

PEARL

Guidebook

THE COMPASS CHURCH EVANGELISM DEVOTIONAL



PEARL

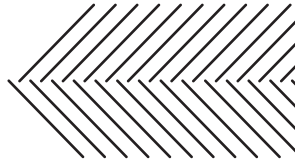
Guidebook

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THE **COMPASS** CHURCH
thecompass.net

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Introduction

What's the one thing you can't do in heaven?

We know from Scripture that we won't sin, we won't marry and we won't have any reason to shed tears. True! However, the question above is intended for Christians to consider what earthly good we will forfeit once we die.

There's no question that what awaits us in heaven will be far greater than what we are experiencing here on earth. And yet, can you imagine people you know and love will never enjoy the blessings of heaven? That is, unless they turn to Jesus as the one and only solution for their sin problem. Unless they repent and believe in Jesus, they will miss out on being in heaven forever.

In a parable Jesus told, a rich man died and went to Hades, eternally

separated from God. Recognizing it's too late to switch sides (go to heaven to be with God) he begs God to send word to his loved ones so they don't have the same fate as him.

With that in mind, what is the one thing you can't do in heaven?

When we get to heaven we will no longer have the opportunity to lead people to trust in Jesus for their salvation. We won't have another chance to tell others about the Good News of Jesus dying on the cross for their sins, so that by faith they can restore their relationship with God and one day experience eternal life in heaven.

The Apostle Paul recognized this dilemma, and being used by God, he put out an amber alert — **EVERYONE...HELP!** In the book of Romans, we read the urgent call for



Christians to evangelize. Paul makes the point that “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” Think about those you know, family members, neighbors, coworkers and friends, who have not called on the Lord for the forgiveness of their sins. Breaks your heart doesn’t it? Just like when you read that amber alert on your phone that a child has gone missing. You think to yourself “I wish I could help. If only I knew how.”

Paul goes on to say that in order for someone to call on the name of the Lord, they are going to need some help; your help. In his words, “But how can they call on him to save them unless they believe in him? And how can they believe in him if they have never heard about him? And how can they hear about him unless someone tells them? And how will anyone go and tell them without being sent?”

This resource is designed to inspire you with God’s truth so that you will be eager to shout, “SEND ME, LORD!” A team of Compass pastors and lay leaders have worked tirelessly with this mission in mind. To arm you with opportunities to learn, reflect and pray about this mission of sharing God’s gift of salvation with people you know who are far from God. Within this guidebook you will find five weeks of devotionals with a small group discussion guide to accompany each week. As we sought to prepare you for this great work, five themes surfaced - Herald, Heart, Head, Hands and Habits. You’ll be asked

five questions, one per day, to help equip you in different ways to be Gospel sharers.

At The Compass Church we use the word PEARL when referring to relational evangelism. Therefore, you will find references pertaining to a “PEARL lifestyle” and “identifying your PEARL person”. Week five will unpack each of these letters and the example Jesus set in living them out. We also invite you to visit our website (thecompass.net/pearl) to hear sermons on each PEARL habit. May this resource be an encouraging tool that motivates you to live on mission and to bear much fruit in being Jesus’ disciple.

Before you begin this five week journey, we would like to provide you with one more principle Jesus showed us regarding personal evangelism. Grab a partner and go at it together. Luke chapters nine and ten reveal two detailed occasions when Jesus sent his disciples out two by two. Perhaps you will find His strategy more effective in you being sent as well. Ask someone to join you in discussing this devotional and to keep each other accountable in prioritizing PEARL habits with non-believers.

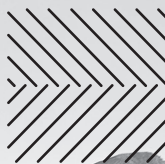
We are thrilled that you are joining us on this journey. And we are praying for you throughout this experience.

THE LEADERSHIP OF THE COMPASS CHURCH

Adventure Awaits

*Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead,
descended from David. This is my gospel.*

2 TIMOTHY 2:8



What is Evangelism?

You and I are profoundly shaped by the doctrines and perspectives we embrace. Consider, for example, the effects of materialism, relativism, narcissism, moralism, workaholism, atheism. The “isms” we subscribe to, whether good or bad, not only shape our behavior. They end up molding who we become. Among the hundreds of “isms” we could build our lives around, evangelism deserves our special consideration.

