

# JESUS

*NAME ABOVE ALL NAMES*

**ROLLING HILLS COMMUNITY CHURCH**

***EASTER 40-DAY DEVOTIONAL***

# JESUS

NAME ABOVE ALL NAMES

*"I walked today where Jesus walked..."*

I can't remember the tune of that song or the voice of the man who sung it at my church when I was growing up, but I'll never forget that line or how it struck me when I first heard it.

Time travel not being an option, you and I can't walk where Jesus walked without international airfare and a really great Holy Land tour guide. We have something equally as good and far less expensive. God's word.

Between the pages of whatever linen or leather-bound book you call the Bible (or illuminated by whatever blue screen you call a mobile device) exists so much more than ink on a page or pixels on a screen. We have the living, breathing, spoken word of God.

Louie Giglio aptly reminds us that there is ultimately no such thing as BC... "before Christ." There wasn't a world. There wasn't a timeline. No evenings. No mornings. Not without Jesus. He was there from the beginning and everything made was made by him, through him, for him.

Everything finds its completion in Christ. This Easter, we're simply focusing on Jesus. It's his name that is above every name. It's his name that brings salvation to the lost. It's his name that offers hope to the world. We find his name echoing through all history but incarnating in gospels. As you engage this daily devotional through the Easter season, you are reading words about Jesus, spoken by Jesus, and those unpacking the truths of Jesus. You're reading about where Jesus walked. What Jesus said. What Jesus did. And why Jesus matters. You're reading the wonderings of people in the life of our church who love Jesus and have been captivated by him.

These 40 devotions were written by people in our Rolling Hills family. Read these words alongside the words of John, a disciple who loved Jesus and was loved by Jesus. Be prompted every day because of God's words and the words of these friends to know Jesus better and love Jesus more. All glory to our God.

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## JOHN 1:1-28

John's telling of the story of Jesus doesn't begin with His baptism as Mark does, or with his birth and human heritage as Matthew and Luke do. John begins at the beginning – you know, before anything existed.

In that sense, John follows Genesis chapter 1. At first there was nothing...except God. There are times still when, despite the craziness of our own "chaos" and "abyss," there is nothing real...except God. He is before. He is now. He is forever.

Like Genesis, John connects God to the Word. In Genesis, God spoke the Word – and Light IS. Not "was," but "is." Now; present reality. It fills up the abyss, spreads across the universe in an instant. It BLAZES. John says the Word was God. You can't disconnect the speech from the speaker; the gift from the giver.

The Word gave genesis to the Light. He spoke life into the light through His Word. He projected all of His Being by His Word, and Light became. The light that illumined first the darkness of space now penetrates the darkness of spirit.

It illuminates ALL, not just some. Many reject the light because they love the darkness. But they can't put the light out. It burns, flows, spreads, grows, and overpowers the dark. The light that "is coming into the world." Yes, it's dark. It will get darker. But the light is coming. It touches everyone.

John's introduction makes it clear: this isn't the story of a guy who lived here, taught there, died then. This is the Great Story. The eternal story. The story of the light that marches, conquers the darkness.

Open your eyes and see!

### DENNIS MELTON

Dennis Melton is a partner at Rolling Hills currently helping lead the Second Half (50+) group Bible study on Sunday mornings, as well as co-hosting a Community Group. He's the blessed husband of Ginger, the proud dad of Matt (whom you see working at Rolling Hills) and Katherine, and soon-to-be Father-in-Law to Tyler.



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## JOHN 1:29-51

In John 1:29-51, we see Jesus call his first followers. Verses 29-42 tell us that two of Jesus' disciples, Andrew and an unnamed disciple (possibly John<sup>1</sup>) initially followed Jesus because of testimony from John the Baptist. Andrew brought his brother, Peter, to Jesus and he began to follow Christ as well. In verse 43, we see the calling of Philip. *"The next day He [Jesus] purposed to go into Galilee, and He found Philip. And Jesus said to him, 'Follow Me.'" (John 1:43)* In our lives, we each have our own unique "Follow Me" directive from Christ. This could be our initial call to salvation or a calling to missions or evangelism. Personally, when Christ calls me, I always struggle with doubt. How could Christ use *me*. The remaining verses of this passage (John 1: 44-51), remind us of an amazing truth. Jesus knows everything about us *before* He calls us to follow or serve Him. As with Philip, Jesus seeks us out and meets us where we are. In answering His call to salvation, we are redeemed (as we are). In answering His call to follow Him, He reclaims our future. Whatever His calling may be on your life, He is calling you to greater things. He is calling us to a greater purpose and greater life through obedience. He will guide us through the good and bad times. He will lead us by still waters and through the valley of the shadow of death. Each of our callings are different. We have our own unique purpose we were created for. When Christ calls us, he intends to use all things for good, even our former failures and struggles. We must simply follow Him.

<sup>1</sup> Based on descriptive details and context clues included in the passage (The MacArthur Study Bible 2013)

### TONY LEMONIS

Tony has served at Rolling Hills since Mid-2016. He is active on the Worship Team at the Nolensville campus. He and his wife, Rachel, also lead a Community Group.



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## JOHN 2:1-23

Jesus revealed His glory. What an interesting statement for Jesus' first miracle, realized by just a few. Yet Jesus foreshadowed his ministry through this single event. He also alluded to four aspects of His character, and thus revealed his glory.

### **Jesus is our Creator**

John 1:1-3 earlier declared "all things were made" through Jesus. Jesus demonstrated He is the Creator by creating wine from water, confirming his divinity.

### **Jesus is our Savior**

Ceremonial washing jars were used to wash hands before eating. The cleansing water represents what Jesus would do for us – take away our sin. *"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) Later, Jesus would also use wine as a symbol. *"This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sin"* (Matt. 26:28).

### **Jesus is our Sustainer**

Water also sustains life. Jesus used water as a metaphor for himself later in his ministry. *"But those who drink the water I give them will never thirst."* (John 4:14)

### **Jesus is our Bridegroom**

Jesus was at a wedding banquet, a celebration! We have hope to see the glory of Jesus at a feast in heaven. We will celebrate Him there as the bridegroom for the Church. *"Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!"* (Revelation 19:9)

Jesus is our Creator, Sustainer, Savior, and the Bridegroom we will one day see face to face! Like Mary in this event, we can trust He is able to meet our need. Like the servants, we can obey and follow His direction without hesitancy. Like the disciples, we can put our faith in Jesus. What a poetic God; what a glorious Savior!

### **AMANDA LABELLA**

Amanda is the wife of Tim Labella and has been a Rolling Hills Partner for 10 years. She has served at the Nolensville and Franklin campuses in Kids Ministry and as a Greeter over the years. Currently, she is a leader of the Starting Point class on Sunday mornings at the Franklin campus.





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## JOHN 3:1-21

Nicodemus, a scholarly religious leader in Jesus' day, was a member of the Pharisees, a religious party of Jews who prided themselves on knowing and doing the Mosaic Law. The Pharisees did not believe Jesus to be God's Son nor did they like His teachings and were actually threatened by Him. However, Nicodemus was curious and intrigued by this man he saw as a great teacher and miracle worker. At a point in each of our lives, we were in the same position of Nicodemus; non-believers who wanted to know more. Who is a Nicodemus in your life? How can you reach out and lead this person to Christ? This Easter season is a great time to do so.

A conversation ensued between Nicodemus and Jesus in which Jesus shared the Gospel in a nutshell in John 3:16. Because God created us, He loves us. So much so that He sent Jesus to save us from our sin and create a way to God and eternal life. Commit this verse to memory and share with your "Nicodemus" identified earlier.

A couple of years ago, I went with my son and a group of Boy Scouts on a cave exploration tour. We crawled on our knees and stomach much of the way through really tight spots. Two different places on this tour, our route opened up into a large cavern where we would rest. Because a cave is dark, and especially in the areas we were in, we wore lights on our helmets. When we were in the large openings, our guide had everyone turn off our lights. We experienced total darkness. And then, the guide turned on just one light so we could see what a difference that one light made. It was scary without the lights but so assuring with it. Try this at home: find a place of total darkness in your house, then turn on a flashlight or light a candle and note the differences.

