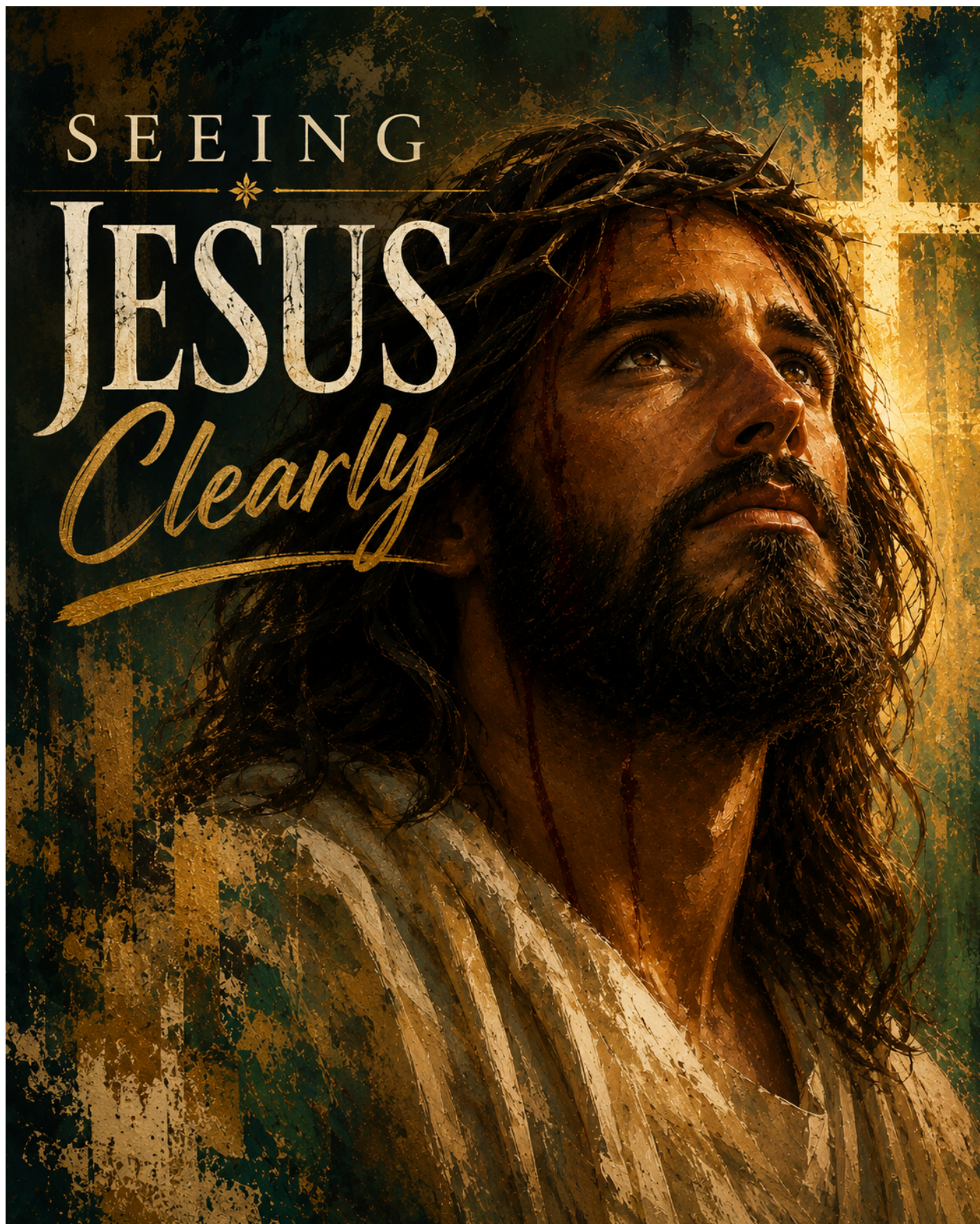


SEEING
JESUS
Clearly



Seeing Jesus Clearly

Movement One of the Restoration Journey

Sample Reader

Welcome: Where This Movement Begins

Every one of us carries a picture of Jesus. We may not have consciously chosen it, and we may never have stopped long enough to examine it, but somewhere within us are expectations about who Jesus is, how He responds to us, what He wants from us, and what it is like to be known by Him. We may believe He is loving while still expecting Him to be disappointed in us. We may know that Scripture describes Him as compassionate while quietly wondering whether that compassion extends to the parts of our own story we would rather keep hidden. We may sing about His nearness and still experience Him as distant when life becomes painful. What we say we believe about Jesus and what we have actually come to expect from Him are not always the same thing.

