you think may help you to become a better person, but it remains up to you. This is how most of the world regards Jesus, and his disciples knew that. But Jesus looks squarely at his disciples and asks them directly, "But who do you say that I am?" The Father works in Simon Peter's understanding and reveals the game-changing truth that Jesus is in fact the Savior, God in flesh. If we, like Peter, believe and confess that Jesus is God, then his teachings, commands and claims can't be disregarded or ignored. He is greater than you or me. If Jesus is God, we find ourselves surrendering our wills, our decisions, our desires, our time, our money, our futures, and our very lives to him. That can be frightening and may even feel uncomfortably like we are out of control. There may be people around you who are claiming to follow Christ, but who haven't learned Jesus's true identity – that he is God and demands their all. If you are unsure whether Jesus is truly God, continue to follow anyway, and continue your investigation. In time, may God give us all the grace that was given to Simon Peter, to understand ourselves in true and right relation to God. Jesus is still alive now, and wants to continue the conversation with you.

Imagine Jesus asking you very directly, "But you, (your name), who do you say that I am?" Discuss your honest answer with him, and what your answer might mean specifically for your life.

…

Share your answer with your spiritual mentor and pray together about it together.

4. Jesus asks you: "Do you believe that I am able to do this?"

[27] As Jesus went on from there, two blind men followed him, calling out, "Have mercy on us, Son of David!" [28] When he had gone indoors, the blind men came to him, and he asked them, **"Do you believe that I am able to do this?"** "Yes, Lord," they replied. [29] Then he touched their eyes and said, "According to your faith let it be done to you"; [30] and their sight was restored. (Matthew 9:27-30, NIV)

First of all, the blind men call Jesus both, "Son of David" and "Lord." They are not confused about who he is. The Jews expected a Messiah, a mighty Savior, and believed that he would be a descendant of King David. Calling Jesus, "Son of David" is code language for saying, "We believe that you are the Messiah, the one and only Savior promised to us by God." Jesus is wondering if they really believe what they say about him. Jesus wants to know how deep their faith goes. Here is a definition of faith: "Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see." (Hebrews 11:1, NIV) When we can't see something, or even understand how it can happen, *we must believe that someone greater than our understanding can change our reality.* Is Jesus greater than your understanding? Or do you limit God in what you believe that he is able to do for you? Do you really believe that he can change your reality? In order for faith in Jesus to be possible, it only makes sense that we must get to know him. Only after we begin to know him and learn to trust his character, can we trust that his promises to us for new life are true.

Whether you are trusting Jesus for healing, wholeness, peace, newness of life, restored relationships, or more faith and maturity – even if you can't see it now - imagine that Jesus is asking you, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" Write your answer to Jesus here:

…

Share your answer with your spiritual mentor and pray together about it.

5. Jesus asks you: "Why are you so afraid?" Matt 8:26

[23] Then he got into the boat and his disciples followed him. [24] Suddenly a furious storm came up on the lake, so that the waves swept over the boat. But Jesus was sleeping. [25] The disciples went and woke him, saying, "Lord, save us! We're going to drown!" [26] He replied, "You of little faith, **why are you so afraid?**" Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the waves, and it was completely calm. [27] The men were amazed and asked, "What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him!" (Matthew 8:23-27, NIV)

Sometimes Jesus leads us beside still waters. Sometimes we will follow Jesus into a storm. We may begin to follow Jesus, and the way seems pretty safe and secure, only to encounter a furious storm that comes upon us suddenly. Jesus, in fact, promised that storms would come our way, "In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." (John 16:33, NIV) What do we do when a storm comes? For most of us, our natural inclination when a storm hits is to panic and be afraid. This kind of fear and panic is not the same as a constant, nagging worry; instead it is the direct result of something dramatic that happens in our lives, when the rug is pulled out from under us. In situations like this, many people also ask, "why?" They want to know why Jesus would lead them into a storm, because they are afraid that they will drown or maybe they were expecting peaceful waters for the rest of their lives. In this story, the disciples did well to turn to Jesus during the storm. *But they forgot that Jesus was God, and that Jesus was in the boat with them!* Jesus wasn't going to let them drown. Jesus will not let you drown, either. Even so, Jesus wants them to think about why they were so afraid, and why they weren't trusting God. If Jesus has overcome the world, has power over winds and waves, he can handle the storms that you face, too.

Think of a time when you were afraid. Imagine Jesus sitting in that situation (in your boat) with you. Jesus asks you, "Why are you so afraid?" Write your answer here:

…

Share your answer with your spiritual mentor and pray together about it.

