

TRAVIS SCHOLL

Foreword by WALTER WANGERIN JR.

WALKING
THE
LABYRINTH

A Place to Pray and Seek God

A Bible Study in 6 Sessions

SESSION 2

THE WAY OF LOVE

(Walking the Labyrinth, pages 65-92)



OPENING PRAYER

Lord Jesus, we long for certainty in a sinful and uncertain world. We worry about events in the world around us and about the difficult circumstances that arise in our own lives. Lead us by your Spirit to walk faithfully in your footsteps, confident that you know what lies before us and that you will be with us always. Amen.

SIGNS AND SEEDS

How often do we hope for some sign, for some sure direction to follow? We long to have a good word from God to tell us that our path leads in the right direction. God surely guides our life in Christ according to his Word (Psalm 119:105; 2 Peter 1:19), but he has not promised to send us signs to direct our choice of a spouse or our employment decisions. Yet he does give us visible signs testifying to his power and glory: “For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made” (Romans 1:20).

The Old Testament tells us of the signs and miracles testifying to the presence of God among his people. God called to Moses from a bush that burned but was not consumed (Exodus 3:2). God led the Israelites through the wilderness in a pillar of fire by night and a pillar of cloud by day (Exodus 13:21). God’s glory filled the tabernacle, the tent of meeting in the wilderness. (Exodus 40:34). A greater sign was still to come, a sign first promised in Eden (Genesis 3:15) and centuries later offered to a frightened king who refused to ask for it: “Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel” (Isaiah 7:14).

The offspring of the woman was born, the long-awaited sign, the son of the virgin—Immanuel—God with us (Matthew 1:23). “Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son” (Hebrews 1:1-2). The Word who is God, the Word made flesh, came to live among us as one of us. This is the sign from the Father, the sign we need. We didn’t even ask for it. It is a gift of the Father’s love.

Read Acts 2:22-36. *During his sermon on Pentecost, Peter spoke of the “mighty works and wonders and signs” done by Jesus. What was the purpose of these signs? Even though he did many signs and wonders, what had been done to Jesus? What great sign followed all the others? How does Peter use this final sign to testify to Jesus’ identity?*

Read Matthew 12:38-41. *Why do you think the scribes and Pharisees demanded a sign from Jesus (see also Mark 8:11)? Why might such a request cause them to be described as “evil and adulterous”? What great sign*

would be accomplished in the presence of that evil generation? According to Jesus' words in verse 41, would the sign bring about the hoped-for change in the unbelieving generation?

Read Romans 6:3-11. When does the "sign of Jonah" touch our lives? What has that sign accomplished in us?

Travis' friend Peter gave him this advice: "Sometimes the only sign God gives us is the sign we receive at our baptism—and that's the only sign we need. Maybe the only sign you need to know is that you are in the arms of a loving Father" (66). When Jesus was baptized, the Father spoke his word of blessing: "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17). We are buried with Christ in baptism and raised to new life. God claims us as his own, dressing us in the righteousness, the holiness, of his beloved Son (2 Corinthians 5:21). The Father is well pleased with his newly created sons and daughters: "See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are" (1 John 3:1).

Read Galatians 3:25-27. Into what new relationship are we brought through faith in Christ? What does it mean to "put on Christ"? (Read 2 Corinthians 5:21.) We are "heirs according to promise." Read Matthew 25:34 and 1 Peter 1:3-5. What is our inheritance in Christ?

Read Galatians 4:4-7. Why was the Son sent forth from the Father? For sons and daughters alike, why is our inheritance that of a firstborn son?

The labyrinth that each of us walks in life is filled with twists and turns and uncertainty. Still, we walk forward in confidence, secure in our Father's love. His love is not grounded in what we do but in what he has already done. "In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4:10). "Love is the one way beyond both certainty and uncertainty. The love whose very being embraces us—our whole self—does not need our certainties. The only sign it needs is the sign of itself, the life it gives to all who are embraced by it" (70).

"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come" (Matthew 6:9-10). The love of God embraces us. Through faith in God's one and only Son, we as his sons and daughters inherit the kingdom prepared for us. The signs of the kingdom surround us, but they may be very small signs, as small as seeds.

