STUDY BOOK

DIRTY CHURCH

BELONG · BELIEVE · BEHAVE



A FOUR-WEEK STUDY

How to Use This Study Book

This study book goes with the book *Dirty Church: Belong. Believe. Behave.* and the four-week series. Each week follows one message about four friends who carried a paralyzed man to Jesus, and went through the roof to do it (Mark 2:1–12).

Before the message

Read the Read First passage and the Memory Verse. If you have a few extra minutes, read Go Deeper for the background behind the story.

During the message

Follow along and fill in the blanks. Write anything else that stands out in the Notes space.

With your group

Use Talk It Over with your small group, your family, or a friend over coffee.

During the week

Try the This Week challenge. In the print version, there's a puzzle for each week too.

On a phone or tablet, tap any blank or box to type in it, and save the file to keep your answers. Tap a title in the Contents to jump there.

Contents

1 **The Church Becoming**
Chapters 1–2: Grandma's House · The Order Matters

2 **Belong**
Chapters 3–4: Through the Roof · Four Friends

3 **Believe**
Chapters 5–6: "Son, Your Sins Are Forgiven" · Two Men Went Up to Pray

4 **Behave**
Chapters 7–8: Costumes · The Shepherd's Voice

Answer Key

How to Follow Jesus



WEEK 1

The Church Becoming

Chapters 1–2: Grandma's House · The Order Matters

Matthew 16:13–18 · Romans 12:2

THE BIG IDEA

The church isn't a house to protect. It's a family Jesus is building.

MEMORY VERSE · Matthew 16:18

"And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it."

READ FIRST

Matthew 16:13–18

13 When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi,
he asked his disciples, “Who do people say the Son of
Man is?” 14 They replied, “Some say John the Baptist;
others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of
the prophets.” 15 “But what about you?” he asked.
“Who do you say I am?” 16 Simon Peter answered,
“You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.”
17 Jesus replied, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah,
for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood,
but by my Father in heaven. 18 And I tell you that you
are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church,
and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.”

NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION

Message Notes

Grandma’s house

1. Some things deserve our nostalgia. But in a church, _____ is deadly. It leads to control, resistance to change and _____.

2. Church should be alive. If you miss a week, you should miss _____.

A gathering, not a house · Matthew 16:18

1. The rock is the truth that Jesus is the _____, the Son of the living God.

2. The word Jesus used, *ekklesia*, means a _____, not a building.

3. You are God's _____. The building is just where the family _____ (1 Corinthians 3:16).

The order matters · Romans 12:2

1. The unwritten rules: _____, then _____, then _____.

2. Jesus flipped it: _____, _____, _____.

3. We're all _____. Not *those* people. Us.

4. Don't be _____. Be _____. Change comes through a relationship with _____, not a relationship to a church.

THIS WEEK

Get to church a few minutes early this week and talk with someone you don't know yet. Remember: they belong from day one.

My Notes · Week 1

Go Deeper

Background for Week 1

What Is the Church?

When Jesus first used the word *church* (Matthew 16:18), the Greek word was *ekklesia*. It means an assembly or gathering, a group of people called together for a purpose. It never meant a building.

Our English word *church* comes from a different Greek word, *kyriakon*, meaning "belonging to the Lord," as in the Lord's house. When William Tyndale translated the New Testament into English in the 1520s, he rendered *ekklesia* as "congregation." The translators of the King James Version (1611) were instructed to keep the traditional word, *church*. Over time, a word that meant "God's people" came to mean "the building with the steeple."

Jesus spoke these words near Caesarea Philippi, at the foot of Mount Hermon, where one of the springs of the Jordan River flows from a cave. Local pagans worshiped there and called the cave a gateway to the underworld. Standing near it, Jesus promised that "the gates of Hades will not overcome" his church.

Talk It Over

For your small group, your family or a friend

1. Was there a “Grandma’s house” in your life, a place you wanted to stay exactly the same? What made it so special?

2. Where have you seen nostalgia turn into a need to control, in a church, a family or a workplace?

3. What “unwritten rules” did you learn about church growing up, or the first time you walked into one?

4. What changes when you think of the church as *people* instead of a *place*?

5. What's the difference between being conformed to the image of a church and being transformed into the image of Jesus?

6. If you missed a week of your church family, what would you miss? What would they miss about you?

Kids' Corner · Week 1

REMEMBER IT!

Church isn't a building. Church is God's family.

Do it: Point to the people around you.

Ask a grown-up: What did church look like when you were a kid?



WEEK 2

Belong

Chapters 3–4: Through the Roof · Four Friends

Mark 2:1–5 · Matthew 9:35–38 · Proverbs 3:5–6

THE BIG IDEA

The ground is level at the foot of the cross.