That picture begins forming long before most of us realize it. Scripture and teaching may have helped shape it, but so have relationships, family experiences, church environments, authority figures, seasons of loss, moments of failure, prayers that seemed to be answered and prayers that seemed to disappear into silence. Perhaps you encountered people who represented Jesus with tenderness, humility, patience, and grace, making it easier to imagine a God who could be trusted. Perhaps your experience was more complicated. Faith may have become tangled with pressure, performance, fear, judgment, disappointment, or the expectation that difficult questions should remain unspoken. Sometimes the people who taught us about God reflected Him beautifully. Sometimes they did not. Either way, those experiences can become woven into the way we approach Jesus without our ever intentionally deciding that they should.

Life itself can alter the picture. It is one thing to believe that God is good when life feels relatively predictable; it can be another thing entirely after loss, betrayal, unanswered prayer, failure, injustice, or a season in which God seemed painfully quiet. Experiences like these can leave questions that theological answers alone do not resolve. If Jesus was there, why did this happen? If He loves me, why did He allow this? If He already knows what I have done, does He still want me near Him? If I failed after knowing better, what does He see when He looks at me now? We may continue believing in Jesus while simultaneously becoming guarded with Him, and sometimes that distance happens so gradually that we do not recognize it as distance at all.

This is why the Restoration Journey begins here. Before examining every wound, changing every pattern, or trying harder to become whole, there is value in looking again at the One with

whom restoration begins. Seeing Jesus Clearly is not an invitation to discard everything you have believed, nor is it an attempt to convince you that every difficult experience can be explained away with the right spiritual answer. It is an invitation to become curious about the picture of Jesus you currently carry and to ask whether every part of that picture actually belongs to Him. Some things we have attributed to Jesus may have come from Him. Others may have come from people, environments, experiences, fears, disappointments, or conclusions we formed while trying to make sense of what happened to us.

Throughout this movement, you will be invited to encounter Jesus within the stories of Scripture and pay attention to Him in ways that may be different from how you have read those stories before. Rather than beginning with, *What am I supposed to learn from this?* or *What should I be doing differently?*, we will begin with a more foundational question: *What is Jesus actually like?* We will notice how He responds to people who are ashamed, confused, grieving, questioning, rejected, angry, afraid, sinful, overlooked, or carrying complicated stories. We will notice what draws Him toward people, what He confronts, what He refuses to condemn, what He asks, what He offers, and what happens when someone discovers that Jesus already knows the truth about them and remains present anyway.

You do not need to arrive at this movement certain of what you believe or confident in your relationship with God. You do not need to protect Jesus from your questions, produce the correct spiritual response, or pretend that experiences have not affected the way you see Him. You are simply being invited to bring the picture you already carry into the light and become willing to look again. You may discover things about Jesus that feel deeply familiar, and you may encounter aspects of Him that challenge assumptions you did not realize you held. The goal is not to manufacture an emotional experience or force yourself toward a predetermined conclusion. The goal is to create enough room for an honest encounter with the Jesus revealed in Scripture.

So as you begin, resist the temptation to rush toward the answer you think you are supposed to give. Pay attention instead to what is actually there. Notice what happens inside you when you think about approaching Jesus. Notice what you expect from Him when you fail, when you hurt, when you are angry, when you have questions, or when your life does not look the way you hoped it would. Those responses are not obstacles to this journey; they are part of the place from which it begins. You are not being asked to have Jesus figured out before you start. You are

simply being invited to come close enough to look again, because sometimes the beginning of restoration is discovering that the Jesus who is actually there is different from the One we learned to expect.

Reflection: The Jesus I Have Come to Expect

Before we look more closely at Jesus in Scripture, it is worth taking some time to notice the Jesus we already expect to encounter. This is different from asking what you believe about Jesus or what you know the Bible says about Him. Most of us know how to give those answers. We may say that Jesus is loving, gracious, forgiving, compassionate, faithful, and present, and genuinely believe those things to be true. Yet our internal responses can sometimes tell another story. What we believe intellectually about Jesus and what we instinctively expect from Him in the vulnerable places of our lives do not always perfectly align.