What is evangelism? *Evangel* is an English word derived from a New Testament Greek word meaning *Good News* — specifically the Good News of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Add the *-ism* suffix and you get *evangelism*, a term that refers to the propagation of the Good News about salvation in Jesus. Do you subscribe to *Good-News-ism*? The Apostle Paul certainly did. “Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!” (1 Corinthians 9:16), he declared. It would be difficult to overstate how much evangelism molded Paul’s life. The Gospel he believed and shared utterly transformed the man. As he put it, “[The gospel] is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes” (Romans 1:16).

So, what exactly is this Good News message at the heart of evangelism? Paul boils it down for us. “Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David. This is my gospel” (2 Timothy 2:8). Lest we over-complicate it, Paul reminds us that the entire Gospel can be summed up in this cryptic statement. The reference to Jesus being descended from King David assures us that Jesus is indeed the long-awaited Davidic Messiah promised by God hundreds of years earlier. And the reference to Christ’s resurrection is, of course, the centerpiece of the Gospel. Jesus’ resurrection assures us that everything He said about dying in our place to rescue us from sin and condemnation is true. By raising Jesus from the dead, God the Father confirmed that he is fully satisfied with the payment Jesus made

for our sins. God has fulfilled his promise to send us a Redeemer, and the resurrection of this Redeemer means our prison doors are flung open. We have only to step out into freedom through faith in Jesus. This is not just good news. It's great news! Jesus gave his life to make it so. Paul gave his life to make it known.

Pastor Charles Spurgeon was right when he said, "He who preaches Christ preaches the gospel; he who does not preach Christ, preaches no gospel. It is no more possible for there to be a gospel without Christ than a day without the sun, or a river without water, or a living man without a head, or a quickened human body without a soul. No, Christ himself is the life, soul, substance, and essence of the mystery of the gospel of God."

News like this is too good to keep to ourselves. This Gospel changes everything! Can you imagine a more worthy *"ism"* to invest your life in than evangelism? For those wanting a more detailed summary of the evangel behind evangelism, Paul offers this "manifesto":

"Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas [Peter], and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also."

1 CORINTHIANS 15:1-8

If by faith you've embraced this Good News — this evangel — then you understand the importance of evangelism. This is your *"ism"*. Embrace it. Tell someone about Jesus. Perhaps their life will be transformed as yours was when someone evangelized to you. This is what evangelism is all about.

REFLECT

1. What connotations does the word evangelism bring to mind? Why is that?
2. In what ways, if any, has this reading helped you better understand what evangelism is?
3. What one thought, if any, did you encounter in this reading that inspires you to engage in evangelism?

PRAY

Praise God for the Good News of salvation in Jesus Christ and ask Him to embolden you to share it with someone else.

[illegible]

There will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.

LUKE 15:7



Why Would We Want to Engage in Evangelism?

For most of us, delight is a stronger motivator than duty. We get more excited about the things we can enjoy than the things we must endure. Perhaps this helps explain why it's so difficult for many of us to make evangelism a priority. We view it as something we *ought* to do rather than something we *get* to do. But what if by trying evangelism we discovered that it yields more joy than the things we habitually turn to in hopes of finding happiness? What if our evangelistic efforts led to someone's conversion to Christ? And what if the joy we experienced as a result eclipsed the lesser joys we invest so much time pursuing?

This is no hypothetical question. Jesus, in his parables of the lost sheep and the lost coin, paints just such a scenario. In his parable of the lost sheep, Jesus says:

“Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Doesn't he leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, “Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.” I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.”

LUKE 15:4-7

The joy in this scene is almost palpable. The shepherd “joyfully” hugs his newly found sheep to his shoulders and goes home beaming.

His joy is so great, in fact, that he can't contain it. He throws a party, inviting a bunch of his friends and neighbors to "rejoice with me." The point of the story is to illustrate how God in heaven rejoices over one lost person who turns to Him. Why did Jesus want us to know this? No doubt He wanted us to know what thrills the heart of our Heavenly Father. But given that He has given us a role in sharing the Gospel, could it be that He is also highlighting the opportunity we have to pursue joy — both in heaven and on earth here and now — by sharing the Gospel with a lost person in hopes of their coming to repentance?

To reinforce his point, Jesus immediately tells another similar parable:

"Suppose a woman has ten silver coins and loses one. Doesn't she light a lamp, sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it? And when she finds it, she calls her friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost coin.' In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

LUKE 15:8-10

As with the lost sheep, the parable of the lost coin points us to the rejoicing that happens in heaven — this time mentioning the angels specifically — when someone comes to God through faith and repentance.

