

# *Love Walked Among Us*

## **Link Group Discussion Questions**

### **Introduction & Chapter 1**

*Introduction: Who is Jesus?*

1. What are you hoping to get out of this study of “How Jesus Loved?” Our church has been “Learning to Love.” Where are you at in your “love education?” How do you see this study taking you the next step?
2. In the introduction, Paul Miller says, “Slowly by slowly, as they say in Africa, I began to understand what it really means to love.” Why does it take time and effort to learn to love?
3. This whole book is about the person of Jesus as described by the Gospels. What are some things that the Gospels say are true about Jesus that are surprising to the world, and even to many Christians?

*Part 1: Love Shows Compassion*

*Chapter 1: A Mind Full of Someone Else*

4. The first chapter is drawn from Luke 7:11-17. What stands out to you in the details of the story?
5. Miller gives us this outline: (1) *He Feels What She Feels*, (2) *He Brings Hope*, (3) *He Never Loses Sight of Her*. From what details in the story did the author get each of these points? How does each one explain what compassion is all about?
6. Can you apply these points of compassion to something that happened to you this last week? Can you apply these to a relationship that you are going to be developing in the near future? What difference will this chapter make in your life?
7. Miller ends chapter 1 by meditating on the “inefficiency” of compassion. What does he mean? How might this insight help you in your relationships?

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## Link Group Discussion Questions

### Chapter 2

*Chapter 2: Looking Shapes the Heart - Learning How to See People*

1. We are learning about compassion. Have you loved others any differently since we met last time? Is there a compassion story you can tell?
2. This chapter is about *looking*. What is looking? How did Jesus model it for us in the Gospels?
3. Jesus taught about looking in the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37). Read this story out loud. Paul Miller says that Jesus' parables, like His behavior, are often startling. What features of this story are startling to you? [If time allows, discuss the concept of looking in the parable of the Lost Son(s) (Luke 15:11-32).]
4. Why do we look *away*? What are the risks of looking? (See the discussion on pgs. 33-34.) Is there a relationship you are in right now where you have been looking away? Why?
5. Miller combines the idea of looking with the word "cherishing." He says, "Cherishing is the beating heart of love." What does he mean? He talks about his wife Jill and her cherishing of their daughter Kim. Do you have someone in your life who is a consistent model of cherishing?
6. How does "Looking Shape the Heart" (pgs. 35-36)? How does that increase the importance of our looking (both how and what we look)?
7. The chapter ends with Miller talking about Jesus' compassionate eyes: "Jesus' eyes give God a face." What difference does this make?
8. What difference should the teaching in this chapter make in your life in the next seven days?

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## **Link Group Discussion Questions**

### **Chapter 3**

*Chapter 3: I Know What's Best for You - Judging Blocks Compassion*

1. Is there anything that we talked about last time that has really been on your mind lately?
2. Chapter 3 is based on the story of Jesus healing the blind man in the Gospel of John chapter 9. Read the whole story and note the things that are surprising.
3. How did Jesus show compassion to the blind man? To the disciples?
4. How was the disciple's judgmentalism getting in the way of their compassion? (How about the Pharisees?) Miller talks about this as two different ways of "seeing" (pg. 48). What does he mean? What could Jesus see that the others couldn't? What is the "secret" of compassion?
5. What is the difference between "making a judgment" (good and necessary) and "being judgmental" (bad and compassion-blocking)? [Does Matthew 7 speak to this?]
6. Which stories of judging and compassion really stood out to you as you read this chapter? Why?
7. Does this chapter lead you to make any "course corrections" in your current relationships? Is there someone that you're quick to judge? Is there a "Courtney" that you need to stop and pour out compassion on?