For this reflection, try not to search for theologically correct answers. Instead, pay attention to your first response, even if it surprises you or seems inconsistent with what you believe. You are not trying to determine whether your responses are right or wrong. You are simply noticing what has been formed within you. Sometimes the most important discoveries begin when we become willing to tell the truth about what we actually expect rather than what we think we should expect.

When I imagine approaching Jesus, what do I expect from Him?

Imagine yourself approaching Jesus without needing anything in particular and without having prepared what you are going to say. What do you imagine happening as you come near? Do you expect Him to welcome you, listen to you, question you, correct you, evaluate you, comfort you, or wait for you to explain yourself? Do you imagine warmth and ease, or do you notice hesitation somewhere within you? Pay attention not only to what you think Jesus *should* do, but to what you instinctively imagine He *would* do. What does your response suggest about the Jesus you have come to expect?

What happens in my picture of Jesus when I fail?

Our expectations about Jesus often become clearer when we imagine Him meeting us in the places we are least proud of. Think about a time when you failed, made a poor decision, hurt someone, repeated something you promised yourself you would never do again, or simply did not live according to what you knew was right. When you imagine Jesus entering that moment,

what happens to His face, His posture, or His presence in your mind? Does He move toward you or away from you? Do you expect disappointment, anger, correction, compassion, silence, forgiveness, or something else? Notice whether failure changes how available you believe Jesus is to you.

What do I expect from Jesus when I have questions?

Questions can reveal a great deal about how safe we believe relationship with Jesus really is. Consider the questions you have carried about God, Scripture, suffering, injustice, prayer, your own life, or circumstances you still do not understand. Do you feel free to bring those questions honestly to Jesus, or do you find yourself editing them before you speak? Perhaps you learned somewhere along the way that strong faith does not question, that doubt disappoints God, or that some subjects are simply off limits. Imagine telling Jesus the question you have been most reluctant to ask. What do you expect Him to do with it, and what might that expectation reveal?

What do I expect from Jesus when I'm hurting?

Pain can expose parts of our understanding of God that remain hidden during easier seasons. When you are grieving, disappointed, frightened, lonely, angry, exhausted, or overwhelmed, where do you imagine Jesus in relation to you? Is He close enough to enter the pain with you, or somewhere outside it waiting for you to recover? Do you expect comfort, explanation, correction, rescue, silence, or perhaps nothing at all? There is no need to make your response sound hopeful. Simply notice what you have learned to expect from Jesus when life hurts.

Where might these expectations have come from?

Once you have noticed some of your responses, become curious about their origins. Perhaps your picture of Jesus was shaped by someone who loved you well and helped you experience patience, safety, grace, and consistency. Perhaps it was influenced by someone who used faith to control, shame, frighten, or pressure you. Church experiences, family relationships, authority figures, teaching, culture, loss, unanswered prayer, betrayal, seasons of silence, and moments of extraordinary grace may all have contributed something to the picture you carry today. You do not need to assign blame or explain everything. Simply begin noticing the connections.

As you reflect, you may discover contradictions, and those contradictions are worth paying attention to. You might write, *I believe Jesus forgives me*, while realizing that you still avoid Him when you fail. You might believe that Jesus welcomes questions while noticing that you are afraid to ask your own. You might know that Jesus is near to those who hurt while realizing that pain has made Him feel farther away. None of these discoveries need to be resolved immediately. For now, allow them to become visible.

Before moving forward, complete this sentence as honestly as you can:

The Jesus I have come to expect is someone who

-----."

Read what you wrote without correcting it. This is not your final statement about who Jesus is. It is simply a snapshot of the picture you are carrying into this journey. In the pages ahead, we are going to place that picture beside the Jesus we encounter in Scripture and allow ourselves to ask a different question:

What if there is more of Him to see?

Chapter 1 - Why Healing Begins with Encounter

Why Information Alone Rarely Heals the Human Soul

There are many places in life where learning something new is enough to change what we do. We learn a better way to manage our time, someone shows us how to use a new tool, or we finally understand why something works the way it does, and we adjust. Because information works this way in so many areas of life, it is natural to assume healing should work the same way. If we can understand what happened to us, identify what is wrong, learn what Scripture says, and discover the right principles for healing, surely change should follow. Yet anyone who has ever known what was true and still struggled to live as though it were true knows that the human soul is more complicated than that. Information can help us understand what is happening but understanding something and being healed by it are not always the same thing.

