

# Enter their world

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*"I entered their world ... I've become just about every sort of servant there is in my attempts to lead those I meet into a God-saved life." 1 Corinthians 9:22-23 (The Message)*

## **Jesus Wept**, Bible Study by

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### **Objectives**

This study asks you to

1. explore what it means to be incarnational in your life with others,
2. consider obstacles you face to carrying out an effective incarnational discipleship, and
3. discover the local and global aspects and implications of incarnational living.

### **Preliminary Reflections**

- Recall a teacher/professor/mentor/friend who strongly influenced your life. What was it about this person that drew you to him/her?

In what ways did this person impact you?

How did he/she identify with you?

- In your experience, what are some of the steps that you feel a person needs to take to develop a strong enough relationship with another individual to be able to share deeply, to be able to see into the window of his/her soul?
- When was the last time you wept? What caused you to weep? (*Anger, frustration, fear, hurt, pain, death, etc?*)

**Scripture Reading: John 11:1-44**

**Questions:**

- When I read this story, some of the things which get my attention, impress me and/or challenge my heart are:
  
- When I think about the friendship that Jesus had with Lazarus, Martha and Mary, I remember some of the things Jesus did to build that relationship were (*consider such things as: He spent time in their home; they ate meals together; they had in depth conversations; Jesus allowed them to minister to Him*):
  
- When I read John 11:35, “Jesus wept,” what impresses me about this part of the event is (*what caused Jesus to weep? how did others interpret Jesus’ tears?*):

**Further Reflection: “Jesus wept” (John 11:35)**

Can you picture it? God Himself in human flesh standing in front of a cave-tomb with tears streaming down His face!

He was with His companions and just coming into town to console the sisters of His deceased friend. As He approached the village, Martha came out first to greet Him. The words He shared with her are powerful and full of hope – “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live...”.

Not long after, Mary came quickly to meet Him. In her sorrow, she threw herself upon her friend and master. What a scene! Jesus was overcome by the situation of Mary and other mourners weeping. He was so deeply moved that He, too, cried. Surely He knew the outcome of it all. He had already indicated to the disciples that a special event would occur that would bring glory to God (John 11:4, 11, and 14). Yet, He wept. Have you ever wondered what brought on those tears? Twice we are told that Jesus was “deeply moved” (John 11:33 and 38, NIV). What a marvelous testimony of the “Word being made flesh,” of Jesus incarnate expressing very human emotion. Here is an outstanding example of incarnational ministry. Is it not noteworthy that Jesus’ identification with the people in this scene preceded His transforming action?

Then, as Jesus approached the cave entrance and called out for Lazarus, we are awed at His power (as were those present for the event). The power of His word transformed the whole scene, and new life broke out of the stench of death. Interesting, isn’t it, that even though life was restored, still the formerly dead man, now alive, remained wrapped in his grave clothes? Jesus did not remove them but invited (maybe better – He commanded) those around the tomb to “Take off the grave clothes and let him go” (John 11:44). His incarnational ministry is one in which He invites others to share.

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Jesus continues to call people out of the darkness of sin into new life but asks believers to help Him in unwrapping the bonds that still encircle the resurrected person. You and I are invited (should we say it again? – commanded) to be involved in incarnational ministry. How do you envision such a ministry in your life?

### **A story from today:**

At a concert in Kansas City, I heard singer/songwriter Michael Card tell a story about his best friend. As a Tsunami relief worker soon after the catastrophic event in December 2005, his friend was in an area severely devastated. Walking down one of the ravaged streets, he saw a man sitting on the curb weeping, surrounded by death and destruction. He could not speak his language, but he deeply felt his heart's voice cry out. "All I could do was to sit down beside him and cry too." For a long time they just sat together and wept. Surely, it was a moving experience for both men. Surely, this is representative of an incarnational ministry of presence.

Respond:

- If I had been that relief worker, I probably would have responded by:

### **Application:**

Jesus modeled what it meant to "enter their world." It was a ministry of presence followed by purposeful action. Paul caught the vision. Can we as Christians and our churches do the same?

Consider the following:

- What are some specific ways you can live out an incarnational theology?
  
- What cultures/sub-cultures form a part of your city/town/community (homeless, poor, different ethnic groups, elderly, abused, etc?) to whom you and your church could minister?
  
- What are some specific, practical ways that you could take the love of Christ to those in your area?
  
- How about globally? What is your vision of incarnational ministry globally?

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- Are there ways that you can help cross-cultural mission workers in other parts of the world to live their ministry incarnationally?
- What are some specific/practical ways that you could encourage missionaries to minister incarnationally?
- How can your church grow in its vision of living as Jesus did?
- Some things that keep me from reaching out to people in need are:
- When I read 1 Corinthians 9:22-23 (“I entered their world...I’ve become just about every sort of servant there is in my attempt to lead those I meet into a God-saved life”) from my experience, I realize that I struggle to enter into other people’s lives because:
- How do my feelings about “my rights” and my individual interests impede my ability to minister to people?

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