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## Link Group Discussion Questions

### Chapter 4

#### *Chapter 4: I'm Better than You - Self-Righteousness Blocks Compassion*

1. Self-righteousness is like bad breath—how true! Can you tell a story on yourself or on someone else (without embarrassing or shaming someone) about self-righteousness being seen by all but the one practicing it?
2. Read the story of what took place at the home of Simon the Pharisee (Luke 7:36-50) and note the things that are surprising (even shocking!).
3. Again, the idea of truly “seeing” someone comes up (or *not* seeing someone). What is the relationship between “seeing” and self-righteousness?
4. Why do we become self-righteous? What’s in it for us?
5. Jesus isn’t blind to the woman’s sin. He sees it for what is and forgives it. What does this say about Who He is?
6. Miller points out that Jesus is both compassionate and honest, with both the woman and Simon (pg. 54). Is that unusual? Why or why not?
7. Miller says that “Jesus takes dead aim against self-righteousness” in his parable comparing a Pharisee and a tax-collector (Luke 18:9-14). What is Jesus trying to do in us as we listen to Him tell the story?
8. Why are the benefits of realizing that “we’re all a mess?” How does that change your stance towards others in your life right now? How can our group pray for you as you admit your own “messiness” and attempt to change?

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## **Link Group Discussion Questions**

### **Chapter 5**

*Chapter 5: This Is What You Should Do - Legalism Blocks Compassion*

1. What have we learned so far about compassion?
2. Read Luke 11:37-43. From that story and from the rest of chapter 5, how would you define “legalism?” Why is it a problem? Rules can be good things, right?
3. How did legalism manifest itself with a) the Pharisee who wanted Jesus to wash his hands, b) Martha in her conflict with Mary, c) Judas in his conflict with Mary, and d) Paul Miller in his conflict with Jill Miller? What were key similarities?
4. Miller talks about the “peculiar blindness of the legalist.” What does he mean? Have you seen that in real life?
5. How does legalism crop up in your life? Do you have a story from the last couple of weeks?
6. What is the answer to legalism? How is it defeated? What is Jesus up to in your heart?

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## Link Group Discussion Questions

### Chapter 6

#### *Chapter 6: The Golden Rule - Incarnation Leads to Compassion*

1. How would you define and/or describe *incarnation* after reading this chapter?
2. Miller begins with the story of the feeding of the 4,000 (Mark 8:1-3) and Jesus' compassion for the shepherd-less crowd (Matthew 9:36). What lessons do we learn from how Jesus saw people in those stories?
3. The author asks, "How do you get 'inside of someone?'" (pg. 71) and then answers his question with Jesus' Golden Rule (see Luke 6:31). How does the Golden Rule help us to "unself?" How do his stories about his interaction with his children ("thinking Ashley," John's "kick in his step") illustrate this principle?
4. Again, we see that love is *hard work*. Why is that so surprising to us?
5. How have you used Jesus' Golden Rule in the last few weeks? How have you seen others use it recently?
6. In the section "Different People, Different Responses" (pgs. 72-73), Miller teaches that Christian love is not one-size-fits all. Why is that? What difference does it make?
7. What does the author mean by "Top Down Love" and "Bottom Up Love" (pgs. 74-75)? Which is better? Why?
8. Note Miller's caution about looking for a "love-formula" (pg. 75). Why would we want to do that? Why shouldn't we?
9. The chapter ends with the ultimate incarnation—John 1:1, 14. How does Miller apply that amazing truth? What difference does that make?

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## Link Group Discussion Questions