Jesus is the light of the world. And, if we put our faith in Him and live for Him, we, too, are light in a dark world. As we watch the news and hear of the evil and discord in the world, we see evidence of a huge need for the light of Christ. How can you be a light right where you are in your family, work and community? How can you be a light to the world?

These verses help us to know that light exposes darkness. What areas of your life need to have light shone on them? What difference could the light of the Gospel make in these areas?

**PRAY:** God, thank you for Jesus. Help me shine His light every day.

**KYLE CRAVENS**

Kyle has been a Partner since 2006. He currently serves a Community Group leader, a 7th grade guys small group leader and a leader with the A6 ministry. He is married to Danette and has a son, Colin, in 7th grade.

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## JOHN 3: 22-36

I can't help but be excited when God reveals something new in a Bible passage that I've read many times before. That is exactly what happened as I read John 3: 22-36, where John is affirming that Jesus is the awaited Messiah. In verses 32-33, John says, *"He testifies to what he has seen and heard, but no one accepts his testimony. Whoever has accepted it has certified that God is truthful."*

We live in a time when people often struggle with the meaning of truth. What is truth? Does absolute truth even exist? People often add to, take away, or rearrange truth until what's left is a version that is no longer truth.

As believers, we accept God as truthful. Therefore, we must accept His Word as truth.

For a believer, seeking truth is essential for growing our faith. It is the acceptance of the truth that God gave his only Son to die on the cross for our sin so that we may have eternal life. That acceptance is our common bond. That acceptance is what makes us the church. It is this truth upon which we base our faith, and we build our lives. It is this truth that we teach our children and that we share with a lost and dying world that isn't even sure of the existence of truth. Yes, there is such a thing as absolute truth and you, my fellow Christ-follower, have it living within you.

What a wonderful assurance to know if we follow God's Word and measure our lives by that standard, then we can know and live in truth, without any doubt. It becomes much easier to understand and live out John's words in verse 30, *"He must become greater; I must become less."*

### MICHELLE ADAMS

Michelle Adams has attended Rolling Hills in Franklin since 2010. During this time, she has volunteered in various areas of Kid's Ministry. She and her husband, Mike, live in Spring Hill and have hosted a weekly Community Group for five years. Michelle and Mike have been married for 23 years and they have three awesome children.

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## JOHN 4:1-26

As the Samaritan woman approached the well, full of shame and guilt over her sin, Jesus sat nearby with a gift that was about to change her life. This woman who approached the well had been living a life full of darkness and very little hope. She came to the well that day to fill her bucket with water that would soon run dry. But Jesus was about to give her an offer she couldn't refuse.

*<sup>13</sup> Jesus said, "Everyone who drinks from this water will get thirsty again. <sup>14</sup> But whoever drinks from the water that I will give him will never get thirsty again—ever! In fact, the water I will give him will become a well of water springing up within him for eternal life." John 4:13-14*

We can spend our lives in turmoil over past mistakes, destroyed relationships, and sinful desires ,yet, Jesus offers us a way out—a way to freedom forever! Even as Christians, we can still stumble through this invitation thinking we aren't worthy of God's love. Like the Samaritan woman, no sin was off-limits as to what consumed her and kept her from the grace of Jesus. She was offered a new life, a spiritual cleanse with fresh eyes and a renewed hope. All we have to do, is be willing to surrender and say yes to the living water. Say yes to a spiritual renewal that only God can provide. Say yes to His love and may you never thirst again.

### AMY ANDERSON

Amy's family relocated to Tennessee from California this past August. They quickly connected to the Nolensville campus and have loved every minute of it. Amy is excited to see the Student Ministry get under way this year and start serving the local youth in the community.

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## JOHN 4:27-54

In John 4, the miraculous story of the Samaritan woman continues. In the verses prior, the broken woman had encountered Jesus at the well. The woman was there for well water, but walked away with something that can satisfy much more than a physical thirst —His living water. At the well, Jesus spoke to her with compassion, knowing full-well of her sin. He showed her no shame and introduced her to a water that quenches a spiritual thirst—she needed what He had to offer.

In verses 27-29, we see her return to her town in great awe; telling everyone she could about her encounter, *“Come see a man that knew everything I ever did! Could this be the Christ?”* Many of the Samaritans believed in Him just by her testimony alone, even more wanted to go see Him for themselves—and they did. The words this woman shared, caused a great stir and brought many to believe in Jesus.

Just like the Samaritan woman, you are an evangelist. You may not feel like one or believe you’re worthy of the title, but if you know Jesus and you believe in what He has done, there is a town awaiting you. The Samaritan woman was thrilled to know Him and we have the opportunity to know the same truth and feel what she must have felt.

Your testimony, the one God has given you, may be exactly what someone else needs to hear. No matter your sin or your past, you have a story that has the power to bring someone to Jesus.

- Do you remember when you first encountered Jesus?
- Who are some people in “your town” who could benefit from hearing your story?
- Show grace to others, break down the walls. Meet them right where they are.





## JOHN 5:1-15

In this passage, Jesus heals a man who had been invalid for 38 years in Jerusalem at the Pool of Bethesda. Bethesda has two translations, house of grace, due to the belief that angels touched the pool, and shame, due to the invalids who were so often there. On the Sabbath, Jesus came and healed this man even though work was not allowed to be done on the Sabbath. This brings to light how Jesus follows the meaning of the law over the letter of the law, something which many Jewish leaders at the time had a lot of trouble doing. In verses 8 and 9 Jesus commanded the man to *"Get up! Pick up your mat and walk!"* and he was healed immediately.

Here we have a beautiful picture of how God heals. This man had been disabled his entire life and Jesus took this impossible situation and used it to bring glory to God and to give examples of His existence and power. In our weaknesses, God is seen clearly. God does this for us daily, even when we are shameful or outcasts, Jesus readily comes forward and brings us into his heart. So, we must follow the commands of God to bring Him glory. Also, we have to help outcasts even when it doesn't seem like the "right" time and to find the beauty in the situation, instead of the shame.

### **KATIE BULLARD**

Katie has been going to Rolling Hills since 2012 and has been serving with elementary and middle school kids since 2013. She loves going to Moldova twice a year and is currently studying nursing at University of Tennessee at Knoxville.



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## JOHN 5:16-30

For two thousand years that is THE question of mankind. Some spend their life sharing the answer and some spend their life running from the question. It started with the Jewish leaders of Jesus' day and continues to every human heart across the globe today.

Motivated by their own jealousy, the Jewish leaders of Jesus' day accused him of being a Samaritan (John 8:48) who was demon possessed (John 7:20 and 8:52), insane (John 10:20), and of illegitimate birth (John 8:41). Today's accusations of Jesus range from political revolutionary, skinny Buddha with long hair, to countercultural hero of rock musicals like Jesus Christ Superstar.

All of this unbelieving pseudo scholarship and cultural babble ignores the biblical account of His life and ministry, which leave no legitimate doubt about who Jesus declared himself to be, and who He is for the ages. The Bible emphatically answers "Who is Jesus Christ" in verses 17 to 23 of John chapter 5.

1. Jesus is equal with God in His person (verses 17,18). In contrast to the Jews' collective reference to God as "our Father," Jesus called God His own Father.
2. Jesus is equal with God in His works (verses 19, 20). Obviously, only someone who is equal to the Father could do everything that He can. Christ's statement, then, was a clear declaration of His own divinity.
3. Jesus is equal with God in His power and sovereignty (verse 21). By asserting His equality with God, Jesus claimed that He has the parallel power with God to raise the dead.
4. Jesus is equal with God in His judgment (verse 22). Jesus' authority to grant spiritual life to whomever He chooses is consistent with His authority to judge all men on the last day (John 3:18-19).
5. Jesus is equal with God in His honor (verse 23). The Father's purpose in entrusting all His works and judgment to Jesus is **so that all will honor the Son even as they honor the Father.**



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## JOHN 5:31-47

Jesus has just healed the man by the Bethesda pool (on the Sabbath) and has claimed to be the Son of God. The Jewish leaders have been searching for a reason to have Jesus killed. Here, they think they have it. Not only has Jesus healed a man on the Sabbath, but he is claiming to be the Son of God (which they consider heresy).