You may already know this from your own life. Perhaps you have read the books, listened to the sermons, highlighted the Scriptures, talked through your story, or spent years trying to understand why you respond the way you do. You may be able to explain exactly where a pattern began and still find yourself repeating it. You may know what you should believe and still feel something very different inside. None of this means that information is unimportant. Understanding can give language to experiences that once felt confusing, help us recognize patterns we could not see before, and point us toward truth. But the deepest wounds of the soul are rarely problems of information alone because they were not formed through information alone.

Pain is experienced, not simply understood. Rejection, betrayal, abandonment, loss, fear, disappointment, and confusion enter our stories as lived experiences. We remember what happened, but we may also remember what it felt like when it happened: the tightening in our body, the fear of what might come next, the shame of being exposed, the loneliness of realizing no one was coming, or the confusion of trying to make sense of something we were not equipped to understand. Experiences like these can influence far more than what we remember. They can begin shaping what feels safe, whom we trust, what we expect from relationships, how we understand ourselves, where we believe we belong, and even what we expect from God.

This helps explain one of the most frustrating experiences in the healing process: we can know something is true without yet experiencing it as true. A person may sincerely believe that God is compassionate and attentive while still becoming uneasy when trying to pray honestly. Someone else may know that Scripture speaks of their worth and belovedness while continuing to hear an internal voice insisting that they are inadequate, disappointing, or never quite enough. A person may know that God can be trusted while still feeling the need to control everything around them because there was once a time when letting down their guard did not feel safe. The tension is not necessarily evidence that they lack faith or have failed to learn the truth. Sometimes it reveals that an older experience is still speaking to the soul alongside what the person now knows.

Imagine someone who grew up with a parent whose affection depended heavily on performance. When they succeeded, they received warmth and approval. When they struggled, disappointed, or failed, affection seemed to disappear. Years later, that person may wholeheartedly believe the Christian message of grace. They can explain that God's love is not earned, quote Scriptures about grace, and encourage someone else to receive God's unconditional love. Yet when they fail, something inside immediately begins to withdraw from God. They pray less. They avoid Scripture. They feel embarrassed to come near Him until they have somehow done better. Their theology may say, *Come boldly to the throne of grace*, while their lived experience quietly says, *Stay away until you have earned your way back*. More information about grace may be helpful, but something deeper is asking to be restored.

This is one reason encounter becomes so important in the Restoration Journey. By encounter, we are not talking about manufacturing an emotional experience, chasing a dramatic spiritual moment, or measuring God's presence by whether we feel something extraordinary. Encounter is much simpler and deeper than that. It is the movement from merely knowing something about Jesus toward beginning to experience His character and presence personally. Truth that has lived primarily as an idea begins to enter the places where fear, shame, distrust, grief, or disconnection have been living. We begin to discover not only that Jesus is compassionate, but that His compassion includes us; not only that He welcomes wounded people, but that we are welcome; not only that He is present in human suffering, but that He is willing to meet us within our own story.

The Gospels repeatedly show us this kind of movement. Jesus certainly taught people, and His words mattered deeply, but He did not relate to people as problems waiting for better information. He noticed them. He touched people others avoided. He allowed questions. He confronted what was false without humiliating the person carrying it. He ate with people whose lives made others uncomfortable. He stopped for individuals when crowds were pressing around Him. He responded to grief, shame, sickness, fear, failure, and rejection with a combination of truth, compassion, clarity, and authority. People were not simply receiving teaching about the character of God; in Jesus, they were encountering the character of God standing in front of them.

For a soul that has learned to protect itself, this matters enormously. Deeper places do not usually open simply because we demand that they do. Trust grows as safety is experienced. As we begin to see Jesus more clearly—not merely through what others have told us about Him, not solely through painful experiences that may have shaped our expectations of Him, but through who He reveals Himself to be—we may find ourselves becoming more willing to bring Him what we previously kept hidden. Questions can be spoken instead of suppressed. Fear can be acknowledged instead of disguised. Memories can be approached without immediately trying to explain them away. Even anger, disappointment, grief, and uncertainty can begin to enter the conversation with God.

This does not mean one encounter instantly resolves every wound or that emotional experience becomes more authoritative than Scripture. Rather, Scripture gives us the truth by which we recognize Jesus, while encounter allows that truth to become increasingly personal and lived. Over time, the distance between what we know about God and what we have learned to expect from Him can begin to narrow. The truth that once existed primarily in our minds starts reaching the places within us that learned another story.