Notice that this rejoicing in heaven does not wait until the person arrives there, which suggests that the celebration is not intended to be confined to heaven. Elsewhere, Jesus taught us to pray to our Heavenly Father "your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (*Matthew 6:10*). So, if heaven sponsors a party whenever someone here on earth comes to faith, then it seems the most fitting thing to do would be to join that party, especially if we had a role in pointing that person to Jesus! Evangelism, as it turns out, is our opportunity to participate in heaven's joy. And if the Lord is "not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance" (*2 Peter 3:9*), then perhaps there's more joy to be experienced in evangelism than we've realized.

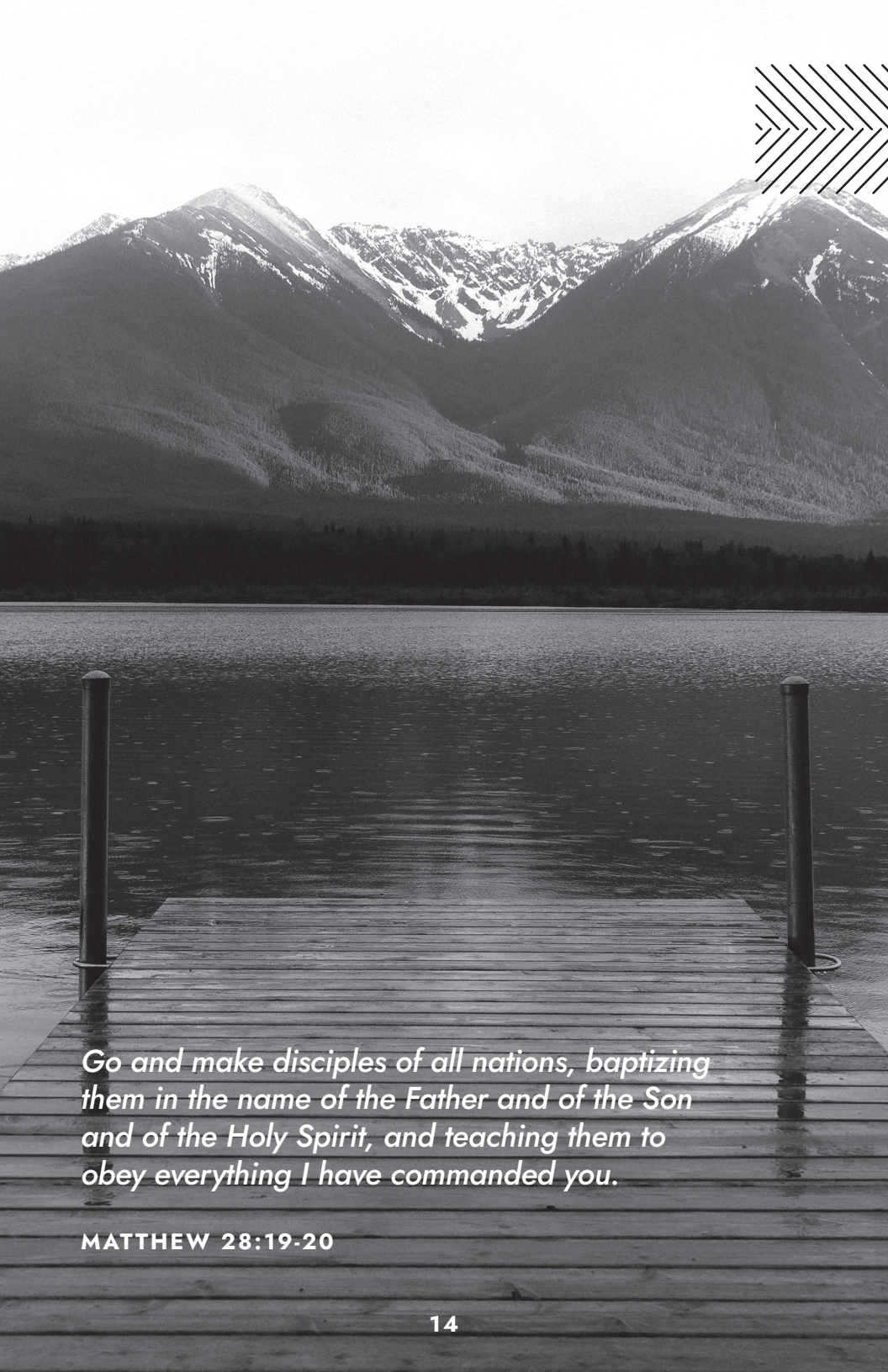
REFLECT

1. How would you describe your current “evangelistic temperature”? (How passionate are you about sharing the Gospel with others these days?)
2. In what ways, if any, has this reading helped you better understand why we should care about evangelism?
3. What one thought, if any, did you encounter in this reading that makes you want to reevaluate the priority you place on personal evangelism?

