

PART 1 — ATOP THE NAZARETH PRECIPICE
AND AMONG THE RUINS OF CAPERNAUM

TIME TO MOVE

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Nazareth Precipice

From His hometown, Jesus
could see the locations of
many Old Testament events.





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Bethlehem

Jesus was born in a “stable” of His day, which most likely was a grotto or a cave like this one.



ANCHOR TEXT: Before you begin this lesson, make sure you read Matthew 4:12-17. It will give you context for the teaching.

NAZARETH

This was the sleepy hometown of a young woman, named Mary, who was pledged to marry Joseph, a carpenter. One day, an angel visited Mary and gave her a miraculous promise: While she was still a virgin, she would give birth to the Son of God who would bring redemption from sin (Luke 1:26-38)!

Around that time, Caesar Augustus issued a census of the whole Roman world. Since Joseph belonged to the tribe of Judah in the family of David, he and his bride-to-be needed to travel 70 miles south to the little hamlet of **Bethlehem**. When they finally arrived for the census, Mary gave birth to her son, fulfilling an ancient prophecy that the King of Israel and Savior of the world would be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2).

There was another king in Israel at that time: Herod, a merciless tyrant imposed by the Roman government. When Herod heard rumors about the promised King’s birth, in his paranoia he sought to kill all the male babies born in that region (Matthew 2:13-18). But God warned Joseph in a dream, sending the young family down into Egypt until Herod’s death (2:13). After the king passed away, Joseph, Mary, and Jesus returned to **Nazareth**.



+ Nazareth Village

In the middle of modern-day Nazareth is a reenactment village from Jesus' time. These re-creations of First Century tools may be similar to the carpentry tools Jesus and Joseph used.

For the first 30 years of His earthly life, Jesus spent most of His time around the town of Nazareth in the northern province of Galilee. This remote town was home to fewer than 400 people. It was the kind of place where everyone knew your name.

Nazareth was a town with a view. Perched on a ridge overlooking the **Jezreel Valley**, Jesus could have walked to the edge of Nazareth to view the battlefields from many Old Testament events.

In the valley below, Joshua had warred with the Canaanites (Joshua 19:18), Saul fought the Philistines (1 Samuel 29-31), and Solomon multiplied his wealth by controlling the trade roads here leading to the Mediterranean (1 Kings 4:12). Looking westward toward the Sea, Jesus could have seen **Mount Carmel**, where God called down fire as Elijah faced the false prophets of Baal (1 Kings 18:16-40). At the southern end of the valley stood **Mount Gilboa**, where Gideon mustered the Israelites to defeat the Midianites (Judges 6-7). And to the east, Christ could see the rounded slopes of **Mount Tabor**, where Deborah and Barak defeated the Canaanite armies (Judges 4-5).

Nazareth was a place with deep roots. The surrounding region visualized the faith of those whom God had used in ages past, and an area that represented the sense of security that comes with trusting God even when life rages on.

When He was about 30, Jesus was prompted by the Holy Spirit to head eastward toward the Jordan River to be baptized and to begin His public ministry in that region of Galilee. We often imagine Jesus surrounded by crowds as He went

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from place to place. But it didn't start out that way. Jesus had time to invest in His initial disciples as He visited **Cana** near the Sea of Galilee to attend a friend's wedding (John 2:1-2). For a time, He could go back to Nazareth, return to His roots, and enjoy some rest before setting out again.

But then, Jesus made a significant shift that would define the second half of His ministry: He began to live in the fishing city of **Capernaum** (Matthew 4:13). "From that time on," the Bible says, "Jesus began to preach, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near'" (4:17). He left the roots of His hometown, the familiarity of His family, and the security of His job, and headed to the northwestern shore of the Sea of Galilee. His Father was calling Him; it was time to move.