Jewish law (Deuteronomy 19:15) states “...a matter must be established by two or three witnesses.” In accordance with Jewish law and custom, Jesus begins to support his claim (verse 31) as He names others who have testified to who he is. This is important, not because Jesus needs to prove he is who he says he is, but because he is continuing to fulfill the prophesy. First, he names John the Baptist. The Jews were aware of John and knew that he preached of the coming Messiah. Second, the miracles performed by Jesus testify to who he is—up to and including dying on the cross to take on the sins of the entire world and his resurrection. Everything Jesus did pointed to who he was. The third testimony Jesus gives is that of the Father himself. The Jews knew and lived by the scriptures and those very scriptures pointed to Jesus as the Messiah they had been waiting for. Jesus’ primary concern was pleasing his Father, rather than the approval of man. The Jews were so concerned with works, prestige and man’s approval that they missed what was most important, Jesus gave them everything needed to believe in him. He has proved his love, and he continues to do works that testify to who he is.

We need to be testifying to who he is. Do you share the miracles that he is doing in and around you? Are you trying to gain the approval of the people around you or are you trying to please God? We have the entirety of the scriptures at our fingertips. We can know what they say, but that isn’t enough. The Jews knew what the scriptures said but they, too, missed the point. Jesus is the point. Not knowledge, not religion. He calls us to so much more. Know him. Know his Word. Believe it. Live it. Share it.

### **ANNE MERIWETHER**

Anne has been a Rolling Hills Partner since 2007. She has served in Preschool, Kids and Student Ministries. She and her husband, Scott, have also led Community Groups. They have 3 daughters Morgan, Ellen, and Lillie.



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## JOHN 6:1-24

*When Jesus looked up and saw a great crowd coming toward him, he said to Philip, "Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?" He asked this only to test him, for he already had in mind what he was going to do. John 6:5-6*

Most of us have gone through the arduous task of interviewing for a job. If you think about the questions asked in an interview you should realize that the questions being asked aren't really the ones the interviewer wants answered. When asked about a time we may have failed at something, the interviewer isn't really concerned about the story we are telling. What they really want to know is, can this person overcome adversity and how well do they learn from failure. By not asking these questions directly, they are testing you to see if you truly understood the nature of the job you are applying for.

Throughout Jesus' ministry, He would teach through parables and ask questions that would require His followers to read between the lines and better understand what He was really trying to teach/ask. We see an example of this with Jesus and his disciples in the above text. As the crowd drew near and Jesus questions Philip on where they could buy enough bread to feed everyone, He wasn't really asking about food. Jesus was really asking, "Do you trust me? Do you believe that I can provide? Do you trust that I will be loyal to my covenant obligations to care for my people?" These questions to Philip are meant to reveal Jesus as the presence of that gracious God who is providing the ultimate blessing—eternal life.

Our faith continues to be tested in this same way today. We who have the benefit of the New Testament and the witness of the Spirit still find ourselves in situations that challenge us in our faith, such as situations of great fear or grief and when God seems absent or cruel. Such testing is not comfortable, but it is part of God's graciousness, for it achieves a deepening of our faith by revealing our own weakness and God's sufficiency. Faith in God is not having all the answers but it's knowing God ultimately holds eternity.

Even though the crowd was not aware of the question Jesus asked his disciples, I can only imagine what they were thinking as their stomachs were growling. How many people do you think got tired of waiting for the food and left to find some





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## JOHN 6:25-59

After the feeding of the 5,000, Jesus joined his disciples en route to Capernaum. When the crowd realized Jesus was gone, they set out to locate him. As the verses above describe, once the crowd found him in Capernaum, they began to ask how and when he arrived. Jesus, as He so often does, completely ignores their questions and gets right to the heart of the matter.

I read the verses above and couldn't help but be a little exasperated. These people walked beside Jesus. They witnessed miracles first hand. Yet, they sought Him out not because they believed he was the Messiah, but because He gave them a free meal. They came to the Savior of the world looking for more bread! That's crazy, right? I mean, I would never...

And then I hear that still, small voice quietly clear his throat and ask, "Are you sure you wouldn't? Are you sure you *don't*? What are *you* searching for? Are you working for food that is eternal?"

If I'm honest, I often fit right in with this crowd of people looking for their next meal. I face my days as a series of tasks that I need to mark off one-by-one; I prioritize meetings, emails, meal planning, bedtime routines, and a slew of other to-dos I feel are necessary to accomplish to be a good steward of what God has entrusted to me. And though the lists aren't bad, how often am I choosing what is *good* over what is *best*? How often am I focusing on the things I have been given instead of the One who gave them?

The truth is that those "urgent" emails may not really be that urgent, it probably won't kill us if those dishes sit in the sink overnight, and my toddler will survive if he has peanut butter for dinner...again. But what I truly cannot afford to live without is the eternal bread that gives meaning to my days.

*"I am the bread of life," Jesus told them. "No one who comes to Me will ever be hungry, and no one who believes in Me will ever be thirsty again."* John 6:35

### LINDSAY CURTIS

Lindsay has been a Rolling Hills Partner for 11 years. During that time, she met and married David Curtis, who is our Nolensville Worship Pastor, and they have had their first child, Max.



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## JOHN 6:60-71

John 6 brings us to a dividing point in Jesus' ministry. Will His followers accept His teaching, internalize it as words leading to eternal life? Jesus feeds the five thousand, walks on water, and then claims to be the bread of life. These spiritual truths take discernment to accept, and many leave Him. Jesus is talking about His death on the cross, which must be believed for eternal life. There is a divide between the reactions of false disciples and true disciples. And it divides us, too. Are we following Jesus for physical benefits as the false disciples, turning away from Jesus and not accepting His gift of salvation through His death on the cross? They followed Jesus for bread, literal food, but when Jesus taught them that He is the bread of life and eternal life comes through believing in Him, emphasizing the importance of spiritual matters and that Jesus is the only way to the Father, many turned away and no longer followed Him. Contrast that response, with Peter's: *"Simon Peter answered him, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We believe that and know that you are the Holy One of God.'" (John 6:68-69)* Consider the boldness and faith of Peter! The crowds were turning from Jesus, but Peter stood his ground. As a follower of Jesus, how do we accept Jesus' words? Do we look to Him as the source of eternal life? Do we recognize Him as Holy? Do we acknowledge Him as God? Are we willing to stand against the crowd and declare,—"Yes, Jesus is Truth"? The passage ends with the notation of Judas Iscariot, whom Jesus knew would betray Him. The question posed to you and me is: are we grasping the deeper meaning of Jesus' words, accepting them as Truth?

### MEGAN GROOTERS

Megan has called Rolling Hills home for five years. One highlight during that time was traveling on the Israel Biblical Study Tour three years ago. She was baptized in the Sea of Galilee by Pastor Jeff. On Sundays you'll find her serving as a Greeter at the Franklin campus.



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## JOHN 7:1-24

In this passage, the Judean crowd and authorities marveled at Jesus' teaching. They knew he had no formal training, but he seemed to really know scripture and he amazed them with his wisdom. But Jesus quickly assured them that his teaching was not his own, "but his who sent me." He then went on to indicate that if they genuinely sought to do God's will, then they would know deep down that both Jesus and his teachings were true and were from God.

Here we see Jesus demonstrating humility. Instead of gloating in the fact that the crowd marveled at his teachings, he immediately gave the glory to God. He wanted the people to know that God sent him and spoke through him. He also challenged the crowd to check their own motives. Did they want to follow God? If their goal was to do his will, they would recognize God's authority in Jesus' words.

How does this teaching equip us now as believers? I think Jesus is telling us that if we are genuinely trying to obey God, His Spirit will help us discern what teachings are from God. As we share God's teachings, we are to keep in mind to honor Him and boost His reputation and not our own. There are people today, too, that challenge Christians about the truth of what we teach. Are we teaching for our own prestige or gain? Do we teach our own ideas or God's commands? As we share, always be true to God and His Word.

As Christ-followers we need to be ready for those who will question the truth of Jesus Christ. If they doubted Jesus, they will doubt us. Maybe they don't want to hear God speaking. Maybe they want to ignore the call of God on them. But whatever the situation, we are to seek to glorify the one who calls us, not ourselves.

Again, Jesus teaches us that our will should be to do God's will! Because we believe he loved us enough to die for us, and became our salvation, we can strive to love and trust him enough to obey him in all things. And Jesus tells us that if we are focused on God's will, we will know what teaching is from God. So glorify God and seek his will!