Information matters. Understanding matters. Good theology matters. Scripture matters profoundly. We are not leaving any of those behind in pursuit of experience. We are recognizing that restoration invites the whole person into truth—the mind that understands, the heart that feels, the body that remembers, the relationships that have shaped us, and the spirit that longs for communion with God. When truth is encountered in relationship with Jesus, it can move beyond something we agree with and begin becoming something we live from.

That is why we begin here. Before asking you to examine every fracture in your story or change every pattern in your life, the Restoration Journey first invites you to look toward Jesus. As you begin to see Him more clearly, trust has room to grow. As trust grows, honesty becomes possible. And as you discover that you can be seen by Him without being rejected, condemned, or abandoned, the places you have spent years protecting may gradually become places you are willing to bring into His presence. This is where information becomes more than something you know; it becomes truth encountered in relationship, and that relationship creates room for restoration to begin.

The Difference Between Spiritual Knowledge and Relational Encounter

There is a difference between knowing about someone and actually knowing them. Most of us understand this instinctively in our human relationships, but the distinction can become less obvious when it comes to our relationship with God. We can spend years learning about Him—reading Scripture, listening to sermons, studying theology, memorizing verses, attending church, participating in Bible studies—and genuinely grow in our understanding of who God is. All of those things matter. Spiritual knowledge gives us language for our faith, helps us recognize truth, guards us from distorted ideas about God, and gives us a foundation for understanding His character and His ways. Yet it is possible to know a great deal about God while still struggling to experience closeness with Him.

You may have experienced this tension yourself. You know the verse that says God loves you, but on your worst day you still wonder whether He really wants you near. You believe in grace, yet when you fail, your first instinct is to hide rather than come to Him. You know God hears prayer, but sometimes when you pray, it feels as though your words travel no farther than the room you are sitting in. You believe He is trustworthy, yet there may be certain areas of your life that you hold tightly because surrender still feels frightening. None of these tensions automatically mean that what you believe is insincere. They may simply reveal a distance between what you know to be true and what you have learned to experience as true.

This is where relational encounter becomes important. Relational encounter does not replace spiritual knowledge, and it certainly does not ask us to set Scripture aside in favor of whatever we happen to feel. Instead, encounter allows the truth we know to become increasingly personal. We move from understanding that God is compassionate to recognizing His compassion toward

us. We move from believing that Jesus welcomes people who are struggling to discovering that we can bring our own struggle to Him without first making ourselves presentable. We move from agreeing that God listens to prayer to learning that our actual thoughts, questions, disappointments, fears, and desires can become part of an honest conversation with Him.

Think about the difference between reading about a person and sitting across the table from them. You could read someone's biography, learn where they grew up, study their work, listen to other people describe them, and know an impressive number of facts about their life. You might even be able to explain their values and personality accurately. But there would still be something you could not know from information alone: what it is like to be with them. You would not yet know the sound of their laughter when something genuinely delights them, the way they listen when you tell them something difficult, whether they make room for silence, or how they respond when you disagree. Those things are learned through relationship. Information tells you something about a person; relationship allows you to experience who that person is in connection with you.

A Question to Carry With You

As you continue, consider the possibility that some of the distance you experience with God may not be explained entirely by what you believe about Him. Your story may also have taught you what to expect from Him. The distinction matters because the Jesus we expect and the Jesus revealed in Scripture are not always the same.

Rather than trying to resolve that tension immediately, carry this question with you into the next part of the journey: **Is there a difference between the Jesus I know about and the Jesus I have actually come to expect?**

Meet Jesus In The Story

The Woman at the Well - John 4

One of the clearest places to begin seeing Jesus differently is in His conversation with the Samaritan woman in John 4. The scene is ordinary enough at first. A woman comes to a well in the middle of the day to draw water, carrying whatever thoughts, routines, and private burdens had become part of her normal life. She is not presented as someone searching for a spiritual encounter, and there is no indication that she arrives expecting anything unusual. Yet in the middle of an ordinary task, she meets Jesus.

Even before the conversation develops, the fact that Jesus speaks with her matters. She is a Samaritan woman, and the social and religious divisions between Jews and Samaritans were significant. Her gender, background, and personal history would have given many people reasons to keep their distance. Jesus does the opposite. He begins a conversation. He asks her for a drink. He allows her to question Him. He remains present even when the conversation moves into complicated territory. Before Jesus says anything about her past, His willingness to speak with her is already revealing something about His character.