NAZARETH —

*THE HEBREW WORD NEZOR MEANS "ROOT" OR "SHOOT."
NAZARETH TRANSLATES AS "SHOOT TOWN."*

"A SHOOT WILL COME UP FROM THE STUMP OF JESSE;
FROM HIS ROOTS A BRANCH WILL BEAR FRUIT.
THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD WILL REST ON HIM—
THE SPIRIT OF WISDOM AND OF UNDERSTANDING,
THE SPIRIT OF COUNSEL AND OF MIGHT,
THE SPIRIT OF THE KNOWLEDGE AND FEAR OF THE LORD—
AND HE WILL DELIGHT IN THE FEAR OF THE LORD..."

ISAIAH 11:1-3

CAPERNAUM

Before moving to Capernaum, two of Jesus' disciples, Andrew and John, "spent the day with" Him (John 1:39). This phrase is translated from the Greek word *méno*, meaning "abide," "remain," or "stay with." While Jesus lived in Nazareth, He had many *méno* days with His disciples: they spent some time with Him, asked Him questions, learned from His example, and then they parted ways.

But when Christ took up residence in Capernaum, a city of more than 10,000 people, things were going to change. Life wasn't going to be simple; this was no Nazareth. Here, the needs of other people constantly surrounded Jesus. Here, it was clear that His life was not His own.

After He made this move, the Bible says Jesus "spent some time with" His disciples (John 3:22). The Greek word used here is *diatribō*, which literally means "worn path." This visual word gives us a picture of Jesus and His disciples walking together, eating together, and sharing life together. And that's just what Jesus did. He spent time in His disciple Peter's home, met his family, and even miraculously healed Peter's mother-in-law (Mark 1:30-31).

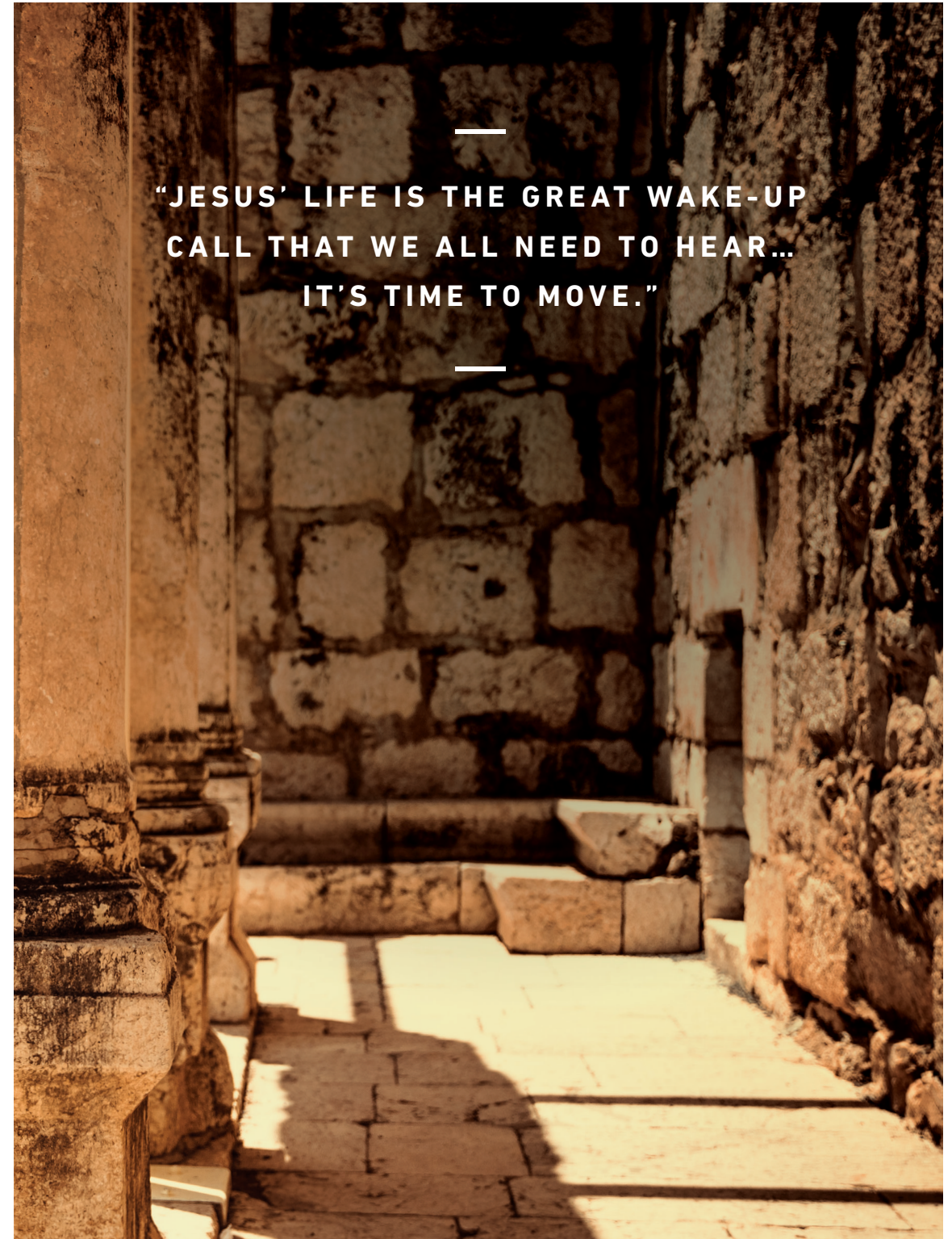
Something shifted when Jesus made the move from a *méno* relationship with His disciples to a *diatribō* relationship. It was a move from surface-level chats to deep conversations, from occasional encounters to day-to-day life. Christ opened up His heart to His disciples and poured His life into them. This was the way He lived from that day on. At the end of His ministry,