Read Mark 4:1-20 and Mark 4:26-34. *In these parables, what lessons do seeds teach us about “the secret of the kingdom of God”? Even though we may now have a scientific understanding of the process, how is the growth of a seed mysterious? How is the growth of the kingdom mysterious? (Read 1 Corinthians 3:6-7.)*

STORMS AND SUFFERING

With sunlight and rain, seeds thrive and grow. Yet too much rain may threaten to sweep them away, unless the Lord sustains them through the storm. “The path of the labyrinth is the passage to and from trouble and pain, wind and wave, the passage we pray our children to be spared. It is the tortuous path to protect us from evil. Yet it is the inevitable path of a world broken and suffering. The only way to arrive at the still eye of the storm is to pass through the storm” (80)

Read Mark 4:35-41. *What do the disciples ask Jesus during the storm? Is their question a sign of faith or of a lack of faith? Jesus stills the storm. What does he say about the disciples’ faith? What question do the disciples ask about Jesus?*

Read Mark 5:21-43. *Here are two personal-sized storms on dry land. What storm afflicts the woman in the crowd? What storm has disrupted the life of Jairus’ family? What does Jesus do to still each storm and restore peace? What is the reaction of the people around Jairus’ home? In these stories and in the account of the disciples on the sea, how is the seed of faith nourished? When has the seed of your faith been nourished?*

Jesus himself endured the painful storm of God’s wrath against human sin. He passed through its full fury on our behalf and his blood-bought peace is ours. The tiny seed of the kingdom explodes into growth in the dawning sunlight of the first Easter morning.

THE REIGN OF GOD

Jesus proclaims the kingdom (Mark 1:14-15). The reign of God is at hand. It is time to repent and believe the good news. But not everyone believes. Some people will reject the purpose of God for themselves (Luke 7:30).

Read Mark 6:1-6. *What questions do the people of Nazareth have about their hometown prophet? The kingdom of God has broken in among them. How do they respond? What appears to be the reason for their lack of belief? How do people today react in similar ways to the person and work of Jesus?*

Read Mark 6:7-13. *Jesus sends out his disciples two by two. How is their message like that of Jesus in Mark 1:14-15? How does their message and work give evidence of the reign of God?*

“The reign of God is a maze expanding outward with boomerang force. Those on diverging paths will circle back to the One who stands at the center. They will proclaim repentance. They will cast out demons. They will anoint with oil. From their hands, the Spirit will release and heal. Homeless, they will find a place in this ever-moving center, this inbreaking of God” (87).

Summary: Jesus is the long-awaited sign, the virgin’s Son. As he walks his long and twisting path to the cross, he proclaims the kingdom of God. Jesus is rejected in Nazareth. At times the disciples must shake the dust of an unbelieving town from their feet. John the Baptist is murdered. Shielded by the hand of God the seed of the kingdom endures even in the “valley of the shadow of death” (Psalm 23:4). The seed will continue to grow until the harvest.

PSALM 89:8-9, 13-16

- L** *O LORD God of hosts, who is mighty as you are, O LORD, with your faithfulness all around you?*
- C** **You rule the raging of the sea; when its waves rise, you still them.**
- L** *You have a mighty arm; strong is your hand, high your right hand.*
- C** **Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne; steadfast love and faithfulness go before you.**
- L** *Blessed are the people who know the festal shout, who walk, O LORD, in the light of your face,*
- C** **Who exult in your name all the day and in your righteousness are exalted.**