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**ALICE DARNELL**

Alice Darnell joined as a Rolling Hills Partner in 2015. She loves serving as a Titus 2 leader for Mom2Mom. She and Larry enjoy meeting people as they serve as greeters. Alice is involved in the 50+ Bible Study and Community Group, and is eager to serve in Moldova in June.

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## JOHN 7:25-52

The prelude leading to the crucifixion of Christ and Easter is full of pride and prejudice, jealousy and confusion.

The feast of Succoth (Tabernacles or Booths) in Jerusalem was one of the three annual religious observances that every Law-observing Jew was eager to attend. Jerusalem would have been a beehive of jostling, buzzing humanity, overflowing out beyond its walls into the tents of those who couldn't be accommodated inside.

Rabbi Jesus is present and conspicuous in the temple courts. He has become the primary subject of rampant conjecture by the crowds since he arrived and began to teach halfway through the festival. The people are astonished by his command of the Scriptures, yet rumors are circulating that the Jewish authorities will have him killed.

On the last, climactic day, Jesus, aware of the speculation about his identity and credentials, stands up in the temple courts and cries out, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him."

It was a claim suspiciously close to what God said about himself in Isaiah 55:1-2: *"Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and your soul will delight in the richest of fare."*

Maybe the biggest temptation for people who have too much is that we're too self-sufficient to thirst for "Jesus water." Or maybe we're so distracted that we've forgotten the sweet taste of Jesus on our lips. Or maybe we're so self-deceived as to believe that there *must be* other options available that will satisfy our souls.

Like the insane, we do things over and over again and expect different results.

And Jesus asks again: "Is anyone thirsty?"





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## JOHN 8:1-30

Throughout the New Testament the Pharisees and Scribes were always attempting to trick Jesus, to invalidate his teaching. One of the more famous incidents resides in John 8:2-11 where a woman caught in the act of adultery is to be stoned to death in accordance with the Law of Moses. Essentially asking Jesus if he believed the law was still valid they asked him to take a position. What follows is an answer that applies to all of humankind, then and now: *"Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her."* Of course, answering honestly in their own hearts, none of those surrounding the woman could throw the stone and she was saved. Such is the way God the Father views us all.

This story says so much about so many things but in my mind I focus on the correct application of both justice and mercy. If God judged us to the same standards the Pharisees applied to this woman we would all certainly burn. But that is why Jesus came, to release us from our bondage to sin and give us a path to redemption. If mercy is withholding from us what we rightly deserve and grace is giving to us what we have not earned, then we are blessed to know the one true God.

As someone whom has been personally saved, released, freed, healed from a constant desire to sin and destroy, I am grateful to God every day that Jesus came and that the stone was dropped from the hand of my accusers. They were righteous and just in condemning my sin but the miracle of God is that I am alive and a new person in Jesus Christ. I have the same hope for this woman, who was instructed to "Go now and leave your life of sin."

### JASON GOTTWALS

Jason is husband to Natalie and father to Isabella and Madeleine. Natalie can be found every Sunday teaching our pre-K students in the Treehouse while Jason runs the technology. They have attended RHCC Franklin since 2013 and became Partners in 2014.



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## JOHN 8:31-59

*"I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. Now a slave has no permanent place in a family, but a son belongs to it forever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed." — Jesus, John 8:34-36*

Slaves have no rights. No freedom. Just as slaves are held captive to someone, we are held captive to our sin. Sin is our master. Jesus calls us out of our captivity into freedom. Jesus sets prisoners free. In exchange for our freedom, Jesus paid the price for our sin. By His blood we are free. Because of Jesus' sacrifice, we have inherited the full rights of sons. We are heirs of the kingdom, children of the King. We now have the Spirit of his Son sealed on our hearts as the deposit guaranteeing our inheritance. As children of the Eternal Father, we have an eternal inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade.

As children of the King, Christ-followers, we should live in the freedom that is ours. The sin that once enslaved us now has no authority over us. We are free from accusation; for there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. We should stand firm and not be burdened again by the yoke of slavery for we have been completely reconciled by Christ's physical body through death. By His wounds we are healed and he sets our hearts free. We are now free to live a new life, a life of righteousness which leads to holiness. A life of freedom in Him instead of captivity.

### **EMILY HOLCOMBE**

Emily is married to Patrick and they have been Rolling Hills Partners for ten years and have been involved in a variety of ways. They have two young sons.



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## JOHN 9:1-34

Whenever I read John's gospel, I'm always amazed at how much he packs into the seemingly simple stories. Like a magician's bag, there is always more to pull out and learn about who this Jesus is and the fulfillment of God's promises.

That's exactly what we have in Jesus healing a blind man in chapter 9. To have been a bystander watching this unfold, I don't know if I could have kept from laughing. Jesus spits on the ground and smears mud on a blind guy's eyes then tells him to go wash. The blind man doesn't know who Jesus is, all he knows is some strangers nearby are having a philosophical conversation about suffering and one of them just smeared mud in his eye. Like a scene out of a sitcom, I can almost hear the Seinfeld bass guitar sounds.

While I know it can be tedious to dig into the Greek of the New Testament, one of the words John uses in this story is important. The word translated "mud" in English is also "clay" and it is only used by John in this story and once by Paul in his letter to the Romans. Why is that important? I wonder if John wanted his original audience, and us today, to hear the echoes of Israel's prophets from over half a millennium earlier. *"Like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in the Lord's hands"* Jeremiah told the people of Israel. One hundred years before Jeremiah, Isaiah would remind the people of God about their relationship to Him, *"Yet you, Lord, are our Father. We are the clay, you the potter, we are the works of your hand."* But it's Job that goes back to how God created us *"Remember that you molded me like clay. Will you now turn me back to dust?"* You see, in this one little word, John is communicating to us that He who created us out of dust in the beginning is now walking among his people. The Potter that formed us is here, he isn't far away like the Greek gods. The Word became flesh and is restoring His creation, making all things new, including this man's sight. Our God is in the business of restoration, two thousand years ago and today.

The fallout from this miracle is amazing. Instead of rejoicing that a man has received sight, those invested in the religious institutions of the day are more concerned with whether or not Jesus performed a miracle according to the rules. When questioned, the man who can now see for the first time in his life gives perhaps the best answer anyone can give: He replied, *"Whether he (Jesus) is a sinner or not, I don't know. One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!"*



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## JOHN 9:35-10:21

In Jesus' day, shepherds gathered their sheep and led them in a very personal way. There were no dogs herding them. Instead, the shepherds had an intimate relationship with their sheep and the sheep knew their shepherd's voice and would only follow him. You could have had several herds together in a single pen and when the shepherds arrived to take their sheep to water them, each would sing and call to his sheep and they would separate from the larger flock and follow their own shepherd.

In this passage, Jesus calls Himself the Good Shepherd and we, His followers, are His sheep. He casts Himself as the protector of the sheep and contrasts that to the role of a hired hand who abandons the sheep when danger arrives. Instead, Jesus is the true shepherd who is willing to lay down his life for His sheep.

Do you and I know the voice of our Shepherd? Are we able to hear it in the noise of all the voices shouting at us for our attention as we go about our daily lives? When He calls, are we listening so that we can stop what we are doing and follow Him? As Christ-followers, we must spend time in prayer and in the Word so that we know Jesus' voice and so that our ear is tuned to hear it and respond. Our Shepherd knows us by name and tenderly calls to us. If we follow Him, He will be sure to meet all our needs and to lead us on the path that leads to life. What joy it brings me to know that our God loves me in this way...that He calls to me, sings to me, leads me, tenderly cares for me. And I can rest in the knowledge that when danger comes, He has already put His life on the line for me and overcome death for me. He really is the Good Shepherd and worthy of our praise!

### MARY KATHARINE HUNT

Mary Katharine is the Executive Director of Operations for Justice & Mercy International. Over the years, Mary Katharine has volunteered for and led dozens of mission trips to Mexico, Moldova and Brazil.