### Chapter 7

#### *Part 2: Love Speaks the Truth*

#### *Chapter 7: A Time to Speak Up – Balancing Compassion with Honesty*

1. Up till this point, we've talked mostly about compassion. What are the key lessons we've learned about compassion?
2. Compassion isn't the whole story of love, however. In this new section, we are going to learn about the importance of love speaking the truth. Miller argues that the Jesus we meet in the gospels is fearlessly committed to truth. What are some of the example's of Jesus' behavior that illustrate this?
3. Read the story of the guests and the banquet in Luke 14:1-14. What is surprising about Jesus' words here? What lessons are taught?
4. Jesus' honesty springs from his fearlessness (pgs. 83-85, see especially Matthew 22:15-22, John 5:41-44, John 7:18). How does that dynamic work?
5. "Picture what the world would be like if no one had hidden agendas—everything out on the table, no gossip or talking behind people's backs. Imagine how freeing it would be to live like Jesus, not ruled by people's opinions, to only be concerned about God's view of us, thus freeing us to care for others with honest words that lead either to rejection or genuine closeness" (pg. 84). How does that "picture" make you feel?
6. Does Jesus surprise again in John 1:43-48 (Nathaniel's frank appraisal)? Why? Is it refreshing or rebuking to you, or both? Do you value honesty like Jesus does?
7. "The gift of compassion must be accompanied by the gift of truth" (pg.88). Why is this true?
8. Most of us are either "compassion people" or "truth people," leaning towards one pole or the other. Jesus was perfectly balanced (so balanced that he looks skewed to our twisted eyes!). Which way do you lean? What are you doing to move towards Christ-like balance? What is getting in your way?

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## Link Group Discussion Questions

### Chapter 8

#### *Chapter 8: Honest Anger – A Compassionate Warning to Others*

1. “Good anger.” Isn’t that an oxymoron? Why don’t we normally put those two words together?
2. Jesus got good and angry. Read and discuss Luke 6:1-11, Mark 10:13-16, and Mark 11:15-17.
  - What things angered Jesus?
  - How was his anger like ours?
  - How was his anger different from how ours usually is? (List as many ways as you can.)
3. Miller writes, “Not a mix of half-anger and half-compassion, Jesus is all compassion and all anger—a perfect expression of love for the victims of injustice” (pg. 92). “He loves to love” (pg. 94). “Both gentle and strong, humble and powerful, Jesus embodies the Tender Warrior” (pg. 96).
  - How would our relationships change if we were more like Jesus in these ways? Think specifically about your major relationships right now.
  - What practical steps could we take to grow in this direction?
4. How does the author reconcile Jesus’ statements that He had come to disturb the peace and to bring peace? Why is “honest anger” necessary? Why is there a chapter about anger in a book about love?
5. How can we pray together as a group for honest anger? Do you have a specific request?



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## Link Group Discussion Questions

### Chapter 9

#### *Chapter 9: A Time to Shut Up – Balancing Honesty with Compassion*

1. This chapter is the “balance point” of chapter 7. What did we learn about there?
2. Can you relate to the story of Walter and his wife (pg. 99-100)? How was Walter like Jesus (compare with what Miller says about Mark 14:27-31)? Can you see yourself doing something similar to Walter or something different? Why?
3. Miller writes, “Some people fear that if they don’t tell other people ‘what they need to hear,’ they are being controlled by them. But the exact opposite is true. We don’t need to express our thoughts every time we are hurt or people resist our honesty. We don’t need to voice every concern or criticism. We don’t always need to say what is on our mind. We can handle something purely internally” (pg. 101). Do you see yourself in this paragraph?
4. Read and discuss Matthew 18:21-35 (see the discussion on pgs. 101-102). How does being forgiven enable us to forgive?
5. Which of your current relationships needs a dose of this kind of compassion?
6. The practical suggestion of “being specific” (pgs. 102-103) is really helpful. How have you used this kind of principle in the past? How could you use it in the future?
7. What questions do you still have about balancing honesty with compassion?

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## **Link Group Discussion Questions**

### **Chapter 10**

*Chapter 10: I Know How Hard It Is; I Do the Same Thing – Being Honest Without Being Judgmental*

1. What are some of the things we have together learned so far about “Love Speaks the Truth?”
2. Read Jesus’ instructions in Matthew 7:3-5. What is “Beam Research?” How does it work? How is it related to Jesus’ Golden Rule? How does the story found in John 8:2-11 illustrate the principles of Beam Research?
3. Talk about the dynamics of Beam Research as shown in Paul and Jill’s ballroom dancing experience. Why was Beam Research needed? How did Paul go about using it? Why is it hard and painful? What did it accomplish?
4. How might Beam Research help you your relationships right now? Can you tell us a story? Where are you stuck? What is working?
5. Beam Research will not always “work.” Read Matthew 7:6. What does Jesus mean by these instructions? How are Christ-followers supposed to relate to their “enemies” (pgs. 111-113). How does this kill bitterness?
6. This is the end of the section on speaking the truth in love. What questions do you still have? How can we pray for you and your relationships?