6. Jesus asks you: "Why do you worry about the rest?" Luke 12:26

[22] He said to his disciples, "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat, or about your body, what you will wear. [23] For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing. [24] Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds! [25] And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? [26] If then you are not able to do so small a thing as that, **why do you worry about the rest?"** (Luke 12:22-26, NRSV)

Jesus's message in this passage is clear: worrying is wasted effort. Can people add hours to their lives by worrying about things? The implied answer is "no." But even so, people worry. They worry about getting what they need to survive; food and clothing. They worry about if they will get food or clothing in the future, so they tire themselves out trying to get security. Worry is like an epidemic that has spread to "the rest"- into every area of our lives – we now worry about our performance in school, work, relationships, we worry about being late or disappointing people, we worry about facing pain or death or getting sick, we worry about not measuring up, not making enough money, not being great in other people's eyes, we worry about fitting in, about being left alone, rejected, about screwing up. We can easily become so obsessed with our worries that the things we worry about can become like gods to us, leading us to spend a large chunk of our time and energy chasing after them instead of chasing after the living God. Think about the things that cause you to worry. Jesus's question is "why?" Do you doubt that God really knows your need? Do you doubt that God is able to provide for your needs? Do you doubt that God cares about you or loves you? Do you doubt that God will stay with you no matter what situation you find yourself in? Listen to what Jesus advises we do instead of worrying: "Instead, strive for his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well." (Luke 12:31, NRSV) *The more you get to know and trust God, the less you will worry.*

Make a list below of the things that you catch yourself worrying about. Jesus wants to know why. Imagine that Jesus is asking you, "Why do you worry about _____?" Write your answer next to each worry:

…

Share your answer with your spiritual mentor and pray together about it.

7. Jesus asks you: "Do you love me?" John 21:16

[15] When they finished eating, Jesus asked Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?" Simon replied, "Yes, Lord, you know I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my lambs." [16] Jesus asked a second time, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Simon replied, "Yes, Lord, you know I love you." Jesus said to him, "Take care of my sheep." [17] He asked a third time, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter was sad that Jesus asked him a third time, "**Do you love me?**" He replied, "Lord, you know everything; you know I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep." (John 21:15-17, CEB)

Jesus doesn't ask this question once, but three times in the same conversation. A few chapters earlier, Simon Peter had denied publicly that he was a follower of Jesus because he was afraid that he might be arrested and killed, too. Simon Peter is still "in-progress" toward becoming a faithful disciple, and he allows his fear to shake his loyalty to Jesus during Jesus's own arrest and crucifixion. Perhaps when Jesus needed his friendship and loyalty most, he denied Jesus not once, but three times. Now Jesus really desires for things to be made right. He cares deeply about their relationship. He asks Peter to affirm his love and loyalty to him three times. He also calls Peter to greater love and loyalty by telling him to take care of, serve, and feed other people. Love is more than talk; Jesus is teaching Simon Peter that love includes loyalty and faithful actions. Jesus is calling Simon Peter to greater love. Jesus continues to ask us this question and invites us to evaluate if our own words and actions are loving and loyal to God. If they have not been, Jesus constantly offers us a chance to repent, repair our relationship with him, and accept his invitation into deeper love, loyalty, and discipleship.

Think about your words and actions over the past few days. Jesus asks you, "Do you love me?" Does your life show that you love Jesus? Confess to Jesus the places you have fallen short below. Ask him to teach you, lead you, guide you into a deeper love for him.

…

Share your answer with your spiritual mentor and pray together about it.

8. Jesus asks you: "Why are you thinking these things?" Mark 2:8

[3] Some men came, bringing to him a paralyzed man, carried by four of them. [4] Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus by digging through it and then lowered the mat the man was lying on. [5] When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralyzed man, "Son, your sins are forgiven." [6] Now some teachers of the law were sitting there, thinking to themselves, [7] "Why does this fellow talk like that? He's blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?" [8] Immediately Jesus knew in his spirit that this was what they were thinking in their hearts, and he said to them, "**Why are you thinking these things?**" (Mark 2:3-8, NIV)