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## JOHN 10:22-42

Have you ever followed someone so closely that you felt like you knew him or her? Maybe for you this is a famous celebrity or athlete, maybe it's just someone you have been "stalking" on social media. I can identify with all of the above. Growing up, I knew everything you could image about every NBA super star. As I got older, I realized that it is weird to have someone's height and weight memorized if you have never met them, or even if you *have* met them... still weird. When I went to college there was this new thing starting up, called "Facebook." I thought I would give it a try, and it became pretty fun to "stalk" people through this form of social media... don't judge me—you've done it too. I realized a couple of things as I did this: One, don't like or comment on someone's photo that was posted years ago. That's really creepy. And two, when in a conversation with someone you have stalked don't bring up things you know about this person from Facebook, because they will be curious as to how you know these things. What I began to figure out was that just knowing a lot about these people, didn't mean I *knew* them.

I think we can agree that there is a big difference between knowing *about* someone, and *knowing* someone.

### **READ** JOHN 10:22-33

Jesus had made it very clear who he was, but the Jews weren't buying it. Why not? If anyone was likely to believe shouldn't it have been them? The Jewish people had all the knowledge; they grew up memorizing the Pentateuch. They knew about the prophesies of the coming messiah and were eagerly awaiting his arrival. Even more, the Jews had seen the works that Jesus had done, they watched as he performed miracles. So what was the deal?

The problem the Jewish people had was with belief. They knew a lot *about* God, the Bible, the rules and the customs, but Jesus tells them plainly that they do not *know* Him. It is very easy to get caught in this trap of elevating knowledge and good works over a relationship with Jesus. And, there is nothing wrong with having knowledge and certainly not with doing good, or following rules. But, there is something very wrong if those things are elevated to a place they were never meant to be.



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## JOHN 11:1-16

Jesus is and has always been the perfect example of love, compassion and commitment. In John 11:1-16 we see the love Jesus had for his friend Lazarus and the concern he showed for Mary and Martha upon hearing of Lazarus' condition. We can rest assured when we hurt, Jesus hurts with us. We should also be challenged to show the same type of concern to others. When I see others struggling, going through difficult times or simply hurting, what impact does it have on me? Do I see this as an inconvenience or an opportunity to be like Jesus?

In addition to great compassion, Jesus showed commitment to people in spite of fear, obstacles and uncertainty. Can the same be said about me? In this specific instance, the situation Lazarus was facing and the physical place Jesus wanted to be, just happened to also be a town where Jesus had been threatened.

The easy thing for us to do is to give and be present, as long as my safety is ensured and nothing too serious is going to be asked of me. However, Jesus did not adopt this principal. If someone was hurting, he didn't let the unknown variables get in the way of being an available servant.

As we seek to grow to be more and more like Jesus, may this be said of us. Regardless of the cost, may my compassion, care and concern for others be overflowing!

### JASON HALE

Jason has been a Partner at Rolling Hills since 2007 and joined the staff team in 2009. Jason serves as our Nolensville Campus Pastor. He is married to Jaclyn and they have a three-year-old daughter, Evie June.



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## JOHN 11:17-57

This passage shows us that, although we may not always understand the rationale behind the timing or ways in which Jesus chooses to come to us, He is faithful and His leadership is perfect. Christ in the Incarnation is fully God, in control of all things and fully man, acquainted with our sorrows and grief. He can be trusted and He works all things together that God may be glorified. We can approach Christ in our disappointment and He will reassure us of the truth of who He is. He will be moved with compassion to empathize with us in our grief and will act on our behalf.

We see Jesus in this passage as one who is able to bring comfort to both the mind and heart of these sisters. Both sisters come with hearts that are disappointed and grieving. Martha approaches Jesus with her reasoning and spiritual understanding that she will see her brother on the last day when He is raised from the dead. Mary approaches Jesus with a broken heart and raw emotion, weeping. Jesus' response to Martha is to reassure her of the truth of who He is, that He is the resurrection and life. While His response to Mary is to weep with her. His overall response to the grief of His friends, is that He is moved to action. Christ not only seemed concerned, but he was inwardly and sincerely affected with the case. In both instances we see Him respond perfectly and individually to the specific person. He knows them and exactly what they need in their time of difficulty and is able to comfort them and breathe life into the situation.

In light of this passage we can have confidence that no matter what it looks like, Christ cares for us and that His plan is perfect. It helps us to believe that not only does He care deeply for us as a friend would but He also has the power to life even when situations seem hopeless. He is emotionally involved in our lives and knows exactly what each heart needs. Because of this truth, we know we can trust Him in impossible situations. No matter how we relate to Christ, whether it be primarily through thought or in a more emotional way He knows exactly what we need.

### **RACHEL CROPPER**

Rachel has been on staff as the Family Ministry Administrative Assistant since 2015. She loves serving with the 6th Grade Girls small groups on Sunday mornings as well as taking trips to see new places and visiting her family who lives in Maryland.



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## JOHN 12:1-19

As we examine this passage, let's ask three questions:

### **What does the passage teach us about Jesus?**

"Just because he/she is a leader, doesn't mean he/she has it all together." Jesus had needs too. A lot of times, we forget our leaders have daily struggles. Like us, they can get tired. Even the best, most selfless leader needs care.

### **How does this passage encourage or equip believers?**

Being a disciple is not complicated. It's about obedience in the little things. Mary wiped Jesus' feet. The crowd sang praises and laid down palm branches. Understanding why is not needed, it's simply executing on the little things.

### **What does this passage tell us to be, believe or know, and do as Christ followers?**

- **Be** – Be like Lazarus. Point people to Christ. (v.10) Many Hebrews were going over to Jesus & believing in him because of Lazarus. We have an opportunity to show people our love for God by living out HIS Word. Each daily step we take should point others to Christ. Our obedience matters because the daily steps we take can direct the people around us to Christ. Sometimes, the people around us won't agree with how God instructs us to live. Continue to take daily steps, even if they are unpopular.
- **Know/Believe** – Understanding is not required for obedience to God's Word. Judas didn't understand Mary's sacrifice. The disciples didn't understand the significance of the praise, the palm branches or the donkey. Sometimes God will require us to make personal & financial sacrifices. We may not understand why. We might not even understand the significance of our actions—take the next step anyway.
- **Do** – Do the thing God has called us to do. The thing tugging at our hearts, the thing we think about all the time—do that thing. Your obedience matters.





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## JOHN 12:20-50

John depicts the death of Christ as a step for His glorification. He was not glorified just for his death on the cross, but also for the sinless life he lived despite temptations. Jesus being lifted up means both lifted on the cross but also lifted on it as a coronation needed to ascend to the right hand of God. The unique purpose of Christ's manifestation was to reveal God. People would think of His death as the end rather than the beginning because they did not understand at first that Jesus always spoke about an eternal kingdom.

Any king in those days would love to rule the world and have all peoples under their dominion, thus were appeased by Jesus' approach to it, however they had no interest in Jesus being that global king.

There are many lessons we can learn from this passage such as: Jesus had a clear understanding and full commitment to his mission. He was inclusive of all peoples. Though He was humanly troubled, his divine side was stronger and would never compromise. He taught to very last minute. He knew the consequences of his actions.

We can gather from the text instructions on what we must be, believe or know and do as Christ's followers, for example it talks about valuing eternal life over earthly. Follow Jesus and be rewarded by God. Because of hardened hearts and blinded eyes not everyone will follow Jesus; and finally that Jesus is the Savior and not the Judge.

The text presents words of encouragement to the crowd back then and to us today as they heard God directly talking about glorifying Christ. Jesus presented sequential facts so that people could know upfront what they were signing up for rather than being influenced or misled by speculations.

### **SAMUEL SANTOS**

Samuel Santos, an author and ordained minister, has been attending RHCC since December 2015. He's passionate for teaching and preaching and served with JMI at the Pastors Conference in Brazil this year.



## JOHN 13:1-17

My daughter, who is in middle school, surprises me by the things she knows how to do. She is always attempting new hairstyles, recipes, and even home DIY projects. She gets most of her instruction straight from YouTube. I am amazed at how easily she tries these new things. Her confidence comes because she has listened to the instructor and seen an example.

In today's passage **John 13:15** says, *"I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you."*

Jesus' time with his disciples was quickly coming to an end. In fact, this would be his last evening with them. He shared His love in a most memorable way. Washing the disciples' feet may have seemed simple, but according to various commentators, it carried profound significance. This act of Jesus' love would stoop to even the most menial service. Even though it was met with opposition, probably because of embarrassment and pride, it was not a matter of a bath, but a needed inward cleansing.