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## **Link Group Discussion Questions**

### **Chapter 11**

#### *Part 3: Love Depends on God*

#### *Chapter 11: The Secret To Love – Dependence on God*

1. Miller calls dependence on God, “the basement of love” (pg. 119). What does he mean by that?
2. What *is* dependence on God? How did Jesus live it out? What examples of Jesus’ dependence on His Father did the author cite? How does it work?
3. What are some of the ways that we get this wrong and “pollute” our love? How did Kim get it wrong during her breathing exercises? How did the wife get it wrong with her husband who missed taking out the trash? How did Miller get it right with Kim’s crayons? What was the difference?
4. Miller says that sometimes when he loves someone, he feels “disoriented” (pg. 122). Can you relate to that? Have you experienced the same thing? Why is that? What is it driving us toward?
5. The chapter ends with two sections titled “A Hunger for Conversation with God” and “A Hunger for Words from God.” What is he talking about? How do words “shape” us? Do you feel that hunger yourself?
6. What questions did this chapter raise for you about love and its relationship with dependence on God? What do you think the rest of this section will be about?
7. Do you have a relationship right now that needs you to grow in your dependence upon God? How can we pray for you?

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## Link Group Discussion Questions

### Chapter 12

*Chapter 12: Saying “No” to Someone You Love – Compassionately Responding to Demands*

1. Have you had to say “No” to someone you love this week? What was it like?
2. Read and reflect on Luke 2:41-52. How was Jesus free to say “No” and to say “Yes” to obeying his parents?
3. Do the same with John 2:1-11 and Mark 3:20-24, 32-35, and Matthew 12:28. Where does Jesus get the ability to “rebuff” his family? Why/how is this love?
4. Miller writes, “When we agree with people just to shut them up, it looks like we’re being nice when we are actually manipulating them” (pg. 132). Do you resonate with that statement? How do you normally relate to other people’s demands? Why?
5. What are the dynamics between “Jeff” and “Lois?” (pg. 133). How does the Jesus-like Jeff love Lois? Does it surprise you that he has more than one option? Are there other loving options for Jeff to pursue? What would/could a Jesus-like Lois do on her side of the equation?
6. According to the author, how did dependance on God shape both Mary and Jesus in John 19:25-27 (pgs. 134-135)?
7. What have you learned from this chapter? How are you going to apply it?

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## **Link Group Discussion Questions**

### **Chapter 13**

#### *Chapter 13: Saying No to Self-Gratification – Love That Is Pure*

1. Why was Paul's insistence that Jill sit down to the table "a skunk in the basement" (pg. 137)? Why is it so important to root out the skunks in the "little things" like this "mundane" family moment?
2. In what ways did Jesus say "No" to selfish desires in Matthew 4:1-10, John 2:18-21, Mark 8:31-35? What can we learn from His example that will help us to love others purely?
3. How do you react to the statement, "Saying 'No' To Self Invites Suffering" (pg. 143). Is it true? Is it helpful? Is it scary? Why or why not?
4. "If our love depends on how the other person loves us, then we have a business deal, not love" (pg. 143, cf. Matthew 5:46). Miller asks, "Is a pure, selfless love like this possible?" Is it? How? How did it play out in the lives of Muriel & Robertson McQuilken?
5. How was Jesus tempted to gratify Himself at His passion (pgs. 144-146)? How did He overcome it? What did it do for us? What does it show us?
6. In what relationships do you need a fresh start in self-denying love like this? What changes do you need to be making? How can our group help you?