Jesus prayed to His Father, "I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word." (John 17:6)

Following Jesus looks like moving from *méno* to *diatribō*, from in-and-out relationships to a life-on-life commitment. No more popping in to people's lives, staying at a safe and easy distance. Christ invites us to open up our hearts with intentionality and purpose, following after Him by making disciples, forming deep relationships that center on Him, His cross, and His Word.

**LIFE IS BOUND TO GET A
LITTLE MORE CROWDED,
MORE COMPLICATED, AND
MORE CHALLENGING
FOR US.**

If we make this shift, life is bound to get a little more crowded, more complicated, and more challenging for us. But our lives will also grow fuller as a result. Jesus' life is the great wake-up call that we all need to hear. We could easily stay in Nazareth, but His plan for us is much fuller than that. It's time to move.



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**"JESUS' LIFE IS THE GREAT WAKE-UP
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- ¹ Jesus was raised in a small town of 300 people with a rich cultural history. How has your upbringing shaped your worldview?
- ² Jesus left the comfort of His home in Nazareth because He knew it was time to move. Describe a move or transition you had to make. Why was this transition significant?
- ³ We all have a sphere of influence (work, school, etc.). How are you leveraging your influence for the Kingdom of God?
- ⁴ In His relationships with others, Jesus moved from *méno* (spending time with) to *diatribō* (persevering with). How have you experienced this in your own life?
- ⁵ How are you moving into the mess of other people's lives? What would it cost you? What might you gain?

🕒 EXTRA INFO

One of the reasons for Nazareth's small size was its geographically-remote location in the mountains. Although Jesus could look out and see centuries of Old Testament history from His boyhood home, Nazareth itself was difficult to reach and away from the main trade roads.

Capernaum, on the other hand, was a lively city. Not only was it located along the Sea of Galilee, sometimes called "Israel's life source," but Capernaum was also situated near the Great Trunk Road. This international trade route linked to Egypt and Mesopotamia, meaning all kinds of people were always coming and going.

Moving from a place of relative isolation to a bustling center of activity did not require Jesus to move across the country. Nazareth and Capernaum were only about 25 miles apart, but that intentional move made all the difference. In fact, when we trace Christ's ministry in the Gospels, we realize He really didn't cover much ground. But because of the major investment He made in His disciples' lives and in the communities where He went, both before and after His death and resurrection, the impact of Jesus' life ripples into nearly every part of the world today.