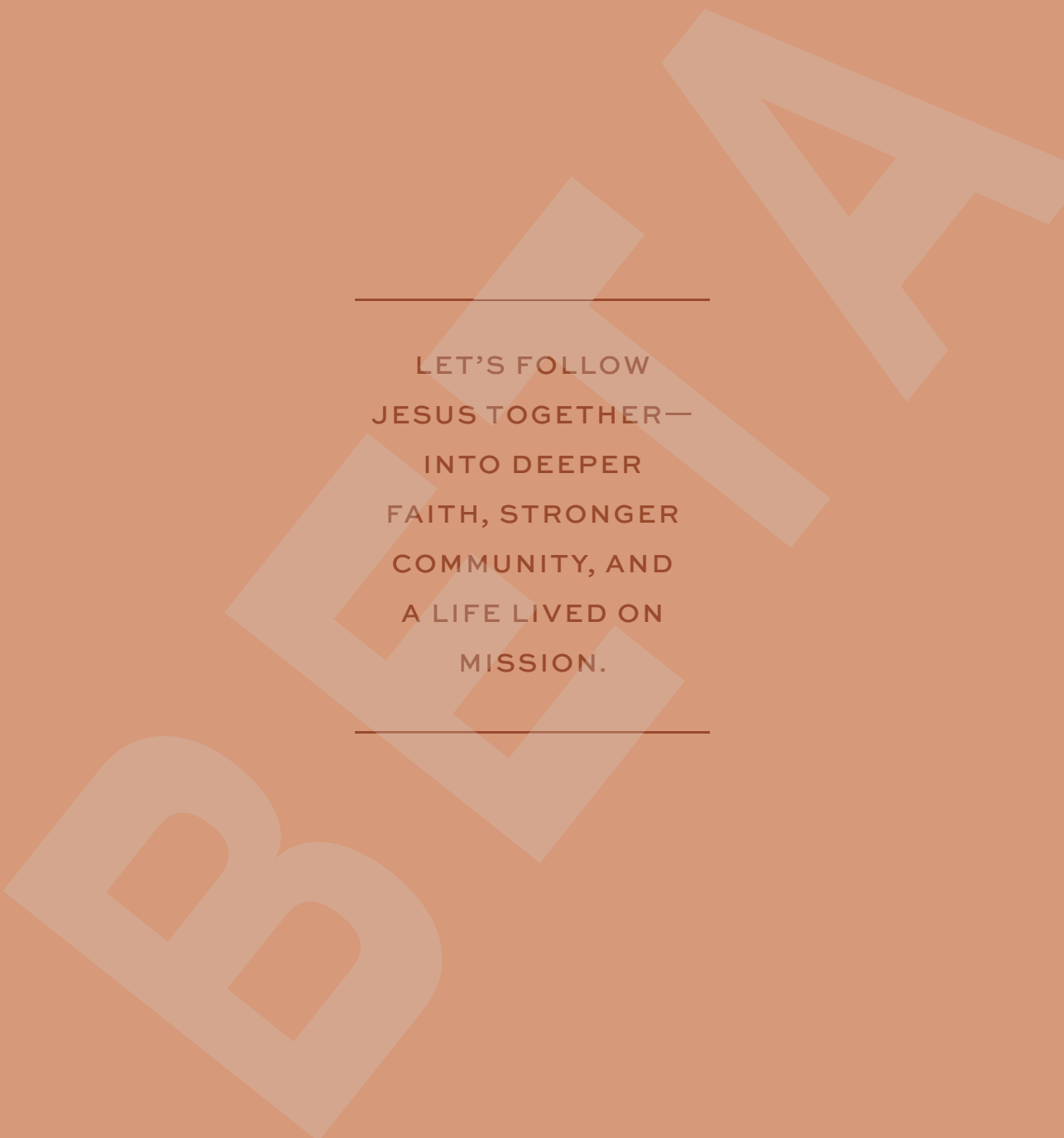


DISCIPLESHIP PATHWAY

BETA VERSION



LET'S FOLLOW
JESUS TOGETHER—
INTO DEEPER
FAITH, STRONGER
COMMUNITY, AND
A LIFE LIVED ON
MISSION.

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DESIGN AND LAYOUT BY APRIL HENRICHS WITH ALBIE CREATIVE





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WELCOME TO THE DISCIPLESHIP PATHWAY

“Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will send you out to fish for people.” At once they left their nets and followed him.

— MATTHEW 4:19-20

Discipleship begins with a call: “Follow Me.” It is the most life-changing invitation ever given, not just to believe in Jesus, but to walk with Him, become like Him, and join Him in His mission to redeem the world. From the shores of Galilee to campuses and communities today, Jesus is still calling people to leave behind what’s familiar and step into something far greater - a life marked by love, purpose, and transformation.

The Discipleship Pathway is a response to that call. It is more than a series of lessons. It is an intentional journey of becoming. Anchored in the gospel and inspired by Cru’s long history of discipleship, this pathway invites you into a story far bigger than your own. It is a journey through the foundational truths of the Christian life, truths meant not just to be known, but deeply experienced and shared with others.

We live in a world aching for clarity and hope. Questions around identity, truth, purpose, and belonging are louder than ever. And maybe you’ve asked those questions too. The good news is that Jesus meets us right where we are, but He never leaves us there. He invites us to walk with Him, to be changed by Him, and to live on mission with Him. As Dallas Willard once said, “There is nothing wrong with the church that discipleship wouldn’t fix.” The need is great, but the invitation is open and the harvest is ready.

Weaved throughout these lessons is a Kingdom mindset, helping you to understand the bigger gospel story and your place in it. Who is God? What is the Bible? What is your purpose? Alongside others, you’ll explore what it means to be rooted in God’s love, filled with His Spirit, grounded in His Word, and sent out to impact the world. These are not abstract ideas. They are truths to be lived, practiced in the context of real life, real relationships, and real mission!



“WHATEVER YOU HAVE LEARNED OR RECEIVED OR HEARD FROM ME—OR SEEN IN ME—PUT IT INTO PRACTICE. AND THE GOD OF PEACE WILL BE WITH YOU.”

— PHILIPPIANS 4:9

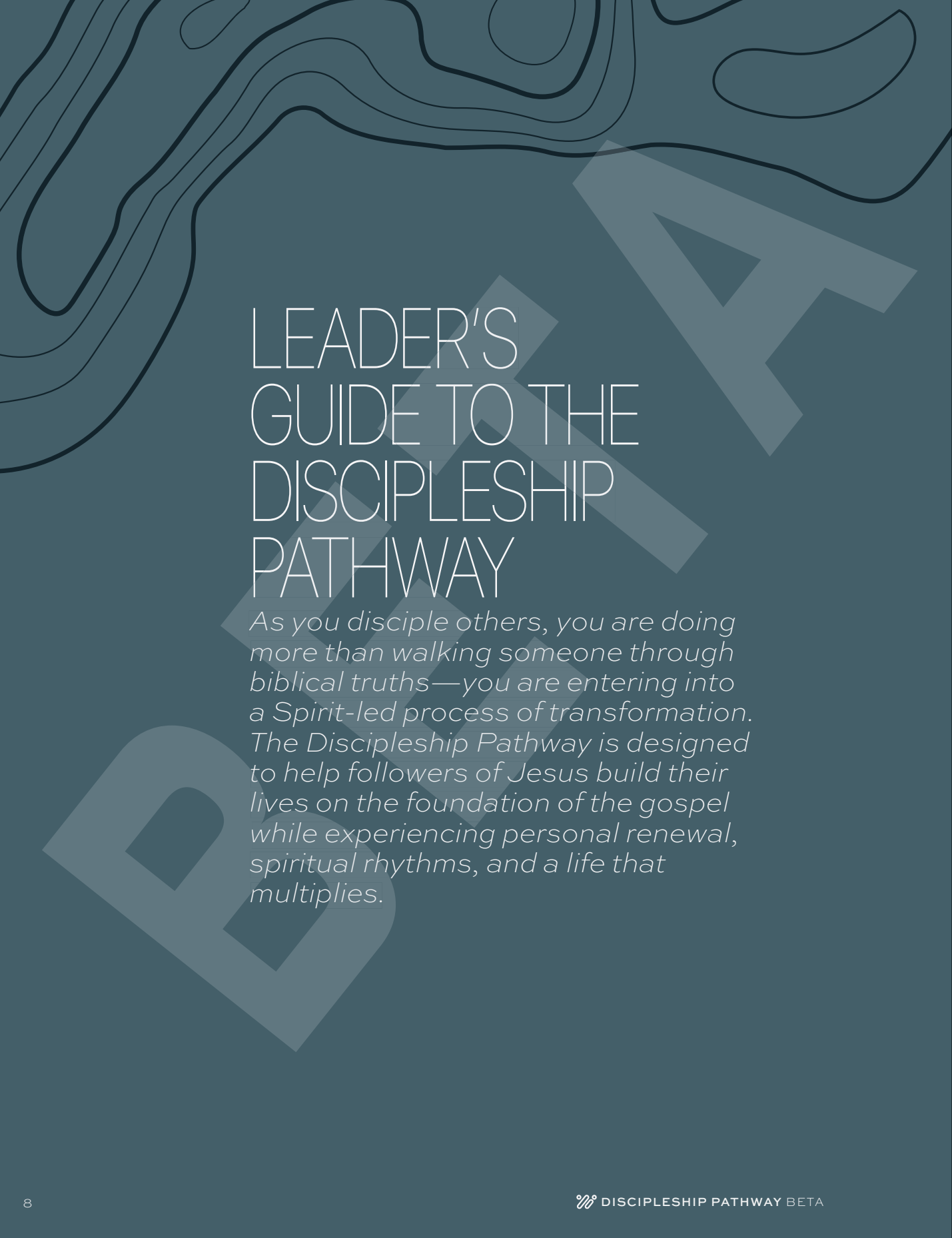
Discipleship isn't just about knowing more—it's about becoming more like Jesus. As you spend time in His Word, in prayer, memorizing Scripture, sharing your story, and walking in community, you'll grow - not just in what you know, but in how you live and love.

As you begin this journey, know this. You are not alone. You are part of a rich legacy of disciple-makers, a family on mission, a movement of people who believe that every follower of Jesus is also a leader of others. Whether you are discipling one person or leading many, this pathway is for you. It exists to help you walk more closely with Jesus and to help others do the same.

Let us follow Jesus together into deeper faith, stronger community, and a life on mission.

“AND THE THINGS YOU HAVE HEARD ME SAY IN THE PRESENCE OF MANY WITNESSES ENTRUST TO RELIABLE PEOPLE WHO WILL ALSO BE QUALIFIED TO TEACH OTHERS.”

— 2 TIMOTHY 2:2



LEADER'S GUIDE TO THE DISCIPLESHIP PATHWAY

As you disciple others, you are doing more than walking someone through biblical truths—you are entering into a Spirit-led process of transformation. The Discipleship Pathway is designed to help followers of Jesus build their lives on the foundation of the gospel while experiencing personal renewal, spiritual rhythms, and a life that multiplies.



EACH LESSON IS INTENTIONALLY CRAFTED not just to inform the mind but to shape the whole person, forming our thoughts, affections, and actions into the likeness of Christ. Your role is to help connect the truth of God's Word to the real and present experiences of your disciple through the power of the Holy Spirit and within the support of gospel-centered community.

This journey was never meant to be walked alone. Through Scripture study, spiritual practices, prayer, story-sharing, and reflection, your disciple will be shaped by God's love and truth. And as they grow, they will be equipped to help others do the same. That is the power of multiplication, and your leadership plays a vital role.

THESE LESSONS ARE DESIGNED TO BE HIGHLY TRANSFERABLE.

Written with clarity and simplicity, they empower any disciple, regardless of background or experience, to turn around and walk someone else through the same content. As a leader, you are modeling a reproducible process. While parts of the material may feel familiar, remember that for your disciple, this could be the first time they are encountering these foundational truths. Everything you do with them, they can do with others.



LAUNCH

GOAL: SPARK CURIOSITY AND PERSONAL REFLECTION

Start with the Launch section's introductory question or short reflection. This is a chance to create space for openness, honesty, and connection. Encourage your disciple to share freely—this often reveals where God may want to work that day. Listen actively.

Example from the Identity lesson: Asking “How do you introduce yourself?” helps surface how we define ourselves—and prepares us to reframe our identity in Christ.



EXPLORE

GOAL: LET SCRIPTURE DO THE HEAVY LIFTING

In this section, you'll explore key Bible passages related to the topic. Be careful not to rush—take time to read the verses aloud together and allow space for reflection. Invite your disciple to notice repeated words, images, or patterns. Use the provided questions to guide deeper discussion. Depending on time, you may also encourage them to consider:

- Who is God in this passage?
- What has He done?
- What does that say about who we are?

Create space for wonder and wrestling. Invite the Holy Spirit to speak.

In the Identity lesson, passages like Romans 8, 1 Peter 2, and 2 Corinthians 5 help reframe who we are through the gospel. Similar insight comes through in every lesson—let the Word shine every lesson—let the Word shine.



PUTTING THE PIECES TOGETHER

GOAL: HELP THEM CONNECT THE DOTS

Here, you'll read through the section together that will summarize the themes and key takeaways from the Scriptures. Help the disciple synthesize what they've seen. Contrast common cultural narratives with the gospel truth. You may want to ask a question or two that leads them to articulate the transformation the gospel offers.

Encourage personal reflection:

- “What have you believed in the past?”
- “What feels freeing or challenging about this truth?”
- “How does this change how you see yourself or live your life?”

In the Identity lesson, this means contrasting performance-based worth with grace-based identity.

BIG IDEA



BIG IDEA

GOAL: REINFORCE THE CORE MESSAGE

Each lesson has a “Big Idea” that distills the heart of the teaching. Read it aloud together. Talk about it. You can ask the disciple to rephrase it in their own words. This is a chance to cement the truth and make it memorable.

RESPOND

GOAL: INVITE SPIRIT-LED APPLICATION AND SURRENDER

Use the reflection questions to guide personal application. Don’t rush this moment. Let the disciple reflect prayerfully. Be okay with silence. Be discerning—some lessons may surface emotion, repentance, or celebration.

Close with prayer—either one the disciple offers, or the one provided. This is often where truth moves from the head to the heart.

PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

GOAL: CULTIVATE SPIRITUAL RHYTHMS THAT LEAD TO TRANSFORMATION

Help your disciple take what they’ve learned and live it out. Each lesson offers 4–6 practical and foundational exercises. These include:

- Scripture meditation
- Prayer practices (e.g., spiritual breathing, written prayer)
- Sabbath or retreat rhythms
- Journaling and reflection
- Worship and Scripture memory

Encourage them to choose 2–3 practices to engage that week. Check in next time to hear what God did in the process

FOR THE DISCIPLE DURING THE WEEK

Invite your disciple to revisit the lesson throughout the week. Some sessions are followed by short, related articles—encourage them to read the one that corresponds to your most recent lesson. These can be found in the appendix at the back of the book.

Be sure to follow up on their “Putting it Into Practice” steps. Celebrate the ways you see them growing and taking steps of faith.

Also, encourage them to memorize the week’s Scripture verse. Hiding God’s Word in their heart is a vital part of shaping their thoughts, affections, and actions.

MULTIPLICATION VISION: CALLED TO MORE

Every disciple is also called to be a disciple-maker. Remind your disciple that what they're receiving isn't just for them. They've been invited into the story of God—redeemed, restored, and now sent.

As they grow, encourage them to:

- › Share what they're learning
- › Pray about who they can invest in
- › Begin leading others through these same lessons

This is how discipleship multiplies. One life transformed; many lives touched. Everything you're doing with them; they are equipped to do with someone else.

TRUST THE SPIRIT

You are not alone in leading. The Holy Spirit is your guide:

- › He empowers your questions
- › He illuminates Scripture
- › He convicts and comforts
- › He brings real transformation

Ask for His help before and during each session. He is faithful.

KEY EXPERIENCES TO REINFORCE THROUGHOUT THE PATHWAY:

- › Opening and exploring Scripture together
- › Sharing personal stories of faith, struggle, and growth
- › Memorizing and meditating on key verses
- › Practicing spiritual disciplines weekly
- › Praying deeply and listening to the Spirit
- › Walking in community, not isolation
- › Engaging in gospel witness and multiplication

These are the building blocks of lifelong, multiplying discipleship.

**LEAN IN. LISTEN WELL. WALK CLOSELY. AND TRUST THAT GOD IS AT WORK
THROUGH YOU—IN WAYS FAR GREATER THAN YOU CAN SEE.**

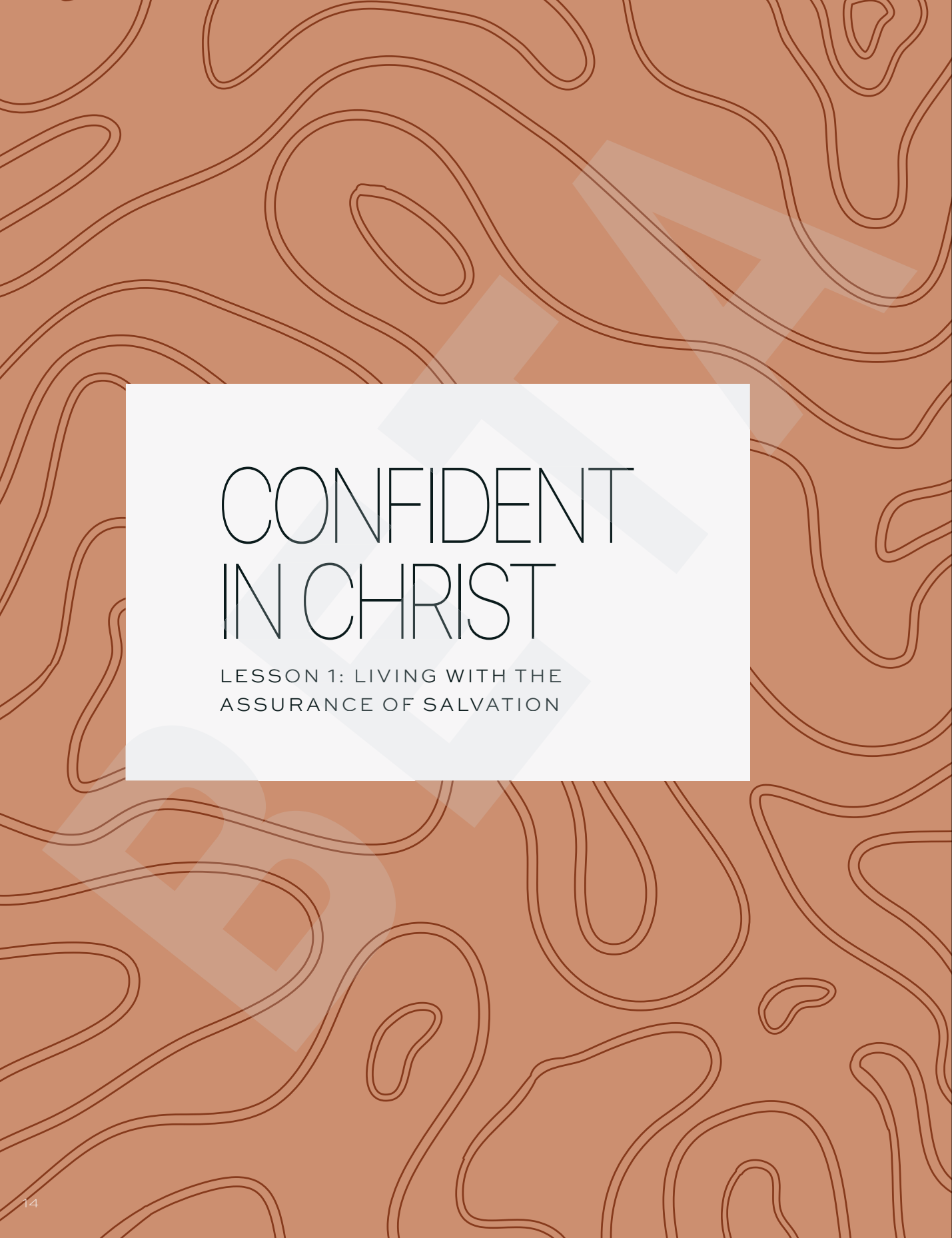
A LEADER'S PRAYER

Jesus, thank You for calling us to follow You and for entrusting us with the sacred privilege of making disciples. Lift our eyes to You. Remind us that it is not by our strength, wisdom, or skill that hearts are changed, but by Your Spirit at work in and through us.

As we lead others through this pathway, form us too. Let these truths sink deep into our minds, awaken fresh love in our hearts, and transform the way we live. May Your Word take root. May Your Spirit move freely. May our love for You and others grow deeper. May lives be marked by surrender, joy, obedience, and power.

Use us, Lord. Multiply what we offer. Let our small steps of faith ripple out into eternal impact. We ask for more than what we can accomplish—would You do what only You can do? Bring healing, freedom, repentance, and renewal. Raise up disciple-makers who reflect Your heart and carry Your name to the ends of the earth.

All for Your glory, Amen.



CONFIDENT IN CHRIST

LESSON 1: LIVING WITH THE
ASSURANCE OF SALVATION

»» LAUNCH

There are very few certainties in our world. We often ask the question, “How can we know for sure?” The ever-changing world makes it easy to question if anything is certain.

The same applies to our salvation. Can we know for sure that we have eternal life?

- » When did you first put your trust in Christ for salvation? How did you know it was real?
- » Has there been a time when you doubted your salvation?
- » If someone asked you how they could know for sure they’re saved, what would you say?

We may not know everything for certain, but there is a longing for certainty within our hearts and souls. The great news is that you can have the assurance of salvation. You can know that you have eternal life.

EXPLORE

1 JOHN 5:11-13 (ESV)

11 "And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. 12 Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life. 13 I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life"

JOHN 3:16 (NIV)

16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."

JOHN 17:3 (NIV)

3 "Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent."

ROM 10:13 (NIV)

13 for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

We will examine three important questions:

1. What is the assurance of salvation?
2. Why is this important?
3. How can I have assurance of salvation?

READ 1 JOHN 5:11-13 (ESV)

DISCUSS TOGETHER

1. What is the "testimony" in this passage? What has God given to the believer?
2. Where is eternal life found? Who has eternal life?
3. What is true if you don't have the Son?
4. Who is John writing to? What did John want them to know?

READ JOHN 3:16 (NIV)

READ JOHN 17:3 (NIV)

READ ROM 10:13 (NIV)

Paul gives a clear demonstration of Christian living, the kind of posture they should have as disciples.

-  What promises are mentioned in these 3 verses?
-  What if you aren't sure you have eternal life?
-  Why do you think it is important that we have assurance of our salvation?

PUTTING THE PIECES TOGETHER

The assurance of salvation is the certainty that our sins are forgiven and that we have received the gift of eternal life.

It is “knowing” that we have eternal life. This passage teaches that eternal life is given to us by God through His Son, Jesus Christ. It is a gift to be received by faith in Christ. Without belief in the name of the Son of God, there is no eternal life. Without belief there is no assurance of salvation. This is God’s testimony to believers. John wanted the believers to know that they have eternal life.

BIG IDEA

AS A BELIEVER, I CAN KNOW WITH
CERTAINTY THAT I HAVE ETERNAL
LIFE IN JESUS CHRIST.



HOW CAN I HAVE ASSURANCE OF SALVATION?

The simple answer is by faith in Christ alone. We receive the assurance of salvation when we put our faith in Christ.

Ephesians 2:8-9 reads, “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.”

Faith in Christ is believing in a person. It is having a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. It is believing that He died for my sins, was buried and resurrected on the third day. (1 Corinthians 5:1-5). Salvation is a freely received gift. Paul wrote to the Romans, “For whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved.” (Romans 10:13)

John makes it very clear in this well-known verse, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.” (John 3:16)

Have you put your faith in Christ? Have you trusted in Him as your Savior and Lord? Are you now putting your faith into action and living for Him? Is there evidence and fruit in your life that you have a personal relationship with Christ?

In John’s epistle he says in verse 13, “believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life.” That is the assurance of salvation. You can know it with certainty.

In John’s gospel he writes, “And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. (John 17:3). Eternal life begins by knowing Christ.



WHY IS THE ASSURANCE OF SALVATION IMPORTANT?

In the first century, the Roman soldier would never go into battle without his helmet firmly in place.

Paul describes this in the sixth chapter of his epistle to the Ephesians. He was probably chained to a Roman soldier in his imprisonment and saw the armor of the soldier. He saw the soldiers all wearing helmets. He describes that helmet as the helmet of salvation. (Ephesians 6:17)

It is vitally important that we put on the helmet of salvation. It is vitally important that we have

the assurance of our salvation. The entire epistle of first John was written for that reason.

Without the assurance of salvation, the believer will have no foundation to build his spiritual life upon. He will have no protection of his mind and thoughts amid spiritual battle. He will be living in uncertainty never being sure of his eternal destiny.

RESPOND

APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

1. How does 1 John 5:11-13 shape your view of eternal life and assurance of salvation?
2. What lies or feelings sometimes make you question your salvation, and how can you combat them with truth?
3. How would your daily life look different if you lived with unshakable confidence in your salvation?
4. Is there someone in your life who needs to hear that assurance of salvation is possible? How could you share with them?
5. How can your confidence in salvation help you take bold steps in faith or witness to others?

SUGGESTED PRAYER

"Dear Lord, I come to you now in worship and adoration. Thank you for the salvation that I have found in Christ. Thank you for the gift of eternal life and for the assurance of salvation that you have given me. Through the power of the Holy Spirit let me live in dependence and joy upon you." Amen

MEMORY VERSE

11 "And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. 12 Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life. 13 I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life."

1 JOHN 5:11-13 (ESV)



PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

Part of how the Holy Spirit transforms us is through regular practices that help move what's in our head into our hearts and lives.

This week, try to incorporate a few of these practices into your schedule. Next time you meet, take time to share about your experiences. Suggested Practices:

» **BEGIN AND END WITH GRATITUDE**

- Morning – Start each day by thanking God for the gift of salvation and the security you have in Christ.
- Evening – Reflect on the day and thank Him again for His faithfulness, mercy, and the assurance that you belong to Him.

» **JOURNAL** – Write down your prayers, scriptures you're meditating on, and ways you see God working in and through your life. This creates a personal record that strengthens your confidence in His presence and promises.

» **SHARE YOUR STORY AND THE GOSPEL** – Look for opportunities throughout your day to share the hope you have in Jesus. Who in your life needs to hear about the assurance that comes through Christ? Ask God to open doors and give you boldness.

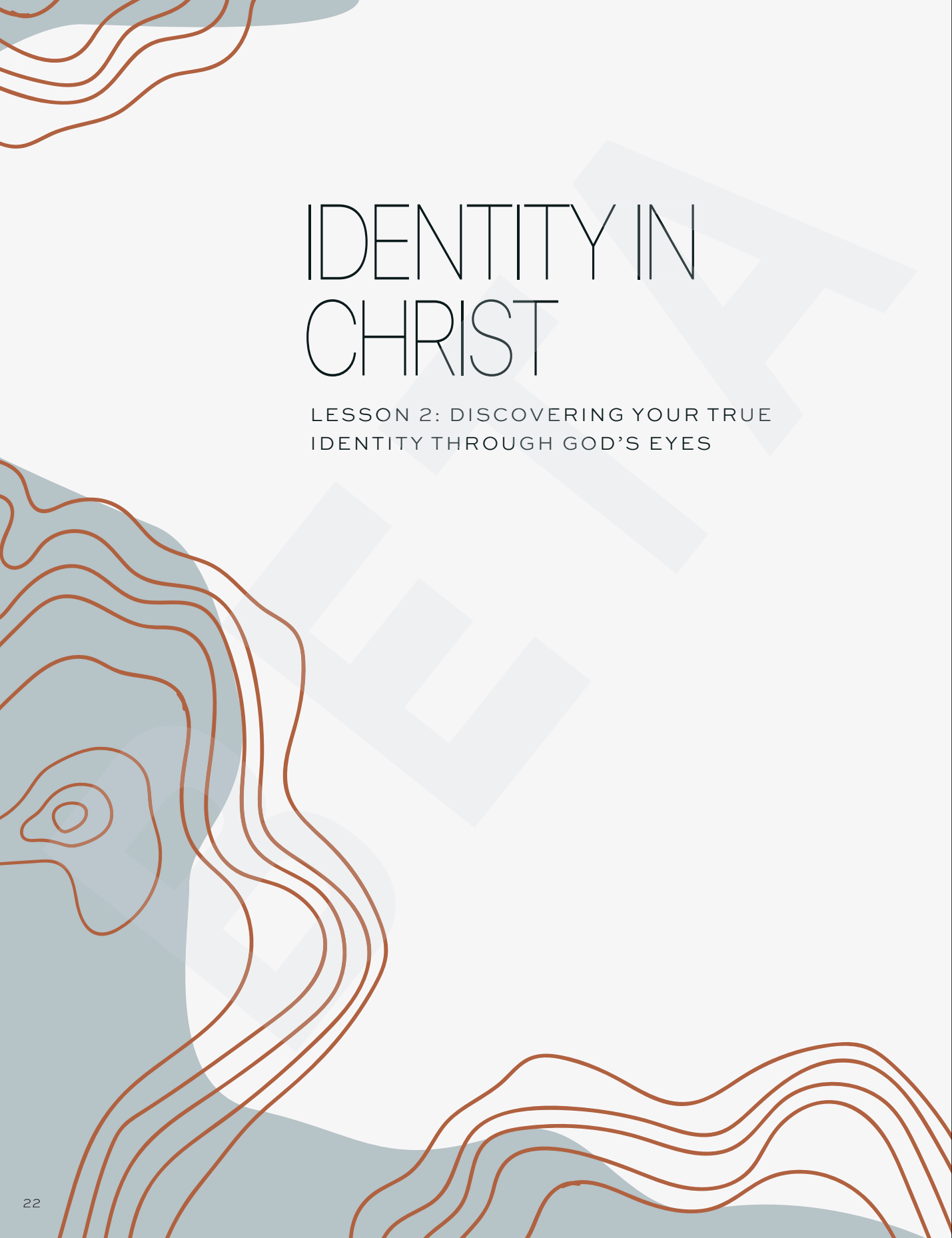
» **WORSHIP** – Use music, Scripture reading, or silent reflection to worship God for His grace and faithfulness. Let your heart rest in the truth that your salvation is His work, not yours.