Jesus is our ultimate example! Christ washed his disciples' feet so that he might not only cleanse, but give proof of that great love, wherewith he loved them; loved them to the end. (John 13:10). We are called to show love the same way that Jesus did. Reach out unasked, unpaid, and without reluctance!

Jesus says it's time for us to follow his lead, and serve others in love. Even when we are met with the opposition of embarrassment and pride, sometimes even our own, we follow his example. Our acts of love are, not simply commanded by Christ, but are empowered with strength, by the Spirit, through God's great love. (Ephesian 3:19-20) We can do it!!

Just like my daughter trying new things, we can confidently follow His example each day, as we respond in love and service unasked, unpaid, and without reluctance.

### LORI CAMPBELL

Lori, and her husband Steve, attend the Franklin campus and have been Partners since 2007. They currently host a Community Group and you'll find Lori in the Treehouse on Sunday mornings with toddlers. She also leads the evening Mom2Mom ministry.



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## JOHN 13:18-38

Jesus said, *"I tell you the truth, one of you will betray me."* Jesus clearly tells his disciples what's about to happen. Somehow, they don't understand so they ask him for clarification. Simon Peter, always a man of action, motions to John. *"Ask Him which one He means."* Jesus answers, *"It is the one to whom I give this bread."* His disciples, with whom Jesus had spent the previous three years, were still unable to comprehend. We read these verses and wonder, "what's wrong with these people!"

Jesus still speaks to us in that same simple language, and yet, we also don't comprehend.

He commands us to love one another, feed the poor, and comfort the suffering. We complicate His message with our disbelief:

Why should I love those who aren't kind to me?

Why should I feed those who should support themselves?

Why is it up to me to comfort those who cause their own suffering?

The simple answer is this: Jesus commands us to show His love, give support and provide comfort to all. We must be the hands and feet of Jesus.

*"A new command I give you: love one another, as I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know you are my disciples, if you love one another."*

### JANICE SCHULER

Janice and Jimmy joined the Rolling Hills family four years ago. They have three adult children and have an exciting May ahead—with the marriage of their daughter and the birth of their first grandchild.



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## JOHN 14:1-14

In this passage, we see Jesus comforting his disciples, and as I read it I, too, find comfort in his words. He is telling them not to be troubled - not to be fearful or doubtful of what is about to happen - because, *"I (Jesus) am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the father except through me"* (John 14:6). He is about to open up the **way** to salvation by being the sacrificial Lamb, covering all our sin. He is about to confirm the **truth** of his promise of eternity by tearing the veil and giving us free access to God the Father. He is about to purchase the **life** we get to live by suffering the death we deserve.

As believers, we should be greatly encouraged because Jesus really is all of this AND so much more, and that alone is enough. But let's not miss this other fact—Jesus is *comforting* his disciples. Why? Because in just a matter of hours He is going to be betrayed, arrested, accused, denied, beaten, and murdered. They need comforting. They need to know that what is approaching is terrible, horrible, unthinkable...but it is not final. Jesus tells them he is going to go but he's going to come back, and when he's gone they won't be alone.

We, as Christ followers, get to trust in the same Jesus and the same promises. We may not know what is approaching, but we do know that it is not final. We have access to God and to eternity because Jesus made the way, confirmed the truth, and purchased the life.

So let us be hopeful, because Jesus Christ did not leave us alone or without hope. Let us believe in these promises of who Jesus is, what he has done, and what he has granted us. And let us pray boldly because we know Him and trust in his assurance.

### MELONIE WAGNER

Melonie has been with Rolling Hills as a Partner and an Intern for 5 months. She serves as the Multisite and Local Missions Intern, reaching out to the Nolensville and Thrive communities.

sources:

NIV Zondervan Study Bible, edited by D.A. Carson

"I Am the Way, the Truth, and the Life" sermon, by John Piper (March 23, 2012)





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## JOHN 14:15-31

How many times a day do you find yourself thinking, "OK, I've got this. Let me just figure out how to fix this." It may be as you're staring at a 1000 piece puzzle spread out in front of you, or you've just hung up with your doctor after a devastating diagnosis.

Either way, we're determined to control the situation and determine the solution. Maybe it's a function of control or maybe this thought process is a function of my problem-solving acumen. If I'm honest, it's my pride. My arrogance.

This goes completely against the model that Jesus communicates to his disciples in this passage. Our only role is to obey. Period. To obey is to surrender our will. If we say that we love Jesus, we are called to obey. "If you love Me, keep my commandments." I'm not sure if it's because of our hearts that are prone to wander or that the enemy has convinced us that this is optional, but Jesus is compelled to repeat this FIVE times. That last time, it's to demonstrate His own example of unwavering love for His Father, ultimate obedience unto death for a lost and broken world.

The beautiful truth is that we were never created to figure life out alone. He has gifted us with "another Helper", "the Spirit of truth", the Holy Spirit. I love it. Community. Verse 20 says *"I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you."* We're gifted with God the Father, Jesus AND the Holy Spirit. He abides in community and desires the same for us. So, "Arise, let us go from here." Don't settle. Let us be bold and go forward together.

### ROSSANA WILLIAMS

Rossana and her family have been attending Rolling Hills since 2008. Rossana currently Worships One/Serves One by teaching 2<sup>nd</sup> Graders at the Franklin campus. She has also been a Community Group leader and currently serves on the RHCC Board.



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## JOHN 15:1-17

Jesus and the disciples have just finished The Last Supper and are taking a walk through the Garden; Him knowing it's only hours before He is on a cross. The vines are in growth season, it's obvious the gardener has been by. In the midst of a season of care, prelude to the season of harvest...It's never easy to say goodbye. As they walk, Christ leaves his disciples some final instructions before he goes. Jesus asks them to remain in Him, to go and bear fruit, and to love one another. But how does this instruction encourage us today?

First we must REMAIN. Cling so close to the vine, you simply live there. Have you ever put down roots in ungodly soil? Have you been covered in dirt because you've been spending time in the wrong places, with the wrong people or thoughts? Have diseased leaves replaced healthy fruit? Has envy or bitterness replaced love? God loves us so much, He'll do whatever is necessary to remove the roots from the wrong place, clean us up, heal disease, and tie us back to the arbor. It may not be comfortable, but God won't leave His branches lying around in the wrong places. The pruning process is an act of love. Sometimes we even have to let go of the good things to get to great things.

Then, we are called to GO AND BEAR FRUIT. We have a mission, ordered and prepared by our Master Gardener. He has given us gifts according to our purpose. We cannot find our purpose without knowing our place. We have no option but to release control. God hasn't called us to bear the weight of the whole branch; our only job is to bear the fruit that He has called for us to bear.

Lastly, we LOVE. Just as Jesus so deeply loves us we are to love one another. They couldn't possibly understand the depths of the love that was about to lay down His life for His friends. Yet, in these moments He reminds them of His love for them, instructs them to remain in that love, and to love one another.

Christ's love for us is unending and His instructions are clear. Although He left the disciples to take on the cross He now lives in us and calls us friends!



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## JOHN 15:18-27

Are You a Servant or a Pleaser?

If you're anything like me, you want to please people. And if you're anything like me, that might have a little bit to do with your "servant's heart." But maybe a lot more to do with the fact that you want to be liked. Maybe even admired. (Or adored?)

But for the follower of Christ here's the catch: Jesus may have been meek and humble (and He was), but a people-pleaser He was NOT. In John 15:18 (ESV), He says, *"If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you."*

Mmmmmmm. Don't those words go down like sweet milk? Mixed with gasoline?

Indeed, many of the most important people who knew Jesus hated Him. And on the day of His crucifixion almost everyone hated Him. Enough to kill Him. Literally. Why? One answer, among many: Jesus wasn't a people-pleaser.

He was a servant. And not just any servant: God's servant. He came to do the will not of the power brokers or of the masses, but of His Heavenly Father.

People-pleasers, if they play their cards right, can be readily liked, admired and adored.

But a servant, if their heart's desire is to please their master, cares not for the approval of anyone else. In fact, a servant who's soul's focus is on his master's pleasure, knows seeking the approval of others will compromise their ability to walk in their master's will.