PRAY

Ask God to give you an evangelistic heart like His, as well as the courage to follow through on the evangelistic impulses He gives you.

[illegible]



Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.

MATTHEW 28:19-20

Is Evangelism Optional?

Jesus' Great Commission here at the end of Matthew's Gospel gives a clarion call for the church to make disciples, and most evangelical churches readily acknowledge that *disciple making* (or *discipleship*, understood as "the ongoing process of growth as a disciple" as author Michael Wilkins would define it) is the heart of our mission. But do we understand the scope of disciple making described in this commission? Our commission has one central command: "make disciples," with three participles describing what's involved in making disciples. Those participles are "going" (though it's translated as "go" in our translation), "baptizing," and "teaching." So, making disciples involves *going* to reach nonbelievers (evangelism), *baptizing* them into faith in the triune God (conversion), and teaching them to obey Jesus (spiritual growth). Notice this is a full-circle process.

Teaching disciples of Jesus to obey everything he commanded includes teaching them to obey this commission to go and make disciples. So, we're not making disciples in the way Jesus commanded unless we teach them to reach others as part of their training. Evangelism, then, is an integral part of the Great Commission. It's essential to discipleship, not an optional extra.

This means that when we zero in on evangelism, as we are in this guidebook, we're not trying to provide a counterbalance to discipleship. We're not even trying to provide something complimentary to discipleship. We're talking about a specific aspect of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus, namely, the sharing of the Gospel with unbelievers.

The earliest Christians understood that evangelism was part of their commission. The rapid expansion of the early church was not due

solely to the apostles' missionary activity. In fact, after Stephen was martyred, we read that "*all except the apostles* were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria" (*Acts 8:1*, italics added) and "those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went" (*Acts 8:4*). Through their evangelism, these early believers were helping to fulfill the commission Jesus had given them.

This idea that evangelism is the beginning of and integral to disciple making, is reflected in Luke's statement later in the book of Acts where he says that Paul and Barnabas "preached the gospel in that city [Derbe] and won a large number of disciples" (*Acts 14:21*). Notice that these new converts were considered disciples right away, a reminder that discipleship is not something reserved for advanced believers. It's for everyone who has received Christ as Savior, and it begins at conversion. This means that Christ's Commission to make disciples is also for all believers, from the newest to the most seasoned. Author Robert Coleman was right: "The Great Commission is not a special calling or a gift of the Spirit; it is a command - an obligation incumbent upon the whole community of faith. There are no exceptions. Bank presidents and automobile mechanics, physicians and schoolteachers, theologians and homemakers – everyone who believes on Christ has a part in His work."

In our previous reading, we discovered that evangelism is desirable. In this reading, we've seen that it is also necessary. Even if we're willing to deprive ourselves of the joy of evangelism, Christ is not willing for us to do so. His Great Commission does not allow us to view evangelism as an optional extra. Faithfulness to our Master compels us to share the Good News.

REFLECT

1. What excuse do you most often fall back on for not sharing the Gospel with others? How does this reading address that excuse?
2. In what ways, if any, has this reading helped you better understand your responsibility for evangelism?
3. What one thought, if any, did you encounter in this reading that makes you want to rethink the priority you place on personal evangelism?

PRAY

Ask God to forgive you for not sharing the Gospel when the Holy Spirit has prompted you to do so. Ask Him to help you obey His Commission to share the Good News whenever He provides the opportunity.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.



How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?

ROMANS 10:14

Is It Enough to Serve People in Jesus' Name?

Saint Francis of Assisi has often and mistakenly been quoted as saying, "Preach the gospel at all times. Use words if necessary." The idea is that the Gospel is conveyed primarily by serving others or by living a godly lifestyle. According to this view, our good deeds should ideally make a verbal witness to the Gospel secondary if not unnecessary. Given the fear that often accompanies evangelism, this may sound like an appealing excuse for not having to talk about sin and our need of repentance and faith in Jesus. But is it really possible to preach the Gospel, to evangelize, without using words?

As many authors have pointed out, Francis of Assisi never said anything like, "Preach the gospel at all times. Use words if necessary." This is an unfortunate perpetuation of a misquotation of the man. But more importantly, the statement does not accurately portray the Gospel as presented in the Bible, where the Good News is depicted as inherently verbal.