» **MEMORIZE** – 1 John 5:11–13 (ESV)



READ ARTICLE “FAITH AND THE GIFT OF ASSURANCE” IN THE APPENDIX, ON PAGE 144.



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IDENTITY IN CHRIST

LESSON 2: DISCOVERING YOUR TRUE
IDENTITY THROUGH GOD'S EYES

»» LAUNCH

When someone asks you to introduce yourself, how do you usually respond?

Your answer often reveals more than just surface-level facts—it reflects how you see yourself, how you want to be seen by others, and even how you relate to God. We tend to define ourselves by our roles (“I’m a VP of Marketing”), our affiliations (“I went to Ohio State”), or by traits like ethnicity, social status, or accomplishments.

These identifiers shape our sense of identity. But most of them are either earned through personal effort (achievements) or assigned by others (popularity or honor)—and both are shaky foundations. At some point, they will fail us. In truth, we may be living with a case of mistaken identity.

EXPLORE

JOHN 1:12-14 (NLT)

12 "But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God. 13 They are reborn—not with a physical birth resulting from human passion or plan, but a birth that comes from God. 14 So the Word became human and made his home among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness. And we have seen his glory, the glory of the Father's one and only Son (Jesus)."

ROM 8:14-17 (ESV)

14 "For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. 15 For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" 16 The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him."

EPH 2:8-10 (NLT)

8 "God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. 9 Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it. 10 For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago."

BIBLICAL CONTEXT

A.W. Tozer famously said, "What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us." In other words, our view of God profoundly shapes our understanding of ourselves. The challenge is that all of us carry distorted views—both of God and of who we are. Influences from the world around us, the lies of the enemy, and our own sinful nature act like a riptide, pulling us away from an authentic and life-giving relationship with God and with ourselves. But the Bible offers us a different narrative. Our identity is not rooted in our achievements, possessions, or group affiliations—it is found in Christ. In Him, we discover who we truly are and were always meant to be.

LET'S CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING SCRIPTURES:

- READ JOHN 1:12-14 (NLT)
- READ ROMANS 8:14-17 (ESV)
- READ EPH 2:8-10 (NLT)
- READ 1 PET 2:9-10 (NLT)
- READ 2 COR 5:16-20 (NLT)

DISCUSS TOGETHER

1. What do these passages reveal about who God is and what He's done for us? How do they deepen your understanding of who He is?
2. According to these Scriptures, who are we in light of what Christ has done? What does it mean to be a new creation? an Ambassador?
3. Many of these verses describe a clear "before and after." What contrasts do you see? How do they reflect the transformation we experience in Christ?

4. What do these passages say about God's purpose for your life?
5. These verses mention roles like child of God, ambassador, masterpiece, and royal priest. What do these roles mean to you personally? Which one feels most meaningful to you right now?

GOD IS FULL OF UNFAILING LOVE, GRACE, AND FAITHFULNESS. He sent Jesus, God in human form, to live among us and reveal His glory. Out of His deep love, God offers us new life through Christ, not because of anything we have done, but as a gift of His grace.

THROUGH FAITH IN JESUS, WE ARE REBORN AND ADOPTED INTO GOD'S FAMILY. We are no longer defined by fear, failure, or our past. Instead, we are called children of God, chosen, loved, and treasured. We are heirs with Christ, with all the rights and privileges of belonging

GOD'S PURPOSE FOR OUR LIVES FLOWS FROM OUR IDENTITY. As His people, we are royal priests, His ambassadors, sent to reflect His light, show His mercy, and invite others back to Him. Our lives now point to the One who rescued and remade us.

BEING IN CHRIST TRANSFORMS WHO WE ARE. We are God's masterpiece, made new to reflect His goodness. We are no longer living for ourselves but are part of something much bigger, His plan to reconcile and restore the world.

1 PET 2:9-10 (NLT)

9 "But you are not like that, for you are a chosen people. You are royal priests, a holy nation, God's very own possession. As a result, you can show others the goodness of God, for he called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light. 10 "Once you had no identity as a people; now you are God's people. Once you received no mercy; now you have received God's mercy."

READ 2 COR 5:16-20 (NLT)

16 "So we have stopped evaluating others from a human point of view. At one time we thought of Christ merely from a human point of view. How differently we know him now! 17 This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun! 18 And all of this is a gift from God, who brought us back to himself through Christ. And God has given us this task of reconciling people to him. 19 For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, no longer counting people's sins against them. And he gave us this wonderful message of reconciliation. 20 So we are Christ's ambassadors; God is making his appeal through us. We speak for Christ when we plead, "Come back to God!"

PUTTING THE PIECES TOGETHER

It's natural to want to be successful. Accomplishing things feels good and gives us a sense of worth.

For example, if we're athletes, we might tie our identity to our performance. But what happens when we're no longer able to compete at that level? Do others see us as less valuable? Do we start to see ourselves that way? Does God?

The tragedy of the human story is that we've detached our identities from God and now, we spend our lives trying to define and justify ourselves apart from Him. Whether it's through our intelligence, income, popularity, or cultural background, these sources of identity are insufficient and shaky because they can all fail.

Jesus warns us not to store up treasures on earth, where moths and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. He's not just talking

about money or material possessions. He's calling us to reorient our lives and our sense of self around God, who is eternal and unfailing.

Despite what the world says, we don't define ourselves. God does. And the passages we just read show that, by His grace and initiative, we are now His children. We belong in His loving family with all the rights and privileges of His royal household.

From this deep, secure place of love and belonging, God invites us into His greater purpose. Not just to be made new but to join Him in making all things new. We are not just recipients of grace but participants in His redemptive plan.

BIG IDEA

OUR TRUE IDENTITY IS NOT FOUND IN WHAT WE ACHIEVE, POSSESS, OR HOW OTHERS SEE US, BUT IN WHO GOD SAYS WE ARE—HIS BELOVED CHILDREN, SAVED BY GRACE, MADE NEW IN CHRIST, AND INVITED INTO HIS REDEMPITIVE PURPOSE.

MEMORY VERSE

14 "For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. 15 For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" 16 The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him."

ROM 8:14-17 (ESV)

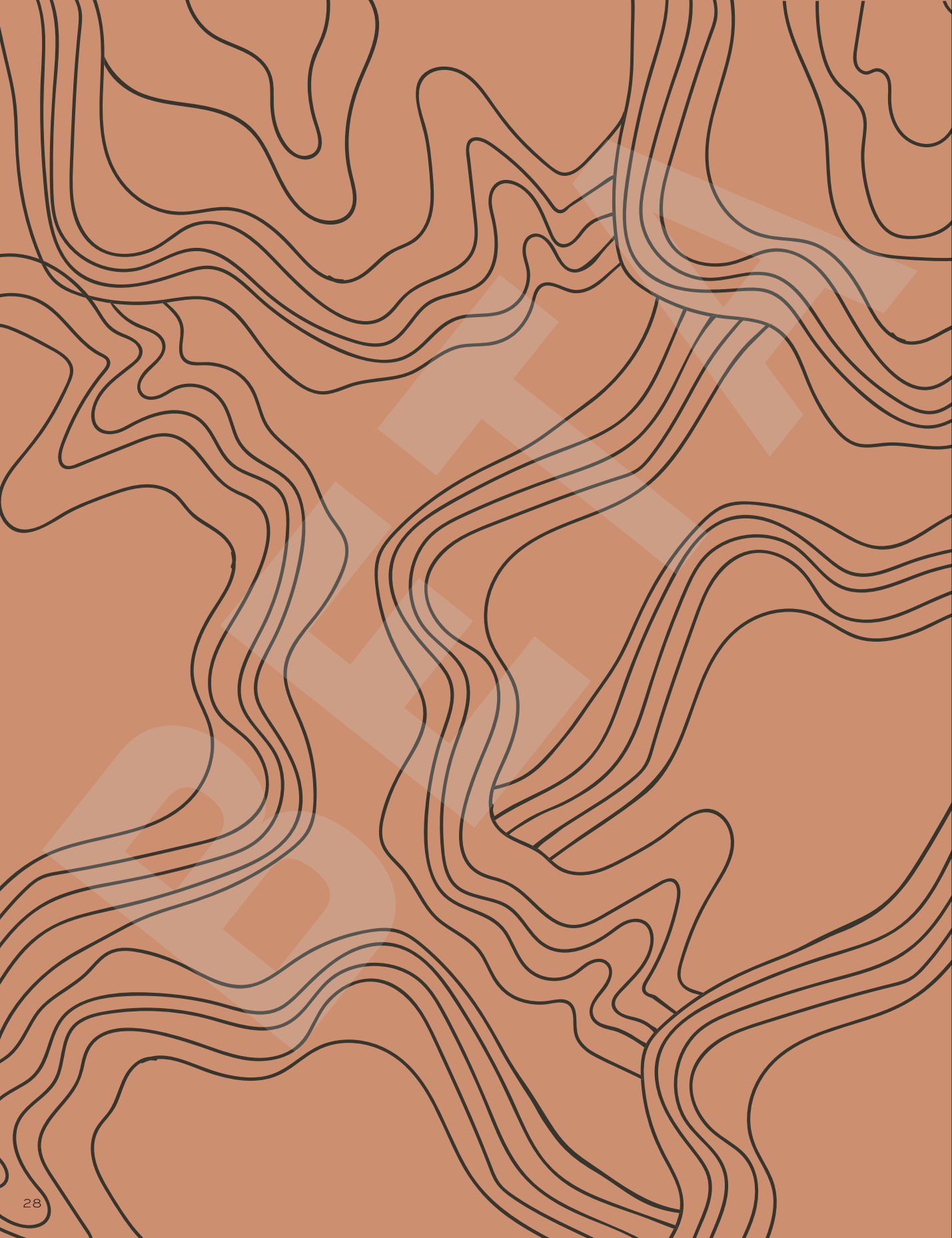
RESPOND

APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

1. When you think about being God's beloved child, what emotions surface? Do you find it easy or difficult to receive that truth?
2. How does knowing you are chosen, renewed, and sent impact how you live?
3. How might knowing you are a child of God affect how you view: Accomplishments? Popularity (or how others see you)? Personal failures? The failures of others? Injustice? The Church?
4. Are there areas in your life where you're striving to prove your worth or identity? What would it look like to rest in what Christ has already done for you?
5. How does knowing you are chosen, loved, and sent by God impact how you interact with others—especially those who don't know Him yet?

SUGGESTED PRAYER

"Abba, thank You for loving me and calling me Your child. Thank You for saving me by grace and giving me a new identity through Jesus. I confess that I often look to things like my achievements, how others see me, or even my failures to define who I am. But those things are temporary and unreliable. Remind me today that my worth is found in You alone. Help me live from the security of being Yours—chosen, loved, and made new. Fill me with Your Spirit and guide me to live out my purpose as Your ambassador, reflecting Your goodness and inviting others to know You. Amen."



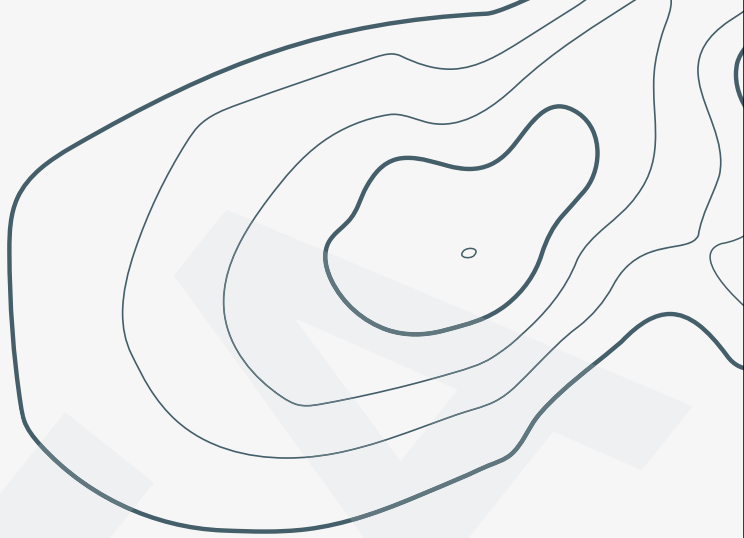


PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

Part of how the Holy Spirit transforms us is through regular practices that help move what's in our head into our hearts and lives.

This week, try to incorporate a few of the following practices into your schedule. Next time you meet, take time to share about your experiences. Suggested Practices:

- » **MEDITATE ON SCRIPTURE** — Many passages in Scripture reveal different aspects of our wonderful new identity in Christ. Below are a few to consider. Take a moment to read one, thank God for His work in making this true in your life, and ask by faith how you can live out this truth today.
 - Titus 3:5, 1 Corinthians 6:11, Ephesians 5:8-10, Colossians 1:21, Romans 8:1, Romans 8:9, Ephesians 1:4, Ephesians 6:10, Hebrews 12:5-9
- » **SABBATH** — The practice of the Sabbath is about resting and enjoying your relationship with God, often in community. This might look like going on a retreat or setting aside a full day to pray and journal in nature. A day of rest reminds us that life isn't all on our shoulders and that our identity and security don't come from our productivity. Instead, it creates space for us to live deeply connected to God in love.
- » **PRAYER** — Practice Spiritual Breathing each day this week. You can do it anytime throughout the day since it only takes a few moments. As you exhale, confess any false identities that cause you to relate to God, yourself, or others in unhealthy ways. As you inhale, ask the Holy Spirit to empower you to live out your true identity as a child of God—filled with love, peace, patience, and kindness.
- » **JOURNAL** — Write your own Psalm. Psalm 136 recounts Israel's journey and celebrates God's unfailing love. Each event mentioned marks a significant moment when God revealed Himself to the Israelites. What would it look like for you to write your own Psalm, remembering the important times when God touched your life and shaped who you are becoming?
- » **MUSICAL WORSHIP** — Listen to some of your favorite worship songs that celebrate who Christ is and who we are in Him. As you listen, reflect on the lyrics and ask the Lord to deepen your understanding and experience of these truths in your life.
- » **MEMORIZE** — Romans 8:14-17 (ESV)

A stylized topographic map graphic in the upper right corner, featuring concentric, irregular lines that suggest a mountain range or a specific geographical feature. The lines are thin and dark, set against a light background.

EXPERIENCING GOD'S LOVE AND FORGIVENESS

LESSON 3: LOVED BEYOND MEASURE,
FORGIVEN FOREVER



»» LAUNCH

You've been walking with Jesus for some time now—maybe just a few months, or perhaps for many years.

You read the Bible, pray, memorize Scripture, attend church, and serve others. But something still feels missing. This doesn't seem like the "abundant life" you heard about when you first began the journey. Do any of these statements resonate with you?

- » When I mess up, I feel like I've disappointed God.
- » God couldn't possibly love someone like me.
- » I keep falling into the same sin—I'm not sure God will keep forgiving me.
- » I confess my sin, but I still feel guilty.
- » Sometimes being a Christian feels more like a burden. No matter how hard I try, I can't seem to get it right.
- » I know God has forgiven me, but I still carry the weight of guilt.

EPH 2:1-6 (NLT)

1"Once you were dead because of your disobedience and your many sins. 2 You used to live in sin, just like the rest of the world, obeying the devil—the commander of the powers in the unseen world. He is the spirit at work in the hearts of those who refuse to obey God. 3 All of us used to live that way, following the passionate desires and inclinations of our sinful nature. By our very nature we were subject to God's anger, just like everyone else. 4 But God is so rich in mercy, and he loved us so much, 5 that even though we were dead because of our sins, He gave us life when He raised Christ from the dead. (It is only by God's grace that you have been saved!) 6 For He raised us from the dead along with Christ and seated us with Him in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ Jesus. "

ROM 3:10-12 (NLT)

10"As the Scriptures say, "No one is righteous—not even one. 11.No one is truly wise; no one is seeking God. 12All have turned away; all have become useless. No one does good, not a single one."

ISA 53:6 (NLT)

6"All of us, like sheep, have strayed away. We have left God's paths to follow our own.Yet the Lord laid on him the sins of us all."

ROM 3:23 (NIV)

23"for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,"

EXPLORE

Author and Pastor Timothy Keller writes, "We are more **sinful and flawed** in ourselves than we ever dared believe, yet we are **more loved and accepted** in Jesus Christ than we ever dared hope." In this study, we will explore how we can experience the joy of God's complete forgiveness and unconditional love every moment of our lives.

When we think about God's love and forgiveness, there are two ditches we can fall into.

- **Ditch#1:** Ignoring my sin
- **Ditch #2:** Ignoring God's grace (love)

 Which ditch do you find yourself falling into most often?

No matter which ditch you find yourself in, Scripture offers a way out.

READ EPH 2:1-6 (NLT)

1. What do verses 1–3 reveal about our condition before experiencing God's love and forgiveness? What word or phrase describes how we were before Christ?
2. How does this contrast with how God sees us now in Christ (verses 4–6)? What word or phrases indicate the extent of our forgiveness? See also Hebrews 10:10-18
3. What does it feel like to be subject to someone's anger?
4. What does it feel like to be loved and accepted?

We ALL have sinned. Each one of us desires to be in control of our own lives.

READ THE FOLLOWING SCRIPTURES:

- ROMANS 3:10-12 (NLT)
- ISAIAH 53:6 (NLT)
- ROMANS 3:23 (NIV)

 What do these passages reveal about our condition?

The good news is that we don't have to stay there! When we were dead in our sins, we were powerless against the desires of our flesh. But thanks be to God, we have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness (see Romans 6:15-18).

SO, WHEN I SIN, WHAT SHOULD I DO?

Let's look at a few promises from the Bible.

- 1 JOHN 1:9 (NIV)
- ROMANS 5:8 (NIV)
- PHILIPPIANS 2:13 (NIV)

🔍 What does God's Word instruct us to do?

🔍 What promises are given?

Here is how God's word guides us when we sin:

- Agree with God that you have sinned (1 John 1:9)
- Thank God that He already has forgiven you (Romans 5:8)
- Repent by turning toward God and away from sin, trusting Him to transform your heart and actions (Philippians 2:13).
- Make restitution: Is there someone you've sinned against whom you need to ask for forgiveness?
- Choose to forgive someone who has wronged you.

A central theme throughout the Bible is that God has made a way for our sins to be forgiven and our relationship with Him restored. He reveals Himself as the One who forgives our sins and remembers them no more (see Isaiah 43:25; Jeremiah 31:34).

1 JOHN 1:9 (NIV)

9 "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."

ROM 5:8 (NIV)

8 "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

PHIL 2:13 (NIV)

13 "for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose."

SINCE I'VE ALREADY BEEN FORGIVEN, ARE THERE STILL CONSEQUENCES FOR MY SINS?

Yes, while God's forgiveness through Jesus removes the eternal penalty of sin, it doesn't always remove the earthly consequences. Our choices still carry real impact—in our relationships, bodies, minds, and circumstances. For example, broken trust may take time to rebuild, or harmful habits may carry lasting effects.

God's forgiveness means we're no longer under condemnation (Romans 8:1), but His discipline as a loving Father may still be part of our growth (Hebrews 12:5–11). His grace not only forgives us but also walks with us through the healing and restoration process.

EPH 2:4-6 (NLT)

4“But God is so rich in mercy, and he loved us so much, 5 that even though we were dead because of our sins, He gave us life when He raised Christ from the dead. (It is only by God's grace that you have been saved!) 6 For He raised us from the dead along with Christ and seated us with Him in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ Jesus.”

BUT WHAT IF I KEEP REPEATING THE SAME SIN? WHY WOULD GOD STILL FORGIVE ME?

Let's re-read Ephesians 2:4-6 (NLT)

🔍 How did God prove His love for us?

Even if we struggle with the same sin repeatedly, Ephesians 2:4–6 reminds us that God's love, mercy, and grace are not based on our performance, but on His character and what Christ has done for us.

DISCUSS TOGETHER

1. In what ways has your life changed now that you've been set free from the “sin you once lived in”?
2. How does Ephesians 2 help you personally experience God's love and forgiveness—not just as a concept, but as a present reality?

PUTTING THE PIECES TOGETHER

Oftentimes, we may believe we can earn God’s love and forgiveness through good works—by giving to the poor, attending church, or being a good neighbor.

Culture often reinforces the idea that we’re already “good” and don’t need God—especially if following Him means surrendering control or changing how we live. But the truth of Scripture counters this message: “There is no one righteous, not even one” (Romans 3:10). We are not good on our own; we need a perfect sacrifice—someone completely righteous—to pay the penalty for our sins. Jesus Christ is that perfect sacrifice, and He

invites us to let Him wash us clean.

God’s mercy is abundant, and His love is unwavering, even in your weakness. He brought you from death to life not because you were perfect, but because He is gracious. Your salvation is secure in grace, not in your ability to never mess up. Your position is with Christ, not based on your repeated failures but on your union with Him.

BIG IDEA

WE EXPERIENCE GOD’S LOVE AND
FORGIVENESS NOT BY EARNING IT, BUT
BY RECEIVING IT THROUGH FAITH IN
JESUS CHRIST.

RESPOND

APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

1. Is there any unconfessed sin in your life? Or Is there a sin or guilt you keep holding onto—even though you've confessed it to God? What would it look like to fully receive His forgiveness?
 - Pray together and confess these to God.
 - Pray a prayer of thanksgiving. You can pray something like this:
 - “Father, thank you that You have removed my sins as far from me as the east is from the west.” Thank You that there is now no condemnation because I am in Christ Jesus and I have been set free in Jesus Christ from the law of sin and death.” Psalm 103:12 and Romans 8:1
2. Is there a lie you've believed about God's love or forgiveness (e.g., “God is disappointed in me,” or “I have to earn His approval”)? What truth from Scripture counters that lie?
3. What habits can you build into your life to remind yourself of your secure identity in Christ and the forgiveness you've received?
4. Who in your life needs to hear about the kind of love and grace you've received from Jesus? How can you begin a conversation with them?

SUGGESTED PRAYER

“Father, if You kept a record of sins, who could stand? Thank You that You don't treat me as my sins deserve. As far as the east is from the west, so far have You removed my transgressions from me. Thank You for the great love You lavish on me—that I should be called Your child. And that is what I am. Help me to live in the freedom of these truths, walking moment by moment in the power of the Holy Spirit, who is in me and with me. Amen.”

MEMORY VERSE

7 "In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace 8 that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and understanding"

EPHESIANS 1:7-8 (ESV)



PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

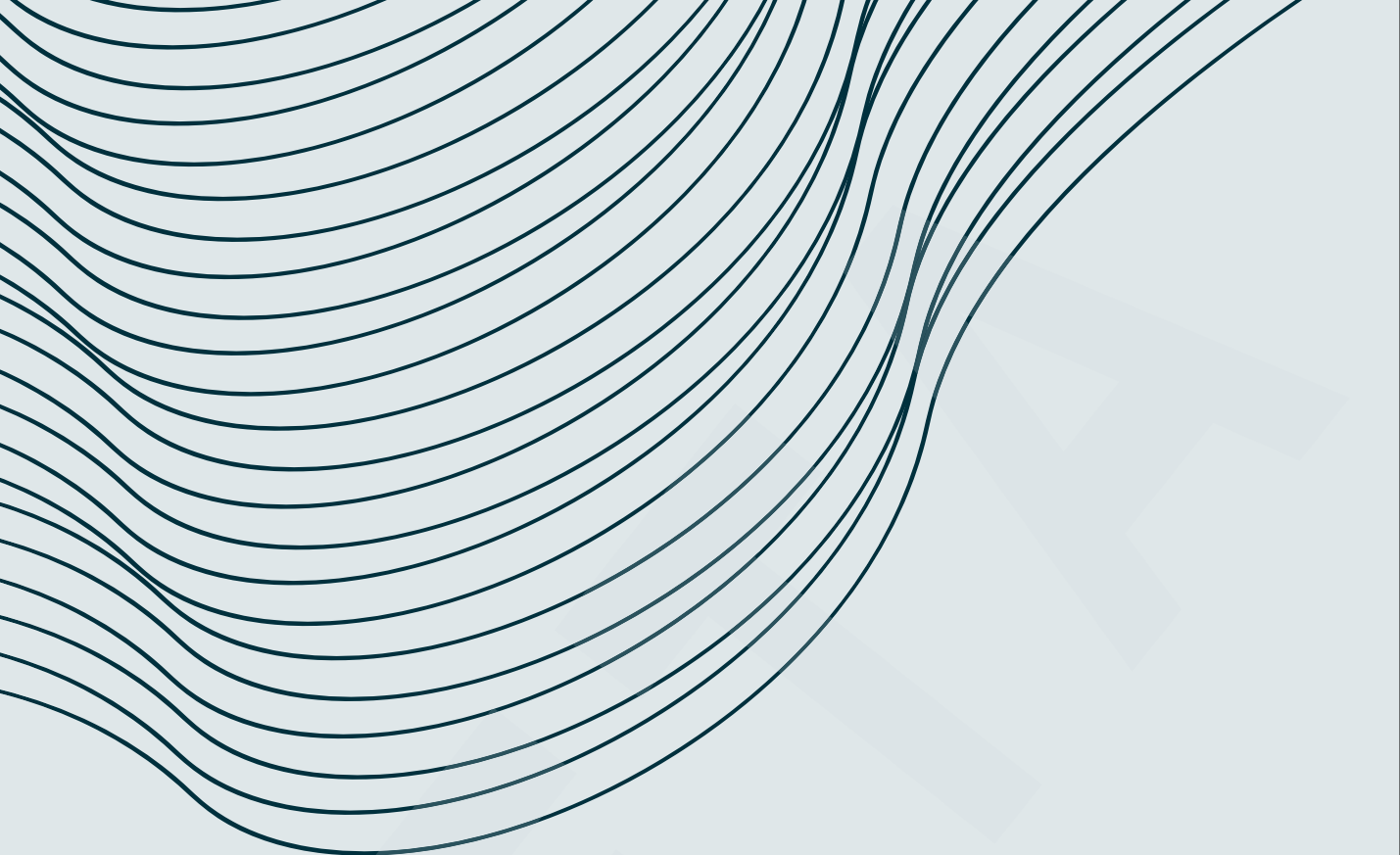
Part of how the Holy Spirit transforms us is through regular practices that help move what's in our head into our hearts and lives.