What does it look like to serve instead of please? Sometimes serving means telling someone the truth they don't want to hear. Sometimes it means letting someone suffer the full impact of their own choices. Even if that impact will hurt *you* as much as them. Sometimes it means making sacrifices no one understands. Not *even* you.



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## JOHN 16:1-15

As we continue walking through the last night Jesus is with his disciples before he was betrayed and arrested, he continued to prepare them for life after he leaves. In this passage, he's referencing the coming of the Holy Spirit and how he'll be their counselor. No doubt the disciples were probably thinking, "We'd rather just have *You* stick around, Jesus!" I would think it would be impossible to comprehend what Jesus was trying to explain. Even though the Holy Spirit isn't something you see, this third part of the trinity is still fully God. It was to their advantage that the Helper would come. He would empower them, give them courage, teach them and make Christ more real to them than He'd ever been before.

One way the Holy Spirit guides us is by convicting us of sin (8). It's a good thing: God wants us to get rid of the things that displease him, and the only way to identify those things is to be convicted by the Spirit. The Spirit works through our conscience to make us aware of sin in our lives. However, the Holy Spirit can't do *all* the work for us. We are responsible to do our part—especially to consistently read our Bibles and pray, asking the Spirit to show us the truth and teach us how to live.

It's important to remember that the Spirit will not prompt us to do anything that goes against Scripture. People sometimes justify their actions by saying, "My conscience told me to . . ." We need to make sure we're listening to the voice of the Holy Spirit, not the voice of our own desires. And we know which is which by checking this voice against the truth of God's Word.

How can you tell if you're being led by the Spirit? By the "fruit" of your life—your attitudes and actions. Galatians 5:22-23 says, "the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control." May the fruit of our lives be evident today.

### LAURA CHAPMAN

Laura has been a Rolling Hills Partner since 2003 and has been on staff for 10 years. She loves opening her home for a women's Community Group each week and serving in Moldova at least once a year.





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## JOHN 16:16-33

If you have a red letter Bible, John 16:16-33 is, well, pretty much all red. Jesus is preparing his disciples for his death, burial, and resurrection. He's speaking to them about what is to come, but quite frankly, he's confusing them with his vague speech. Jesus says, *"In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me."* To me, this sounds very similar to my five-year-old daughter pretending to do a magic trick. The disciples, justifiably, had questions about these teachings of *Jesus*.

Throughout these eighteen verses, two seem to stand out as fairly clear, at least when you compare them with the other things Jesus is saying in this passage. First, John 16:20, *"I tell you the truth, you will weep and mourn while the world rejoices. You will grieve, but your grief will turn to joy."* Then, later in the passage, verse 33, *"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."*

Though the disciples didn't understand the future circumstances for which they would *"weep and mourn,"* the Lord is assuring it's coming. Not only does he assure trouble is on the horizon, He more importantly assures peace. Jesus says, *"Take heart! I have overcome the world."* Did you catch the punctuation? It's a command.

As we look to the Easter season and celebrate the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, take heart! Jesus, indeed, has overcome the world. As you weep and mourn through difficult situations in life, take heart! As life takes turns you never expected, take heart! Rest in the peace of Jesus and watch as he turns hardships to joy; it's his specialty.

### TIFFANY BAILEY

Tiffany is a mom to two young daughters. She has been a Rolling Hills partner for one year and serves in Main Street. Tiffany has a heart for college students and making Christ known on college campuses.



## JOHN 17:1-26

*"When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, "I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known." John 17:1a, 26a*

Jesus asks Peter in Mark 8:29, *"Who do you say that I am?"*

What name do you call God? In just these short 26 verses, Jesus calls God: Father, true God, Holy Father, and O righteous Father. But let's gaze a little longer, a little deeper. He also calls Him: giver of authority (vs. 2), giver of eternal life (vs. 2), the one who sent Jesus Christ (vs. 3), the one who calls us to our work (vs. 4), giver of your word (vs. 14), keeper from the evil one (vs. 15), Sanctifier (vs. 17), one with His children (vs. 23).

*"And those who know your name put their trust in you, for you, O LORD, have not forsaken those who seek you." (Psalm 9:10)*

Jesus greatly desired for us to know who God is so that in return we could share who He is with those who have not yet learned His name. Jesus knew every characteristic of God and taught and manifested the nature of God to us. The more I get to know someone, the more I get to truly *see* of them. Trust is built in seeing the identity. God wants to be our all in all. Our friend, comforter, advocate, teacher, etc. He wants us to know His name.

Because when we know HIS name, we know *our* name.

Jesus says, *"I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one"* (vs. 23a)

You are "Perfectly one with the Father."

If He is Father, I am daughter/son.

If He is Redeemer, I am redeemed.

If He is Freedom, I am free.

Who do you say that He is?



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## JOHN 18:1-18

Scripture shares little with us about the desperate prayer that Jesus prayed to His Father only hours before He would be arrested. Scripture does tell us, however, that He prayed *“My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.”* But I can only imagine what else was said during this exchange. Was He thinking about running away? Did He think that He could live His life in hiding? Maybe He imagined He could and that the rest of His life would be spent trying to keep Himself from the hands of the Pharisees. Maybe He discussed a different plan with God where the outcome wasn't Him dying on a cross.

But He didn't do any of these things. Whatever thoughts He had while He was alone with God in the garden, whatever temptations He wanted to give into, He chose to listen to the voice of His loving Father whose plan was much greater than His. In fact, scripture says that Jesus took His disciples to a place that His betrayer, Judas, was very familiar with since He had been there with Jesus many times before. Jesus didn't hide. He didn't try to run. Instead, he almost waited for the soldiers to get there. I believe that if the Son of God wanted to hide, He would have found a way to do it. But He didn't. I would almost dare to say that He led Judas and the soldiers right to Him because He knew what His death and sacrifice would mean for God's people. He waited for God's plan to unfold even if it wasn't the way He wanted it to be.

This Easter, Jesus is leading you right to Him, if only you listen to His voice.

### **SAM SCOTT**

Sam is in her second year of internship at Rolling Hills. Last year she served in Worship Arts and this year in Discipleship. You'll find Sam at Thrive every Thursday night.



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## JOHN 18:19-40

In today's world, when someone is trying to wiggle out of something or shift the blame, you may hear something like this: "Well, define \_\_\_\_\_", implying that my definition of the situation may differ and therefore one cannot be held accountable. Surprise – this has been done for thousands of years. In fact the Roman leader Pontius Pilate did this when he was questioning Jesus to determine if there was any cause to condemn him. Pilate was walking a political 'tight rope' and wanted to protect his interests and position. Jesus had said he came to testify to the truth and Pilate replied "What is truth?" and then went out to the crowd saying "I find no basis for a charge against him. But it is your custom for me to release to you one prisoner... shall I release the king of the Jews?" Twice now Pilate has tried to wriggle out of his responsibility and the condemnation of his own conscience. Though he has met Jesus, perhaps *because* he met Jesus, his spiritual self is poked, but the systems of this world seem to have a blinding hold—and he succumbs. He "washes his hands" of the matter, but his heart has not been made clean. Truth – according to Jesus – is in Him and through Him. It is light, life, love, and eternity with our good Father. Jesus suffered beyond comprehension to make a way for us to have this life. Praise God that through His perfect sacrifice on the cross and resurrection Jesus made a way for us to be restored to Him and our souls are truly alive through His mercy and grace. Do we accept this gift? Once accepted, do we still allow this world to dictate our lives?

**PRAYER:** God, as we sojourn here, help us actively embrace life in your true and everlasting Kingdom. Let YOU and your truth motivate and direct our actions on earth as it is in heaven.

### CINDY HAYES

Cindy serves as Counseling Director at Rolling Hills and has been a partner for ten years. She loves coaching couples, families and individuals to embrace Jesus' love and power for healing, hope and life. She and her husband, Tim, have four grown children.





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## JOHN 19:1-27

*"Finally Pilate handed him over to them to be crucified."* John 19:16

Pilate was stuck between a rock and a hard place. After questioning Jesus and ordering a scourging and a crown of thorns, Pilate tells the chief priests he finds no guilt in him. We see an indecisive man in front of the King of kings and Lord of lords. Maybe he could feel the pull towards the man in front of him. Maybe he sensed the power and the love. Maybe Pilate just wanted to save his reputation. Whatever it was that led him to his decision, we know that Pilate ultimately gives in to the mob and finally decides to give the order of crucifixion. The order is followed and Jesus is led to Golgotha and nailed to a cross.