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## Link Group Discussion Questions

### Chapter 14

*Chapter 14: Saying “Yes” to Gentle Intrusion – Love Brings Light Into Darkness*

1. Miller says, “Love moves toward people, even if that means confrontation” (pg. 148). Can you tell a story from your own life when someone “moved toward” you and how it showed their love?
2. How does Jesus “move toward” Zacchaeus in Luke 19:1-10? What are the results? What can we learn from this about love?
3. What does Miller mean by “gentle intrusion?” In what ways is it “gentle?” In what ways is it “intrusion?”
4. Jesus touched people. What are the risks of this kind of demonstrating love (pg. 151-152)? What are the pay-offs?
5. Jesus allows others to touch him (read Luke 8:40-55, Mark 5:30,32). How is this showing love?
6. Discuss the story of Paul and Jill on pages 156-157 and relate it to your life. How and when do we intrude? How and when should we allow intrusions?

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## **Link Group Discussion Questions**

### **Chapter 15**

#### *Part 4: Love Is Energized By Faith*

#### *Chapter 15: Faith Empowers Love – Where Can I Find the Energy To Love?*

1. Miller writes, “The hardest part of love is not ‘How do I love?’; it’s wanting to love in the first place and then having the energy to do it.” Do you agree? Is this the hardest part of love for you? Why?
2. “Scratch whatever preexisting definitions of faith that you have...” How does the author re-define biblical faith for us in this chapter (pgs. 161-162, 164, 168)? Is this helpful to you? In what way(s)?
3. Review the story of Jesus’ long day (pgs. 168). Who is Jesus according to this story? What insights about love and faith can be drawn from Jesus’ example here?
4. Why doesn’t Jesus’ model of love necessarily energize us to love (pg. 168)? What does?
5. Have you had a “breakfast” experience like Paul Miller’s (pg. 169)? What made the difference for him?
6. How can you apply the teaching of this chapter to your next seven days?

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## Link Group Discussion Questions

### Chapter 16

#### *Chapter 16: Faith Means Losing Control – Going to God with Our Needs*

1. Jesus continues to surprise. How did Jesus “disrupt [the disciples] categories” in Luke 5:4-11 and Mark 3:38-41 (pgs. 172-174)?
2. Miller says, “Following Jesus means losing control” (pg.174). What does he mean? What doesn’t he mean? How is this truth illustrated in Matthew 14:25-32? *What does this have to do with love?*
3. In Mark 8:14-21, Jesus confronts the yeast of the Pharisees and Herod as well as the unbelief of his disciples. What made Jesus so upset? What does Jesus want from us? What does Jesus want for us?
4. Paul Miller grew in true faith on his disastrous camping trip. What did he learn and how (pgs. 179-181)?
5. How do *you* struggle with faith? What makes it hard to trust? What helps *you* in the midst of your struggle?
6. How can we help *each other* to turn to Jesus with our needs, especially in day to day living?



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## Link Group Discussion Questions

### Chapter 17

*Chapter 17: The Intimate Stranger – Weaving a Fabric of Love*

1. What does Miller mean when he says that Jesus “weaves a fabric of love?” Briefly, what are some examples of this concept in this chapter?
2. As a group, read through John 4:3-35, stopping every few sentences to discuss the story. Who was this Samaritan woman? What was she like? What was her problem? How did she try to deflect Jesus’ attention?
3. Jesus never fails to surprise. How did Jesus show love to this woman?
4. What can we learn about love from Jesus’ interaction with his disciples (pg. 190)?
5. Jesus is unique. “He is truly a being by himself” (Napoleon, quoted on pg. 191). Yet, Jesus is also our model. What can we learn from His perfect example of love in John 4 that we can imitate in relationships now?
6. What is the top thing you learned in this chapter that you want to grow in doing?

