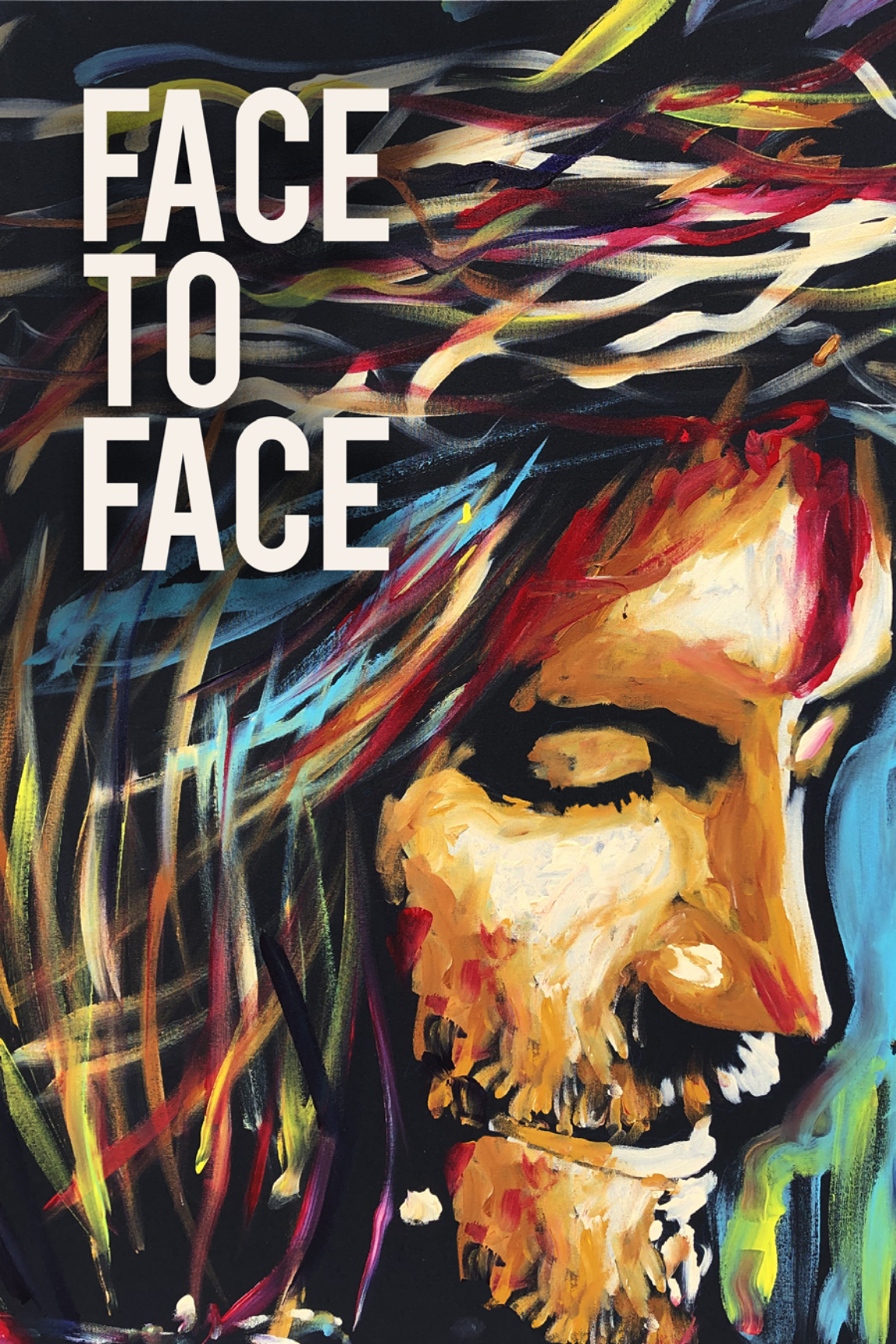


FACE TO FACE



6

THE LIFTED
LOWLIFE

If there is one thing history has taught us, it is this: One person's story can change the world. Throughout time, the simple stories of human beings have overthrown tyrants and inspired generals, they have established justice and struck down prejudice, they have encouraged compassion and restored hope. The stories we read in the Gospels are no different. Over two thousand years, they have reshaped lives and redirected eternities. When we read the Gospels, we are provided with a rare window into the lives of people who encountered Jesus face to face and were changed as a result.

That is why we want to try something a little unusual for this series. We want to take six stories from the Gospels—six stories of people who met Jesus and were transformed after meeting Him—and give each of them a completely fictional backstory. Our goal is simple: We want to see their humanity, up close, so that we can discover how we might encounter Jesus just as they did. We invite you to use your imagination along with us, to consider what their lives may have been like before they met Jesus and how their encounter with Him impacted their futures.

Through this study and discussion, we will turn our attention inward and examine the motivations of the human heart. We will identify the forces that can turn us away from the true life to which God calls us. We will share our lives with one another and pinpoint the values that lead us to become more like Christ. In so doing, we pray you will encounter Jesus face to face and uncover how He can change your life forever.

Play the *"Session Six: The Lifted Lowlife"* video.

What stood out to you in the video?

Read Luke 23:26-43

1. Share about a time when you were given a second chance or another opportunity, perhaps after you made a small mistake or a big error. How did you feel when you received that second chance? What did you do with that opportunity?

2. Why did Jesus offer paradise to a criminal who had hurt many people and caused destruction to many lives? How did Jesus view that man differently from the rest of the world? What was the difference between him and the other criminal who was crucified with them? How can we view the people of this world in the same way Jesus sees them?

Read Matthew 7:13-14

3. In what ways do the people of this world walk toward destruction instead of choosing the path to eternal life? Why might a person choose a road that leads to misery instead of a road that leads to paradise? How do we ensure we are walking on the narrow road that leads to eternal life?

4. How have you witnessed someone turn their lives around and walk toward paradise and toward Jesus? How did that decision change their demeanor and attitude? How did their outlook on life change after they chose to follow Jesus?

Read Luke 15:11-32

5. In this story, both brothers made themselves miserable in different ways. How did those two brothers make their lives “hell” through their actions? What change did they need to make in their hearts to enter the “paradise” of their father’s feast?

6. Today, the Lord invites you to join His celebration and His paradise. What obstacle is preventing you from entering into a life of joy and well-being? If you could name one barrier standing between you and God right now, what would it be? How will you take the first step toward getting past it?

DEEPER STUDY QUESTION

Read Revelation 2:1-7

7. In this letter, Jesus speaks to a church that had been faithfully following Him but then lost their way. What did Jesus mean when He said the church of Ephesus lost their “first love?” What are some ways Christians today might replace their love of Christ with the love of something else? How can Christians practice self-reflection and repentance to ensure Jesus remains their first love?