MEMORY VERSE · Mark 2:5

"When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralyzed man, 'Son, your sins are forgiven.'"

READ FIRST

Mark 2:1–5

[1]A few days later, when Jesus again entered Capernaum, the people heard that he had come home. [2]They gathered in such large numbers that there was no room left, not even outside the door, and he preached the word to them. [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."

NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION

Message Notes

Through the roof · Mark 2:1–5

1. Capernaum was Jesus' adopted _____ base.
2. The paralyzed man was talked _____, not talked _____.
3. You can no more clean up your life before you come to Jesus than this man could _____ himself.

Level ground

1. Jesus planted his _____ on our lines in the sand. The ground is _____ at the foot of the

cross.

2. The gospel divides: Jesus is the only _____.
   The gospel unites: _____ can come.

Four friends · Matthew 9:36

1. The _____ friend: "God, break my heart for the world around me."
2. The _____ friend: I see the person the way God does.
3. The _____ friend: I'm willing to be _____.
4. The _____ friend: I don't give up.

THIS WEEK

Write down the name of your friend on the mat. Pray for them by name every day this week, and look for one way to be a compassionate, accepting, loving or faithful friend to them.

My Notes · Week 2

Go Deeper

Background for Week 2

Houses in Jesus' Day

The poorest families lived in a single square room of stone, often with a small space at the back where the animals slept. There wasn't much privacy.

A family that had been in a home for generations had more: a courtyard out front where visitors gathered, sometimes a second story, and a flat roof reached by an outside stairway or ladder. The roof worked like a modern deck or patio. People went up there to pray, to talk in the cool of the evening and, when the weather was good, to sleep. Roofs were made of beams covered with branches and packed clay, and the better homes had clay tiles. Digging through one would have taken real effort, and real faith.

The Town of Capernaum

Capernaum sat on the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee, along a major trade road. Its name means "village of Nahum." The Old Testament never mentions it, but in the Gospels it's everywhere.

Peter, Andrew, James and John were fishermen from Capernaum, and Peter's home was most likely the headquarters of Jesus' ministry. Many of Jesus' miracles happened there. After his hometown of

Nazareth rejected him (Luke 4:28–30), Capernaum became the place Jesus called home.

Paralysis in Jesus' Day

People with disabilities were often assumed to be suffering for their own sin or their parents' sin (see John 9:2). Many were left to beg by the roadside. They were talked about, but rarely talked to. That's what makes the four friends, and Jesus' first word to the man, "Son," so remarkable.

Talk It Over

For your small group, your family or a friend

1. Have you ever been talked about instead of talked to? How did it feel?

2. Who are the people in your world today who get talked about but not talked to?

3. Where do you see Christians drawing lines in the sand? What would meeting people at the level ground of the cross look like instead?

4. Which of the four friends comes most naturally to you: compassionate, accepting, loving or faithful? Which is hardest?

5. Being a friend means giving people grace and space, while still taking responsibility to nudge them toward Jesus. What does that look like in a real relationship?

6. Who is your friend on the mat? Share their first name with your group if you're comfortable, and pray for them together.

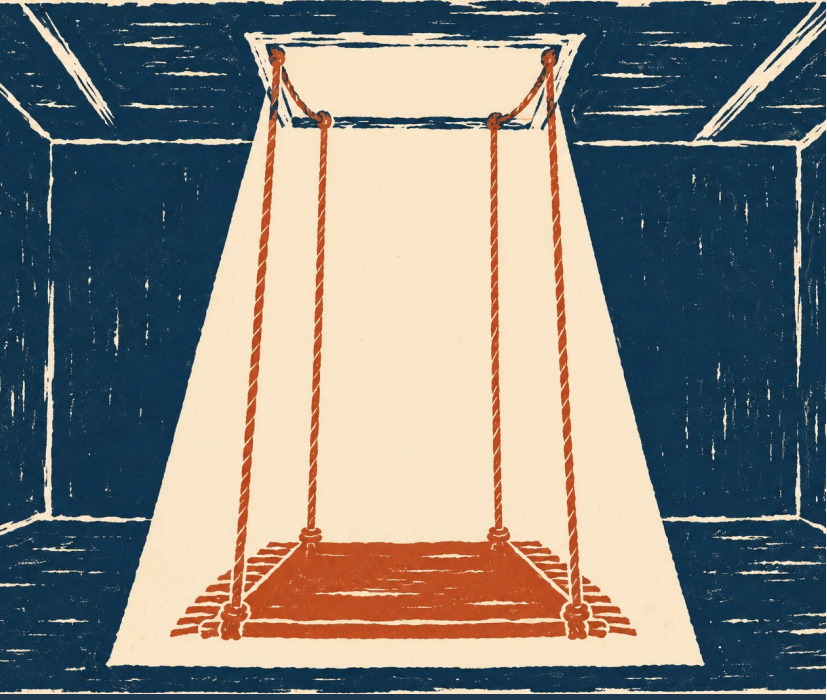
Kids' Corner · Week 2

REMEMBER IT!