This week, try to incorporate a few of the following practices into your schedule. Next time you meet, take time to share about your experiences. Suggested Practices:

- » **Meditate on Scripture** — Meditate on key verses - such as Psalm 103:11,12; John 3:16, Romans 8:38-39- that declare your identity in Christ and God's steadfast love and mercy. Read slowly, reflect, and listen for what God wants to say to you personally.
- » **Confession and Repentance** — Spend time daily or weekly examining your heart before God. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal any unconfessed sin. Write it down, confess it honestly to God, and receive His forgiveness.
- » **Prayer** — Use a short phrase like "Inhale: I am forgiven... Exhale: by Your grace." Pray this slowly throughout the day.
- » **Gratitude Journaling** — Each day, write down 3–5 specific things you're thankful for, especially focusing on God's mercy, love, and forgiveness in your life. Gratitude realigns our heart with God's goodness and helps break cycles of guilt and shame.
- » **Practice Forgiveness** — Ask God if there's someone you need to forgive or seek forgiveness from. Take a step toward reconciliation or release that person in prayer.
- » **Musical Worship** — Create a playlist of songs about God's mercy, grace, and forgiveness (e.g., "His Mercy Is More," "You Say," "Jesus Paid It All"). Listen and worship intentionally.
- » **Memorize** — Ephesians 1:7-8 (ESV)



READ ARTICLE "THE WEIGHT OF UNFORGIVENESS, THE GIFT OF RELEASE" IN THE APPENDIX, ON PAGE 146.



ABIDING IN CHRIST

LESSON 4: DWELLING SECURE IN JOY

»» LAUNCH

*In his book *Orthodoxy*, G.K. Chesterton wrote, "Joy is the gigantic secret of the Christian." Your answer often reveals more than just surface-level facts—However, many followers of Jesus do not experience the joy Christ intended for them, and wonder what they're doing wrong. In the following study, we'll learn what it means to abide in Christ and experience His joy overflowing in us!*

- » Share with each other about a time when you experienced great joy. What was that like?
- » Many people search for joy but find it fleeting. Why do you think that is?

EXPLORE

READ: JOHN 15:1-11 (NLT)

1 “I am the true grapevine, and my Father is the gardener. 2 He cuts off every branch of mine that doesn’t produce fruit, and he prunes the branches that do bear fruit so they will produce even more. 3 You have already been pruned and purified by the message I have given you. 4 Remain in me, and I will remain in you. For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and you cannot be fruitful unless you remain in me.

5 “Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing. 6 Anyone who does not remain in me is thrown away like a useless branch and withers. Such branches are gathered into a pile to be burned. 7 But if you remain in me and my words remain in you, you may ask for anything you want, and it will be granted! 8 When you produce much fruit, you are my true disciples. This brings great glory to my Father.

9 “I have loved you even as the Father has loved me. Remain in my love. 10 When you obey my commandments, you remain in my love, just as I obey my Father’s commandments and remain in his love. 11 I have told you these things so that you will be filled with my joy. Yes, your joy will overflow!”

DISCUSS TOGETHER

1. According to this passage, what is the result of remaining (abiding) in Jesus? What are the consequences of not remaining in Him?
2. What does Jesus mean when He says, “I am the vine; you are the branches”? How does that shape how we think about our relationship with Him?
3. What role does the Father (the gardener) play in the life of the believer?
4. What else does Jesus call His disciples to remain in? How could that help them remain in Him?
5. How does remaining in Jesus lead to fruitfulness? What kind of fruit do you think Jesus is referring to?
6. Jesus promises overflowing joy to those who remain in Him. How have you experienced this joy, or what hinders you from it?

ABIDING

“Abiding” means “to remain.” Some Bible translations use the word abide, while others translate it as remain.

READ: JOHN 14:16-21 (NLT)

16 "And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, who will never leave you. 17 He is the Holy Spirit, who leads into all truth. The world cannot receive him, because it isn't looking for him and doesn't recognize him. But you know him, because he lives with you now and later will be in you. 18 No, I will not abandon you as orphans—I will come to you. 19 Soon the world will no longer see me, but you will see me. Since I live, you also will live. 20 When I am raised to life again, you will know that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. 21 Those who accept my commandments and obey them are the ones who love me. And because they love me, my Father will love them. And I will love them and reveal myself to each of them."

🔗 How does Jesus intend for us to be connected to

🔗 PUTTING THE PIECES TOGETHER

Human beings are made for joy. The latest neuroscience increasingly suggests that joy is the "fuel of the brain." Think of the lengths that we will go to have a "once in a lifetime" transcendent experience at a particular theme park, or to see a musical artist in concert?

BIG IDEA

BECAUSE JESUS LIVES IN US THROUGH HIS SPIRIT, WE CAN EXPERIENCE HIS JOY AND POWER WHEN WE ABIDE IN HIM.

Think of the lengths that we will go to have a “once in a lifetime” transcendent experience at a particular theme park, or to see a musical artist in concert? At the same time, joy can feel elusive, fragile, and fleeting. We weep for joy at “that” transcendent moment, only to return to normal life. We’re like a toddler delighting in blowing bubbles, only to find that the bubbles just keep popping over and over again.

Jesus however taught that we could find real joy that is both full and enduring. How? Once again, neuroscience gives us a clue. Dr. Allan Schore writes, “Joy is what you experience when you can see in another person’s face and eyes that they are happy to be with you.” Jesus Christ taught that our joy could be full, and could remain, as we remain vitally connected to Him. Why is this? Because God is a community of joy. What do we mean by

that? Christians worship a triune God. One God in three persons - God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. One God in three persons mutually delighting in themselves in a cosmic dance of love. And as we’re connected to Jesus, we’re invited into that dance, through His Holy Spirit that dwells within every person who receives Christ!

Abiding in Christ means simply learning to live out what’s already true of us, as those who have placed their faith in Him. Another way of saying it is, “Make your home in me just as I do in you.” (John 15, The Message) It means to “remain” in Him, learning to rest secure in His love, looking upon Him as He looks upon us in love. And as we follow Christ’s command to “love one another,” we practice giving and receiving love, which in turn helps us to abide in Christ!

RESPOND

Abiding in Christ means staying closely connected to Jesus in a continual, life-giving relationship—like a branch depends on the vine for nourishment and growth. It's not about striving in our own strength, but daily relying on His presence, His Word, and His love. As we remain in Him through trust, obedience, and connection, He produces spiritual fruit in us—like love, joy, peace, and a life that reflects Him. Abiding is both a posture of dependence and a pathway to joy, growth, and fruitfulness.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

1. What are some signs in your life that you are abiding (remaining) in Christ?
2. Where do you try to find life and joy apart from Jesus?
3. What might Jesus want to lovingly “prune” from your life, so that you can experience closer connection to Him?
4. Jesus connects obedience with love. In what area is He calling you to respond in obedience right now?
5. What would it look like for you to live from a secure attachment to Jesus and His love this week?

SUGGESTED PRAYER

“Jesus, apart from you I can do nothing. I confess how I try to find joy and peace apart from you. Thank you for making your home in me through your Spirit. Through the Spirit’s power, renew my mind and heal my heart so that I learn to dwell secure in you and your love. Amen.”



PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

Part of how the Holy Spirit transforms us is through regular practices that help move what's in our head into our hearts and lives.

This week, try to incorporate a few of the following practices into your schedule. Next time you meet, take time to share about your experiences. Suggested Practices:

- » **MEDITATE ON SCRIPTURE** — Spend unhurried time reading and meditating on
 - John 15:5: “I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.”
 - As you linger over this verse, pay attention to what stirs in your heart. What is God inviting you to believe, surrender, or do in response?
- » **JOURNAL** — Reflect in your journal: What might it look like to “dwell securely” with Jesus in every part of your day? Where did abiding feel natural today? Where did it feel hard? What patterns or circumstances drew you away from Him?
- » **PRAYER** — Choose a short, meaningful prayer you can whisper throughout your day—especially when you notice you’re striving, anxious, or distracted. Some examples could be: “Jesus, keep me close to You,” “Lord, I return to Your love,” or “Abide in me, and I in You.”
- » **RHYTHMS OF ABIDING** — What practical rhythms help you remain in Jesus’ love? Consider starting your day with Scripture, pausing at midday for prayer, or ending with reflection. Pick one or two rhythms and share them with your discipler for encouragement and accountability.
- » **MEMORIZE** — John 15:5 (NIV)

 **READ ARTICLE “MAKING OUR HOME IN CHRIST” IN THE APPENDIX, ON PAGE 148.**

 MEMORY VERSE

5 “I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.”

JOHN 15:5 (NIV)



BE FILLED

LESSON 5: THE INDWELLING NATURE
AND POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT



» LAUNCH

“Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you.” (John 16:7, ESV).

These were some of Jesus’ final words before his arrest, mock trial, and crucifixion. Here, He makes the bold and audacious claim that it is actually better for Him to leave. Better?! What could have been better than actually being with Jesus? But according to Jesus, it was better because His ascension would usher in a new era of how God related to His people. Whereas in the past, God spoke to His people through the prophets and through the sacrificial system; (Hebrews 1:1) But now, “Christ will dwell in our hearts through faith.” (Ephesians 3:17). How? What does that even look like? That’s where this lesson is headed. Together, we will discover the indwelling nature and power of God the Holy Spirit. Who is He, and what is He like.

🔗 When life gets difficult, who or what do you tend to rely on?

EXPLORE

READ EPH 1:13-14 (ESV)

EPH 1:13-14 (ESV)

13.“In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, 14.who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.”

BIBLICAL CONTEXT

Ephesians 1 is all about identity. It answers the question, from God’s perspective: “Who am I?” A more pointed version might be, “Now that I’ve placed my faith in Him, what is true of me now that wasn’t true before?” This passage contends that one of the biggest new realities for the believer is the indwelling presence of God the Holy Spirit. We discover that the Holy Spirit is God’s greatest gift to all believers, providing both the assurance of our salvation (1 John 5) and the internal spiritual resources to live faithful, obedient lives (2 Peter 1:3).

DISCUSS TOGETHER

1. In verse 13, what word does Paul use to describe our relationship with the Holy Spirit?
2. When does this sealing with the Holy Spirit happen?
3. What does Paul say is required of us to receive this sealing?
4. What do you think it means to be “sealed with the Holy Spirit,” both practically and spiritually?

Paul reminds the church that new believers are “sealed” with the Holy Spirit. In first-century culture, kings often sealed letters during travel to communicate this message: “This word you are about to hear comes directly from the King. As such, it is true, certain, authentic, and binding.” In our passage, to be “sealed with the Holy Spirit” means we have the guarantee that God will never leave us nor forsake us. His abiding presence remains with us forever. This sealing happens at salvation—no effort or good works are needed. All that is required is hearing the word of truth and believing in Him.

CHOCOLATE MILK ILLUSTRATION:

STIRRED UP BY THE SPIRIT

Take two glasses and fill them both with plain milk. Then pour chocolate syrup into one of the glasses, but don’t stir it. This visual shows what happens when someone becomes a believer in Jesus. At the moment of salvation, the Holy Spirit comes to live inside of them—He indwells and seals them (Ephesians 1:13). Notice how both glasses still look very similar. It isn’t until the chocolate is stirred up that the color of the milk begins to change. It’s the same in the Christian life. We “stir up” the Holy Spirit’s work in our lives as we learn to depend on Him. Practical implications to follow in this lesson and the next.

As we explore what it means to be filled with the Holy Spirit, it's important to take time to know Him more personally and deeply. Read the following attributes of the Holy Spirit and discuss:

- 🔍 What did you learn about the Holy Spirit that you didn't know before?
- 🔍 Choose one attribute or role of the Holy Spirit that stands out to you.
- 🔍 In what ways could knowing this truth about the Holy Spirit make a difference in your everyday life?

GOD IS OMNIPOTENT: God the Holy Spirit has power over all things.

READ GEN 1:1-2 (ESV)

GOD IS OMNISCIENT: God the Holy Spirit knows all things.

READ 1COR 2:10 (ESV)

GOD IS TRIUNE: One God in three persons. The Holy Spirit is co-equal and fully divine, sharing the same nature and standing as God the Father and God the Son.

READ MATT 28:18-20 (ESV)

GOD IS PERSONAL: The Holy Spirit is not a force or energy. He experiences emotions.

READ EPH 4:30 (ESV)

Consider once more, John 16:7 from the beginning of the lesson:

READ JOHN 16:7 (ESV)

- 🔍 In what ways do you now think it is to our "advantage," that Jesus went away?

GENS 1:1-2 (ESV)

1^{"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. 2The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters."}

1COR 2:10 (ESV)

10^{"These things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God."}

MATT 28:18-20 (ESV)

18 ^{"And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."}

EPH 4:30 (ESV)

30^{"And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption."}

JOHN 16:7 (ESV)

7^{"Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you."}

PUTTING THE PIECES TOGETHER

We live in a world saturated with messages centered on autonomy and self-determined effort: “You can be anything you want,” “Pull yourself up by your bootstraps,” “Be the captain of your own ship, the master of your fate.”

These messages are woven into the fabric of the American dream. And while they may seem helpful in some sense, they also convey an anti-gospel message. The truth is, we can’t earn right standing with God. “None is righteous, no, not one” (Romans 3:10, ESV). That’s what makes the indwelling nature of God the Holy Spirit such good news. All that’s required to receive Him is “hearing the word of truth” and “believing in Him”—no striving, no proving, no trying to do better next time.

In fact, throughout the epistles, Paul emphasizes that God is far more concerned with us knowing who we are than simply getting right what we should do. That’s one of the key differences between religion and the gospel. Religion says, “Try harder.” The gospel of grace reorients us in our identity and calls us out of darkness, doubt, and shame, and back into a restored relationship with the Father. The indwelling Holy Spirit is tangible proof of God’s unmerited favor. He is given to us by grace, through faith.

KEY TRUTHS

God the Holy Spirit is the 3rd person of the trinity.

He indwells all believers at the moment of salvation.

We receive Him by faith.

God invites us to surrender and yield control of our lives over to Him.

Note: For further study, see the following passages — Ezekiel 36:26-27, Jeremiah 31:33, John 7:37-39, John 14: 16-17.

BIG IDEA

THE HOLY SPIRIT IS GOD'S GREATEST GIFT TO ALL BELIEVERS, PROVIDING BOTH THE ASSURANCE OF OUR SALVATION AND THE INTERNAL SPIRITUAL RESOURCES TO LIVE FAITHFUL, OBEDIENT LIVES.

RESPOND

APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

1. When you think about being "sealed" with the Holy Spirit, how does that impact your sense of security in your relationship with God?
2. What difference does it make in your daily life to know that the Holy Spirit is given by grace, not by striving?
3. How does knowing the Holy Spirit is a personal being (rather than a force) shape the way you relate to Him?
4. How could being aware of the Spirit's presence with you this week shape the way you handle challenges, temptations, or important decisions?
5. What is one practical step you could take this week to surrender control and walk in greater dependence on the Holy Spirit? How can I come alongside you in that?"

SUGGESTED PRAYER

"Lord, You are loving, good, and gracious. Thank You for sending the Holy Spirit to indwell my heart and guide my life each day. Help me this week to trust You more deeply, surrender my need for control, and walk in dependence on Your Spirit. Open my heart to Your leading, empower me to follow Your truth, and remind me of Your constant presence. In Jesus' name, Amen."



PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

Part of how the Holy Spirit transforms us is through regular practices that help move what's in our head into our hearts and lives.

This week, try to incorporate a few of the following practices into your schedule. Next time you meet, take time to share about your experiences. Suggested Practices:

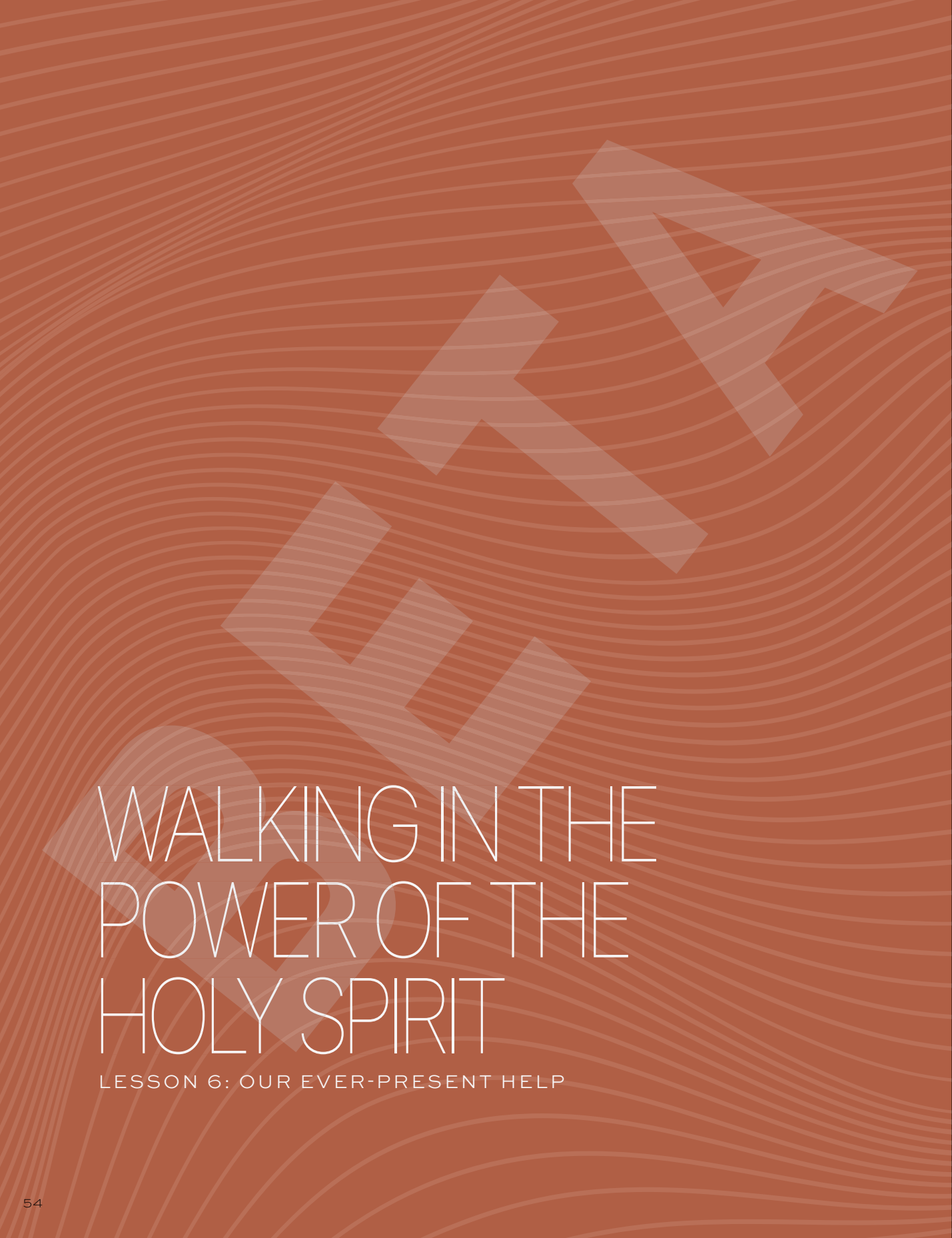
- » **DAILY QUIET TIME WITH SCRIPTURE AND PRAYER** — Set aside 10-15 minutes each day to read a passage about the Holy Spirit (e.g., John 14:15-17, Romans 8, Galatians 5:16-25) and pray, inviting the Spirit to guide your understanding and empower your day.
- » **PRACTICE SURRENDER MOMENTS** — Throughout the day, intentionally pause when facing decisions, frustrations, or temptations, and consciously invite the Holy Spirit to lead your thoughts, emotions, and actions.
- » **JOURNAL** — Write down moments when you sense the Holy Spirit's prompting, peace, or conviction. Reflect on how He is working in your heart and where you can cooperate more fully.
- » **MEDITATE ON SCRIPTURE** — Read and pray slowly through Psalm 23, pausing after each phrase. Invite God to meet you in the passage. Reflect on His character and care. Ask Him to reveal areas of internal struggle, fear, or anxiety. Surrender those areas to Him, and thank Him that He is your Good Shepherd
- » **WORSHIP** — Spend 30 minutes one evening stargazing. Reflect on God's omnipotence—His unmatched and unrivaled power. Let the vastness of time and space, along with God's immense sovereign authority, reshape how you see your current struggles.
- » **MEMORIZE** — Ephesians 1:13-14 (ESV)



MEMORY VERSE

13“In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, 14.who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.”

EPHESIANS 1:13-14 (ESV)



WALKING IN THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

LESSON 6: OUR EVER-PRESENT HELP

»» LAUNCH

"I need help." Why is it that these three simple words are often the most difficult to utter out loud? Perhaps it's because saying them requires immense humility, self-awareness, and courage. To ask for help is to admit weakness and need. Check your ego at the door. Many of us would much prefer to be self-sufficient and self-reliant—to not need anybody for anything.

But the truth is, we're all dependent beings. God designed us to rely on Him—not just for salvation but for daily life and transformation. (John 10:10) How does that actually work in practice?

In the previous lesson, we discussed the indwelling presence and character of God the Holy Spirit. By the end of it, you might have asked, "Now what? What does this look like in real life?" That's what this lesson is all about: learning how to "walk by," be "led by," and "keep in step with" the Spirit.

- 🔗 How easy or difficult is it for you to ask for help? Why do you think that is?

EXPLORE

GAL 5:16-26 (ESV)

16 "But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. 17 For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. 18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. 19 Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, 20 idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, 21 envy, 4 drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. 24 And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

25 If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. 26 Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another."

READ GAL 5:16-26 (ESV)

BIBLICAL CONTEXT

Paul wrote to the church in Galatia to combat false teaching. A group known as the "Judaizers" insisted that Christ's work on the cross was insufficient and that law-keeping was still required for salvation. Throughout this letter, Paul refutes this heresy, using a tone that is urgent and direct—because for him, the gospel itself was at stake. In our passage, Paul draws a vivid contrast between walking in the power of the Holy Spirit versus walking in the power of our flesh.

DISCUSS TOGETHER

1. Paul uses multiple metaphors to describe life in the Spirit. What does each one reveal about our relationship with Him?
2. What stands out to you about the list of "works of the flesh"?
3. Why do you think Paul uses the metaphor of fruit to describe spiritual growth? What does this suggest about the Spirit's role in forming Christlikeness?

Paul begins in verse 16 by using a key metaphor: "walk by the Spirit." Walking suggests a continuous, active, and relational journey. In verse 18, he shifts to the phrase "led by the Spirit," suggesting both direction and submission. And in verse 25, he uses another phrase, "keep in step with the Spirit," which emphasizes harmony and attentiveness to His pace. These phrases emphasize a posture of dependence, attentiveness, and willingness to follow the Spirit's lead. This is not passive. It requires intention, discernment, and moment-by-moment surrender.

Then, Paul contrasts the "works of the flesh" with the "fruit of the Spirit." The former is a list of destructive behaviors that characterize a life apart from God. The latter, by contrast, are the beautiful, relational qualities that the Holy Spirit produces in a believer who is surrendered to Him.

The metaphor of “fruit” is deeply significant. Just like physical fruit grows on trees, spiritual fruit grows in our lives—gradually, seasonally, and symmetrically—through the Holy Spirit’s work.

Finally, Paul exhorts us to “crucify the flesh.” This imagery is intense and intentional, conveying the idea of rejecting and putting to death anything that opposes God’s will in our lives.

- 🔍 What might it look like in everyday life to “crucify the flesh”? How do you see this connecting with what it means to walk by the Spirit?

To “crucify the flesh” (Galatians 5:24) means to reject sinful desires, thought patterns, and habits that disrupt our communion with God. That’s part of our Spirit-empowered partnership. But the emphasis is on dependence, not striving. The Holy Spirit leads, empowers, and cultivates lasting fruit in us.

READ 1 THESS 5:19 (NIV)

READ EPHESIANS 4:30 (NIV)

- 🔍 What do you think it means to quench or grieve the Holy Spirit?
- 🔍 In your experience, what might that look like in everyday life?

The Spirit-filled life is not just about resisting sin (though that’s important); it’s about saying yes to the Spirit’s leading. We quench the Spirit when we ignore, suppress, or dismiss His prompting. We grieve the Spirit when we harbor sin, especially in how we treat others—through bitterness, unforgiveness, and unrepentance.

1 THESS 5:19 (NIV)

19 "Do not quench the Spirit."

EPH 4:30 (NIV)

30 "And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption."

PUTTING THE PIECES TOGETHER

Galatians 5 offers a clear and practical invitation to live in partnership with the Holy Spirit.

Together, these commands highlight a beautiful tension: **God is fully responsible for our growth, and yet He calls us to actively partner with Him**—to walk, follow, listen, respond, and obey.

Paul’s metaphor of walking with the Spirit implies that the Spirit takes the lead. Our role is to follow. The call to “keep in step with the Spirit” encourages us to stay close, attentive, and responsive.

Similarly, being “filled with the Spirit” calls us to continually yield to God’s presence and power in every area of life.

We also learn that we must not “quench the Spirit” by resisting or ignoring His promptings, nor “grieve the Spirit” through unrepentant sin, bitterness, or neglect of love.

The Spirit-filled life is a dynamic, responsive, relational journey:

- **KEEPING IN STEP WITH THE SPIRIT** — we attentively follow His leading.
- **BEING FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT** — we stay connected to God’s presence and power.
- **NOT QUENCHING THE SPIRIT** — we don’t ignore or resist His voice.
- **NOT GRIEVING THE SPIRIT** — we reject sin and bitterness that disrupt relationship.

Spiritual fruit grows gradually (over time), seasonally (with varied intensity), and symmetrically (as a unified whole). Love leads to patience; joy fuels self-control; faithfulness and gentleness go hand in hand.

KEY TRUTHS

THE SPIRIT
FILLED LIFE
IS A LIFE
CHARACTERIZED
BY MOMENT-
BY-MOMENT
DEPENDENCE.

THE HOLY SPIRIT
EMPOWERS, LEADS,
AND CULTIVATES
GROWTH WITHIN
US.

THE FRUIT OF
THE SPIRIT IS
THE NATURAL
OUTCOME OF A
SURRENDERED
LIFE.

BIG IDEA

WALKING IN THE SPIRIT IS A MOMENT-BY-MOMENT JOURNEY OF SURRENDER, DEPENDENCE, AND OBEDIENCE — LETTING HIM LEAD AND SHAPE US TO BE MORE LIKE CHRIST.

RELYING ON THE HOLY SPIRIT

A SPIRITUAL BREATHING EXERCISE

Just as our bodies rely on breathing to live and function, our spiritual lives depend on continual reliance on the Holy Spirit. “Spiritual breathing” is a simple, faith-filled practice that helps us stay connected to God’s presence and power.

HOW IT WORKS

A moment-by-moment exercise of confessing sin and depending on God the Holy Spirit

EXHALE: Confess—agree with God about your sin and thank Him for His forgiveness (based on 1 John 1:9 and Hebrews 10:1-25). Confession involves repentance, which means a genuine change of attitude and action. As you exhale, imagine releasing control, worries, or burdens into God’s hands with the prayer, “I surrender to You.”

INHALE: Surrender control to Jesus - Invite the Holy Spirit to fill your heart and mind with the prayer, “Come, Holy Spirit.” Trust that He now directs and empowers you, following the command in Ephesians 5:18 and the promise in 1 John 5:14-15.

This rhythm helps you develop greater dependence on God and deeper awareness of His presence. Practice it daily. Let it become a regular part of how you walk with Him. By practicing this, we’re reminded that spiritual life is not about striving harder but about resting continually in the Spirit’s work within us.

RESPOND

APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

1. What spiritual season are you in right now—growth, pruning, dormancy, renewal?
2. Reflect on the past 3 months. How have you seen the fruit of the Spirit growing in your life? Are there specific areas where you sense the Spirit prompting change?
3. In what ways might you be resisting or ignoring the Holy Spirit's voice in your life?
4. Are there any areas where sin, bitterness, or broken relationships may be grieving the Spirit?
5. What's one step you can take to keep in step with the Spirit this week?

SUGGESTED PRAYER

"Dear Father, I need You. I confess that I've often directed my own life, and I ask Your forgiveness. Thank You that through Jesus' death, I am fully forgiven. I now invite Christ to take His rightful place on the throne of my life. Fill me with Your Holy Spirit, just as You promised. I surrender to You, and I trust You to guide and empower me. Thank You for Your presence and love. In Jesus' name, Amen."

** Adapted from "The Spirit Filled Life,"
Bill Bright*

MEMORY VERSE

16 "But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh."

GALATIANS 5:16 (ESV)



PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

Part of how the Holy Spirit transforms us is through regular practices that help move what's in our head into our hearts and lives.