We must all decide what we are going to do with Jesus. He cannot be simply cast aside as was Pilate's original plan. Jesus is too much to walk away from. He paid a price too expensive to be indifferent. His very nature requires a response in us. The fact of the matter is Jesus is exactly who he said he is. He is the King of kings and Lord of lords. He is the truth, the way and the life. Our Savior longs for us to run straight into his arms. He is worthy of all our worship and praise. Jesus wants all of us. Anything less would be offensive in the light of the price that was paid by the Creator of the universe. May we be a people who decide he is worth giving it all. May we be people who live fully for our Savior!

### LESLI CRAWFORD

Lesli has been a Rolling Hills partner for over 10 years. She is a community group leader and teaches two-year-olds on Sunday mornings. One of the highlights of her year is traveling to Red Hill, South Africa with Rolling Hills and Justice and Mercy International.



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## JOHN 19:28-42

In the last two years, there has been a challenge in my faith journey. I have had to give over control and trust God with this situation. I have said “whatever it takes, Lord, to get this person I love to find You and follow You.” I trust that You have a plan and purpose in this and I am choosing to pray and give it to You. In His generous grace and mercy, He has reached out to me through His Word in the sweetest care and also placed people to pray and walk beside me through this time.

As I read this passage, I wonder if He, too, said I will do “whatever it takes” to make a way back to me—full of mercy, grace and the biggest sacrifice—my Perfect Son. I also see Jesus, in his humanness, dying for me and for you. He made us free from the bondage of the sin to which we were slaves; through Him we have the power to be overcomers.

I love the weaving of prophecy throughout the scriptures; to prove to us doubters that His Word is truth. Things predicted in the past come to completion in accurate detail in this passage. Jesus knew what all had to come to pass for scripture to be fulfilled and when it was complete He spoke the words “It is finished.” His Word—the Bible—is proven and true. I also see the testimony of the man in verse 35 which he gave so that others would believe. Such is true with our testimonies, we should share so others can see God at work, even in the dark, ugly parts that shame wants us to keep secret.

In this passage, I see His provision of the place to lay the body of Jesus, He used Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus and their careful preparation of the body and the fresh new tomb in a garden. He also prepares a place for you to spend eternity with Him. (John 14:1-4)

He provides the way to Him through Jesus, He shows us truth through His Word, He knows our uniqueness and how to reach us, and He prepares a place for us. I will trust Him with the plan He has and will tell Him “whatever it takes Lord” to know you more.



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## JOHN 20:1-18

### THE EMPTY TOMB

Much like us today, the first followers of Jesus had varied reactions to the empty tomb. When Mary Magdalene arrives at the site, she sees that the stone has been rolled back. She immediately runs away, with no thought that Jesus might have risen from the dead. In fact, even after speaking with *Jesus himself*, she still only addresses him by a quite earthly title - "Teacher." Mary had seen the empty tomb, had even seen that Jesus was, in fact, alive, but the message she shared was very terrestrial indeed—that someone had stolen the Lord's body.

We see another reaction in Peter. Peter had previously confessed that Jesus is the Messiah, yet when he arrives at the tomb and sees the very clothes that Jesus had worn, he wonders to himself what could have happened. (The word rendered "saw" here is *theoreo*, from which we get "theory.") At the moment of having been presented with evidence, he is still trying to come up with a physical explanation.

The third reaction is from the other disciple – John. When told that the body is missing, he and Peter run to the tomb to investigate. He arrives first and stands at the entrance, absorbing what he is seeing. In fact, when he finally does go in, we are told that he sees (*horao* - to perceive or know) and believes.

We have the opportunity every day to decide what we are going to do with the empty tomb. When confronted with the question of where our Lord is, do we avoid the question by running away, or try to develop a physical explanation like Mary and Peter, ignoring everything that we have heard about Jesus? Or, do we have enough faith to "see and believe," like John? By truly believing that our Lord has conquered death, we are left with no choice but to live a life that reflects His glory. However, anything short of that simply leaves us with an empty tomb.

### AL MCDONALD

Alan has been attending Rolling Hills since 2015. He and his wife Melissa have two sons - a 26 year old that lives in Chicago and an 11 year old in that attends Page Middle School. He was born in the Midwest and still enjoys cheering for his Purdue Boilermakers. He's involved in A6 and Community Groups.



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## JOHN 20:19-31

Jesus is the great interrupter of history and our lives. In the Bible we see Jesus asking a Samaritan woman for a drink at a well, calling Zacchaeus out of a tree and even raising the dead at a funeral procession. His actions and words offer us the instantaneous opportunity to move from one end of a spectrum to the polar opposite. Hurt to healed, hidden to seen, life to death.

In John 20:19-30 we see Jesus interrupt the disciples' lives. They are hiding in fear, their lives are falling apart and they have lost their purpose. Jesus interrupts their fear and offers them peace— twice, once in verse 19 and again in verse 21. Although “Shalom” or peace, was a common greeting at the time, this time it had a whole new meaning as it is extended by their Rabbi who was crucified, died, buried and is now standing before them having appeared in a room where the doors were locked! They are faced with a choice—receive the peace that Jesus is offering, or continue to live in fear. They choose peace. The peace that Jesus extends here to the disciples and this first breath of the Holy Spirit (and later the indwelling of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost) is what will get the disciples through very hard times as they carry out Jesus' commission to spread the word. Jesus interrupted their fear, offered peace, and gave them a whole new direction in their lives.

Thomas, who missed Jesus' initial appearance to the disciples, was also interrupted by Jesus. Thomas heard from the disciples that Jesus has reappeared, however, he refuses to believe until he has witnessed it for himself. Because of Jesus' great love for Thomas, he does not want him left out. He shows up again in a locked room and offers Thomas the same offer he gave to the initial group, his peace. Then he goes further and offers Thomas the opportunity to turn his doubt into belief. Jesus' interruption in Thomas' life presents Thomas with two roads, stay on the path of doubt, or take a very different path, belief. Thomas chooses belief.

Jesus interrupts our lives too. Our circumstances may be different, however, we too are offered the opportunity to turn our fear into peace, our doubt into belief. Jesus even addresses us today and says when we do choose the path of peace and belief, we will be blessed as those who have believed and not seen.





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## JOHN 21:1-25

### HOW FAR WILL YOU GO TO FOLLOW CHRIST?

The scene in John 21 takes place after Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection. In it, Jesus appears to seven disciples (Peter, Thomas, Nathanael, James, John, and two others) on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. John depicts Jesus preparing a breakfast of bread and fresh fish for them. Interesting that this encounter is not mentioned in any other gospel. Nor was the conversation John recorded exclusively between Peter and Jesus. It seems everyone present was part of the exchange, and the exchange was important to all of them as well as to us today.

Also, you may recall that prior to the arrest of Jesus, He told Peter: *"You will deny Me three times before the cock crows."* And Peter vowed he would never deny Jesus. He did, three times, as Jesus foretold. John 21 follows this awkward history with this reunion and inexplicable moment with an exchange in which God sets out His plan for Peter's life.

Here was Peter face to face with Jesus. Thinking back on his denial, and feeling beset with guilt for his personal failures. Then it came. Peter was confronted by Jesus with a head-on question, *"Do you love Me more than the other disciples?"*

I'm sure the question was a show stopper, because what Peter heard Jesus say, was, *"Do you love Me sacrificially and completely?"* That's what the Greek word in John's gospel says Jesus used. How did Peter respond? *"Yes, Lord, you know I love you."* Only, when Peter responds he doesn't respond with "I love You sacrificially and completely." Instead, Peter uses the word for love that means "like a friend." It's the kind of love he felt he could live up to. He knew he had not loved Jesus sacrificially.

Jesus didn't let it go. He tells Peter to *"Feed His Sheep."* Then, for a second time Jesus asks Peter using the same strong word for "love." Peter, again, gives the same response using his word for a different kind of love. And so, isn't it like the Lord to ask a third time? But, Jesus each time also repeats a command, *"Feed my sheep."*

This is what Jesus is saying. *"If you love Me completely, you will you do this for Me. That is love."*





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