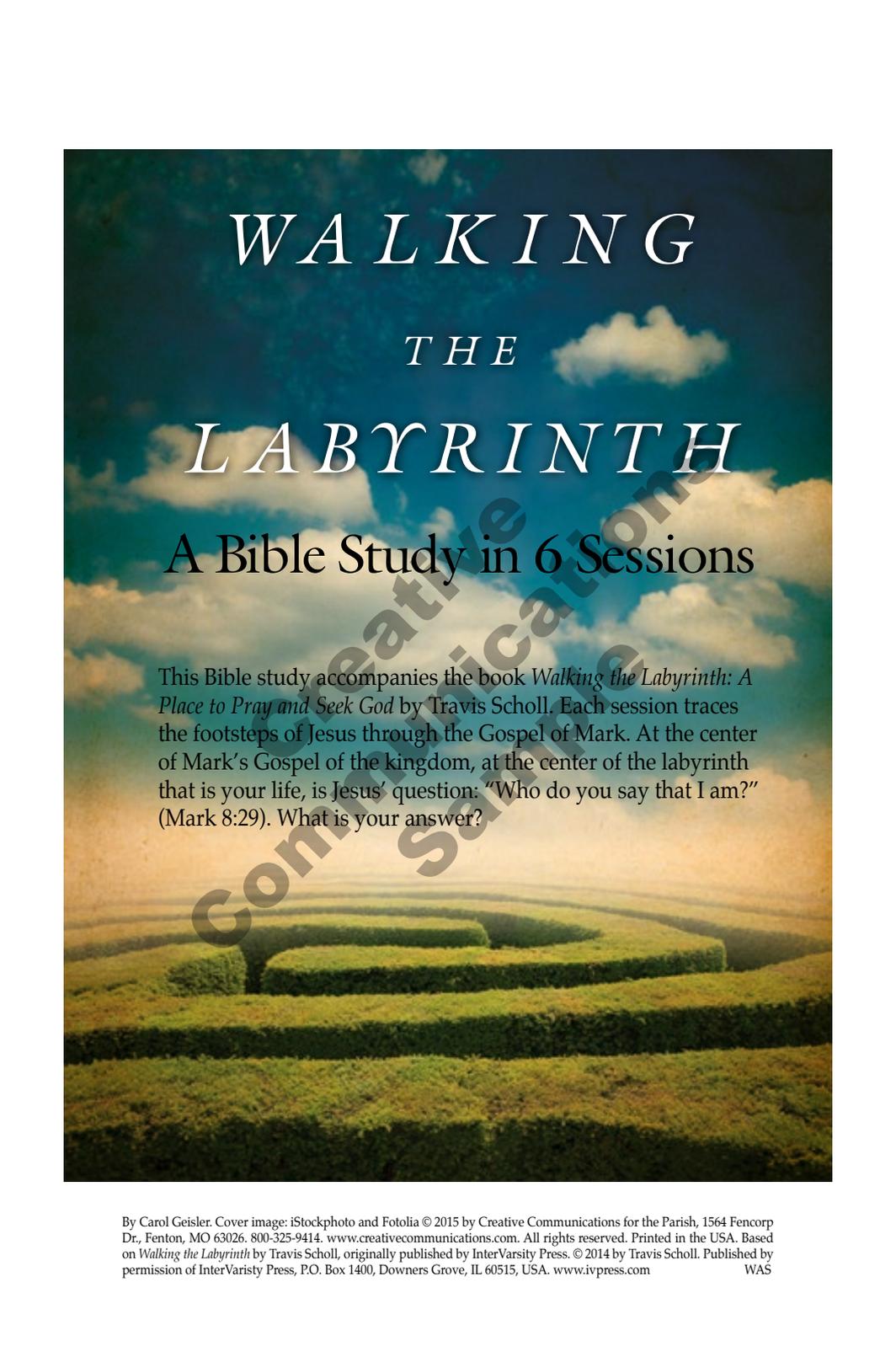
CLOSING PRAYER

Heavenly Father, forgive us for the many times we look for certainty in all the wrong places. You have adopted us in Christ Jesus as your sons and daughters. In all of the circumstances of life, teach us to trust in you. When we pass through storms and darkness, shield us by your love and give us peace in the name of Jesus, our Savior and King. Amen.

TO CONSIDER AS YOU WALK

What evidence of the kingdom of God do you see, even in storms and darkness? How do you know that the reign of God is present, even though you may see no evidence of it?

Creative
Communications
Sample



WALKING THE LABYRINTH

A Bible Study in 6 Sessions

This Bible study accompanies the book *Walking the Labyrinth: A Place to Pray and Seek God* by Travis Scholl. Each session traces the footsteps of Jesus through the Gospel of Mark. At the center of Mark's Gospel of the kingdom, at the center of the labyrinth that is your life, is Jesus' question: "Who do you say that I am?" (Mark 8:29). What is your answer?