This week, try to incorporate a few of the following practices into your schedule. Next time you meet, take time to share about your experiences. Suggested Practices:

- » **PRACTICE SPIRITUAL BREATHING** —This week, set a daily reminder to pause at least twice a day.
 - During these moments, practice the spiritual breathing exercise above. Share about your experience next week with your discipler or discipleship group.
- » **DAILY SCRIPTURE REFLECTION** —Read Galatians 5:16–26 every day this week. Ask God to highlight a fruit of the Spirit He wants to grow in you.
- » **LISTEN AND OBEY** —Set aside 5–10 minutes in prayer simply to listen. Ask, “Holy Spirit, how are you leading me today?” write down any impressions and scriptures that come to mind and seek to respond faithfully.
- » **MEMORIZE** — Galatians 5:16 (ESV)



PRAYER

LESSON 7: A DIVINE LIFELINE
THAT CONNECTS US TO GOD



» LAUNCH

God designed us for connection. He hardwired it into our DNA—first with Him, and then with others. Just like you might look forward to catching up with a close friend over coffee or getting lost in a deep conversation, God longs to connect with us through prayer.

But let's be honest—prayer can be difficult. We get easily distracted. We know we should pray but often feel guilty that we don't pray more. Sin can keep us stuck in shame and hiding. And unlike with people, we don't hear God speak back to us audibly.

Yet God, in His grace, knows our weak frame and meets us right where we are. The Lord's Prayer is a gracious accommodation from God to us. It models practical petitions while inviting us to embrace a humble heart posture. If you've ever wondered, "How should I pray?" "What should I pray about?" or "Why pray at all?" then this lesson is for you.

- » What do you think makes a great relationship? What are the key parts or components? How does healthy communication contribute to building a close connection?

 EXPLORE**READ: MATT 6:5-13 (ESV)**

5 "And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. 6 But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

7 And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. 8 Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him. 9 Pray then like this:

“Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,

10 Your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.

11 Give us this day our daily bread.

12 And forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.

13 And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from the evil one.”

BIBLICAL CONTEXT

“The Sermon on the Mount” is Jesus’ most famous sermon. It begins in Matthew 5 and covers a wide range of topics. The overarching theme is the Kingdom of God, which explains how God designed life to work, focused on loving God and loving neighbor. The Lord’s Prayer unpacks these themes and serves as a divinely inspired template for how we can connect and commune with God through prayer. In essence, it is Jesus saying, “When you pray, pray like this...”

DISCUSS TOGETHER

1. In verses 5-8, Jesus begins with a stern rebuke. Who is He addressing, and why is He rebuking them?
2. Notice how the Lord’s Prayer begins. What are the first two words? What do you think those words communicate?
3. The word “hallowed” isn’t commonly used today. What do you think it means? How can we show awe and reverence when we talk with God in prayer?
4. How many petitions are included in the Lord’s Prayer? Broadly speaking, into what categories might you group them?
5. Asking for our daily bread appears third on the list rather than first. Why do you think this placement is significant?
6. Why is confessing sin and asking for forgiveness an important part of prayer?
7. What do we learn about God’s character and heart from this passage on prayer?

PUTTING THE PIECES TOGETHER

Somewhat surprisingly, Jesus begins the “Lord’s Prayer” with a rebuke. “Don’t be like the hypocrites and Gentiles.” For them, prayer was theater, a public spectacle meant to impress others. It wasn’t a divine conversation with the God of the universe but a chance to show off. Jesus wasn’t impressed.

Instead, Jesus invites us to come to Him humbly and simply ask for what we need. No fancy words, no audience to impress. It begins with just two words: “Our Father.” Two words that pack a serious punch, words that set the tone and frame the entire prayer. Jesus wants us to know from the very start that God is your Heavenly Father. He loves you. He created you. He knows you. He longs to commune and connect with you. Would you come and talk to Him? Ask Him anything. Ask for what you need. He will freely give because He is your loving Father.

Next, Jesus invites us to ask God for heaven to come to earth, for God to sovereignly enact His purposes and His will here and now. Wait, God can do that? He’s that big and powerful? It’s amazing how, in just a few verses, Jesus reveals that God is paradoxically both deeply personal and all-powerful. He rules the universe by His word yet desires to talk with you like any good father talks to his children.

Only the God of the Bible is like this. For example, in Islam, God is powerful but not personal; in Hinduism, He is personal but not all-powerful; in Buddhism, He is neither. But the triune God is both. In the Lord’s Prayer, both these attributes take center stage. Isn’t that incredible? Doesn’t it make your heart swell with joy, gratitude, and praise? Doesn’t it fill your prayer life with bold, radical faith? It is a reminder that God can and God cares. God can do anything, He’s God. And we can ask Him for big, “only God could do this” kinds of things. Yet He cares deeply, so whatever answer comes is from a gracious and loving heart.

That is the God we serve. The Lord’s Prayer leads us to Him, our personal, powerful Heavenly Father who is always ready, always willing, and eager to commune with us through prayer.

Note: For further study, see the following passages — 2 Chronicles 7:14, Proverbs 15:8, Mark 1:35-39, Philippians 4:6

BIG IDEA

PRAYER IS OUR LIFELINE TO GOD—A SACRED CONNECTION WHERE OUR HEARTS MEET HIS, AND WE EXPERIENCE HIS PRESENCE, POWER, AND LOVE.

RESPOND

APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

1. How do you currently experience prayer in your daily life? What feels natural, and what feels challenging?
2. How can you incorporate the model of the Lord's Prayer into your own prayer life?
3. How might seeing God as both personal and powerful change the way you pray?
4. Who could you encourage to join you in praying regularly? How might that help you grow?
5. What small, practical step can you take this week to deepen your connection with God through prayer?

SUGGESTED PRAYER

"God, thank You that You are a good Father who longs to commune and connect with me. You alone are worthy of all worship and praise. I surrender my heart to You and ask that Your purposes and Your will be done in my life today. Help me to seek Your agenda above my own. Please meet my physical, emotional, and spiritual needs according to Your perfect provision. Forgive me for _____, and give me the grace to forgive others as You have forgiven me. Protect me from the schemes of the enemy and from the temptations within myself. Fill me with Your Spirit so I may walk in Your truth and love. I ask all of this in the matchless, loving, and powerful name of Jesus. Amen."



PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

Part of how the Holy Spirit transforms us is through regular practices that help move what's in our head into our hearts and lives.

This week, try to incorporate a few of the following practices into your schedule. Next time you meet, take time to share about your experiences. Suggested Practices:

- » **DAILY QUIET TIME** — Set aside 5–10 minutes each day to sit quietly and simply be with God. Focus on listening, not just talking.
- » **PRAYING THE LORD'S PRAYER** — Memorize and pray the Lord's Prayer slowly, reflecting on each phrase and what it reveals about God and your relationship with Him.
- » **PRAYER JOURNAL** — Write out your prayers, including praises, requests, confessions, and moments you sense God speaking to you.
- » **FORGIVENESS PRAYER** — Spend time asking God to reveal any bitterness or unforgiveness, and pray for grace to release it.
- » **PRAYER WALK** — Take a walk and pray for people and situations you encounter, practicing awareness of God's presence in your daily life.
- » **MEMORIZE** — Philippians 4:6 (ESV)

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MEMORY VERSE

“Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”

PHIL 4:6 (ESV)

GOD'S WORD

LESSON 8: THE SOURCE
OF LIFE AND HOPE

LESSON 8

» LAUNCH

As Jesus' teaching grew challenging, many who'd followed Him chose to turn away. He then asked the Twelve, "Will you also go away?" Peter's response captures the heart of true devotion:

"Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life."

— JOHN 6:66-68 (ESV)

God's words have something no one and nothing else can provide. Just as our bodies depend on food and water—and our souls long for security and purpose—God's Word alone truly sustains us. God's word is life-giving, meeting our daily needs and the deepest longings of our souls.

» What gives you life? What are the things that you really could not live without?

The Bible shows us that only God can give lasting life, satisfy our deepest longings, and provide a foundation of peace, hope, and joy.

EXPLORE

GOD'S LIFE-GIVING VOICE

- 🔍 How do you feel when you are isolated or cut off from communication with others?

Relationships and communication are basic human needs. We are social beings and have a longing to know and be known. The book of Hebrews begins with these epic words: “Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke...” God is not silent; He has a clear desire for communication with us. Words express our thoughts and experiences to others, and when God calls Himself “the Word” in the Gospel of John, He is saying that a desire to communicate is an essential part of His character. **He wants us to know and interact with Him**, and He uses His Word to do that.

God invites us to hear His voice and receive life through His words.

1 THESS 1:13 (NIV)

13 “And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as a human word, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is indeed at work in you who believe.”

READ WHAT PAUL WROTE IN 1 THESS 1:13 (NIV).

Our relationship with God begins as we receive – hear, understand, and believe – what the Scriptures say about how to have eternal life. 1 Peter 1:23 describes the Word as a seed that results in life: **“you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God.”** (ESV). Then as we continue to listen to the voice of God, He guides us in how to experience life. This is what Jesus meant when he said: **“Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.”** God’s Word will give us life and sustain us.

- 🔍 How does it make you feel to know God has spoken His Word so that you can have life?

A LIGHT TO GUIDE US

- 🔍 If you could ask God one question—about anything—what would it be?

When God gave Moses the first part of the Scripture, the Lord said to Moses, **“Come up to me on the mountain and stay here, and I will give you the tablets of stone with the law and commandments I have written for their instruction.”** Exodus 24:12 (NIV). As our Creator, God put together an owner’s manual to show us how to have life and to give us the answers to our questions.

In Psalms, one of the books of poetry in the Bible, David says: **“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.”** (Psalm 119:105 ESV). It is like a light that not only enables us to see clearly and find the right way but also gives warmth as it leads us out of the darkness. God’s word has the ability to encourage us and nurture our souls because it is God speaking personally to our hearts, providing exactly what we need to hear.

In Psalm 19, David described God’s Word as more desirable than gold and sweeter than honey.

🔗 How does Scripture speak to a need you have or satisfy a longing in your soul?

A SURE FOUNDATION IN AN UNSTABLE WORLD

We may be left wondering if there’s anything we can truly build our lives on with confidence. Experiences of broken promises, unfaithful relationships, and an uncertain future leave us longing for something constant—something we can rely on no matter what comes our way. Like an anchor in the middle of a storm, we need something that will hold us steady in an unpredictable world. The Bible is that unshakable, trustworthy foundation—completely true and dependable. Proverbs 30:5 gives us this assurance: **“Every word of God proves true. He is a shield to all who come to him for protection.”** (NLT).

Just as God met our need for salvation, He has given us His Word as a **“sure and steadfast anchor for our souls”** (Hebrews 6:19), enabling us to stand firm and walk forward with confidence in every circumstance.

GOD’S WORD HAS THE ABILITY TO
ENCOURAGE US AND NURTURE
OUR SOULS BECAUSE IT IS GOD
SPEAKING PERSONALLY TO OUR
HEARTS, PROVIDING EXACTLY WHAT
WE NEED TO HEAR.

We have seen in these passages how God's word is designed to give us life. Let's open our bibles and discuss them a little deeper.

THE NATURE AND POWER OF GOD'S WORD

READ 2 PETER 1:19-21

- 🔍 Why should we pay attention to God's Word? How does this speak to the authority and reliability of Scripture?

The Bible comes from God, not man.

READ PSALM 19:7-10

- 🔍 What terms are used to describe God's Word (e.g., law, testimony, precepts)?
- 🔍 What promises are attached to His Word in this passage?
- 🔍 Which of these meet a deep longing in your life or draw you closer to God?

The Bible revives, makes wise, rejoices the heart, enlightens, and endures.

READ 1 THESSALONIANS 2:13

- 🔍 What's the difference between receiving the Bible as the word of God versus the word of men?
- 🔍 Why does it matter that Jesus' words carry authority?

Receiving Scripture as God's Word transforms how it works in us.

OUR NEED FOR GOD'S WORD

READ 1 PETER 1:23 & ROMANS 10:17

- 🔍 How did God's Word play a role in you coming to faith?

His Word brings new life, faith, and assurance.

READ MATTHEW 7:24-29

- 🔍 What does this parable teach us about hearing and doing God's Word?
- 🔍 How is God's Word meant to be the firm foundation for our lives?

His Word is a firm foundation in all circumstances.

OUR RESPONSE TO GOD'S WORD

- 🔍 What response should we have when God speaks? Why does our attitude toward the Bible matter?
- 🔍 If the Bible truly comes from God, what must be true about it? How does that set it apart from any other book?

READ DEUTERONOMY 5:31-33

- 🔍 What is God's purpose in giving His people commands?

Notice that these instructions come in the context of God giving them a land to thrive in.

- 🔍 How does our relationship with God shape the way we respond to His commands?

His commands come from relationship, not restriction.

PUTTING THE PIECES TOGETHER

The Bible is God’s message both to all of us and to each of us personally. Through His Word, God reveals Himself so we can know Him and experience the life He designed for our good.

The Scriptures are not just instructional—they are deeply personal, inviting us into relationship and assuring us of His faithful love and care. His Word becomes an anchor for our souls, offering a trustworthy foundation of truth for every part of life and practical guidance for our everyday decisions. So next time someone asks what you can’t live without, consider this answer: “God’s Word.”

BIG IDEA

THE BIBLE IS GOD’S INCREDIBLE GIFT
TO US—REVEALING THAT HE ALONE
GIVES TRUE LIFE, MEETS OUR DEEPEST
NEEDS, SATISFIES OUR LONGINGS, AND
PROVIDES A FIRM FOUNDATION ON WHICH
WE CAN BUILD OUR LIVES.

RESPOND

APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

1. In a Jewish tradition, teachers would pour out honey for young children to taste, then explain that God's Word is even sweeter than honey. When have you experienced God's Word as "sweet"—bringing you comfort, joy, or clarity in a meaningful way?
2. "What's a question you're wrestling with or a challenge you're facing right now? As you think about the different images of God's Word, which one speaks to your situation most clearly? Why?"
3. How might you invite God's Word to shape your thoughts, attitudes, or actions this week?
4. When have you experienced what it feels like to build your life on a solid foundation versus a shaky one? What are some "sandy" foundations—habits, beliefs, or influences—that you might need to rethink or replace?
5. What does it mean to treasure God's Word in your heart? How might treasuring it help you to live in a way that pleases God?

SUGGESTED PRAYER

"Lord, thank You for the gift of Your Word. Help me treasure it as Your personal letter to me. Thank you that it is true, reliable, and a firm foundation for my life. Give me a deep hunger to hide Your words in my heart and discover how it can meet the deepest longings of my soul. Amen."



PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

Part of how the Holy Spirit transforms us is through regular practices that help move what's in our head into our hearts and lives.

This week, try to incorporate a few of the following practices into your schedule. Next time you meet, take time to share about your experiences. Suggested Practices:

- » **LISTEN TO GOD'S VOICE** — Allow God to speak to you through His word. Listen to an audio Bible using the YouVersion App, and try different translations until you find one that helps you hear God's voice clearly
- » **EXPRESS GRATITUDE** — Every time you open your Bible, pause to thank God for the gift of His Word. Don't take it for granted—it's a personal expression of His love, wisdom, and guidance for your life.
- » **PERSONAL BIBLE STUDY** — Approach the Bible with a growth mindset. There's always something new to discover about who God is. Choose a study tool or explore resources that help you go deeper—but remember, nothing replaces time spent directly in the Word.
- » **MEDITATE ON SCRIPTURE** — God told Joshua to meditate on His Word “day and night” (Joshua 1:8 NASB) for success and direction. Try reading Psalm 119—a rich passage on the value of God's Word. It's divided into 22 sections: read three verses each day this week. Note the benefits mentioned, then pick one to reflect on and carry with you throughout the day.
- » **MEMORIZE** — Psalm 119:105 (ESV)

The background features a dark teal color with a pattern of fine, wavy, horizontal lines. Overlaid on this are several large, semi-transparent geometric shapes in shades of blue and orange. A prominent orange rectangle is centered on the page, containing the text. Other blue and orange shapes are scattered around it, some resembling stylized letters or abstract forms.

MEMORY VERSE

“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.”

PSALM 119:105 (ESV)



GOD'S WORD AT WORK

LESSON 9: HOW SCRIPTURE SHAPES
AND TRANSFORMS OUR LIVES

»» LAUNCH

Jesus once told a parable about a merchant searching for fine pearls. When he found one of great value, he sold everything he had to buy it. He recognized its worth and was willing to give up all to obtain it.

This parable reflects the heart of John 3:16: **“For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.”** God saw us as a pearl of great price - worth pursuing at great cost. Our story, too, can echo that wholehearted pursuit of what truly matters.

» What value would you put on knowing God and what He thinks?

The apostle Paul prayed for the new believers in Colossae that they would **“be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to Him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.”** Colossians 1:9-10 (ESV).

We have the incredible privilege of knowing God and discovering His desires for us through His written Word. When we become a new creation in Christ, the Holy Spirit begins a powerful work of transforming us to reflect God’s character. This transformation unfolds as we engage with Scripture intentionally and consistently.

Let’s explore how God designed His Word to shape our lives—and how we can actively pursue His transformation.

2 TIM 3:16-17 (ESV)

16 "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work."

HEB 4:12 (NIV)

12 "For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart."

PSA 119:105 (NLT)

105 "Your word is a lamp to guide my feet and a light for my path."

ROM 12:2 (NIV)

2 "Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will."

JOHN 17:17 (NLT)

17 "Make them holy by your truth; teach them your word, which is truth."

EXPLORE

GOD DESIGNED THE BIBLE TO TRANSFORM OUR LIVES.

READ AND DISCUSS

2 TIMOTHY 3:16-17 (ESV)

HEBREWS 4:12 (NIV)

PSALM 119:105 (NLT)

ROMANS 12:2 (NIV)

JOHN 17:17 (NLT)

-  What do these passages say about the purpose and power of God's Word? How is His word described?
-  According to these verses, how does God speak and form us through Scripture?
-  Is there anything that surprises you in these passages?

SCRIPTURE IS GOD-BREATHED AND EQUIPS US FOR EVERY GOOD WORK.

In his letter to Timothy, Paul writes that Scripture is God-breathed. The Greek word he uses literally means "breathed out by God." This means that Scripture doesn't originate from human ideas or imagination; it comes directly from God. Though written by human hands, it was inspired and guided by the Holy Spirit. God's Word carries His authority, wisdom, and truth. It is living and powerful, actively working to shape and transform our lives. We can trust it completely.

-  What difference does it make that everything we read in the Bible is "God-breathed"? How does this affect what authority it has in our lives?

What should we do when God's Word challenges our own perspective or desires? One powerful way to answer that is by looking at how Jesus responded to Scripture. Let's explore His view in Matthew 4:1–11 (NIV).

READ MATTHEW 4:1–11 (NIV)

As you read Matthew 4:1–11, pay attention to how Jesus countered each temptation with God's Word.

- 🔍 How did Jesus respond to temptation, and what does His use of Scripture reveal about its power and authority?
- 🔍 What does this teach us about relying on Scripture in our own moments of struggle or decision?

RE-READ HEBREWS 4:12

- 🔍 Why must we confront the thoughts and intentions of our hearts if we truly want to be transformed?
- 🔍 When the Holy Spirit brings something to light through Scripture, how should we respond?

RE-READ 2 TIMOTHY 3:16–17.

“Teaching and reproof” address our beliefs—what we understand to be true or false. “Correction and training in righteousness” address our actions—what we do that's wrong or right.

- 🔍 How do these aspects of Scripture work together to bring about true transformation in our lives?
- 🔍 What might happen if we only allowed God's Word to shape some of our beliefs or actions, but not both?

MATT 4:1–11 (NIV)

1 "Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted[a] by the devil. 2 After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. 3 The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread." 4 Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" 5 Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. 6 "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written:

"He will command his angels concerning you,

and they will lift you up in their hands,

so that you will not strike your foot against a stone."

7 Jesus answered him, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'" 8 Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. 9 "All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me." 10 Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'" 11 Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him."

PUTTING THE PIECES TOGETHER

God is committed to transforming us into His image, and He has given us His Word as the primary instrument of that change.

Scripture reveals who God is, communicates His truth, and challenges our beliefs, thoughts, and actions. It teaches what is right, corrects what is wrong, and provides the guidance and instruction we need to reflect the character of our heavenly Father. This transformation happens as we engage intentionally and consistently with God's Word—allowing it not only to inform us, but to shape us. As we invite the Holy Spirit to work through Scripture, we open ourselves to the teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training it offers, leading to genuine spiritual growth.

STUDYING GOD'S WORD

Studying the Bible isn't just for scholars; it's for every believer who wants to grow in knowing and loving God. Through study, we uncover the context, meaning, and application of God's Word. God uses Scripture to shape our identity, guide our decisions, and conform us so that our hearts, attitudes and actions look more and more like Jesus.

When we study, we want to search for the answers to three main questions:

- What does it say?
- What does it mean?
- What response should I have?

Many Christians use what is called the inductive Bible study method that answers these questions with three steps: Observation, Interpretation, and Application. You can refer to the article for a fuller introduction to this method.

Let's try this together!

READ COLOSSIANS 3:12-14 (NLT)

12 "Since God chose you to be the holy people he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. 13 Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others. 14 Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds us all together in perfect harmony."

BIG IDEA

GOD'S WORD IS LIVING, POWERFUL,
AND COMPLETELY TRUSTWORTHY.
GOD'S WORD TRANSFORMS OUR LIVES
WHEN WE CHOOSE TO LISTEN AND
RESPOND TO IT.

OBSERVATION

WHAT DOES IT SAY?

Simply: How would you summarize what is written or retell in your own words?

Going deeper: Make observations about the details or points it makes.

For example, "God chose you," "clothe" is used twice, "love binds us all together" etc.

Make 10 observations about the text.

INTERPRETATION

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?:

Simply: What is the main message that God wants us to understand?

This can be stating a truth about God or something He promises, a life lesson, a correction or warning, an encouragement, or an instruction.

Also try to answer: Why does God say it? and How is it relevant to our lives?

Try to answer these three questions now.

APPLICATION

HOW WILL I RESPOND?

This is where we become doers of the Word, not only hearers. An application means we reflect to see if there is anything God wants to change in our lives based on what He has said. For example, "Is there anyone I need to forgive? Where might God be inviting me to extend more grace?"

Take a moment to ask God how He wants you to respond then discuss with each other what that will look like in your daily life. Pray for each other to be hearers and doers who are blessed.

RESPOND

APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

1. What area of your life do you long for God to transform? How could engaging with His Word lead you toward that change?
2. What barriers might keep you from consistently engaging with God's Word or responding to it?
3. How can we encourage and support one another in allowing Scripture to shape our lives?
4. Read the Putting it Into Practice section below and discuss which of the practices appeal to you as a way to get deeper into God's Word?

SUGGESTED PRAYER

"Lord, thank You for Your Word, designed to speak to my heart and transform my life from the inside out. Thank You that through Your Word I can better understand who You are and what You desire. Please continue to shape and change me — renew my mind, soften my heart, and empower me to live out Your truth daily. Help me to make Your Word a priority so I can be both a hearer and a doer, experiencing real transformation that reflects Your love and character. Amen."

MEMORY VERSE

16 "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work."

2 TIMOTHY 3:16-17 (ESV)



PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

Part of how the Holy Spirit transforms us is through regular practices that help move what's in our head into our hearts and lives.

This week, try to incorporate a few of the following practices into your schedule. Next time you meet, take time to share about your experiences. Suggested Practices:

- » **Bible Reading** — Read your bible daily. A simple way to start is by selecting a Bible reading plan on the YouVersion app. It's easy to access each day and helps you keep track of your progress. You can choose plans that guide you through the New Testament, the whole Bible, or focus on specific topics.
- » **Journal** — Write down what God reveals to you each time you read or study a passage. Later, review your notes to see how He is transforming your mind and guiding your actions.
- » **Personal Bible Study** — Read three sections of Psalm 119 each day for a week. Print it out and underline the phrases that stand out to you. Reflect on the difference God's Word can make in your life and make a list. Then ask God to show you how to apply what you've learned
- » **Practice** — Psalm 119:140 says "Your promise is well tried, and your servant loves it." Choose an instruction that God gives in His Word and commit to testing it out this week. Meditate on this truth throughout the week.
- » **Share** — Develop a practice of sharing something you learned. Passing it on to someone is the most effective method of solidifying your learning. Simply ask someone, "Can I share what God showed me in His Word today?"
- » **Memorize** — 2 Timothy 3:16-17 (ESV)



READ ARTICLE "HOW WE CAN ENGAGE WITH GOD'S WORD" IN THE APPENDIX, ON PAGE 150.

THE SURRENDERED LIFE

LESSON 10: FOLLOWING JESUS WHOLEHEARTEDLY



» LAUNCH

Imagine you are on a year-long journey with friends. Now imagine if Jesus was with you on this journey, would following His lead seem like it would make the journey limiting, boring, and constrained, or more wide open, interesting, and fulfilling?

Many people follow someone on social media. Sports and entertainment personalities have the most followers. For example, the global soccer star Cristiano Ronaldo tops the list with 672 million Instagram followers. Who are some of the people you follow?

What are some differences and similarities between following someone on social media, and following Jesus? What does it cost you to seriously follow someone?

Now, let's look at what Jesus said it would be like to follow Him.

EXPLORE

LUKE 9:23, 24 (ESV)

23 "And he said to all, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. 24 For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it."

MARK 10:28 - 30 (ESV)

28 "Peter began to say to him, "See, we have left everything and followed you." 29 Jesus said, "Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, 30 who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life."

READ LUKE 9:23, 24 (ESV)

-  Briefly describe each of the following phrases: deny yourself, take up your cross, follow Me, losing your life on what it means to be a wholehearted disciple of Jesus.
-  Do these ideas seem too extreme or unrealistic? Why or why not? Does one seem harder than another?
-  Do these commands make following Jesus more or less attractive to you?

READ MARK 10:28 - 30 (ESV)

-  What do you notice about the eventual outcomes of following Jesus fully?

The following Scripture passages are the responses of those who followed what God wanted for their lives. It affected them very personally and included practical issues like their personal life and relationships, their vocation, and the sacrifice involved in accomplishing their mission in life.

DISCUSS TOGETHER

Pick one of these passages on the following pages to read together and discuss.

- LUKE 1:26-38 (ESV)
- LUKE 5:1-11 (ESV)
- LUKE 22: 41, 42 (ESV)

READ LUKE 1:26-38 (ESV)

26 In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, 27 to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary. 28 And he came to her and said, "Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!" 29 But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. 30 And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. 31 And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. 32 He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, 33 and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

34 And Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?"

35 And the angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God. 36 And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. 37 For nothing will be impossible with God." 38 And Mary said, "Behold, I am the servant[e] of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her.

Mary had been chosen by God to be Jesus' mother, the one who would give birth to the Messiah. While it's easy to assume she had no choice in this matter, notice what she says when she is given the message of what is to come. Shortly after her question to the angel regarding how she could give birth to a baby and still be a virgin, she responded, "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word."

- 🔍 What would have been difficult about her agreement to what the angel had explained to her?
- 🔍 In what ways do you see her denying herself, or taking up her cross, and even losing her life as Jesus talks about in Luke 9?

Mary endured the risk of misunderstanding and shame in her community, rejection from Joseph, her betrothed, and the fear of uncertainty of what this would mean for her life going forward.

READ LUKE 5:1-11 (ESV)

1 "On one occasion, while the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, he was standing by the lake of Gennesaret, 2 and he saw two boats by the lake, but the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. 3 Getting into one of the boats, which was Simon's, he asked him to put out a little from the land. And he sat down and taught the people from the boat. 4 And when he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch." 5 And Simon answered, "Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word I will let down the nets." 6 And when they had done this, they enclosed a large number of fish, and their nets were breaking. 7 They signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink. 8 But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." 9 For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish that they had taken, 10 and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men." 11 And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him."

Peter and the disciples were fishing, and Jesus gave them a great catch after they had just fished all night and caught nothing. Upon realizing what had happened, Simon (also known as Peter) responds with confession and humility. They ultimately leave everything to follow Jesus.

 Why did this dramatic provision motivate them to leave their fishing business to follow Jesus?

They were professional fishermen and were not doing well. Jesus shows that he can provide for them better than they can provide for themselves. Also, they had previously left their fishing to follow Jesus, but for some reason here they have gone back to it, at least for a short bit. Perhaps in a season of questioning, or maybe just thinking that they needed to do something to provide for themselves and not trust that in following Jesus everything they needed would be provided. Peter's emotional response (astonishment and perhaps even fear) and his statement recognizing he was sinful and not worthy to be in Jesus' presence, lead to them leaving everything behind to follow Jesus.