People need a verbal Gospel witness, not just to see a godly lifestyle, to exercise saving faith. The Apostle Paul makes this clear when he asks, "How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: 'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!'" (*Romans 10:14-15*). Paul makes this more personal when he writes to the Ephesian believers, "You also were included in Christ when *you heard* the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When *you believed*, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit" (*Ephesians 1:13*,

italics added). What both of the preceding passages make clear is that salvation is based on a faith response to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and this implies a basic knowledge of this Good News, which requires that someone conveys that message with words.

To be sure, our actions are an important aspect of our witness. Elsewhere Paul says, “Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ” (*Philippians 1:27*). But this is not to suggest that the power to bring people to salvation is in our “worthy” conduct. Who could bear that responsibility except Christ alone! No, even when our conduct falls short of being worthy of the Gospel, it is the Gospel itself that can win people to Christ. “I am not ashamed of the gospel,” Paul says, “because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes” (*Romans 1:16*).

Duane Litfin, President Emeritus of Wheaton College, puts it this way:

“The belief that we can “preach the gospel” with our actions alone represents muddled thinking. However important our actions may be (and they are very important indeed), and whatever else they may be doing (they serve a range of crucial functions), they are not “preaching the gospel.” The gospel is inherently verbal, and preaching it is inherently verbal behavior. If the gospel is to be communicated at all, it must be put into words.”

Here’s the Apostle Paul’s conclusion of the matter: “Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ” (*Romans 10:17*). And this is where God is pleased to use you and me, whenever we are willing to give a verbal witness to this saving message.

REFLECT

1. Which would you rather do, serve someone or tell them about Jesus? Why is that?
2. In what ways, if any, has this reading helped you better understand the need to share a verbal Gospel witness in addition to leading a godly life?

3. What one thought, if any, did you encounter in this reading that motivates you to move beyond sharing kindness to sharing content in your Gospel witness?

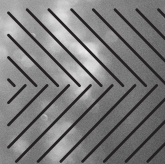
PRAY

Ask God to give you opportunities to have spiritual conversations with nonbelievers you know. Ask God to prepare you to make the most of these opportunities.

[illegible]

Do the work of an evangelist.

2 TIMOTHY 4:5



What if I Don't Have the Gift of Evangelism?

The Apostle Paul's cryptic command to Timothy here is instructive in that it implies that evangelism is not just for gifted evangelists. To be sure, there is such a thing as gifted evangelists. To put it more precisely, these evangelists themselves are God's gift to the church. Scripture says God gave these "evangelists," along with "apostles, prophets, pastors and teachers," to the church "to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up" (*Ephesians 4:12*). "Philip the evangelist," as he is identified in *Acts 21:8*, is apparently one such evangelist. Philip is said to have "traveled about, preaching the gospel in all the towns until he reached Caesarea" (*Acts 8:40*). It's likely no one ever had to tell Philip to "Do the work of an evangelist." It's who he was. Yet this is exactly what Paul tells Timothy. Now, if Timothy was not known first and foremost as an evangelist, then we have a biblical precedent for the notion that evangelism is not just for evangelists. This, of course, confirms what we've already noted in an earlier reading that evangelism is for all of us who have received Christ as Savior.

While Timothy may not have been known as a gifted evangelist, he was certainly no stranger to the Gospel. Paul testified that "[Timothy] has served with me in the work of the gospel" (*Philippians 2:22*). In his first epistle to the Thessalonian church Paul wrote, "We sent Timothy, who is our brother and co-worker in God's service in spreading the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you in your faith" (*1 Thessalonians 3:2*). So, Timothy was Paul's co-worker in the Gospel (a kind of evangelistic support role) as well as someone who could strengthen and encourage the Thessalonian believers in their faith. In other words, Timothy was a disciple maker. (Recall how

we pointed out in an earlier reading that evangelism is a vital aspect of disciple making.)

Paul advised Timothy to “Do the work of an evangelist” while Timothy was stationed in Ephesus at Paul’s direction. Paul himself had established the Ephesian church some eight years earlier. Now, Timothy’s assignment was primarily to guard the doctrinal purity of that church (see *1 Timothy 1:3-4*). How interesting that Paul would be so concerned about evangelism in Ephesus even after the church was so well established. It seems the work of evangelism is never done. No doubt this is because, as the Apostle Peter assures us, “[The Lord] is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance” (*2 Peter 3:9*).

Gifted evangelist or not, our charge is to “Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect” (*1 Peter 3:15*). But doing the work of an evangelist involves more than a passive responsiveness. It also involves an active proclamation of the evangel, the Good News of salvation in Jesus Christ.