I belong with Jesus from day one.

Do it: Open your arms wide, then give yourself a hug.

Ask a grown-up: Who is a friend who helped you get to Jesus?



WEEK 3

Believe

Chapters 5–6: "Son, Your Sins Are Forgiven" · Two Men Went Up to Pray

Mark 2:5–12 · Luke 18:9–14 · Ephesians 2:8–9

THE BIG IDEA

The man who knew he was dirty went home clean.

MEMORY VERSE · Ephesians 2:8–9

"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast."

READ FIRST

Luke 18:9–14

9 To some who were confident of their own
righteousness and looked down on everyone else,
Jesus told this parable: 10 "Two men went up to the
temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax
collector. 11 The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed:
'God, I thank you that I am not like other people—
robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax
collector. 12 I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I
get.' 13 "But the tax collector stood at a distance. He
would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast
and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.' 14 "I tell
you that this man, rather than the other, went home
justified before God. For all those who exalt
themselves will be humbled, and those who humble
themselves will be exalted."

NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION

Message Notes

"Son, your sins are forgiven" · Mark 2:5–12

1. Jesus left his mission with _____ like us.
2. "Son" means _____ family.
3. Jesus healed the man to show he has _____ to forgive sins (Mark 2:10).
4. Sin is any thought, action or _____ that separates us from God.

Two men went up to pray · Luke 18:9–14

1. Self-righteous people are rarely self-_____.
2. Being _____ does not equal forgiveness.
3. Being _____ does not equal forgiveness.
4. Being in the right _____ does not equal forgiveness.
5. _____ through Jesus equals forgiveness.
6. We are all dirty, saved by _____ through _____ (Ephesians 2:8–9).

THIS WEEK

Pray the tax collector's prayer each morning: "God, have mercy on me, a sinner." Then tell one person this week what Jesus has done for you.

My Notes · Week 3

Go Deeper

Background for Week 3

The Pharisees and the Sadducees

The **Sadducees** were wealthy and powerful, and included the chief priests. They held many of the seats on the Sanhedrin, the 70-member ruling council, and were more concerned with politics and keeping the peace with Rome than with ordinary people. They accepted mainly the books of Moses and denied the resurrection and the afterlife. When Rome destroyed Jerusalem and the temple in A.D. 70, the Sadducees disappeared.

The **Pharisees** were mostly middle-class laymen, and the common people respected them far more. They believed God was in control of all things, and they believed in the resurrection. Their problem was legalism. They added layer upon layer of rules around God's law, treated their traditions as if they were Scripture, and became known for caring more about appearances than the heart (Matthew 23:23–28). Many Pharisees fasted every Monday and Thursday.

The two groups were usually rivals, but they joined forces to oppose Jesus. Both earned his harshest words. The lesson for us: believe everything the Bible says, like the Sadducees didn't, and never let faith shrink into a list of man-made rules, like the Pharisees did.

Tax Collectors

Tax collectors worked for the occupying Roman government and were allowed to collect more than Rome required and keep the difference. To their neighbors they were traitors and thieves. That's why the crowd was shocked when Jesus said the tax collector, not the Pharisee, went home justified.

Talk It Over

For your small group, your family or a friend

1. If Jesus left his mission with people like us, what part of that mission is yours this week?

2. Who in your life would you call chosen family? What made them family?

3. Where might you be “confident of your own righteousness” without realizing it?

4. Which do you lean on most: being good, being smart or being in the right place?

5. When was the last time you invited someone to church? What happened?

6. Some Sundays you'll get a lot out of church, and some Sundays you won't. How would it change things to remember that you might be there for someone else?

Kids' Corner · Week 3

REMEMBER IT!

Jesus forgives anyone who comes.

Do it: Hold out both hands, palms up.

Ask a grown-up: What does it feel like to be forgiven?



WEEK 4

Behave

Chapters 7–8: Costumes · The Shepherd's Voice

Mark 2:10–12 · John 10:1–11 · Romans 12:2

THE BIG IDEA

A costume changes the outside. Jesus changes the inside.

MEMORY VERSE · John 10:27

"My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me."