Jesus cares about us as whole people. Jesus does not only want to heal you and forgive you, he wants to cleanse you and give you new life. He wants to transform the way you talk, act, yes, and even *think.* Jesus knows your thoughts and he cares about your thoughts. He knows that our thoughts reveal the truest nature of our hearts. In this story, Jesus first meets the paralyzed man's spiritual need before meeting his physical need. The teachers of the law observed this and began to oppose Jesus. In Matthew's version of this story, Jesus calls their thoughts "evil." (Matthew 9:4) In order to show the teachers of the law his godly power and authority, Jesus then heals the man physically, and the man gets up and walks home. Jesus, who knows the thoughts of the teachers of the law, asks another "why" question: **Why are you thinking these things?** Why are they opposing Jesus? Why don't they believe that he is God? Why are the immediately judgmental and so eager to discredit Jesus? What is causing them to focus on condemning Jesus rather than seeing the good that Jesus is doing for the paralyzed man? Jesus is always inviting us to evaluate our own judgmental thoughts. Usually, when we are judging someone else, it is an indication that our own hearts may not be where they need to be.

Jesus lives in your thought world. When you are struggling with negative, doubtful, or judgmental thoughts about yourself, God, or others, Jesus wants you to think beyond those "evil" thoughts and asks you, "Why are you thinking these things?" Talk to him about the struggles with your thoughts here, and ask him for help:

…

Share your answer with your spiritual mentor and pray together about it.

9. Jesus asks you: "But when the Son of Man returns, how many will he find on the earth who have faith?" (NLT) Luke 18:8

One day Jesus told his disciples a story to show that they should always pray and never give up. [2] "There was a judge in a certain city," he said, "who neither feared God nor cared about people. [3] A widow of that city came to him repeatedly, saying, 'Give me justice in this dispute with my enemy.' [4] The judge ignored her for a while, but finally he said to himself, 'I don't fear God or care about people, [5] but this woman is driving me crazy. I'm going to see that she gets justice, because she is wearing me out with her constant requests!'" [6] Then the Lord said, "Learn a lesson from this unjust judge. [7] Even he rendered a just decision in the end. So don't you think God will surely give justice to his chosen people who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? [8] I tell you, he will grant justice to them quickly! **But when the Son of Man returns, how many will he find on the earth who have faith?**" (Luke 18:1-8, NLT)

Faith takes persistence. Our journey on earth will be filled with joy and good things, but we will also experience trouble, hardship, and need. Jesus wants us to continue to bring our need before him. Even if we can't immediately see the healing, wholeness, or change that we seek, he wants us to continue to believe in his promises to us. Although God is faithful, God does not always work according to our timetable. We can trust him because we have come to know him for who he is. One day he will restore all things and bring about justice and wholeness for us, and for the rest of the world. But, in the meantime, he wants us to "pray and never give up" just like the persistent widow in the story. It is easy to get discouraged and give up our faith when we don't see immediate results, to doubt that God exists or cares, or doubt that God is even able to meet our need. It is in those times that Jesus wants us to run to him and pray all the more!

Jesus told us that one day he is going to come back to earth, and every eye will see him (Revelation 1:7). Jesus is asking you personally: will he find you faithful when he returns? What are you still asking Jesus for that hasn't been granted yet? What are you doing to encourage others to keep the faith? Write your answer to him here:

…

Share your answer with your spiritual mentor and pray together about it.

10. Jesus asks you: "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been with you such a long time?" John 14:9

---

[6] Jesus answered, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. [7] If you have really known me, you will also know the Father. From now on you know him and have seen him." [8] Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father; that will be enough for us." [9] Jesus replied, "**Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been with you all this time**? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? [10] Don't you believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words I have spoken to you I don't speak on my own. The Father who dwells in me does his works. (John 14:6-10, CEB)

God in flesh has lived with, walked with, talked with, laughed with, ate with, taught and healed the disciples every day and night for roughly 2-3 years. As Jesus's time on earth with them is drawing to a close, the disciple Philip still doesn't even really know him. He is still confused. He has missed a lot of what's been going on, so he asks for more. Think about how sad and disappointing this is to Jesus. What has been distracting Philip this whole time? How has God's miraculous activity, happening right under his nose, so terribly missed Philip's radar? Knowing Jesus means being aware of God's activity that is happening all around you, participating in this activity, and constantly having conversations with God about it. What is it that is happening around us that we might be missing? Through prayer and fasting, Bible reading, the Lord's Supper, and meeting with other Christians, we become more aware of who God is and how God is working right under our noses. The more and more you do this, the more you come to know God. In this story, Jesus had been with the disciples for 2-3 years. In your life, the Holy Spirit has been working since you were born. If you've been baptized, God has been especially active in your community and in your life since that time. Pray for God to open your eyes so that you can truly know God. This, after all, is the very definition of eternal life: "Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent." (John 17:3, NIV)

Jesus asks you, "Don't you know me, _____, even after I have been with you all this time?" Write your answer, including obstacles that keep you from knowing Jesus and being aware of his activity in your life.