READ LUKE 22:41, 42 (ESV)

41 "And he withdrew from them about a stone's throw, and knelt down and prayed, 42 saying, 'Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done.'"

When Jesus was in the garden of Gethsemane on the night before His crucifixion, He prayed for the Father to not have to go through the crucifixion. But His response was "Nevertheless, not my will, but yours be done."

 How does Jesus' prayer help you think about a life of denying yourself, taking up your cross, and following Jesus?

Jesus knew the physical and soul pain he would experience, and he was honest about the cost of that. At one level, he wanted to avoid it, but on the deeper level, he was ready to enter into what was best as he followed the will of his Father. We will also encounter times where we know it will be hard. We don't need to deny that reality. But we can also tell God that we will follow his will even if it is very painful and difficult.

DISCUSS TOGETHER

As you consider the call to follow Jesus:

1. What are some daily life habits where it is beneficial to “deny ourselves?”
 2. Why do you think it's hard to surrender to Jesus in the way the passages above describe?
 3. Imagine following Jesus with your whole heart. Describe what that kind of life looks like to you and how does that feel? What does your response tell you about what you think God wants for you?
-

PUTTING THE PIECES TOGETHER

Our lives are like a puzzle we are putting together each day, made up of our choices. We may have an image in mind of what we want that puzzle to look like at the end of a year, a decade, or even by the end of our lives.

In fact, it seems this is our right, and that anyone, especially God or religious beliefs, will only bring unsatisfying limits to our fulfillment and purpose in life. Following Jesus fully may seem what's right and even admirable, but secretly we imagine it will be unenjoyable and boring.

The puzzle of our lives consists of our values, desires, and beliefs about all sorts of things, like friendships, marriage, family, a vocation, our money and possessions, our personal significance and success, and our

contributions to our communities. To complete our puzzle, we sometimes choose to identify and emulate others - their values, beliefs, interests, and actions. Sometimes this is conscious, and in other ways it's like osmosis.

In the end, we make choices to put those puzzle pieces together day after day, often in search of significance, belonging, and meaning in our lives. We may even add a little bit of “Jesus” into our lives, in hopes that he will help make our journey better.

However, God created us with an amazing and fulfilling plan for our lives. The Bible says we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which he has prepared beforehand, and that we can discover and choose to live those out in our daily lives. In other words, He knows what the picture of the puzzle of our lives looks like, and as we follow Him, He will lead us toward His best for us. He has not left us alone to figure this out.

To surrender to Jesus is the best decision to make to put that puzzle together. We recognize

not only His rightful authority over our lives but also that He loves us so much that He has rescued us to be in relationship with Him.

To wholeheartedly follow Him is in our best interest, because He knows what our lives can become, and He will lead us there if we follow Him. This will mean letting go of our own self-imagined plans, but his plan for us is better and beyond anything we can dream up on our own. When we lose our lives to Him, we will gain even more back than if we try to hold on to what we want.

BIG IDEA

AS WE WHOLEHEARTEDLY SURRENDER
OUR LIVES TO JESUS EACH DAY, HE
WILL LEAD US TOWARD A LIFE OF
ABUNDANT FRUITFULNESS AND IMPACT
IN THE LIVES OF OTHERS. WE WILL NOT
LOSE OUT ON A GREAT LIFE BUT HAVE
A RICHER LIFE THAN WE COULD EVER
CONSTRUCT ON OUR OWN.

Jesus says that the impact of our lives will multiply like a grain of wheat that falls into the ground and dies but then produces much fruit. If we try to protect our own rights and live for ourselves, we will end up being more constrained, missing out on what God would want for us. But sticking close to Jesus will ensure that we end up in the place where the puzzle picture of our lives gets put together

by Him. Our desire to be with Him and use the talents He has given us will end up in a life that is fulfilling and fruitful for His glory.

The missionary Jim Elliot wrote in his journal: "The will of God is always a bigger thing than we bargain for, but we must believe that whatever it involves, it is good, acceptable, and perfect".

RESPOND

We can read about the lives of Mary, Peter, and Jesus, and see how they had real issues to deal with. For Mary, there was her whole personal life and marriage to Joseph. For Peter and the disciples, there was the issue of their fishing business. For Jesus, there was the incredible suffering He would encounter to accomplish his mission. What about you?

How would you answer the following questions:

- 🔗 Is there an area of my life I have a particularly hard time surrendering to Him? Is there something I fear happening with that area?
- 🔗 What are other “influencers” in my life that may hinder me from following Him?

None of us will ever follow Jesus perfectly. Jesus’ disciple Peter, while desiring to follow Jesus fully and proclaiming his absolute loyalty, nevertheless suffered a major failure the night before his crucifixion by denying three times that he even knew Jesus. We will suffer times of failure and sin in our journey to follow Jesus. We may grab those puzzle pieces of our life and try to put them all together the way we want them to look. But God is always forgiving and will be there to remind us that what He wants for us is in our best interest. He will forgive and always allow us to keep following him on our journey in life.

Consider praying something like this to tell Jesus that you want to follow Him fully.

SUGGESTED PRAYER

“Lord Jesus, this feels hard and scary, because I don’t know where it all leads. But I know you love me so much that you died for me. And you know what the puzzle pieces of my life look like and how they will best fit together. It only makes sense to surrender myself to you. I don’t want to just add you to part of my life. I choose to set aside my own agenda and plans for my future and allow your plans for me to unfold as I journey with you. I trust they will not

only be good for me but will bless those around me more and more over time. Reveal to me anything I need to cast aside, as well as what I need to start doing in order to identify with you above and beyond any other person or idea. I will Go, Do, Say, and Give whatever you want me to in order to follow you more closely. Fill me with your Spirit to live each day as you want me to. Amen.”



PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

Part of how the Holy Spirit transforms us is through regular practices that help move what's in our head into our hearts and lives.

This week, try to incorporate a few of the following practices into your schedule. Next time you meet, take time to share about your experiences. Suggested Practices:

- » **JOURNAL** — Write a letter to God describing how you want to put everything aside to follow Him. Share how it feels to make a decision to let him put the puzzle of your life together as he wishes. List the specific relationships, plans, and interests that you will yield to Him to shape in whatever way He wants over time as you more fully identify with Him.
- » **PRAYER** — Start each day praying something like this: “Lord Jesus, I surrender myself to you again today, and I will Go, Do, Say, and Give whatever you want me. Fill me with your Spirit to live as you want me to today.” This expresses your daily desire to wholeheartedly follow Jesus and rely on his power to change you.
- » **SHARE** — Share this decision with your discipler and a peer that is a follower of Christ, and why this is significant to you right now.
- » **MEDITATE ON SCRIPTURE** — Consider meditating on these passages, one per day, over the next week:
 - **EPHESIANS 2:10**
 - **JOHN 12:23-26**
 - **ROMANS 12:1, 2**
 - **1 CORINTHIANS 6:19, 20**
 - **PHILIPPIANS 3:7-11**
- » **MEMORIZE** — Luke 9:23, 24 (ESV)



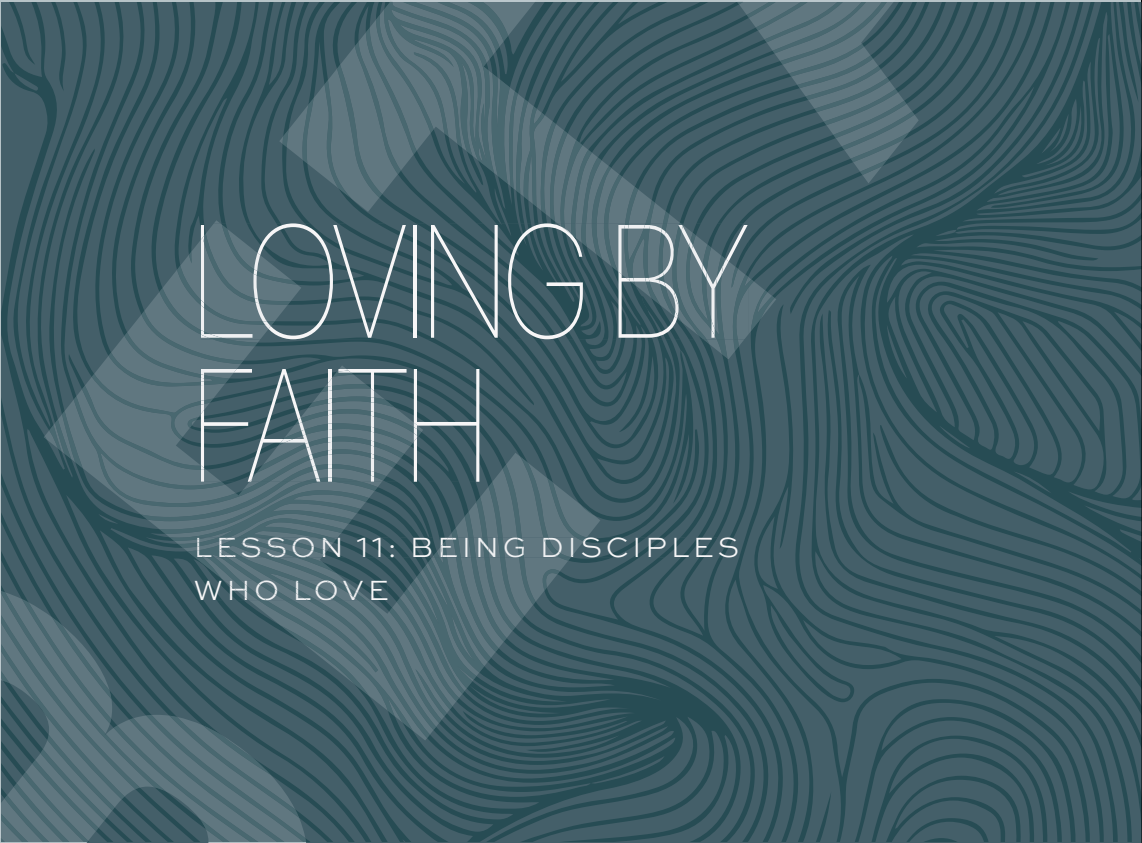
READ ARTICLE “A DAILY PRAYER OF SURRENDER” IN THE APPENDIX, ON PAGE 152.

Recommended Resources: YouVersion seven day Bible reading plan: “Go, Do, Say, Give”

MEMORY VERSE

23 "And he said to all, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. 24 For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it."

LUKE 9:23, 24 (ESV)



LOVING BY FAITH

LESSON 11: BEING DISCIPLES
WHO LOVE

»» LAUNCH

Loving by faith—simple, right? Many of us have heard that love is essential to the Christian life, yet it can be one of the most challenging aspects to live out. One of the most powerful truths of Christianity is how God demonstrated His love for the world: He gave His life so that we could have life and relationship with Him.

That same agape love—sacrificial and unconditional—is what we’re called to carry as followers of Jesus.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus gives a radical command: **“But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you ...”** This calling is rooted in the truth that we love because God first loved us. But it’s not easy, especially when we try to love in our own strength or when we’re in conflict with others. For those who have experienced harm, pain, or deep wounds, this command to love can feel especially difficult.

As we explore this concept of “loving by faith”:

- » What did your upbringing or community teach you (directly or indirectly) about who deserves love and how others should be treated?
- » When someone has wronged you or your community, how do you understand God’s response to that? What does Scripture teach us about forgiveness, justice, and love in these situations?

EXPLORE

MATTHEW 5:43-45 NIV

43. “You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor[a] and hate your enemy.’ 44. But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 45. that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.”

READ MATTHEW 5:43-45 NIV

BIBLICAL CONTEXT

The Sermon on the Mount is an invitation to endure and await the coming kingdom. Suffering for Jesus is something that is expected for the early church and for us today. Jesus is teaching the disciples how to live as His followers. It is also instructions for us, as believers today, in how to follow Jesus. As we follow Jesus’ words and example, it gives glory to God the Father and grows our joy as His followers

DISCUSS TOGETHER

1. What is Jesus instructing us to do in this passage? How does that differ from what we might naturally expect or want to do?
2. How does our relationship with the Father shape the way we understand and respond to this command?
3. What does this passage reveal about God’s character and how He relates to others?
4. This passage challenges us to love beyond our inner circle. Who is God bringing to your mind?
5. Who is easiest for you to love right now? Who is the most difficult, and why? Can you think of someone who has loved you by faith?
6. If you were to explain to someone what it means to “love by faith” as a disciple of Jesus, what would you say?
7. What might you tell someone else about the significance of loving by faith as a disciple?

READ JOHN 13:31-35 (NIV)

This verse is sandwiched by the betrayal of Judas and the future denial by Peter. Jesus gives a new command to love one another. As disciples, we see a purpose to show the world the impact of loving one another.

- 🔍 When loving others feels difficult, what can we learn from how Jesus responded in those moments?

READ JOHN 14:15-17 (NIV)

We are given God's **power** to love others. We must live by faith as a follower of Jesus and love others by faith. We have been given power in the Holy Spirit. We love by faith through God's strength and our faith.

- 🔍 Where does the strength to love others by faith come from?
- 🔍 Through the Holy Spirit's power and presence, who is God inviting you to trust Him to love by faith this week?

READ PHIL 2:1-4 (NIV)

Paul gives a clear demonstration of Christian living, the kind of **posture** they should have as disciples.

- 🔍 According to these verses, how do we love one another? According to these verses, how are we called to love one another?
- 🔍 Based on this passage, can we, as Christ-followers, ever justify not loving someone? Why or why not?

JOHN 13:31-35 (NIV)

34 "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. 35 By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

JOHN 14:15-17 (NIV)

15 "If you love me, keep my commands. 16 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever— 17 the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you."

READ PHIL 2:1-4 (NIV)

1 "Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, 2 then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. 3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, 4 not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others."

PUTTING THE PIECES TOGETHER

As we look around the world, news headlines, our local community or even our family, we can see the ways that our world is struggling to love.

Some big reasons people stay away from religion Some big reasons people stay away from religion or communities of faith is the increase of scandal, hypocrisy or judgment in church. When it comes to the idea of loving by faith, it is crucial that we understand the importance of this way of living. We love others because God first loved us. We must experience God's love ourselves and reflect that onto others.

The journey of discovering God, living and loving Him is by faith. We do all things in and through God. We are made right and are

secure in that love because of the gift of the Holy Spirit. His permanent presence gives us the ability to see as He sees, to hear, and to learn to love the world as God does. Our goal is to love as God loves whether they are friend or foe. The depth of God's radical love and sacrifice is offered to everyone. As a recipient of that love, we in turn, love others. Through the power of the Holy Spirit in us, we choose to love others by faith. In the midst of pain, suffering, injustice, and inequality, we trust in the presence of God in our lives and the power of God to love people as He did.

KEY TRUTHS

JESUS
COMMANDS
US TO LOVE
(BY FAITH)

JESUS
COMMANDS
US TO LOVE/
PRAY FOR
ENEMIES
(BY FAITH)

JESUS IS
WITH US AND
EMPOWERS
US THROUGH
HIS SPIRIT
TO LOVE.

BIG IDEA

LOVING BY FAITH IS THE PRACTICE OF EXPERIENCING GOD'S LOVE AND GRACE AND PASSING IT ONTO OTHERS. WE GROW IN OUR AWARENESS OF GOD'S LOVE THROUGH THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

RESPOND

APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

1. What thoughts or emotions arise when you consider loving your enemies or praying for those who have hurt you?
2. How are you currently experiencing God's love and forgiveness? Take a moment to thank God for His love and grace in your life.
3. Is there someone you need to love by faith? What is one practical step you can take this week to love that person?
4. How does living out this kind of love reflect your identity as a child of God?
5. Who could you share this journey with—or invite to grow alongside you in loving by faith?

SUGGESTED PRAYER

“Heavenly Father, we thank you for your love and sacrifice for us. We confess our need for you and appreciate your saving grace. Would you help us see the world as you do? Would we trust you by faith, to love our friends and enemies. We need your presence and power to change how we approach others in our lives. Would you walk with us as we love our neighbors and love our enemies by faith. Amen



PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

The Sermon on the Mount gives us an upside down kingdom perspective. Blessed are those that.... What seems to be “bad” or “weak” actually leads to very good things.

Jesus gives us a picture of who we are. You are salt and light and then give many examples of how the kingdom of God is opposite of how the world works. When we consider loving by faith, the world might say - only love those who deserve it or are kind to you. Instead, Jesus says - Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you or are after you. The challenge of us is to experience God's presence in our life and allow that to overflow into practices of the “upside down kingdom.”

Part of how the Holy Spirit transforms us is through regular practices that help move what's in our head into our hearts and lives. This week, try to incorporate the following practices into your schedule. Next time you meet, take time to share about your experiences.

- » **GRATITUDE PRACTICES** – Thank God for the ways that He has provided for you. How do you experience His love and forgiveness in your daily life? (This is foundational, as we grow in appreciation, we can extend grace and mercy)
- » **SURRENDER** – Our own understanding of who and why we must love can be clear or cloudy. By faith, we trust in God's perspective, His power and his plan to work things out in our lives. Loving by faith requires a surrender and trusting posture to let the Holy Spirit do the healing in our lives and in the lives of others.
- » **DIVE DEEPER** – Take steps to understand or engage with people or places that you find it difficult to love. Listen to stories/podcasts/movies about communities that you have a hard time connecting with. Spend time getting to know or moving toward others who you can gain new insights from. Or simply, practice starting and holding conversation for 5-10 minutes with someone who is hard to love.



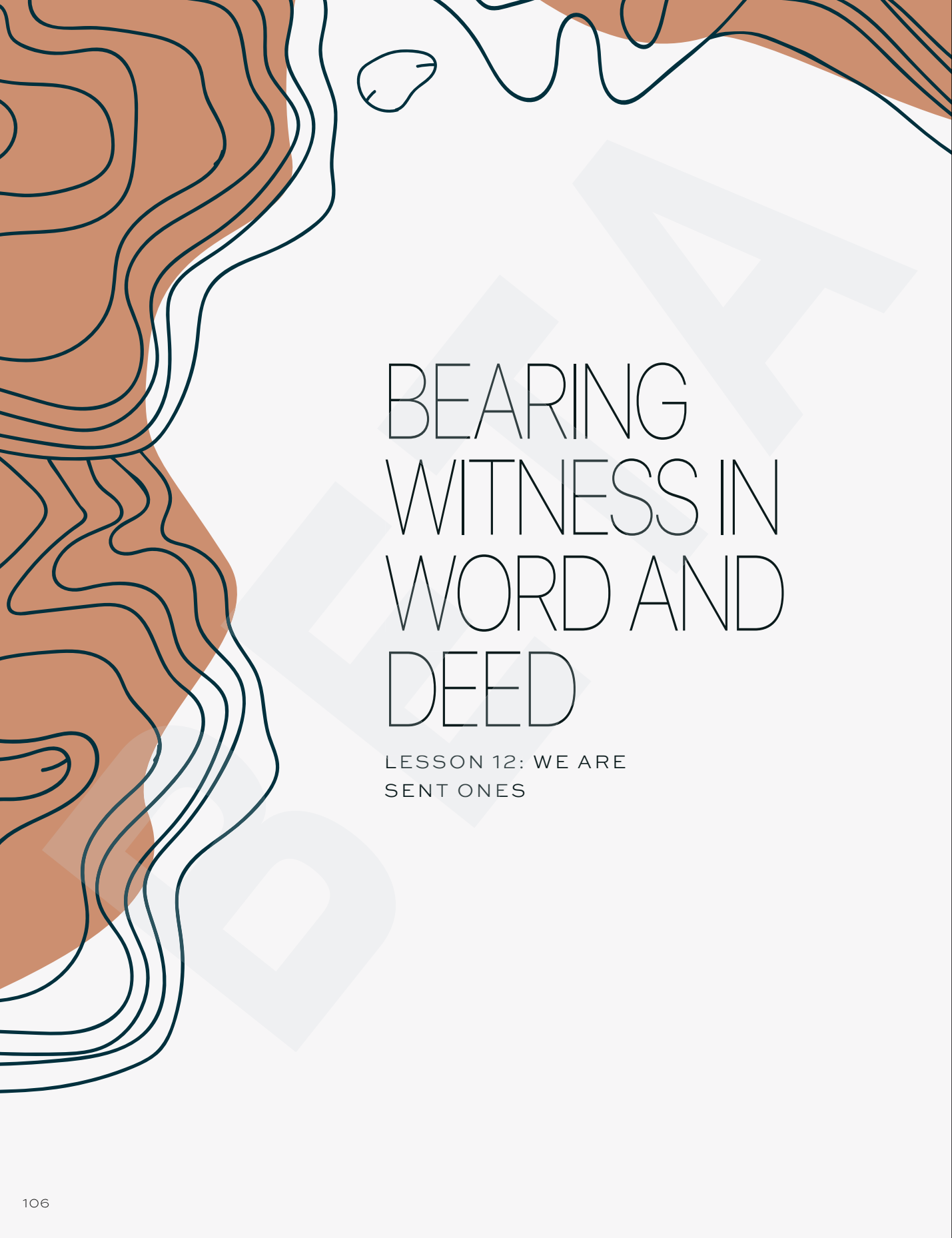
**READ ARTICLE “RETURNING TO JOY”
IN THE APPENDIX, ON PAGE 154.**



MEMORY VERSE

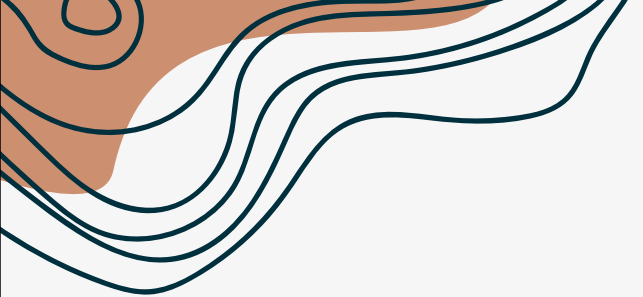
34 “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. 35 By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

JOHN 13:31-35 (NIV)



BEARING WITNESS IN WORD AND DEED

LESSON 12: WE ARE
SENT ONES



» LAUNCH

Just as God sent Jesus to earth to usher in His kingdom, Jesus in turn sends us to bring the good news of God's kingdom to every tribe, tongue, and nation.

Jesus makes this very clear in John 20:21 **"Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you."** He doubles down on this when, after his resurrection and just before he return to the Father, He gives this command in Matthew 28:19-20 (NIV) :

19. "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20. and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

So just like the disciples some two thousand years ago, Jesus calls us to go and live into our "sent" identity as shining lights in the world through our words and our deeds. The Bible is filled with metaphors to help us grasp and understand the responsibility given to us by Jesus. In the New Testament we're called: witnesses, heralds, royal priests, servants, living stones, soldiers, farmers, athletes, mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, friends, and family!

- 🔗 What does it look like to live as a sent one, both in how we proclaim the gospel with our words and how we live like Christ among those who don't believe?

In this lesson, we will look a little more closely at what it means to be "sent ones" by considering four metaphors: the witness, the farmer, the fisherman, and the ambassador.

- 🔗 Why do you think Jesus used these pictures to talk about the work of His kingdom?

EXPLORE

MARK 1:17 (NIV)

17“Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will send you out to **fish** for people.”

LUKE 10:1-2 (NIV)

10“After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go. 2. He told them, ‘The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to **send out workers into his harvest field.**’”

ACTS 1:8 (NIV)

8“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be **my witnesses** in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

READ MARK 1:17 (NIV)

READ LUKE 10:1-2 (NIV)

Though the practices of fishing and farming are less common in our world today, we can still see the spiritual application of these activities in our modern context.

-  How are these good metaphors for what we do when we share the gospel and build God's kingdom?

READ ACTS 1:8 (NIV)

God alone, through the power of His Holy Spirit, gives us the ability to be His witnesses.

DISCUSS TOGETHER

1. When you hear the word “witness,” what images or thoughts come to mind?
2. According to this verse, how are we able to be witnesses for Jesus? Why is it important to understand this?
3. What are some ways you can be a witness, both in how you share the gospel message and how you live out your faith?

READ 2 COR 5:18-21 (NIV)

As His representatives throughout the world, God has committed to us the message of reconciliation.

DISCUSS TOGETHER

1. What are some responsibilities of an ambassador?
2. How are the actions of an ambassador a reflection of the country they represent?
3. How does that apply to our Christian faith?

2 COR 5:18-21 (NIV)

18“All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: 19. that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. 20. We are therefore **Christ’s ambassadors**, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God. 21. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”

KEY TRUTHS

OUR SENT
IDENTITY IS AN
IMPORTANT PART
OF OUR IDENTITY
IN CHRIST.

GOD SENT JESUS
TO EARTH TO
USHER IN HIS
KINGDOM, JESUS IN
TURN SENDS US TO
BRING THE GOOD
NEWS OF GOD’S
KINGDOM TO THE
WORLD

WE ARE CALLED
TO LIVE AS
AMBASSADORS,
BOTH IN WORD
AND DEED, AS WE
SHARE THE GOSPEL
MESSAGE WITH
OTHERS.

*From the book Sent by Heather and Ashley Holleman,
four metaphors help explain our sent identity*

1 FAITHFUL WITNESS

**SHARES WHAT THEY'VE SEEN OR
EXPERIENCED**

A witness is someone who sees something important or amazing. When a person begins to share what they've seen, we call this "bearing witness." Being messengers of hope is the most natural thing to do after experiencing the love of God through Christ: to tell the story of Jesus by "bearing witness" to those around us. A witness talks about what they've seen and what they've experienced firsthand.

3 HARDWORKING FARMERS

PLOW, SOW, WATER, HARVEST

Farmers work to break up hard ground, prepare the soil, plant seeds, and keep the ground watered. Similarly, as sent ones, we are meant to have conversations that plant gospel seeds and we are to tend to budding relationships that are spiritually curious. Like the farmer, we often have to wait before we see a harvest.

2 PATIENT FISHERMEN

CAST, WAIT, DRAW IN

Fishermen in Jesus' day prepared their nets, cast them into the sea, and waited expectantly for a catch—often working together and trusting the outcome to the Lord. Similarly, we "cast the net" by speaking words filled with spiritual truth, offering prayer or help, and sharing how Jesus is at work in our lives. When we openly share about our relationship with God it gives people natural chances to respond with curiosity when they're ready. Our posture, like the fisherman, is one of patient readiness.

4 CONFIDENT AMBASSADORS

**REPRESENT BY THEIR ACTIONS,
DELIVER THE MESSAGE, INFORM**

United Nations Ambassadors represent their home countries while residing in the United States. They speak on behalf of their nation's leadership, boldly communicating important messages. The actions and activities of an ambassador portray what their country stands for and what someone can expect when engaging in their culture. Likewise, as ambassadors for Christ, we represent God and proclaim the gospel as representatives of His kingdom. Our conduct paints a picture of what our King values and supports.