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## Link Group Discussion Questions

### Chapter 18

#### *Chapter 18: Oneness – Love Leads to Intimacy*

1. This chapter gives several compelling portraits of intimacy, from Jesus and His Father to examples from the Millers' family life. What pictures of intimacy in action were especially beautiful and meaningful to you? Why?
2. What does Paul Miller mean when he says that oneness is a key to understanding the universe (pgs. 195-196)?
3. The author defines intimacy: "Oneness is a state of pure and constant compassion devoid of selfishness" (pg. 194). Sounds good. But he also says, "Intimacy eludes us. It is fragile, difficult to maintain, and easy to lose. So good, but so rare" (pg. 193). Why isn't there more love in the universe?
4. What is the relationship between oneness and joy?
5. Where does intimacy come from? How did Isabelle experience intimacy with her mother?
6. What did you learn in this chapter that you can apply to your life in the next week?

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## Link Group Discussion Questions

### Chapter 19

*Part 5: Love Moves From Death Into Life*

*Chapter 19: Humility – Love Takes the Lower Place*

1. Have you seen someone practice humility lately? Tell us the story. What was unusual about it, how did it help the situation, was it motivated by Christ?
2. What is humility? Paul Miller calls it “taking the lower place.” Why is that a helpful description?
3. Miller unpacks three different teachings of Jesus on humility. What does each one add to our understanding:

Mark 9:33-35, Matthew 18:2-5

Matthew 20:22-28

Luke 22:24-27; John 13:4-5

4. What is the difference and the connection between humility and humiliation (pg. 210)?
5. The husband and wife fight over the laundry. What do you think about the options that Miller suggests the wife could take instead of retaliating? Would you add to the list? Subtract? Miller says, “Humility hurts, but such is love.” Is that always true?
6. Humility isn’t easy. But it is beautiful and good. Why take the Low Place? What are the benefits?
7. Jesus not only taught humility but was the ultimate example of it. How did His humility translate into love for us?
8. What is one key relationship you have right now that is crying for you to inject a healthy dose of humility? How can our group pray for you?

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## **Link Group Discussion Questions**

### **Chapter 20**

*Chapter 20: Facing Sadness – When Love Leads to Grief*

1. What is the relationship between love and sadness? Why do we tend to think of sadness as badness?
2. Miller says, “[Jesus] isn’t a plastic Messiah.” If you had to prove that Jesus was truly sad, what biblical evidence would you point to? What did He say and do that points to the authenticity of His grief?
3. How is Jesus’ sadness like our own? In what ways?
4. How is Jesus’ sadness unique, unlike how we are usually sad?
5. How can “good sadness” help us to love like Jesus?

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## **Link Group Discussion Questions**

### **Chapters 21 & 22**

#### *Chapter 21: A Symphony of Love – Love Under Pressure*

1. Why do our best efforts at love often go out the window when the heat gets turned up?
2. Jesus never gave in to this temptation. He loved to the end (John 13:1). He is the perfect example. What jumped out at you about His love as you read this chapter?

#### *Chapter 22: His Life for Ours – The Cost of Love*

3. Why did Paul check on Ed the sheep? Was it love?
4. How does love “demand an exchange?” How did Jesus’ death do this for us?
5. In what ways do we underestimate the cost that Jesus’ paid in love for us?
6. Great joy comes from great expense. What is our joy in receiving Jesus’ gift? What is His joy? How should that make us feel, think, and act this week?

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## **Link Group Discussion Questions**

### **Chapters 23 & 24**

#### *Chapter 23: The Birth of Hope – The End of Love’s Journey*

1. “Without hope, love makes no sense” (pg. 240). Why?
2. How did Jesus break the power of both sin and death? Why is that important for love (pg. 242-243)?
3. What significance for love does Miller draw from Jesus’ scars (pgs. 243-245)?

#### *Chapter 24: Opening the Door – What Do We Do With Jesus?*

4. Jesus intrudes and invites. What is He doing in your life right now?
5. What are some of the major things that you’ve learned through this study of the way that Jesus loved people? In what ways have you changed, grown, and been challenged?
6. How can we, as a group, pray for you as you become more like Jesus?