…

Share your answer with your spiritual mentor and pray together about it.

11. Jesus asks you: "Why are you sleeping?" Luke 22:46

[39] Jesus went out as usual to the Mount of Olives, and his disciples followed him. [40] On reaching the place, he said to them, "Pray that you will not fall into temptation." [41] He withdrew about a stone's throw beyond them, knelt down and prayed, [42] "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done." [43] An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him. [44] And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground. [45] When he rose from prayer and went back to the disciples, he found them asleep, exhausted from sorrow. [46] "**Why are you sleeping?**" he asked them. (Luke 22:39-46, NIV)

Jesus tells the disciples that the time of his betrayal and murder is approaching. After this, they go to their usual spot, the Mount of Olives, to pray. It is important to note that focused prayer is a regular practice of Jesus, "Jesus went out *as usual…"* When we keep alert and pray, God gives us the help we need to face our lives with God's power. Jesus, who was probably also sleepy that night, fought through his sleepiness and prayed intently in the garden. As a result, an angel strengthened him, enabled him to pray even more, and made him ready for the difficulties of his arrest, trial and crucifixion. In other words – he prayed – and God helped him! The disciples fell asleep instead of praying. When the time came for Jesus's arrest, trial, and crucifixion, they were unfaithful, fearful, and disloyal. Have you ever tried to pray, but you were too sleepy? Have you ever wanted to read your Bible or go to church, but end up watching TV or staying home and relaxing instead? If we give in and do what's easy over and over, we can spiritually "fall asleep." If we are spiritually asleep, we dangerously drift away from God without realizing it. Instead, we should pattern our spiritual lives after Jesus, who stayed awake and prayed. To fight spiritual sleepiness, we can commit to regular spiritual disciplines. By doing this, we will receive God's strength and power that we need to face the trials that will come in our lives.

Are you spiritually awake or asleep right now? If awake: what spiritual disciplines do you need to commit to regularly in your life in order to stay awake? If you are asleep, Jesus asks you, "Why are you sleeping?" Write your answer here:

…

Share your answer with your spiritual mentor (who may have more suggestions for you about spiritual disciplines) and pray together about it.

12. Jesus asks you: "Do you believe this?" John 11:26 (Resurrection)

[21] "Lord," Martha said to Jesus, "if you had been here, my brother would not have died. [22] But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask." [23] Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." [24] Martha answered, "I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day." [25] Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; [26] and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. **Do you believe this?**" (John 11:21-26, NIV)

We see death all around us. We see tragic deaths, deaths from illnesses, and deaths from old age. We go to funerals, and we see people we've known and loved laying still and lifeless. This has been the way the world has worked ever since Genesis 3 when people sinned and rebelled against God, introducing hate, jealousy, brokenness, chaos, disease, and death into the perfect world God had created. Therefore, there is nothing unusual about the opening scene of this story. Martha experiences the death of her brother, and many people gather at her house to grieve with her family, as is the usual custom. However, Jesus makes a startling statement to them all: "I am the resurrection and the life." Jesus, who is God, the source of all life, is standing among them. Jesus has come to begin a great reversal to all of the problems started in Genesis 3. God, in Jesus, has finally arrived to begin to redeem this seemingly hopeless situation of the world. Jesus is changing the rules for the way the world has worked up until that point. The definition of eternal life is knowing Jesus, and it is because Jesus himself *is* the resurrection and the life. Jesus takes on the worst enemy of humankind head-on. But before he raises Martha's brother Lazarus from the dead, he tells Martha the new rules and asks her if she believes them. The new rules are that belief in Jesus will keep us alive forever, even after we physically die. This is a difficult truth to believe, because it requires trust in God's promises before we see them fulfilled. Martha tells Jesus that she does believe. She only has to wait a few minutes until she is blessed to see with her very own eyes as Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead. A short time later, she and the other disciples would witness Jesus's own resurrection from the dead. Even though we may have to wait a little longer to see our faith turn into reality, one day, too, we will see God's resurrection power in our own and others' lives.

Jesus tells us that we will have eternal life if we believe in him. So Jesus asks you, "Do you believe this?"

…

Share your answer with your spiritual mentor and pray together about it.