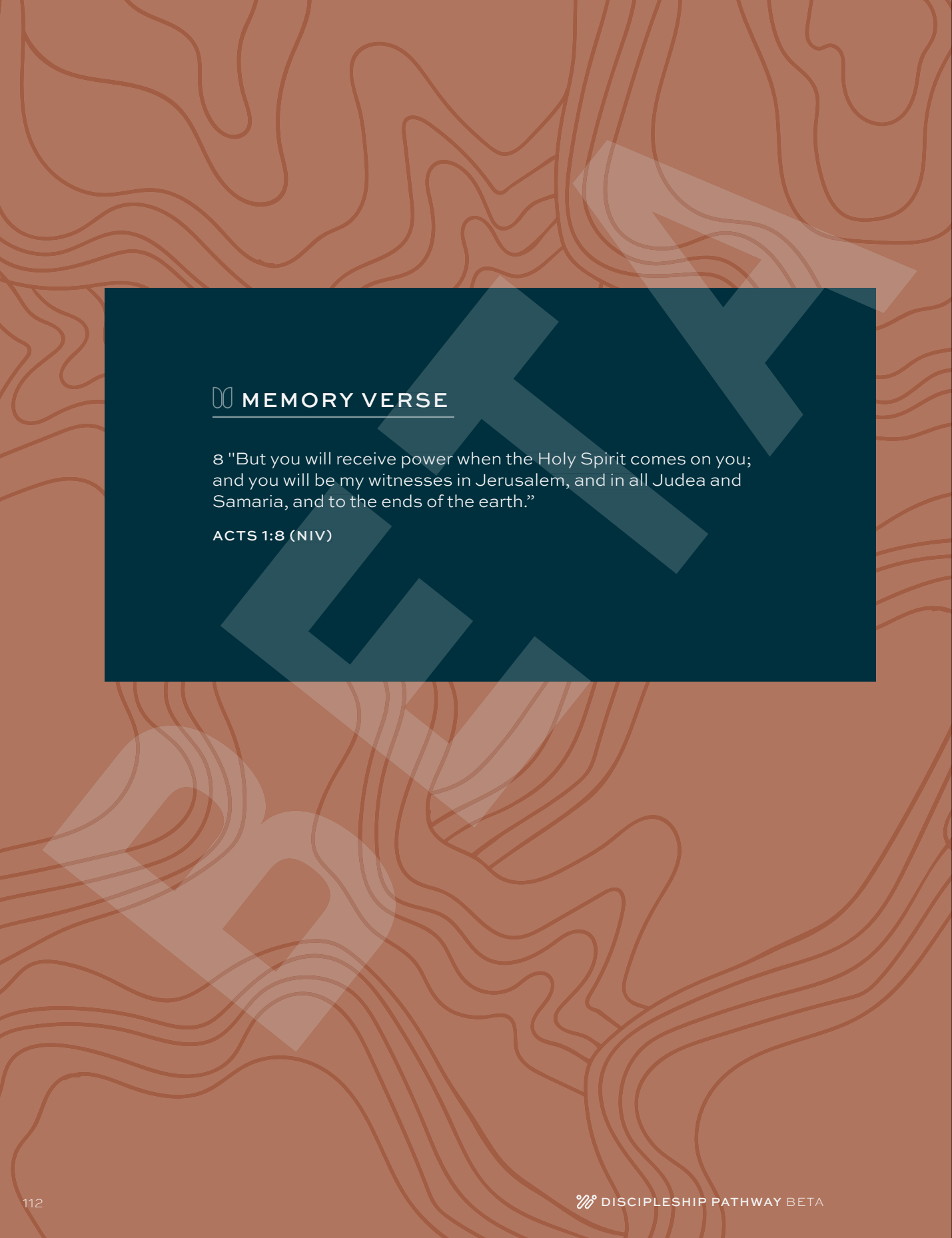
PUTTING THE PIECES TOGETHER

“Sent represents a biblical philosophy of living that reshapes the way we think about why we’re here on earth and what purpose God has for us as worshipers and followers of Jesus Christ. Sent begins from a starting point of our identity in Christ; evangelism flows from who we are rather than inviting us into something more to do. As a result, we live as sent people not out of guilt, shame, or a sense of duty. Sent people naturally enter into evangelism the same way they eat breakfast or walk down the street. It’s simply a part of who they are.”

–Heather and Ashley Holleman

BIG IDEA

**WE ARE SENT BY GOD, IN
THE POWER OF THE HOLY
SPIRIT, AND CALLED TO
BE HIS WITNESSES.**



MEMORY VERSE

8 "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

ACTS 1:8 (NIV)

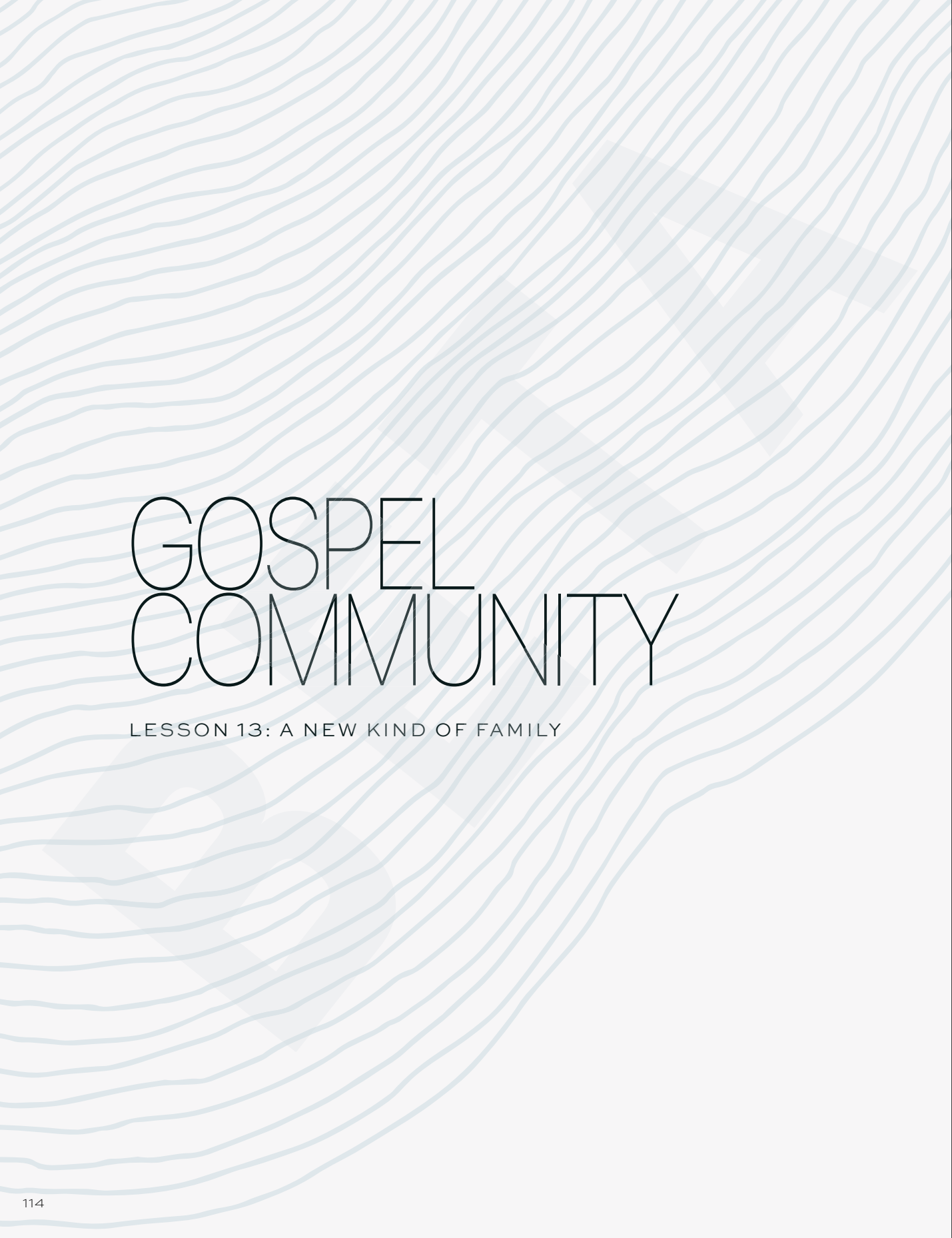


PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

Part of how the Holy Spirit transforms us is through regular practices that help move what's in our head into our hearts and lives.

This week, try to incorporate a few of the following practices into your schedule. Next time you meet, take time to share about your experiences. Suggested Practices:

- » **REFLECTION & PRAYER** — Spend some time in prayer reflecting on the metaphors. Ask the Lord to reveal specific people in your life where these metaphors are coming to life. As you pray over the names the Holy Spirit brings to mind, ask God to open tangible opportunities for you to be a blessing to one of them this month.
- » **PRACTICE YOUR MICRO TESTIMONY** — Write and practice sharing a 1–2 minute story about how your relationship with Jesus is impacting your life right now. Share it with a friend or discipler for feedback, then pray for an opportunity to share it naturally this week.
- » **LEARN A GOSPEL PRESENTATION** — Choose one gospel tool (e.g., The Four, The Four Spiritual Laws, Honor Restored etc.) and learn it well enough to explain it to someone else. Practice using it in conversation with a friend or fellow believer.
- » **PRAYER WALK YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD OR CAMPUS** — Walk around your area, praying quietly for your neighbors, co-workers, or classmates by name (if you know them).
 - Ask the Holy Spirit to give you His heart and lead you to be His witness there.
 - Ask God for boldness, love, and clarity to share Christ.
- » **SERVE WITH GOSPEL INTENTIONALITY** — Volunteer or join a local outreach opportunity (e.g., tutoring, food pantry, refugee care).
 - As you serve, pray for God to open relational doors and spiritual conversations.
 - Ask a good question to spark spiritual conversation (e.g., “What gives you hope when things are hard?” or “Do you ever think about spiritual things?”).
- » **MEMORIZE** — Acts 1:8 (NIV)



GOSPEL COMMUNITY

LESSON 13: A NEW KIND OF FAMILY



»» LAUNCH

Perhaps you are a new believer in Christ or have been one for some time. You are now part of a new family, the family of God. This is an amazing subject, one of the most important things we may talk about. How have you experienced the need for community in your own life?

What comes to mind when you consider Gospel Community? Sometimes it can be confusing or it might not always be positive. Take a look at these statements and questions and highlight a few of the most relevant ones.

- › Does this mean my small group or a local church?
- › I have a group of friends already, why would I need other ones?
- › Does becoming a Christian mean I have to find a new group of friends, leave my old friends?
- › The church is full of judges and hypocrites.
- › Christian community has shown me a love I never experienced in other groups.
- › If the Christian or Gospel community is so important, why do I see non-Christian groups being so loving and accepting while churches struggle to be kind?
- › Church folks or Christian communities are not my type; I don't think I would fit in there.
- › I think this is important, but I don't know how to get started.

EXPLORE

EPH 4:15–16 (ESV)

15“Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, 16 from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.”

COL 1:17–20 (ESV)

17“And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. 18 And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. 19 For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, 20 and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.”

1 PET 2: 9,10 (ESV)

9“**But you are a chosen race, a** rBut you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. 10 Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.”

1. WE ARE ONE BODY

Through Christ, we are joined together as one body, each part vital, growing in love as we speak truth and build each other up.

READ EPH 4:15–16 (ESV)

-  What words or phrases in this passage stand out to you the most, and why?

Notice some keywords in this passage.

- As individual believers, we are an important part of a larger whole that makes up the Body of Christ.
- Jesus is the head.
- Together we contribute to the proper functioning of the body so that we grow
- into Christ-like love.
- This passage emphasizes one of the actions that leads to this equipping, growing, and building in love: “Speaking the truth in love.”

2. WE WERE MADE FOR COMMUNITY

God created us in His image—a relational, loving community—and He calls us into healing and unity through life together in Christ.

In the beginning, God created the earth and in his final and crowning act he said, **“Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.”** Genesis 1:26 (ESV). God said, “Let us make” because God is what some have called the happy community. He is one yet three, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Theologians have called it the “Happy Society.” God is one and yet three persons, existing in love and perfect unity.

He made us out of love and in His image, meaning we were created in His template of unity and diversity. God follows up in Genesis 2:18 saying. **“It is not good that the man should be alone.”** So God created another: “Eve” who was like “Adam” but also different in important ways.

Soon, sin and brokenness enter the garden, and all relationships are affected. We see sin and shame enter the relationship between Adam and Eve and with God. Sin and shame have broken us and all our relationships. Gospel Community is God's plan for our healing in this life and is a reflection of the life to come in Christ.

In speaking about Jesus, Paul writes to the church of Colossae

READ COL 1:17-20 (ESV)

Christ is from the beginning, and through Him, we are now united in a new way—as a new family formed in Him.

-  What does it mean to you that “in Christ all things hold together”? How does this shape your view of gospel community?

3. WE ARE A NEW FAMILY

In Christ, we're no longer strangers—we're God's people, a spiritual family marked by mercy, belonging, and love for one another.

- READ 1 PETER 2: 9,10 (ESV)
- READ EPHESIANS 2:18-19 (ESV)
- READ GALATIANS 6:10 (NIV)

We are now a family in God's house. We are called brothers and sisters. And as such, we are called to have a special love for one another.

4. THIS FAMILY BEARS FRUIT

Gospel Community overflows in love, service, generosity, and growth—not to earn God's favor, but as a joyful response to His grace. There is a natural fruitfulness in Gospel Community. We see it clearly in the early church.

READ ACTS 2:42-47 (ESV)

-  What attributes or attitudes do you love in this passage?

To be clear, their religious actions didn't make them a Gospel Community. Their community commitments were the natural byproduct of a changed life in Christ. Our commitment to gospel community needs to spring from a heart of love and gratitude, not a motive of earning favor with God or looking good in the eyes of others.

EPH 2:18-19 (ESV)

18“For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.
19 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens,[a] but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,”

GAL 6:10 (NIV)

10“Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.”

READ ACTS 2:42-47 (ESV)

42“And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. 43 And awe[a] came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. 44 And all who believed were together and had all things in common. 45 And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. 46 And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, 47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.”

DISCUSS TOGETHER

1. What does this new family look, feel, and sound like?
2. How is a gospel community - one rooted in our common love and forgiveness in Christ - different from other communities you are currently a part of?
3. In what ways have you seen sin and shame impact relationships—either in your life or in the world around you?
4. Because we are forgiven by Christ, how are we called to treat our brothers and sisters in Christ?
5. Why do you think we fail sometimes to love well?

PUTTING THE PIECES TOGETHER

Gospel Community is the spiritual family God creates through Jesus—a community marked by love, unity, and healing.

From the beginning, we were made in the image of a relational God designed to live in connection with Him and one another. Sin broke that design, fracturing our relationships and bringing isolation and shame. But through Christ's death and resurrection, we are

reconciled to God and to each other. In Him, we are no longer strangers, but brothers and sisters—called into a new kind of community where grace, truth, and sacrificial love shape how we live.

BIG IDEA

GOSPEL COMMUNITY IS ABOUT LIVING
IN A JOYFUL NEW FAMILY THAT'S BASED
ON LOVE AND FORGIVENESS, WHERE
BELIEVERS GROW AND BEAR FRUIT
TOGETHER.

RESPOND

APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

1. Which part of this topic spoke to you personally or felt especially meaningful?
2. How do you see the Holy Spirit helping you grow in love, unity, or truth within your community?
3. Where do you see a need for healing or reconciliation in your relationships right now?
4. How might the gospel shape the way we respond when we're hurt in community?
5. What's one practical way you can contribute to building up your Gospel Community this week? If you don't have a healthy Gospel Community now, what could you do to find or create one?
6. Who in your life needs to see the love and unity of Christ through your community?

SUGGESTED PRAYER

"Dear Lord, thank You for creating us for community and for bringing us together as Your family. Help us to love one another deeply, forgive freely, and grow in unity through Your Spirit. Teach us to encourage, serve, and speak truth in love, reflecting Your grace in all we do. Strengthen our bonds and guide us to be a light to the world."



PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

Part of how the Holy Spirit transforms us is through regular practices that help move what's in our head into our hearts and lives.

This week, try to incorporate a few of the following practices into your schedule. Next time you meet, take time to share about your experiences. Suggested Practices:

- » **PRAYER** — Growth in Gospel Community happens through grace and truth, over time. Trust and depth require intentional investment. Spend time this week praying specifically for your current and future community—ask God to help you engage with humility, patience, and love.
- » **PRIORITIZE WEEKLY GATHERINGS** — Commit to regularly attending your local church or small group. Consistent presence helps build meaningful relationships and opens the door for mutual encouragement and accountability.
- » **PRAY WITH OTHERS** — Find one or two people to pray with on a regular basis. Share your needs, celebrate answered prayers, and grow together in dependence on God.
- » **REFLECT THROUGH JOURNALING** — After moments of community—whether encouraging or challenging—take time to journal. What did God show you? How were you stretched? What growth is He working in your heart toward others?
- » **PRACTICE HOSPITALITY** — This week, open your home or schedule to invite someone from your church or small group into your life. Meals, walks, or honest conversations can be simple ways to deepen connection and embody Gospel love.
- » **MEMORIZE** — Ephesians 2:18-19 (NLT)



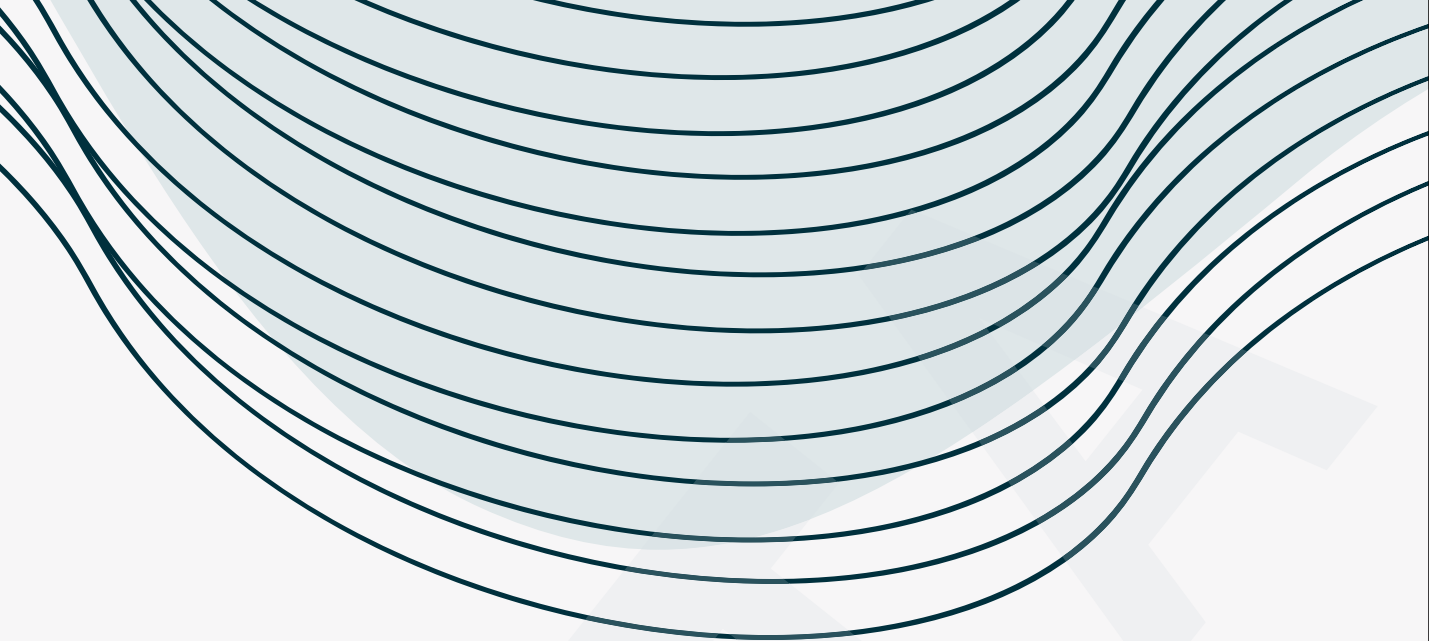
READ ARTICLE “ROOTED TO GROW: LIVING IN GOSPEL COMMUNITY” IN THE APPENDIX, ON PAGE 156.



MEMORY VERSE

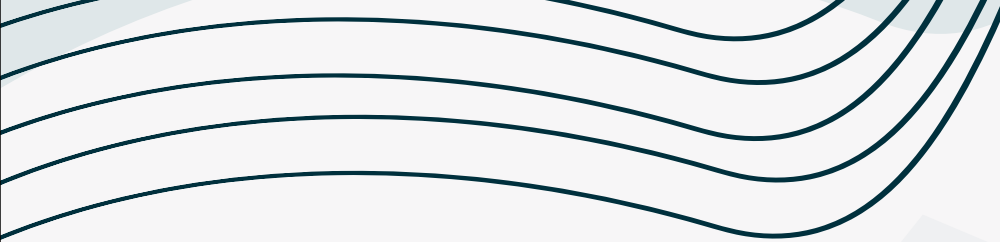
“Now all of us can come to the Father through the same Holy Spirit because of what Christ has done for us. So now you Gentiles are no longer strangers and foreigners. You are citizens along with all of God’s holy people. You are members of God’s family.”

EPHESIANS 2:18-19 (NLT)



GOD'S HEART FOR THE WORLD

LESSON 14: THE SACRED TRUST OF PARTICIPATION



LAUNCH

Why do we care about God's heart for the world?

We care about God's heart for the world because we've personally experienced His overwhelming love. In His grace, He forgave us, adopted us into His family, and gave us a new identity in Christ—all because someone faithfully shared the gospel with us.

This incredible love was never meant to be kept to ourselves. It compels us to share it with others. That's why the Great Commission matters—it's not just a command, but an exhilarating invitation to join God in His redemptive work across the world.

As Bill Bright, founder of Campus Crusade for Christ, passionately put it:

"I want to share with you what is, in my opinion, the most exciting discovery of my life. It is something that has revolutionized my walk with God and has filled me with an indescribable passion to help fulfill Christ's Great Commission in this generation. This discovery is a realization of God's heart for the world and the incredible privilege we have to participate in His plan to reach every person with the Good News."

This isn't just a mission for missionaries—it's for you! As we begin, consider:

-  What would it look like if God's heart for your neighbors, your city, and the nations flowed through your life?

MATT 28:19-20 (ESV)

19 "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you."

"GO"

The word "go" in the Great Commission has sparked discussion about its precise meaning. Some interpret the Greek to mean "as you are going," suggesting an ongoing or natural part of daily life. Others emphasize that "go" is anything but casual—it carries the weight of intentional obedience. It implies movement, initiative, and often a willingness to embrace inconvenience or sacrifice.

GEN 12:2-3 (NLT)

2 "I will bless you and make you famous, and you will be a blessing to others. 3 I will bless those who bless you and curse those who treat you with contempt. All the families on earth will be blessed through you."

IS 49:6 (ESV)

"6 I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth."

EXPLORE

READ: MATT 28:19-20 (ESV)

- 🔍 What exactly did Jesus command?
- 🔍 Who is this command for? Who was Jesus telling to "go"? Does it still apply today and does it apply to you?
- 🔍 What is baptism? Why do you think Jesus includes this as He commissions His disciples?

This isn't a theological deep dive into the nature of baptism—though that's an important topic. Instead, it's about the purpose of baptism and how it fits into fulfilling the Great Commission. In Matthew 28:19–20, Jesus makes it clear that baptism is an essential step in helping someone follow Him. It's a visible act of obedience where a follower of Jesus publicly declares their faith, identifies with Christ, and marks their new life in Him. Baptism also shows that they belong to God's family and is a key part of how we make disciples.

- 🔍 What does Jesus mean when He says "go"? (See sidenote)
- 🔍 What is radical about the Great Commission? How do you think this would have challenged the people Jesus was speaking to?

Jesus gave this commission to Jewish disciples who had been shaped by centuries of cultural, religious, and ethnic boundaries. When He says "all nations," He's not just expanding the geography—He's expanding the scope of God's family. "All nations" means all people, all cultures, all backgrounds. For His Jewish listeners, this was a radical shift, challenging deeply held assumptions about who belonged in God's family.

READ & DISCUSS:

Now, let's look at a few helpful passages to understand God's heart.

- 🔍 What do these passages reveal about God's heart for the world?
 - GENESIS 12:2-3 (NLT)
 - ISAIAH 49:6 (ESV)
 - JOHN 3:16 (NIV)
 - REVELATION 7:9 (NIV)

God's heart is for all people, everywhere, to know Him and experience His love, salvation, and blessing. From the very beginning, He planned to bless the nations through His people (Genesis 12). His love isn't limited to one group. It extends to every tribe, language, and nation (John 3:16; Revelation 7:9). God desires that everyone turn to Him and be saved, and He invites His people to join Him in His mission to proclaim the good news of Jesus to the ends of the earth (Matthew 28:18–20). Ultimately, God's plan is to gather people from every corner of the world into His eternal kingdom united in worship, joy, and love.

🔍 If someone asked you, 'Why does the Great Commission matter to you?' how would you respond?

READ & DISCUSS:

Let's look at a few more passages. Bold and italics added

- MATTHEW 22:37-39 (ESV)
- 1 JOHN 5:3 (NLT)
- 2 CORINTHIANS 5:14 (NIV)

While it is love for God that compels us to help fulfill the Great Commission, it can help to consider the reality for people who have not yet been adopted into God's family, who may not even realize such an invitation exists. Paul's letter to the Ephesians explains that reality clearly.

JOHN 3:16 (NIV)

16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."

REV 7:9 (NIV)

9 "After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb."

MATT 22:37-39 (ESV)

37 "And he said to him, 'You shall **love** the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. 38 This is the great and first commandment. 39 And a second is like it: You *shall love your neighbor as yourself.*'"

1 JOHN 5:3 (NLT)

3 "Loving God means *keeping his* "commandments, and his commandments are not burdensome."

2 COR 5:14 (NIV)

14 "For **Christ's love** compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died."

READ EPH 2:11-13 (NLT)

“Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh... remember that *you were at that time **separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.*** But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ”

This is the condition of so many around us: separated, without hope, and unaware that a way has been made for them to be brought near.

The Great Commission is not just a task. It is a sacred invitation to join what God is already doing—pursuing the lost, healing the broken, and adopting the outsider. It also calls us to see each person as uniquely handcrafted by God, precious, valuable, and absolutely worth being inconvenienced for.

🔍 How might our view of the Great Commission change if we truly saw others as God’s handcrafted masterpieces, each with inherent dignity and value?

We care about God’s heart for the world because He first loved us, and that love reached us through someone’s faithfulness to share it. Now we get to be part of passing that same hope to others who are waiting to hear.

🔗 PUTTING THE PIECES TOGETHER

We’ve received the greatest gift imaginable—adoption into God’s family—because others before us embraced Jesus’ call to go and make disciples.

Their faithfulness opened the door for us to encounter God’s love and forgiveness. Now, we are invited into that same mission. In a world full of noise and competing demands, it’s easy to drift. But Jesus offers us something greater: the privilege of joining Him in His redemptive work around the world. What could be more meaningful than helping others find their place in God’s family?

The Christian community, though full of sincere believers, can sometimes lose focus and become distracted by fear, insecurity, or a reliance on programs over people. When we

drift from Jesus’ priorities, we risk exchanging His call to make disciples for cultural comfort or busyness. And all the while, we face an enemy that is actively working to distort the truth and derail the mission.

Yet in the midst of this battle, we carry the most powerful message the world has ever known: that anyone, anywhere, can be adopted into God’s family through the finished work of Jesus. What a sacred trust we’ve been given to help people know, love, and follow Him more deeply each day!

BIG IDEA

GOD LOVES HIS CHILDREN AND LONGS
FOR EVERYONE TO BE ADOPTED INTO HIS
FAMILY. HE INVITES US TO PARTICIPATE
IN HIS REDEMPTIVE MISSION.

RESPOND

APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

1. When you think about “going” to make disciples, what excites you, and what intimidates you?
2. What difference has being part of God’s family made in your life? How is God stirring your heart today for the nations?
3. What fears or distractions often hold you back from fully engaging in the mission to make disciples?
4. Who in your life might God be calling you to pursue with love, truth, and intentionality? How might their life change if they truly understood God’s love and invitation?
5. Is there any part of your life (schedule, finances, relationships, etc.) that needs to be reoriented around Jesus’ command to make disciples? What are some practical steps you could take this week?

SUGGESTED PRAYER

“Father, You desire that no one should perish but that all would come to repentance. You gave Jesus as a ransom so we could be reconciled to You and welcomed into Your family. Open my eyes to see others as Your precious masterpieces, just like me. Help me understand my role in Your Great Commission, and grant me the grace to embrace and faithfully pursue Your vision. Fill me with boldness and compassion, and empower me by Your Holy Spirit to share Your love courageously. May I depend fully on You as I step out in faith to make disciples, trusting that You will guide and sustain me every step of the way. Amen.”



PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

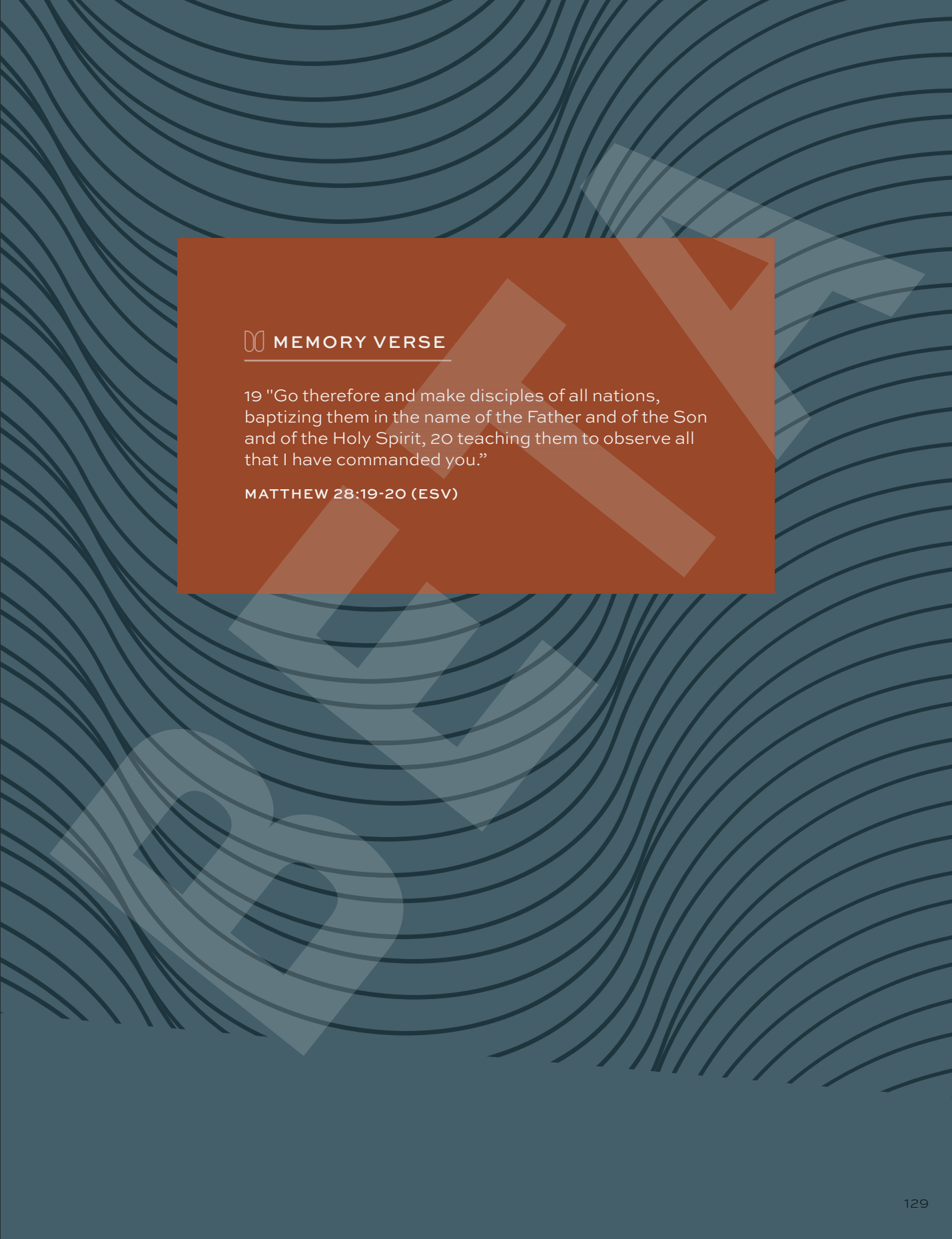
Part of how the Holy Spirit transforms us is through regular practices that help move what's in our head into our hearts and lives.

This week, try to incorporate a few of the following practices into your schedule. Next time you meet, take time to share about your experiences. Suggested Practices:

- » **MEDIA FAST AND PRAYER** — choose a day this week to take a break from media and entertainment and use that time to pray for those who don't know Jesus. Ask God to expand your heart for the world.
- » **PRAYING FOR THE NATIONS** — Set aside time each day this week to pray for specific people groups, cities, or countries. Use resources like **Operation World** or **Joshua Project** to learn about spiritual needs globally.
- » **PRAYER WALK IN YOUR COMMUNITY** — Walk through your neighborhood or city with eyes open to where God might be at work or calling you to engage. As you walk, pray silently for the people and places you pass. Ask God to show you where His love is needed and how you might join Him.
- » **MEDITATE** — Meditate daily on a Bible verse that fuels your love for God or compassion for those outside His family.
 - Some examples: Genesis 12:1–3, Isaiah 49:6, Matthew 28:18–20, John 3:16, Acts 1:8, and Revelation 7:9–10).
 - Journal how God's global heart stirs yours and share your reflections with your discipler.
- » **WRITE YOUR FAITH STORY** — Sharing the good news starts with being able to share your own story of encountering Jesus.
 - **WRITE** A 3-minute version of your testimony that highlights God's love, transformation, and invitation to others. Practice sharing it with a friend or group.
 - **SHARE** Your story with your discipler.
 - **CONSIDER** What is one step you can take to steward the message you've been entrusted with?
- » **MEMORIZE** — Matthew 28:19-20 (ESV)



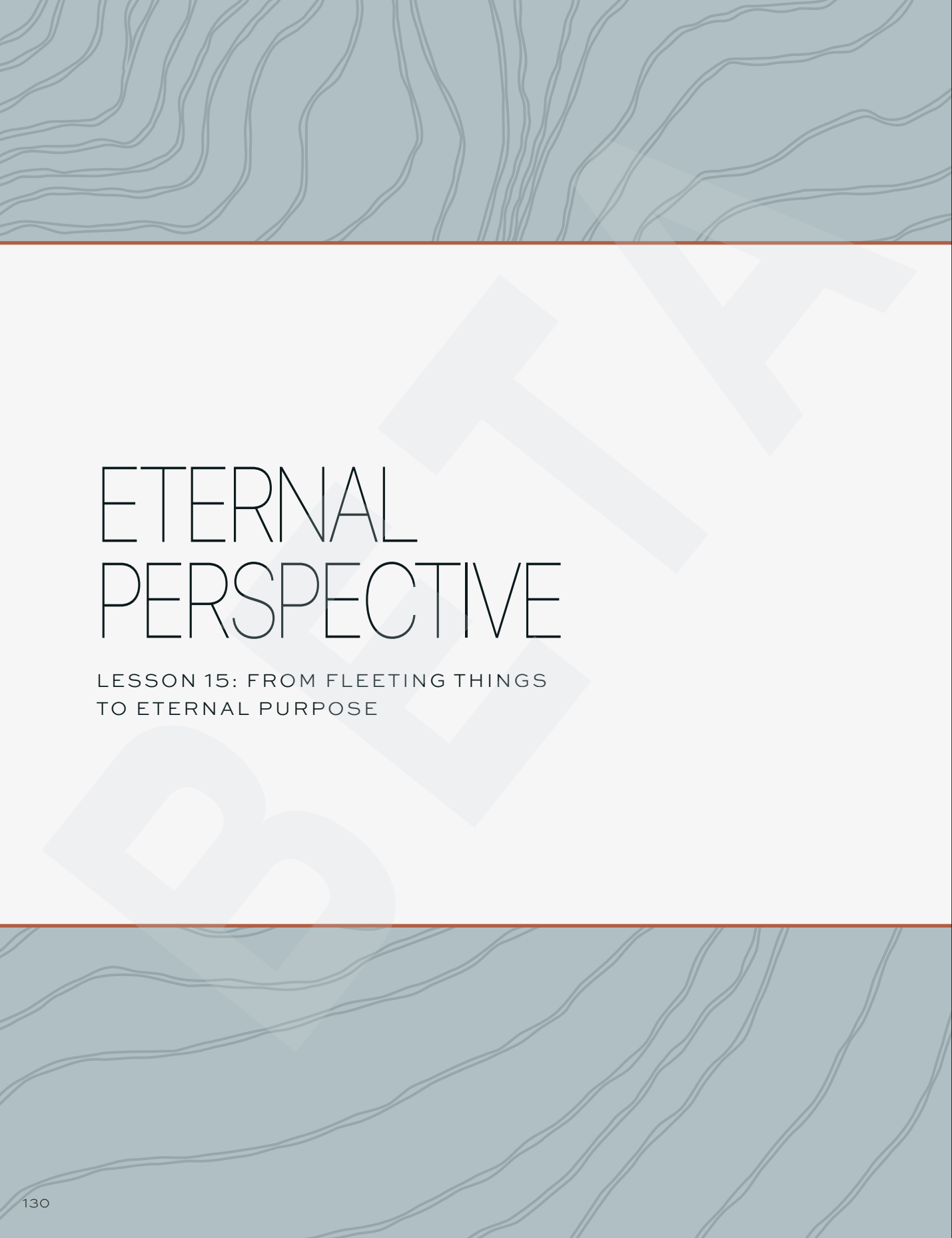
READ ARTICLE “THE SACRED TRUST OF THE GREAT COMMISSION” IN THE APPENDIX, ON PAGE 158.



MEMORY VERSE

19 "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you."

MATTHEW 28:19-20 (ESV)



ETERNAL PERSPECTIVE

LESSON 15: FROM FLEETING THINGS
TO ETERNAL PURPOSE

» LAUNCH

Much of today's cultural messaging urges us to look within ourselves for purpose in order to fulfill our desires with temporary pleasures. Jesus invites us to a life of eternal significance rooted in His eternal kingdom purposes.

- » In what ways do you see people today—both positively and negatively—trying to achieve something lasting? Where do you think that desire comes from?
- » What cultural messages encourage people to live only for the here and now?
- » In what ways do you personally find yourself influenced by those messages?



EXPLORE

READ: MATT 6:19-34 (ESV)

19 “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, 20 but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

22 “The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, 23 but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!

24 “No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.

25 “Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? 26 Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? 27 And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life?

28 And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, 29 yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. 30 But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? 31 Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ 32 For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. 33 But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. 34 “Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

DISCUSS TOGETHER

1. What reason does Jesus give for storing up treasures in heaven rather than on earth? What do you think He means by, “Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also”?
2. In verses 22-23, Jesus uses the eye and the body to illustrate a spiritual truth. What happens when the eye is healthy, and what happens when it is bad? If the eye represents what we focus on or desire, what does it mean if someone’s desires are “darkness”?
3. What are the two masters Jesus mentions, and why does He say it’s impossible to serve both?
4. Jesus tells us not to be anxious about our life (verse 25). What reasons does He give in verses 25-30 to support this?
5. Read verses 30-34 again. How should knowing that our heavenly Father cares for our needs shape what we seek in life? How does this perspective differ from those who don’t know God?

"BUT SEEK FIRST THE KINGDOM OF GOD
AND HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS, AND ALL
THESE THINGS WILL BE ADDED TO YOU.
“THEREFORE DO NOT BE ANXIOUS ABOUT
TOMORROW, FOR TOMORROW WILL BE
ANXIOUS FOR ITSELF. SUFFICIENT FOR THE
DAY IS ITS OWN TROUBLE."
- MATTHEW 6:33-34 (ESV)

PUTTING THE PIECES TOGETHER

CONSIDER THESE VERSES FROM SCRIPTURE (ESV):

PSALM 90:12: “teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom.”

JAMES 4:14: “yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes.”

MARK 8: 35-37: “For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel’s will save it. For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? For what can a man give in return for his soul?”

COL 3:1-2: “If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.”

PHIL 3:20: “But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.”

There is a longing in the human heart for significance and for an impact that lives beyond us. God’s Word says that God has “put eternity into man’s heart.” We have a longing and desire to live lives that make a difference that will last. The desire for significance is deeply rooted in us, but it often becomes bent or broken when we search for it in temporary things that will not last. We pour our time and energy into projects, sports, achievements, the approval of others, or building wealth - yet these pursuits ultimately prove empty. Even when we reach our goals, we’re often left chasing the next one. When our longing to make a difference is disconnected from God’s eternal purposes, it leaves us feeling unfulfilled and empty - because we were created to live for eternity.

In the person of Jesus, heaven meets earth - the immortal God takes on flesh and brings the Kingdom of heaven to us. He invites us to join in His mission of seeing God’s will done on earth as it is in heaven. This gives our everyday lives eternal significance and purpose as we love God, love others, and serve Him faithfully in our daily lives.

Through Jesus’ death and resurrection, God offers us the gift of eternal life. This impacts not only our present, but also our eternity! And He invites us into the mission of being His ambassadors on this earth to help others come to know Him and be reconciled to Him, impacting their eternity as well.

BIG IDEA

JESUS INVITES US TO LAY DOWN TREASURE
THAT FADES AWAY IN ORDER TO INVEST OUR
LIVES IN HIS KINGDOM THAT LASTS FOREVER.



RESPOND

APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

1. What would it look like for you to store up treasures in heaven instead of on earth?
2. How do you see money “mastering” people in our world today? Are there ways you notice it influencing your own life? If so, what practical steps could help you resist its pull and keep God first?
3. In what areas do you struggle with worry or anxiety about your needs? How do Jesus’ words about not being anxious speak to your current worries or struggles?
4. How might adopting an eternal perspective impact the way you handle finances, possessions, or ambitions? How can you practically seek God’s Kingdom first in your daily decisions and priorities?
5. Who can you encourage or share with about living with an eternal focus this week?

SUGGESTED PRAYER

“Father, we come humbly before You, confessing the ways we live for ourselves—investing our time, energy, and resources in things that will not last. We repent of our foolishness, our empty pursuits, and our desire to build our own earthly kingdoms. Thank You for the gospel—that we can rest fully in the finished work of Jesus and receive His invitation to eternal life by grace through faith. Empower us to live each day for Your eternal purposes, and open our eyes to the opportunities You give us to bring Your Kingdom here on earth as it is in heaven. Amen.”



PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

Part of how the Holy Spirit transforms us is through regular practices that help move what's in our head into our hearts and lives.

This week, try to incorporate a few of the following practices into your schedule. Next time you meet, take time to share about your experiences. Suggested Practices:

- » **PRAYER** — As you go through your week, continue in the practice of prayer. Ask God to help you see the world through Jesus' eyes—with an eternal perspective. Each day, invite Him to show you opportunities to make a lasting impact for His Kingdom in the lives of others.
- » **PRESENCE & INTENTIONAL LISTENING** — Slow down. Be willing to linger with others and ask deeper questions about life.
- » **GENEROSITY** — Look for opportunities this week to give—whether your time, resources, or money. Choose one specific way to give, no matter how big or small. When we open our hands and release earthly things, we make room to receive the eternal things God wants to give us.
- » **REFLECTION** — Make a specific list of things that will last forever, then take time to evaluate your daily life in light of that list. What changes might you make to invest more intentionally in “heavenly treasure”?
- » **MEMORIZE** — Matt 6:19-21 (ESV)

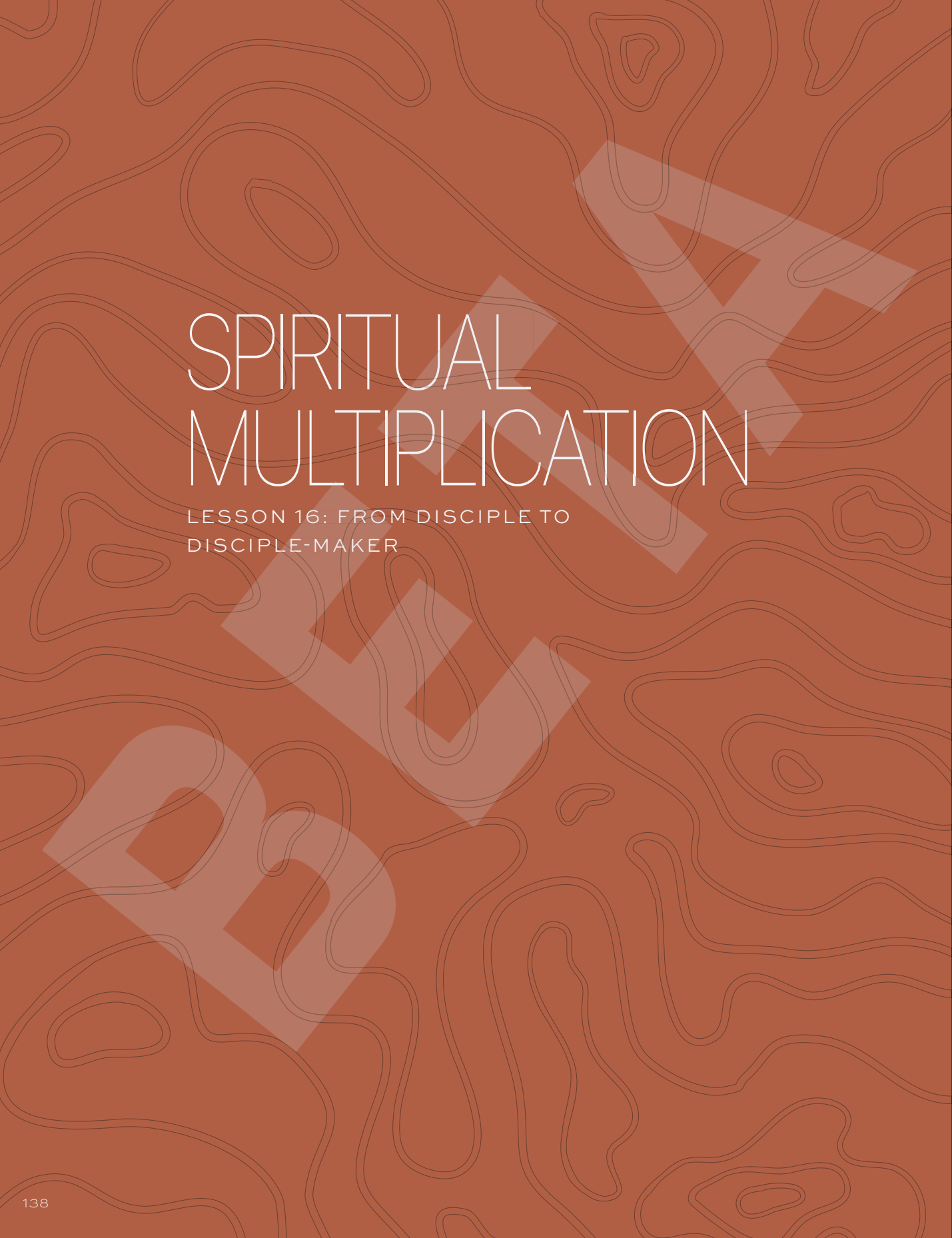


**READ ARTICLE “LIVING WITH ETERNAL PURPOSE”
IN THE APPENDIX, ON PAGE 160.**

MEMORY VERSE

“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

MATT 6:19-21 (ESV)



SPIRITUAL MULTIPLICATION

LESSON 16: FROM DISCIPLE TO
DISCIPLE-MAKER

LAUNCH

Just like our human DNA provides the blueprint for who we become as people, Scripture gives us the DNA that shapes how we become a disciple of Jesus.

In an earlier lesson, we learned that Jesus instructs us to “go and make disciples.” The word “disciple” simply means learner. Followers of Jesus are learners of Jesus in order to become more like Him. But what is the process of becoming like Jesus? And how does one “make disciples?” We can identify a disciple by three important hallmarks:

- A disciple walks by faith
- A disciple communicates their faith
- A disciple multiplies their faith

Over the past few weeks we’ve been focusing on practices and principles that help us walk by faith. We’ve also looked at what it means to “bear witness” which gave us some great understanding on communicating our faith. In this lesson we will look at how we multiply our faith, or what we call spiritual multiplication. Let’s start with some questions:

- 🔗 What does it mean to “multiply our faith”? How do you think someone might go about doing that?
- 🔗 What do you think keeps people from “making disciples” as Scripture commands?

2 TIM 2:2 (NIV)

2 “And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others.”

1 THESS 1:5-8 (NIV)

5 “... You know how we lived among you for your sake. 6 You became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you welcomed the message in the midst of severe suffering with the joy given by the Holy Spirit. 7 And so you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia. 8 The Lord’s message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia—your faith in God has become known everywhere.”

EXPLORE

READ 2 TIM 2:2 (NIV)

BIBLICAL CONTEXT

The Book of 2 Timothy stands as the Apostle Paul’s poignant and deeply personal final letter, written from a Roman prison shortly before his martyrdom. Addressed to his beloved protégé and “true son in the faith,” Timothy, who was leading the church in Ephesus, the letter serves as a passionate exhortation to remain steadfast in the Gospel, endure hardship, and faithfully carry on the ministry in the face of growing opposition and false teachings.

DISCUSS TOGETHER

-  What is Paul asking Timothy to do?
-  What might be some qualities of “reliable people” that you would look for as you think about multiplying your life?

1 THESS 1:5-8 (NIV)

BIBLICAL CONTEXT

The Thessalonians became imitators of Paul, his companions, and ultimately of the Lord. They embraced the message with joy given by the Holy Spirit, even in the midst of severe suffering. Their faith and transformation became so evident that they served as a model for believers in other regions, specifically Macedonia and Achaia.

READ 1 COR 10:31-11:1 (NIV)

BIBLICAL CONTEXT

Paul gives us a great example of how to multiply our faith—follow me as I follow Jesus. First and foremost, we need to be growing in our personal relationship with God and from there we can lead others into what it looks like to imitate Christ. This is the true essence of discipleship.

DISCUSS TOGETHER

- 🔗 In what ways do you see spiritual multiplication in these verses?
- 🔗 What would it look like to be an “example” and a “model for believers”? What part does modeling play in spiritual multiplication?

READ MATT 28:18-20 (NIV)

BIBLICAL CONTEXT

These verses from the end of the Gospel of Matthew, often called the “Great Commission,” are considered to be some of Jesus’ final instructions to His followers. He commands people to spread His teachings and to go out and make more disciples from all people groups worldwide, with the assurance of His divine power and constant companionship in this mission.

DISCUSS TOGETHER

- 🔗 What verbs do you see in these passages? How can we accomplish these actions?
- 🔗 Matthew 28:20 Says we are to teach our disciples everything Jesus has commanded us. What are the important elements of our faith that we should teach others?

1 COR 10:31-11:1 (NIV)

31 "So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. 32 Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks or the church of God— 33 even as I try to please everyone in every way. For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many, so that they may be saved. 1 Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ."

MAT 28:18-20 (NIV)

18 "Then Jesus came to them and said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.'"

PUTTING THE PIECES TOGETHER

A follower of Jesus is truly a disciple of Jesus! Disciples imitate Jesus by loving the lost, caring for the poor, forgiving and being forgiven, and ultimately, obeying the will of the Father.

The gospels make it clear that Jesus meant for the message of God's kingdom and the good news of God's love and forgiveness to spread well beyond Jerusalem. Jesus chose a group of twelve men who lived with and served alongside Him for three years. He commissioned not only the twelve but all His followers to carry on the mission of God in the power of God's Spirit. This is the model Jesus left us.

We are called and privileged to do the same. So where do we even begin in this process of raising up multiplying disciples? Here's a helpful acronym to consider when thinking through people you could ask to join you in following after Jesus.

Qualities of Faithful People (F.A.I.T.H.)

- F** *Faithful people* – People who show up full of faith and eager to serve
- A** *Available* – Available and eager to pitch in and help
- I** *Intentional* – Excited about regularly engaging with people in their corner of the world and sharing the gospel
- T** *Teachable* – Eager to learn and to guide others toward kingdom impact
- H** *Heart for God* – Hungry to know God and seeks transformation

BIG IDEA

WE ARE CALLED TO BE FRUITFUL AND MULTIPLY,
THEREFORE WE INVEST OURSELVES INTO OTHER
PEOPLE. THIS IS PART OF LIVING OUT OUR CALLING
AND BEING CONNECTED TO GOD'S BIG STORY.

“2 And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others”

— 2 TIMOTHY 2:2 (NIV)

Time and again we see Jesus going against conventional wisdom, choosing those who appear to be the least qualified: tax collectors, prostitutes, and the like. Paul chose young Timothy who lacked confidence and served alongside new believers like Aquila and Priscilla.

But one thing we observe throughout Scripture — **disciples of Jesus have always displayed a vibrant faith, an eagerness to serve, an intentionality in gathering with**

others, a teachable heart, and a longing for people to know the Savior whom they loved.

Take a step of faith and, with intention, ask a few faithful people to join you in the mission of God in their corner of the world. Just think — we are followers of Jesus today, some two thousands years after Jesus ascended into heaven. We are living proof that spiritual multiplication continues to carry the gospel to the ends of the earth!

RESPOND

APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

1. Can you think of one or more people who you could help become more like Jesus?
2. Are there any skills you would like to grow in to be better equipped to pour into others?
3. What might be your first 3 steps towards practicing spiritual multiplication? What might keep you from moving forward with your plans?
4. How can I support you as you take those next steps?

SUGGESTED PRAYER

“God thank you that you’re with us and that you choose to use us. You have used your children to bring the good news of Jesus to the world for centuries. Allow us to build your kingdom through teaching others your truths. Fill us with your Spirit that we might accomplish the good works you’re prepared in advance for us to do (Eph 2:8-10). We pray this in Jesus’s name. Amen.”

MEMORY VERSE

2 "And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others."

2 TIMOTHY 2:2 (NIV)





PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

Part of how the Holy Spirit transforms us is through regular practices that help move what's in our head into our hearts and lives.

This week, try to incorporate a few of the following practices into your schedule. Next time you meet, take time to share about your experiences. Suggested Practices:

- » **Relational Map** — Write down the names of people in your life—friends, classmates, coworkers, or family members—who don't yet know Jesus or who could benefit from discipleship. Ask God to highlight 1–2 people you could begin praying for and intentionally investing in.
- » **Multiply** — If you're ready, invite someone to begin meeting regularly and use the Discipleship Pathway to guide your time.
- » **Scripture study** — Read through one of the gospels and make note of all the activities you see Jesus doing. Pick one to practice over the next month.
- » **Fast & Pray** — Choose one mealtime this week to fast and intercede specifically for God to raise up more laborers through your life (Luke 10:2).
- » **Pray** — If the Lord has laid specific people on your heart to invite into a discipleship relationship, begin to pray for them regularly. Ask the Lord to bless them and prepare them for how he wants to use them to advance His kingdom.
- » **Memorize** — 2 Timothy 2:2 (NIV)

APPENDIX

ARTICLES FOR FURTHER STUDY

FAITH AND THE GIFT OF ASSURANCE

There are very few certainties in the world we live in. We often find ourselves asking, “How can we know for sure?” Our ever-changing culture makes it easy to question whether anything can truly be certain—including our salvation. Can we really know that we have eternal life? Why does assurance of salvation matter?

Though we may not have certainty in all areas of life, deep within us is a longing to know where we stand with God. The good news is: you can have assurance of your salvation.

In this article, we’ll consider three important questions:

1. What is the assurance of salvation?
2. Why is it important?
3. How can I have assurance of salvation?

Let’s explore what John writes in his first epistle:

“And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life. I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.”
— 1 John 5:11–13

WHAT IS THE ASSURANCE OF SALVATION?

The assurance of salvation is the confidence that your sins are forgiven and that you have received the gift of eternal life. It’s knowing that you belong to Christ and that your eternity is secure.

This passage teaches that eternal life is given by God through His Son, Jesus Christ. It is a gift we receive by faith. Without belief in the name of Jesus, there is no eternal life and no assurance. But to those who believe, John offers God’s testimony: you may know that you have eternal life.

WHY IS THE ASSURANCE OF SALVATION IMPORTANT?

Imagine a football player stepping onto the field without his helmet. He would be putting himself at serious risk. His helmet protects his head and without it, the consequences could be life-threatening.

Paul draws on a similar image in Ephesians 6:17 when he describes the helmet of salvation as part of the spiritual armor we must wear. Likely writing from prison, possibly chained to a Roman guard, Paul had a clear image of the protective role a helmet played in battle.

Likewise, assurance of salvation protects our minds and hearts in the midst of spiritual battle. Without it, we

lack a solid foundation for spiritual growth. Doubt and uncertainty can hinder our ability to walk confidently with Christ and bear witness to others.

John wrote his entire first epistle so that believers would have confidence in their salvation. God doesn't want His children to live in fear or uncertainty. He invites us to rest in the security of His promise.

HOW CAN I HAVE ASSURANCE OF SALVATION?

The simple but profound answer is: by faith in Christ alone. Paul writes,

“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God, not by works, so that no one can boast.” — Ephesians 2:8–9

Faith means trusting in the person and work of Jesus Christ and believing that He died for your sins, was buried, and rose again (see 1 Corinthians 15:1–5). Salvation is not something we earn; it is a gift to be received.

Paul also assures us:

“For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” — Romans 10:13

And as John 3:16 declares:

“For God so loved the world, that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.” — John 3:16

So let me ask you:

Have you placed your faith in Christ? Have you trusted Him as your Savior and Lord? Is your faith bearing fruit in your life? Is there evidence of a relationship with Jesus that is growing, active, and real?

John writes, “to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.”

This is the assurance of salvation. You can live in that certainty.

Jesus said in His high priestly prayer,

“Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.” — John 17:3

Eternal life begins with knowing Christ. Do you know Him?

ACTION STEPS

1. Reflect on the question: Do I have assurance of my salvation? If not, trust Christ today.
2. Ask yourself: What evidence do I see in my life that points to a genuine relationship with Jesus?
3. Consider: How does having assurance change the way I live, think, and share my faith?