What Paul’s parting admonition to “Do the work of an evangelist” teaches us is that evangelism is too important and too expansive to be accomplished by gifted evangelists alone. Our Lord Jesus himself, the one who summons His disciples to “Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field” (*Matthew 9:38*) and then sends them out to do the work of evangelism in answer to their own prayers, calls us to participate in the harvest as well.

The power of the Holy Spirit that enabled those first disciples to be Christ’s witnesses (see *Acts 1:8*) is the same power that’s available to us today. Few of us may qualify as gifted evangelists. But all of us who follow Christ can, in the Spirit’s power, do evangelism. May we, like Timothy, take up the work of an evangelist!

REFLECT

1. What do you think is the difference between an evangelist's responsibility to share the Gospel and your own responsibility to do so?
2. In what ways, if any, has this reading helped you feel more included in God's plan for drawing people to Himself?
3. What one thought, if any, did you encounter in this reading that makes you want to rethink your role in personal evangelism?

PRAY

Ask God to help you identify and “own” your mission field, where God has called you to have a Gospel influence.

[illegible]

Group Discussion Guide

CONVERSATION KICK-STARTER

- If you are comfortable, share about your fears with the group:
Why does it feel scary to share your faith with strangers or even people you may know?
- What part of discussing your faith feels most intimidating?

DEVOTIONAL DISCUSSION

- What challenged or impacted you from your reading and journaling this week?
- What from your processing this week are you feeling prompted by God to act on?

Group Facilitator | Consider picking one question from each Daily Reflection and discussing as a group.

Nearly all of the Apostle Paul's New Testament letters explain "who you are" before instructing "here is what you need to do." Paul starts with helping us identify ourselves before he explains our roles or what actions to take.

Read these verses and discuss what the verse says about who we were apart from Christ and who we are in Christ.

Before Jesus, we were:

Romans 3:7, 1 Peter 4:8,
Ephesians 5:5, John 12:35,
Romans 2:9, Ephesians 5:8,
Galatians 4:7, 23, Ephesians 2:3

But in Christ, we have a new identity as:

Romans 12:2, Ezekiel 36:26,
Ephesians 5:8,
2 Corinthians 5:17

Second Corinthians chapter 5 explains our new identity and reminds us that it's only through Jesus that taking on this identity is possible. But Paul doesn't stop there! What else does God do? He "gave us the ministry of reconciliation." He entrusts us with His "message of reconciliation." He calls us His "ambassadors." Many Bible passages that speak of salvation echo the idea that our new identity calls us to demonstrate the Gospel.

In Romans chapter 1, Paul exhorts us that the Gospel is "the power of God for salvation," enabling us to live by faith. In Ephesians chapter 2, the same God who saves us by grace, through faith also calls us "his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them." Throughout most of the Bible, we see that our decisions, actions, and even roles stem from our new identity in Christ.

God doesn't change our identity so that we can hide away from the world and wait for eternity. No! In our spiritual conversion, God changes our identity; our identity impacts our roles and changes our actions.

The Gospel is not just for the purpose of individual reconciliation. The Gospel does not just call each of us out of our old identity. The Gospel also calls us to participate in God's reconciliation of all things. The Gospel also calls us to live out our new identity, every day as His ambassador. Why do we care as Christians about everyday mission? Surprise! The fact that you call yourself a Christian, God calls you a missionary.

GROUP REFLECTION

1. What is your profession or area of study? What are some of the things you need to know and do to be effective at your job or area of interest?
2. How does your identity in Christ impact your confidence in evangelism?
3. In Christ, we are now His ambassadors with the ministry of reconciliation. How can you be an agent of reconciliation between non-Christians and God?



Just as a nursing mother cares for her children, so we cared for you. Because we loved you so much, we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well. Surely you remember, brothers and sisters, our toil and hardship; we worked night and day in order not to be a burden to anyone while we preached the gospel of God to you.

1 THESSALONIANS 2:7B-9



What's Your Motive?

Maybe it was a neighbor offering to help with a chore. Or an invitation to share a meal. Perhaps it was making a phone call or sending a caring text — just to check in, after hearing some difficult news. If you've been on the receiving end of such a kind and caring gesture from a believing brother or sister, then the practical love of Christ made its way into your world. And there's a good chance it might have even made you want to reciprocate. Sharing the love and Good News of Jesus in real and practical ways can, and should, be contagious. With that in mind, it's also a good idea for each of us to check our motives, whenever we're planning to carry out the command to share the Good News to the world. Asking ourselves, "What's the real impetus, deep down in our heart?"