READ FIRST

John 10:1–5, 9–11

[1]"Very truly I tell you Pharisees, anyone who does not
enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by
some other way, is a thief and a robber. [2]The one who
enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. [3]The
gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep
listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name
and leads them out. [4]When he has brought out all
his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep
follow him because they know his voice. [5]But they
will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run
away from him because they do not recognize a
stranger's voice." [9]"I am the gate; whoever enters
through me will be saved. They will come in and go
out, and find pasture. [10]The thief comes only to steal
and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have
life, and have it to the full. [11]I am the good shepherd.
The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep."

NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION

Message Notes

Costumes · Mark 2:11–12

1. Costumes are for _____. Jesus wants to _____ us, not dress us up.

2. Three challenges: _____, _____ and _____.

3. The real test of faith is how the people _____ to you see your life.

The Shepherd's voice · John 10:1–11

1. Jesus is the _____ and the good _____.
2. We follow because we _____ him. There's a difference between believing in God and believing God.
3. We follow because we _____ him. Agape love is a choice.
4. We follow because we _____ him.

How we follow

1. Choose your _____ carefully.
2. Develop your own _____.
3. Use an _____ on the non-essentials.
4. Your faith is personal, but it's not _____.
5. Live for an audience of _____.

THIS WEEK

Text one friend who can "do the heavy lifting" in your life and thank them. Then invite your friend on the mat to church, or to coffee.

My Notes · Week 4

Go Deeper

Background for Week 4

Sheep Pens and Shepherds

Many villages shared a common sheep pen: a low stone wall with a single opening, watched at night by a gatekeeper. Several shepherds might leave their flocks there overnight. In the morning, each shepherd called, and his own sheep came to him. They knew his voice.

As sheep went in, a shepherd often stood at the opening and checked each one, then let it through. Out in the open country, some shepherds would lie down across the opening themselves, becoming the gate. That's the picture behind Jesus' words, "I am the gate" (John 10:9).

Shepherding was honored in Israel's history (Abraham, Moses and David were shepherds, and Ezekiel 34 describes God himself as Israel's shepherd). But by Jesus' day, shepherds were often viewed as rough and unreliable. Jesus didn't mind. He called himself the Good Shepherd anyway.

Talk It Over

For your small group, your family or a friend

1. What "costumes" do you wear during a typical week? Which one is hardest to take off?

2. Which challenge does your church, or you, struggle with most: legalism, culturalism or traditionalism?

3. If you asked the people closest to you whether Jesus is changing you, what would they say?

4. Do you believe *in* God, or do you believe God? What's the difference in your life?

5. Who can do the heavy lifting in your life when the weight gets too much?

6. Who are you bringing? Name one person you'll invite to church or to your group in the next month.

Kids' Corner · Week 4

REMEMBER IT!

Jesus changes me from the inside out.

Do it: Put your hand on your heart, then push both hands out.

Ask a grown-up: How do you know Jesus' voice?

Answer Key

Week 1 · The Church Becoming

1 nostalgia · 2 irrelevance · 3 something · 4 Messiah · 5 gathering · 6 house · 7 gathers · 8 behave · 9 believe · 10 belong · 11 belong · 12 believe · 13 behave · 14 dirty · 15 conformed · 16 transformed · 17 Jesus

Week 2 · Belong

1 home · 2 about · 3 to · 4 heal · 5 cross · 6 level · 7 way · 8 anyone · 9 compassionate · 10 accepting · 11 loving · 12 inconvenienced · 13 faithful

Week 3 · Believe

1 people · 2 chosen · 3 authority · 4 attitude · 5 aware · 6 good · 7 smart · 8 place · 9 Salvation · 10 grace · 11 faith

Week 4 · Behave

1 kids · 2 transform · 3 legalism · 4 culturalism · 5 traditionalism · 6 closest · 7 gate · 8 shepherd · 9 trust · 10 love · 11 like · 12 friends · 13 convictions · 14 ellipsis · 15 private · 16 one

How to Follow Jesus

Jesus said, “The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost” (Luke 19:10). That means you.

We’re all dirty. “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). You can’t clean yourself up, any more than a paralyzed man could heal himself.

But God didn’t wait for you to clean up first. “God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). Salvation is a free gift: his grace, your faith, nothing else (Ephesians 2:8–9).

Confess your sin and ask for forgiveness. “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). Believe that Jesus is the Son of God, who died for you and rose again, and choose to follow him. Not perfectly. Every day.

If you’ve made that decision, tell someone: a pastor, a friend who follows Jesus or a church near you. You belong from day one, and you weren’t meant to do this alone.

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