As the conversation continues, Jesus begins speaking about “living water.” At first, the woman understandably thinks in practical terms. She is standing beside a well, carrying a water jar, and listening to a man speak about water that would somehow remove the need to keep returning. Yet Jesus is leading the conversation somewhere deeper. He is speaking to the thirst beneath the routine, the longings that ordinary solutions cannot satisfy, and the deeper life that comes through relationship with God. What begins as a conversation about water becomes a conversation about worship, truth, identity, and the presence of God.

Then Jesus speaks directly into her personal story. He knows details about her relationships that she has not told Him. He sees the complicated parts of her life clearly, and there is no attempt to pretend those realities are unimportant. Yet notice what He does not do. He does not shame her, humiliate her, expose her publicly, or use what He knows as a weapon against her. He tells the truth while remaining in relationship with her. He knows her history and continues the conversation.

That detail is easy to move past, but it is worth staying with for a moment. Jesus does not need the woman to become less complicated before He is willing to engage her. He does not require her to explain herself before He treats her with dignity. He does not wait until her theology is settled, her questions are resolved, or her life has been cleaned up before revealing Himself more fully. The truth about her story is already known, and yet she remains someone He chooses to see, address, teach, and invite into deeper understanding.

As the conversation unfolds, the woman's perception of Jesus begins to change. At first He is simply a Jewish man asking her for water. Then she recognizes that there is something unusual about Him. She begins to perceive Him as a prophet, and eventually the conversation moves toward the question of the Messiah. Her understanding develops relationally. She is not handed a list of correct answers at the beginning. She discovers who Jesus is as she remains in conversation with Him.

By the end of the encounter, something within her has shifted. She leaves her water jar and returns to the town, telling people about the man who knew her story. The very thing that could have produced shame becomes part of what compels her to speak. She does not return saying, "I met someone who told me everything I had done and made me feel condemned." She returns inviting others to consider whether this could be the Christ. Being known by Jesus did not drive her farther into hiding. It drew her into greater openness.

This is one of the reasons her story matters so deeply within the Restoration Journey. Many of us carry some fear about what would happen if the most complicated parts of our lives were brought fully into the presence of God. We may believe that God knows everything while still living as though certain parts of ourselves should remain carefully managed. We may edit our prayers, avoid particular memories, minimize certain emotions, or approach God more cautiously after failure. Somewhere beneath those habits may be an expectation that being fully known will result in distance, disappointment, or rejection.

The woman at the well gives us another picture. Jesus knows, and He stays. He sees, and He continues speaking. He tells the truth, but the truth does not come wrapped in humiliation. He allows her questions, engages her theology, acknowledges her history, and reveals Himself within the same conversation. The story does not present a Jesus who overlooks truth in the name of kindness or a Jesus who uses truth without compassion. We see both together.

This is where the invitation to “look again” becomes personal. Instead of rushing immediately toward what the woman should have done differently, pay attention first to Jesus. Watch how He relates to her. Notice what He initiates, what He asks, what He knows, what He refuses to do, and how He remains present throughout the encounter. Before deciding what the story means for your behavior, allow it to tell you something about His character.

Look Again

As you sit with John 4, consider what you notice about the way Jesus treats this woman and whether anything about His response surprises you. Pay attention to what happens when He encounters a complicated story, how He handles truth, how He responds to questions, and whether His posture toward her resembles the Jesus you have come to expect. You may also want to notice what you feel as you imagine yourself in a similar conversation with Him, especially if there are parts of your own story you would rather not have named.

Consider whether you expect Jesus to remain present with you when He sees the whole story, including the places that carry shame, regret, grief, confusion, or disappointment. Notice whether you imagine Him becoming colder, more distant, or harder to approach when you fail, and then place that expectation beside what you see happening at the well. You do not need to force the two pictures to match. For now, simply notice where they differ.

As you finish this reflection, carry one question forward: **What might change if I began to believe that Jesus already knows my story and still chooses to remain in the conversation?**

Personal Reflection - Safe to Be Seen

The woman at the well encountered something many of us deeply desire and, at the same time, may find difficult to trust: she was known without being rejected. Jesus knew the parts of her story that were complicated. He knew what she might have preferred to explain, protect, minimize, or keep private. Yet His knowledge of her did not cause Him to withdraw. He remained present, continued the conversation, listened to her questions, spoke truth, and invited her into something deeper.