Do we want to simply check off a box on our proverbial Christian to-do-list?

Are we trying to impress someone?

Do we think that doing enough "good things" makes up for other ongoing sin in our lives?

Nobody wants to feel like they were someone's evangelism "project," so we are wise to ask God to help us have a heart for the lost that moves us into action purely from godly compassion. Without love behind it, your Gospel won't feel like Good News. *1 Thessalonians 2:4-5* reminds us that God empowers us to share the Gospel, but He alone tests our motives.

"On the contrary, we speak as those approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel. We are not trying to please people but God, who tests our hearts. You know we never used flattery, nor did we put on a mask to cover up greed — God is our witness." Another translation puts it this way: "And God is our

witness that we were not pretending to be your friends just to get your money!”

1 THESSALONIANS 2:4-5

At the same time, if we're waiting for 100% pure motives, we could be waiting a mighty long time. Theologian John Piper puts it this way:

“Don't wait for a feeling or love in order to share Christ with a stranger. You already love your heavenly Father, and you know that this stranger is created by Him, but separated from Him, so take those first steps in evangelism because you love God. It is not primarily out of compassion for humanity that we share our faith or pray for the lost; it is first of all, love for God.”

So, the bottom line? Perfect conditions and purely unselfish reasons aren't necessary for us to move forward in telling others about Jesus. Not only that, but *not sharing* our faith merely because we want to ensure we have no competing motives, could keep us from reaching those in our sphere of influence...if we're not careful.

Week One examined how evangelism is a command, not a suggestion. And *James 4:17* tells us, “If anyone, then, knows the good they ought to do and doesn't do it, it is sin for them.” Let's let God's heart for each one of us and our love for others, no matter how imperfect, be all the motivation we need.