THE WEIGHT OF UNFORGIVENESS, THE GIFT OF RELEASE

I hadn't spoken to him in over a year. The rift between us was deep, filled with threats, false accusations, backstabbing, gaslighting, and unethical behavior. The list of offenses felt endless. I had no desire to reconnect.

Then, on Mother's Day, the phone rang. I answered without recognizing the number. It was him. Ironically, I had laryngitis and couldn't speak. Months passed, and I heard from a friend that he was missing. While I was disturbed by the news, I also felt strangely detached. Still, drawn in by the crisis, I suggested some places he might be, and he was found. He had been in a community hospital for seven days, admitted under the name "John Doe."

At first, I refused to visit. I was determined to avoid reentering a toxic situation. But the next day, I felt the familiar tug of obligation, the "should" in me—and I went. There he was, unconscious. The nurse looked relieved someone had come. I stood there, watching, my face masked with concern while my heart remained hardened. I thought, He's just reaping what he's sown.

I left, untouched and unmoved.

The next two days were filled with inner turmoil. I rehearsed every wrong he'd done. I didn't pray. I didn't ask God to soften my heart or heal him. I was numb.

Then, on the third day, I sensed an unexpected urgency: Go back.

"Why, Lord?" I asked.

To release forgiveness, came the gentle whisper.

I wanted clarity, something scripted and safe. But all I heard was: Go.

So I went, guided by the Holy Spirit. No agenda. No clever words.

When I walked into his hospital room, he was still unconscious, now on a ventilator. I remembered that hearing is often the last sense to fade, so I began speaking, releasing forgiveness. One by one, I named the offenses. When I had finished, I reached out and gently touched his arm.

Then came another whisper: Ask him to forgive you.

Me? I hadn't done what he had done. I didn't think I had anything to confess. But I obeyed. I asked him to forgive the ways I had wronged him, my judgment, my silence, my hardened heart.

That's when I saw it: tears welling up in his eyes.

He heard.

He accepted my forgiveness.

And he forgave me.

In that sacred moment, I sensed the Lord whisper once more: And I forgive you too.

I left my brother's hospital room with a lightness I hadn't known in years. I had accepted his tear-stained forgiveness. And I had released mine.

We never spoke again. But I sat by his bedside in his final days, reading Scripture until he breathed his last.

UNFORGIVENESS IS SIN. AND SIN IS HEAVY.

Relief comes through confession and the Lord meets us there, ready to forgive. Psalm 32:1–5 says it beautifully:

1"How joyful is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered!

2How joyful is a person whom the Lord does not charge with iniquity and in whose spirit is no deceit!

3When I kept silent, my bones became brittle from my groaning all day long.

4For day and night Your hand was heavy on me; my strength was drained as in the summer's heat.

5Then I acknowledged my sin to You and did not conceal my iniquity. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord," and You forgave the guilt of my sin." — Psalm 32:1–5 (CSB)

FOR REFLECTION

I didn't realize I was carrying unforgiveness. I thought I didn't need to ask for forgiveness because I wasn't the one who had done the wrong. But my heart was hard — critical and unyielding.

God, in His kindness, led me to repentance. I only wish I had asked Him to search my heart sooner, before my brother passed away. But that day, with tears streaming down both of our faces, I heard it clearly in my soul: Your sins are forgiven. Both his — and mine.

Is there someone you need to forgive or ask forgiveness from?

The Lord invites you to the table. He brings these things to light gently—not with condemnation, but with grace. *Will you trust Him?*



MAKING OUR HOME IN CHRIST

“In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.”
— John 14:20

Imagine standing shoulder to shoulder with a sea of others at Disney World’s fireworks finale or in the final moments of the Eras Tour. You glance around and see people weeping, smiling, utterly captivated.

There’s awe. Rapture. Tears of delight streaming down faces. In these moments, something becomes crystal clear: we were made to experience transcendent joy.

But then the music fades. The lights come up. You’re jostled in the crowd waiting for the monorail, or navigating traffic back to reality. You carry a phone full of pictures and an ache in your chest. When will I feel that again?

C.S. Lewis captured this dynamic well:

“Joy...has indeed one characteristic, and one only, in common with [other pleasures]; the fact that anyone who has experienced it will want it again... I doubt whether anyone who has tasted it would ever, if both were in his power, exchange it for all the pleasures in the world.”

If we were made for joy, why does it vanish so quickly?

Into this ache, Jesus speaks:

“These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.” — (John 15:11)

So how do we experience that kind of joy? Jesus tells us: by abiding in Him.

To abide means to remain, to stay, to dwell. The word abode shares the same root—it’s a place of residence, a home. Abiding in Christ is about making our home in Him. It’s not a temporary stay; it’s a way of being. A settledness. A sanctuary.

Yet if we’re honest, we often try to make our home elsewhere. We run to habits, affections, attachments, or dependencies. In [The Book of Waking Up: Experiencing the Divine Love That Reorders a Life](#), Seth Haines explores some of these false refuges:

Habits: Don’t we all have patterns we run to in order to numb discomfort? Podcasts, YouTube videos, streaming series—even the comforting voice of a sports documentary—can distract us from the ache of silence.

Affections: In our loneliness, we turn to lesser loves: money, success, relationships, a good meal, or the next adventure. In the absence of loving God with our whole heart, our affections scatter.

Attachments: We chase the next idea, the next purchase, the next follower. Our phones hum with promise and yet pull us away from presence—from our friends, our hopes, and even ourselves.

Dependencies: Sometimes it’s the obvious things—alcohol, pills, sugar. But sometimes it’s subtler: the need to be right, to be in control, to be liked. Ask yourself, “Am I free to let it go, or do I always give in?”

Here’s the stunning news: abiding in Christ isn’t something we have to manufacture. It begins with the reality that He has already made His home in us through the indwelling Holy Spirit. We don’t have to strive to earn His presence. We’re invited to rest in it.

Spiritual practices, or disciplines, help us dwell more deeply. They don't earn us God's love. Instead, they open space for us to receive and respond to it.

Some practices that help us abide:

- Morning prayer
- Reading Scripture
- Listening to worship music
- Keeping Sabbath

Just as physical training transforms our bodies, spiritual practices shape our souls. They gently turn our gaze toward Jesus, forming us into people who live by His love.

And we remember the wise words of Dallas Willard:

“Grace is not opposed to effort. It is opposed to earning.”

We were made for joy. And joy is found not in fleeting moments, but in abiding relationship. As we learn to make our home in Jesus, we begin to experience what He promised:

“In your presence is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.” — (Psalm 16:11)

FOR REFLECTION

1. What are some of the “false homes” you tend to dwell in—habits, attachments, dependencies?
2. Which spiritual practice could help you more intentionally abide in Christ this week?
3. When have you experienced joy in God's presence? What was that like?

Jesus invites us not into a visit, but into a home. He has made His dwelling in you. Will you make your dwelling in Him?



HOW WE CAN ENGAGE WITH GOD'S WORD

Engaging with God's Word can take many forms—we can listen, read, reflect, study, memorize, teach, and more. In all these ways, God is speaking. And as He does, the most important thing is that we are open and responsive to His voice.

Let's explore some ways to engage with Scripture and practice them with a passage from the book of James.

PREPARATION

The fact that God has spoken to us through His Word is incredible. Recognizing this and preparing our hearts to receive what He has to say is the first step. As you come to Scripture, begin by praying. Thank God for His Word and ask His Spirit not only to speak truth to you, but also to help you receive and respond to it.

Take a moment now to do that.

LISTEN / READ

Romans 10:17 says, "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ."

Hearing God's Word builds our faith. As you read Scripture, slow down and allow space between the phrases so your mind and heart have time to absorb what is being said. Read the passage below aloud twice—once as the reader, once as the listener. If you're doing this on your own, try listening to the passage using a bible app.

James 1:22–25 (ESV)

22. But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.

23. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror.

24. For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like.

25. But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.

REFLECT

After hearing God's Word, allow time for the Spirit to give you understanding. Too often we rush to our own conclusions without pausing to listen. Take two minutes in silence, inviting God to direct your attention. Then share how He led your thoughts.

STUDY

Studying Scripture helps us understand more deeply what God is saying. When we study, we look for answers to three core questions:

- What does it say?
- What does it mean?
- How should I respond?

These can be explored simply or more deeply, but asking good questions leads to greater insight. Jesus invites us to seek and promises that we will find. Many believers use the inductive Bible study method, which aligns with these three steps: Observation, Interpretation, and Application

Let's try it now using our passage. James 1:22–25 (ESV)

OBSERVATION: WHAT DOES IT SAY?

Simply put: How would you summarize what's written in your own words? (Resist the urge to interpret or apply—just describe the content.)

Going deeper: Make 10 observations about the details. Examples:

- "Hearers only are deceiving themselves."
- "The law is perfect and it brings liberty."
- "Blessing comes through doing."
- What do you notice?

INTERPRETATION: WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

What is the main message God wants us to understand? This could be a truth about God, a promise, a warning, a correction, an encouragement, or an instruction. Also consider:

- Why does God say this?
- How is it relevant to our lives?

Going deeper: Ask questions that take you further.

- What does it mean to be a “doer of the Word”?
- Why is forgetting what we see in a mirror a helpful image for not obeying Scripture?
- Why does perseverance matter in this process?

If you don’t know the answer, seek it! Ask a trusted believer, search Scripture, or use a trusted resource. Let the Spirit lead your learning.

APPLICATION: HOW WILL I RESPOND?

This is where transformation happens. Application moves us from information to obedience. Ask:

- How is God asking me to respond?
- Is there a change I need to make, a habit to start, a sin to confess?

For example:

“Am I someone who hears the Word but rarely acts on it? What could acting on it look like today?”

Ask the Spirit to empower your response. He will provide the strength to follow through if you invite Him.

Pray now, asking God to show you what step to take—and then share with one another (or share with your

discipler the next time you meet) what that will look like in your daily life. Pray for each other to be both hearers and doers of the Word.

MEDITATE / MEMORIZE

God’s Word renews our minds and replaces false beliefs with truth. Meditating and memorizing Scripture allows it to take root in us. Choose one verse—or even just a phrase—to carry with you today.

Which line from James 1:22–25 will you keep with you?

PRAY

God’s Word shapes our prayers. Choose a verse to turn into a personal request. For example:

“God, make me a doer of the Word and not just a hearer. Let me persevere in obedience and experience the blessing you promise.”

How do you think God will respond to that prayer?

Read 1 John 5:14–15 for encouragement.

“This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us...”

PRACTICE

Romans 12:2 tells us not to conform to the patterns of the world, but to be transformed by the renewing of our minds. This happens not just through hearing God’s Word, but by putting it into practice.

Putting truth to the test in our daily lives proves to us that God’s Word is good, trustworthy, and life-giving.

How could you “test out” the truth of James 1:22–25 this week?



A DAILY PRAYER OF SURRENDER

“Lord Jesus, I surrender to You.” Surrender is a difficult word to swallow. It sounds like losing—and no one wants to feel like a loser. No wonder it’s hard to surrender to God. Our instinct tells us it might not work out in our favor. Maybe He’s disappointed in us. Maybe we’ll lose control of something we value.

But Scripture reveals the truth: surrendering to Jesus is what is most in our best interest.

God has given Jesus complete authority over all creation. Bowing the knee, an act of submission and loyalty, is the appropriate response to the sovereign king of the universe. But He is not a harsh dictator. Jesus is our loving King, who leads us with kindness and purpose. His plans for us are good, even when they’re difficult.

God created us, redeemed us, and calls us into a life of freedom and fruitfulness. We have no reason to fear what submission will bring. He is not out to make us miserable. Instead, He desires for us to walk in relationship with Him and with others, marked by His love.

Following Jesus wholeheartedly requires surrender. We cannot follow our own agenda and His at the same time. Trying to do both only creates more tension and stress. We may not know where He will lead, but we can trust the One who is leading. He’s already prepared good works for us to walk in.

Now is the time to hand over the reins and trust Jesus to guide your life to the very best place, far beyond what you could imagine for yourself.

FOUR DAILY PRAYERS OF SURRENDER

These four prayer-postures help form a daily rhythm of surrender to Jesus. As you pray them, they will shape your heart and life around His mission and character.

“I will Go where You want me to Go.”

When Jesus finished His mission on earth, He gave His followers this charge: “Go, and make disciples of all nations...” (Matt. 28:19). In His prayer in John 17, He tells the Father, “As You sent Me into the world, so I have sent them into the world.”

Going where Jesus sends us will always, in some way, connect to helping others know and follow Him.

Unfortunately, many have viewed the call to “make disciples” as a job for a few trained professionals. But Jesus intends it for every believer, no matter their career or season of life. As we go about our everyday lives, we are called to live on mission with our words, actions, presence, and love.

Will you go where God wants you to go today?

“I will Do what You want me to Do”

Doing what God wants can feel intimidating—like He might hand us an impossible to-do list. But Jesus made it simple: “So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets” (Matthew 7:12).

In each interaction in your day, how would you desire to be treated? Doing what Jesus wants us to do means that is the way to treat others. Micah 6:8 gives three categories that help us think practically about what we do: treating others fairly and without partiality, showing mercy to those in need, and living in humility before God by not putting ourselves as greater or more important than others. Imagine a world where we all treated each other that way. Living this way and doing what God desires, will make your life stand out. It will impact the people around you, even when they don’t live the same way.

Will you do what God wants you to do today?

“I will Say what You want me to Say”

Words carry weight. Scripture says: “The tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great things. How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire!” (James 3:5)

Our words can destroy or bring life. They reveal what’s inside of us. Our world is filled with speech characterized by hatred, jealousy, condemnation and anger. Jesus said that “out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.” Our speech will reveal what is deep down inside of us.

Sometimes, saying what God wants means telling someone about Jesus. It always means using our words to talk to others in the way Jesus would: to bless, encourage, or speak truth in love. We can affirm others, extend forgiveness, and speak life into people’s pain.

Will you say what God wants you to say today?

“I will Give what You want me to Give”

God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son for our salvation. God’s love is so intertwined with giving that it’s impossible to think of one without the other. When we follow Jesus, we will find ourselves giving in ways we hadn’t before - of our time, money, resources, energy, and affection. Jesus was well aware of the magnetic pull of money and possessions: “No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the

one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money” (Matthew 6:24). The quest for money or possessions is a powerful force within us and can keep us from following God fully.

How do we overcome such a strong pull? It comes about through giving, and like other aspects of this prayer, it is ultimately a heart issue. Money itself isn’t the problem—it’s our attachment to it. Everything we have belongs to God, and we are stewards of His resources. He entrusts them to us to use for His glory. So, nothing I have is really mine to just do with whatever I want.

Will you give whatever God wants you to give today?

Romans 12:1 reminds us: “**present [ourselves] as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is [our] spiritual service of worship.**” This daily prayer of surrender—“Go, Do, Say, Give”—is a way to worship. It expresses our desire to follow Jesus wholeheartedly, not just in theory, but in action.

Remember, this isn’t something we accomplish through sheer effort. We need the power of the Holy Spirit to surrender daily. Ask Him to fill you. Trust Him to lead. And know that His strength will enable you to walk the surrendered life, one day at a time.



RETURNING TO JOY

Loving by faith is simple at its core. We are called to love God and to love the people He loves. God so loved the world. So we are invited to do the same. But love can get complicated. What if we don't want to love certain people? What if we don't have the strength, energy, or even the desire to love others?

Many of us can quickly recall times in our lives when we were not loved—by a family member, a community, or even a church. When we don't experience love, acceptance, or approval, our hearts can grow weary. Wounded. Closed off.

And yet, the invitation of Jesus remains: to love by faith. So as we reflect on the past week, how did it go?

Were you able to love by faith? Where was it easy? Where was it hard?

As we journey with Christ and others, we must learn the art of returning to joy.

Psalm 16:11 reminds us:

*You make known to me the path of life;
you will fill me with joy in your presence,
with eternal pleasures at your right hand.*

Returning to joy means re-centering our hearts in God's presence. It is where the path of life is found. No matter the circumstances, burdens, or failures we carry (and we all do), joy reminds us that God is with us. He is Immanuel. And His joy can renew us, even when love feels hard.

We want to become people who are regularly filled with God's love, and who generously pass that love on to others. So let's briefly review what it means to love by faith.

What is loving by faith?

As Christians, we do everything by faith. We love God and receive His love by faith. We trust in His character—"God is love"—and obey His command to love others as Christ has loved us.

Loving by faith is simply giving others the love of God that we've received through the Holy Spirit.

Dr. Bill Bright described loving by faith as an essential practice in the Christian life—one that we must learn and continue to grow in. It's not based on feelings, but on our trust in God's truth and empowerment.

Why is it important?

Jesus said that those who are forgiven much will love much.

His way of living—marked by grace, forgiveness, and love—is radically different from the world. And it's the very way God has chosen to make Himself known.

When we love by faith, we experience God more deeply and grow in Christlikeness. Over time, it forms us into mature disciples. It's also how we reflect God's nature to the world.

If our lives aren't marked by love, people will walk away with a distorted view of who God is. But if our lives are overflowing with His love, others will catch a glimpse of heaven breaking in.

How can I do it?

As the Karate Kid famously put it, “wax on, wax off”—loving by faith is built through everyday practices.

Spiritually speaking, it’s: Love God, Love Others.

It starts with receiving- remembering and experiencing God’s love for us. Then it becomes giving- offering that love to others through our words, posture, presence, and sacrifice.

Loving by faith looks like:

- Listening well
- Showing up when it's hard
- Surrendering the need to be in control
- Living dependently on Christ
- Growing in prayer, spiritual discernment, and emotional maturity

As we take on new roles and responsibilities in life and leadership, loving by faith requires us to release our grip on how others respond to us. When we trust God to be at work in us and through us, we’re free to love without strings attached.

A PRAYER FOR RETURNING TO JOY

Father, we ask for your power and your presence. Would you help us to embrace the life of loving others by faith? Help us and our communities of faith to see the people around us with Your eyes. Give us the grace to grow in love, even when it’s hard. And when we fail, help us be quick to confess and return to You. Thank You for Your mercy, grace, and forgiveness that’s available to all. When it is difficult or when we fail to love, help us to be quick to confess and repent. Restore to us the joy of Your presence. ~ Amen



ROOTED TO GROW: LIVING IN GOSPEL COMMUNITY

When you go to get a new plant for your garden or a pot in your house, it often comes in a small black plastic container with barely enough soil to survive. That container is meant to be temporary.

We all know what would happen if you pulled the plant out, shook off the dirt, and left it sitting on a windowsill. It would quickly wither. Instead, when you bring it home, you place it in a larger pot or in a garden with plenty of rich, nourishing soil so it can thrive.

We are like that plant. Deep inside, we know we were created in and for community. And now, through Christ, we have been made new and can be replanted in the soil of Gospel Community. Only a community rooted in grace and truth—a place of spiritual nourishment, loving feedback, and growth, like Jesus cultivated with His disciples—can help the gospel take root in our hearts and produce lasting transformation.

A DOSE OF CAUTION AND REALITY

Let's be honest. Community, even church community, can be both a place of healing and a place of hurt. Have you experienced pain or disappointment in community, even Christian community? You're not alone. The very gift God designed for our flourishing has been touched by sin and shame.

So we need to be wise. Examine the fruit of a community before you plant your life there. Look for evidence of gospel-centeredness, grace, and truth. But also remember: people will fail us and we will fail them. The Church is not the gospel, but it is

called to embody the gospel. Forgiveness, grace, and mercy are what allow any community to grow into Christlikeness together.

How might the gospel shape the way we respond when we're hurt in community? That question matters deeply. Will we isolate ourselves, or will we allow the gospel to lead us toward restoration, patience, and long-term relationships rooted in Christ?

WHAT ABOUT A LOCAL CHURCH?

Can I just watch church online or be part of a small group with friends?

Online messages and gospel-centered small groups are a great supplement, but not a substitute for a local church. The local church is God's ongoing provision for Gospel Community. It's where you're taught sound doctrine, shepherded through different seasons of life, and supported in suffering, celebration, and service.

The church walks with us through milestones—whether it's facing illness, navigating transitions, experiencing loss, or celebrating joyful moments like weddings, graduations, or baptisms. It's a community that cares for you, knows you, and stands with you. It also becomes the family that receives and discipless those who come to faith through your witness. No other institution on earth is charged with that mission.

Here are some questions to ask when seeking a church:

- Do they affirm a commitment to the authority of the Word of God?
- Is Scripture treated as holy and handled with care?
- Does the community value personal and corporate study of the Bible?
- Do they affirm the inerrant and infallible nature of Scripture?

THE FRUIT OF GOSPEL COMMUNITY

In Gospel Community, we should see love, patience, and peace growing. It's not a perfect place, but it is a growing place. There should be space for urging one another toward responsible, loving lives. There should be encouragement for the fainthearted, help for the weak, and patience for all.

“Be at peace among yourselves. And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all.” *1Thessalonians 5:13–14 (ESV)*

Also look for the fruit of the Spirit among the leaders and members:

Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. These aren't just ideals, they are signs that the Spirit of Christ is at work.

FINAL ENCOURAGEMENT

Just like a plant can't thrive without healthy soil, we cannot grow into mature disciples of Christ without being rooted in Gospel Community. When we're replanted in the rich soil of a Jesus-centered, grace-filled, truth-speaking community, we grow. And when we grow, we bear fruit—not just for ourselves, but for the good of others and the glory of God.

Let the gospel shape how you seek community. And let community shape how you live out the gospel.



THE SACRED TRUST OF THE GREAT COMMISSION

Surfing, fishing, and sunshine marked Sam's childhood. Growing up down the street from a popular Australian beach, life was almost idyllic. His was a "Leave it to Beaver" type of experience.

(You can look it up online if you're unfamiliar)—a life marked by safety, security, and a supportive family. That all changed when his parents' marriage began to unravel. They returned to the U.S., settling in a brand-new city. Shortly after, his parents divorced. His dad moved to a different state, and his mom went to work.

Suddenly, Sam found himself alone and caught in the middle of junior high, facing the social stigma of divorce in a new community. It was a brutal season marked by isolation and loneliness.

Believing happiness could be found by working hard, being nice, and accumulating nice things, Sam threw himself into achievement. He started working in high school, put himself through college, and became known for his kindness. Later, an inheritance from his grandfather allowed him to buy the very things he thought would satisfy him.

But the emptiness remained.

A short time later, God crossed Sam's path. Someone invited him to a Cru weekly meeting. Over the next few weeks, he discovered that while his earthly family had fractured, God's family was different. God's love is wide and welcoming, and He longs for every person to be adopted into His eternal family (John 3:16; Romans 5:8; 1 Timothy 2:4).

About six weeks after attending that first meeting, Sam realized he wanted the relationship others were describing. Late one night, he picked up a Knowing God Personally booklet and prayed, "God, I don't know if You're real or not, but I know I want what those people at Cru have." Then he read the prayer and opened his heart to Jesus.

The change wasn't immediate, but it was real. After a few days, Sam began to notice subtle shifts in how he viewed life. The emptiness that had haunted him for so long was gone. In its place was a quiet joy, richer and deeper than any temporary happiness he had chased before. Nothing compared. Not the self-help tapes, not counseling, not other religious paths.

Only Jesus.

Sam was so transformed that all he wanted was more. He devoured each discipleship lesson, delighting in every new discovery. He couldn't keep it to himself, either. He began sharing his story and inviting others to experience the joy he'd found.

Less than a year after he came to Christ, Sam went on a summer mission trip to Japan. After graduation, he attended seminary to deepen his understanding of the faith. A few years later, he joined the staff of Cru and for the last 25 years, Sam has devoted his life to helping fulfill the Great Commission.

A LONG LINE OF FAITHFUL WITNESSES

Sam's story is just one in a long line of stories that trace back to Jesus Himself. While it's impossible to map his full spiritual lineage, the impact of faithful disciplinarians throughout history connects his story to a broader movement—one that has crossed centuries and continents.

Many names have been lost to time, but some remain known:

- **Patrick of Ireland**, whose legacy still shapes the spiritual landscape of a nation.
- **William Carey, Hudson Taylor, and Gladys Aylward**, who brought the gospel to unreached lands.
- **Mary Slessor, Harriet Tubman, and Mary McLeod Bethune**, who demonstrated gospel courage in the face of injustice.
- **Eric Liddell**, who ran not just for Olympic gold, but for the glory of God.

What united them? A deep conviction that the gospel of the kingdom is the most beautiful, urgent, and transformational message the world will ever know. And a willingness to endure hardship, rejection, and sacrifice to make Jesus known.

THE GREATEST MESSAGE. THE SACRED TRUST.

What Sam discovered and what every follower of Jesus has access to is this: There is nothing more fulfilling than knowing and following Christ.

We live in a world hungry for joy, meaning, and belonging. Money, fame, success, and beauty may offer momentary satisfaction, but they cannot fill the God-shaped space in every human heart. Only God can do that through Jesus' life, death, and resurrection.

And God has entrusted us with that message. We get to be His messengers. We get to help others discover the joy of knowing Him and the beauty of belonging to His family.

This is not just a calling. It is not just a task. It is a **sacred trust**.



LIVING WITH ETERNAL PURPOSE

Modern physics predicts that at some point in the future—approximately five billion years from now—the sun will run out of hydrogen to fuse into helium. This will cause it to enter the “Red Giant” phase, expanding beyond Earth’s orbit.

Eventually, it will cool and fade into a “Black Dwarf,” a cold, dark, and inert object. In the much longer term, the entire universe will experience heat death (or “the Big Freeze”) as stars burn out, galaxies drift apart, and everything fades into darkness. In a godless universe, this is the inevitable end of all things.

When modern people turn to the question of life’s purpose apart from God, they’re left with two options:

Accept that life is ultimately meaningless.

Search for temporary meaning by anchoring purpose in personal passions or desires.

Some choose the first and live in despair. Most choose the second and build their lives around things like success, family, wealth, power, or reputation. These pursuits may provide temporary satisfaction, but they cannot offer anything lasting, enduring, or eternal.

But when we look at the world through the lens of God’s design—the world as it actually is—we see something entirely different. God spoke the universe into being with intention. He created humanity in His image and has set eternity in our hearts. Though we rebelled and turned from His

purposes, chasing temporary ones of our own, God rich in mercy and love, sent His Son to redeem us. He invites us back into alignment with His eternal purpose for our lives.

And in living for that purpose, we find meaning, joy, and significance that will echo into eternity.

MADE FOR MORE

God has placed eternity in our hearts. Deep within us is a longing to live a life that matters and to make an impact on the world and the people around us. That desire points us back to our Creator and how He designed us.

C.S. Lewis captured this idea beautifully:

“Most people, if they had really learned to look into their own hearts, would know that they do want, and want acutely, something that cannot be had in this world... The longings which arise in us when we first fall in love, or first think of some foreign country, or first take up some subject that excites us, are longings which no marriage, no travel, no learning, can really satisfy... If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world.”

WHAT LASTS FOREVER

In Matthew 6, Jesus challenges His followers not to invest their lives in things that perish. He teaches them to store up treasure in heaven. When we live for earthly treasures, money becomes our master, our desires become distorted, and anxiety grows. But when we live with God as our master—seeking first His kingdom—we find peace, provision, and purpose.

True purpose in life doesn't come from looking within ourselves. It comes from looking beyond ourselves and investing in God, His kingdom, and the lives of others. Living with eternal purpose means seeing the world the way God does. We are eternal beings, created for relationship with our Creator. This changes how we approach everything:

- It changes how I see my work.
- It changes how I spend my time.
- It changes how I view my resources.

Eternal perspective doesn't make earthly things unimportant. It gives them deeper meaning. What I do on this earth matters because it can have eternal impact.

So we ask:

How can my work serve and bless others, not just myself?

How can my time make a difference for eternity, not just for my own comfort?

How can my resources be used for God's kingdom, not just for my kingdom?

An eternal perspective also gives us courage in hardship. Even when life is painful, disappointing, or difficult, we know nothing is wasted in God's kingdom. As Paul reminds us, "Therefore, my beloved brothers and sisters, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain." (1 Corinthians 15:58)

And as we walk in this eternal mindset, we're not just shaped ourselves - we help shape others. Living with eternal purpose means not only growing in Christ personally, but multiplying our lives into others for the sake of the gospel. Our lives ripple into eternity when we help others know and follow Jesus.

Living with an eternal perspective realigns our hearts with God's purposes and invites us into a life of deeper meaning, lasting impact, and unshakable joy.





BETA