Being fully known can feel vulnerable because our experiences with people may have taught us that being seen carries risk. Perhaps someone learned something about you and treated you differently afterward. Maybe honesty resulted in criticism, judgment, rejection, control, or shame. Perhaps you became skilled at deciding which parts of yourself were safe to reveal and which were better kept private. Over time, we can carry those same protective instincts into our relationship with Jesus, even when we believe intellectually that He already knows everything about us.

We may tell Him about the grief but not the anger that came with it. We may confess the failure while withholding the circumstances, fears, desires, or choices surrounding it. We may bring Him the questions that sound acceptable while keeping the questions that feel irreverent or difficult to ourselves. Sometimes we do not deliberately decide to hide from God at all. We simply discover that there are places within us we rarely allow into the conversation.

The invitation here is not to force yourself into vulnerability or uncover every hidden part of your story at once. It is simply to notice what happens within you when you consider being completely known by Jesus. Imagine sitting with the same Jesus who remained at the well. Imagine that He already knows what you are trying to decide whether to tell Him. He knows the history behind it, the parts you understand and the parts you do not, the choices you regret, the wounds you did not choose, the questions you cannot answer, and the emotions you may not know how to name. Nothing you reveal gives Him information He did not already possess.

Now consider the possibility that He stays in the conversation with you, too.

What Might Change?

Take some time with this question without rushing toward an answer: **What might change if you believed you could be completely known by Jesus without needing to hide from Him?**

Consider what you might finally say if you were not trying to manage His response. What question might you ask? What emotion might you stop apologizing for long enough to acknowledge? What part of your story might you allow yourself to bring into His presence? Is there something you have been trying to resolve on your own before approaching Him with it?

You may also want to notice what makes this difficult. If some part of you immediately resists the idea that it is safe to be fully seen by Jesus, become curious about that response rather than judging it. What are you afraid might happen if you were completely honest with Him? What do you imagine His response would be? Does that response resemble the Jesus you just encountered in John 4, or might it have been shaped by another relationship, experience, disappointment, or understanding of God?

You do not need to change your answers today. You do not need to convince yourself to feel safe simply because you believe you should. Seeing Jesus clearly begins with honesty, and sometimes honesty sounds like, *I want to believe You will stay, but I am not sure yet.*

Even that can become part of the conversation.

As you finish this reflection, return once more to the woman at the well. Jesus knew her story before she knew who He was. Her honesty did not create His willingness to remain with her; His presence made greater honesty possible. Perhaps that is the invitation here as well. You do not have to make yourself completely unguarded before approaching Jesus. You can begin by allowing Him to meet you exactly where you are and discovering, over time, what it is like to be known by Him and still welcomed near.

A Practice for the Journey - Look for Jesus

One of the simplest ways to begin seeing Jesus more clearly is to spend time watching Him in the Gospels. Many of us have learned to approach Scripture by immediately asking what a passage means for us. We look for the lesson we should learn, the behavior we should change, the principle we should apply, or the command we should obey. Those are valuable questions, but for this practice, we are going to begin somewhere different. Rather than first asking, *What am I supposed to learn or do?*, begin with one question: **What is Jesus like here?**

Choose one encounter with Jesus from Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John. You might choose a story you already know well or one you have rarely considered. Read the passage slowly, perhaps more than once, and resist the temptation to rush toward interpretation or application. For a few moments, simply watch Jesus within the story. Pay attention to where He goes, whom He approaches, what captures His attention, what He says, what He does not say, and how the people around Him respond to His presence.

Notice especially how Jesus responds to people in vulnerable or complicated places. What happens when someone fails? How does He respond when someone is grieving, frightened, ashamed, sick, angry, confused, or asking difficult questions? What does He do with people others dismiss, avoid, criticize, or consider unworthy of attention? Notice how He handles truth and compassion, how He uses authority, when He confronts and when He comforts, when He speaks and when He simply remains present.

As you read, try not to make yourself the subject of the passage too quickly. Give yourself permission to simply become curious about Jesus. You may discover something you have read many times but never really noticed. A question He asks, a person He stops for, a response He refuses to give, or an unexpected expression of compassion may reveal something about His character that deserves your attention.

When you finish reading, write down what you noticed in a simple sentence: **“In this story, I see Jesus as someone who _____.”** Then consider whether what you observed matches the Jesus you have come to expect. If it does, notice that. If it does not, resist the urge to immediately explain the difference. Let the difference remain visible long enough for you to become curious about it.

You may want to return to this practice several times over the coming days, choosing a different Gospel encounter each time. Over time, you may begin collecting a picture of Jesus drawn not primarily from assumptions, experiences, or what others have told you, but from watching Him as He reveals Himself in Scripture. The goal is not to finish with a more impressive list of facts about Jesus. The goal is to become increasingly familiar with His character.

If You Need Somewhere to Begin

You might spend time with Jesus and the woman caught in adultery in John 8:1–11, Bartimaeus calling to Jesus from the roadside in Mark 10:46–52, the grieving sisters at Lazarus’s tomb in John 11:17–44, the leper who approaches Jesus in Mark 1:40–45, Peter after his failure in John 21:15–19, or the children others tried to send away in Mark 10:13–16. Each encounter reveals something different about how Jesus responds to real people in real circumstances.

Whichever story you choose, carry the same question with you:

What is Jesus like here?

You are not trying to master the Gospel story. You are learning to notice the Person within it.

What Am I Beginning to See?

You have spent some time noticing the picture of Jesus you have carried, watching how He encounters people in Scripture, and considering what it might mean to be fully known by Him without needing to hide. Before moving on, give yourself some space to notice what is beginning to emerge. You do not need to arrive at a conclusion or turn what you have experienced into a lesson. This is simply a place to gather the thoughts, questions, tensions, surprises, and discoveries that have surfaced along the way.

Perhaps something about Jesus feels different than you expected. Maybe you noticed tenderness where you anticipated correction, truth without humiliation, attention toward someone others overlooked, or a willingness to remain present in a complicated story. You may also have discovered places where what you believe about Jesus and what you instinctively expect from Him do not quite match. Even that awareness matters. Seeing clearly often begins with noticing what has been there all along.

Use the space below however it serves you best. You might write in paragraphs, make a list, sketch, record questions, write a prayer, or simply capture a few words you do not want to forget.

What am I beginning to see about Jesus?

What has surprised me about Him?

Where does the Jesus I am seeing in Scripture differ from the Jesus I have sometimes expected?

What am I beginning to notice about my own relationship with Him?

Is there something I want to bring into the conversation with Jesus that I have previously kept hidden, guarded, or unresolved?

As you finish, you might return to the sentence you completed earlier: **“The Jesus I have come to expect is someone who...”** Without erasing or correcting what you wrote then, complete a second sentence now: **“The Jesus I am beginning to see is someone who...”**

Let both sentences remain on the page. You do not have to force the distance between them to disappear. This movement begins by noticing that there may be more of Jesus to see.

Continue the Journey

There Is More of Jesus to See

This sample is only a beginning. Seeing Jesus Clearly is an invitation to continue exploring the difference between the Jesus you may have learned to expect and the Jesus revealed in Scripture. The complete reader goes much deeper into the experiences and beliefs that shape our picture of God, why we can sincerely believe in Him while still living at a distance from Him, how trust develops, what it means to feel safe enough to be known by God, and how encounters with Jesus can begin reshaping the places within us that have learned another story.

Continue with the Complete Reader

The Seeing Jesus Clearly Reader takes you further into this first movement of the Restoration Journey through biblical teaching, stories of encounter, reflection, and opportunities to examine how your understanding of Jesus has formed over time. It is designed to be read slowly rather than rushed through, allowing you to notice, question, reflect, and continue looking at Jesus for yourself.

Get the Complete Seeing Jesus Clearly Reader →

Go Deeper with the Companion Workbook

If you want to do more than read, the Seeing Jesus Clearly Companion Workbook provides guided reflection and experiences that help you bring the teaching into your own story. The workbook creates space to explore the picture of God you have carried, the experiences that may have shaped it, the places where trust has become difficult, and what you are beginning to discover as you encounter Jesus more clearly.

Explore the Companion Workbook →

Or Begin with a Conversation

Sometimes reading opens a door to something we would rather explore with another person. You may have recognized something in these pages that you want to understand more deeply, or perhaps you simply aren't sure where you belong in the Restoration Journey.

You do not need to have that figured out before reaching out. A Restoration Conversation is a place to begin with what is true for you right now, ask questions, talk about what has surfaced, and consider what your next step might look like.

Begin with a Restoration Conversation →

Wherever you go from here, you do not need to rush. Keep looking. Keep noticing. Keep bringing your real questions into the conversation. The invitation of this first movement is beautifully simple: come and see Jesus for yourself.