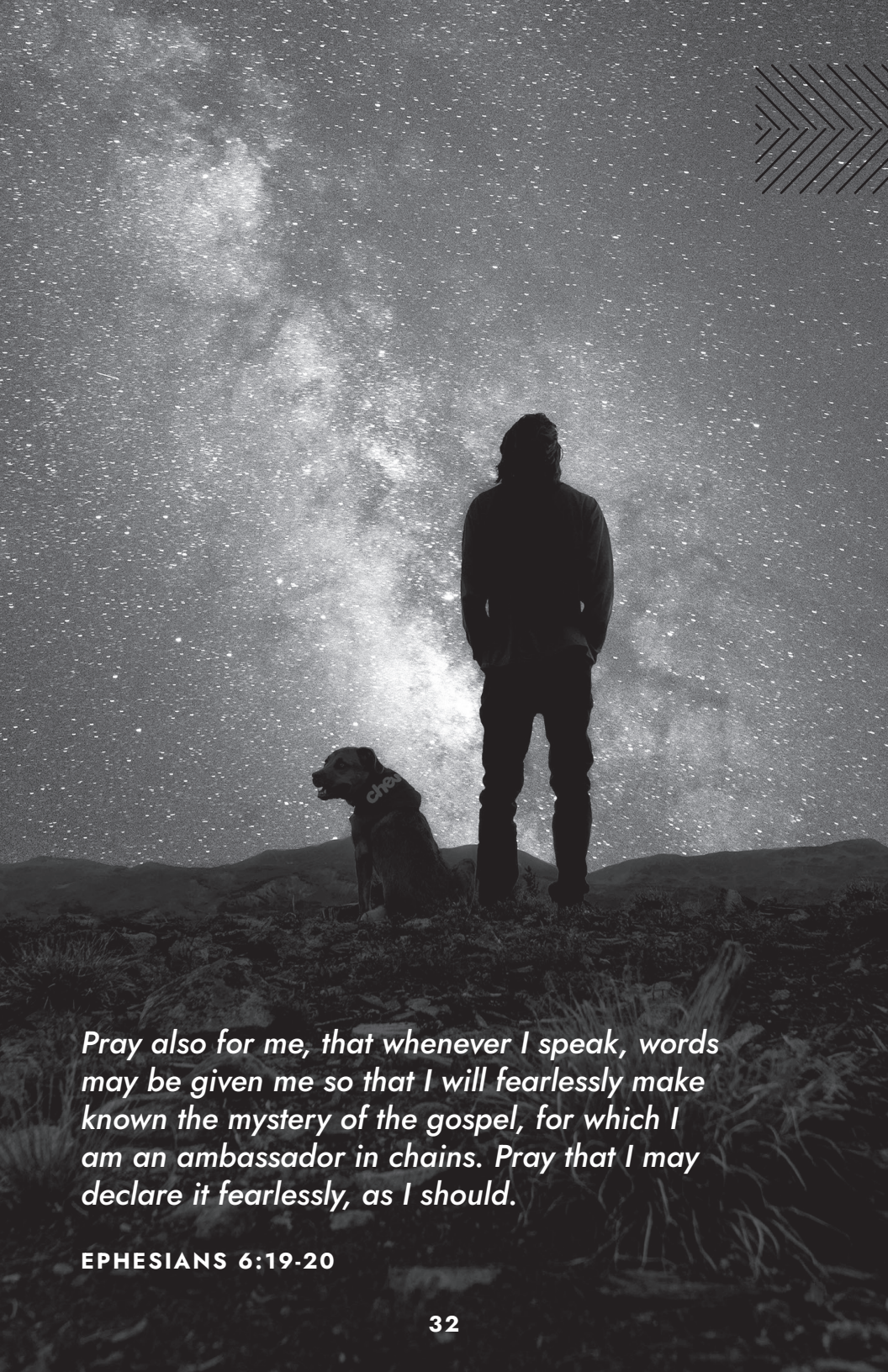
REFLECT

1. When you think about sharing your faith, what fears or concerns do you have about it?
2. What are some of the reasons you want to share your faith with others? What led you to learn more in this study?
3. Who comes to mind as someone who's shared God's love for you in real and practical ways? Ask God to bless that person and/or to serve as an inspiration for you to share your faith with others.

PRAY

Ask God to grow your heart for the lost so you're moved to action from godly compassion. Pray for God to increase your faith, to help you do the good you know He's called you to do, especially if you don't feel like doing it. Invite the Lord to help you move forward in obedience, even when your deepest motives feel a little bit selfish.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.



Pray also for me, that whenever I speak, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.

EPHESIANS 6:19-20

Have You Started Praying?

In looking at this passage of *Ephesians 6:19-20*, two words seem to stand out:

1. *Whenever*
2. *Fearlessly*

“Whenever” implies a regular, frequent occurrence. In other words, Paul speaking about the Lord became part of a natural rhythm in his life, no matter what dire circumstances he faced. (In this case, Paul was writing a letter to the church at Ephesus, straight from a Roman prison where he was wrongly held captive.)

The word *“fearlessly”* is also translated as *“with boldness”* (NASB). Plus, it’s used twice here. We can think of that as God’s way of underlining His Word, long before the days of pixelated bold fonts or colored ink. *Who couldn’t use a little more boldness and less fear in our role as an evangelist?*

And yet having a regular rhythm of sharing the Gospel with minimal fear doesn’t just happen on its own. It takes our personal prayers, plus asking for prayer from other believers.

Chances are that through the course of this study, God will bring people to mind who desperately need to hear about Jesus — *from you!*

The Holy Spirit can remind you of the people in your life who need to know how God loves them unconditionally and how He very much longs to see them gain not just eternal life, but also a full, satisfying, and abundant life here on earth. (See *2 Peter 3:9* and *John 10:10*).

Prayer is the critical ingredient to that recipe for success.

It's worth noting that this passage directly follows Paul's instructions about using the whole armor of God when we're fighting spiritual battles (see *Ephesians 6:10-17*). And wrestling someone from Satan's grip, right into an eternal connectedness with God. There's no greater spiritual battle than that!

Once you've buckled the belt of truth, added the breastplate of righteousness, covered your feet with the gospel of peace, put on the helmet of salvation, grabbed the shield of faith, and picked up your word-of-God-sword of the Spirit, it's time to pray ... and pray hard.

In *Ephesians 6:18*, Paul tells the Ephesians to "pray at all times, and on every occasion." (Doesn't that sound like the concept of "whenever" to you?) Next, he instructs them to pray for him to fearlessly explain God's plan for Jews and Gentiles alike. While he could have asked for prayer to remove his chains and alter some awful circumstances (again, he was writing as a prisoner in Rome!), Paul asks for God to give him the right words to help other people know Jesus.

Let this serve as an example for us to pray for God to help us boldly share our faith. No matter what kind of personal "chains" we might be in, whenever the chance to speak comes up. And let's ask others to join us on this journey, through their prayers.

Maybe that's an accountability partner, someone in your group, a friend at school, or your spouse. It doesn't even have to be an in-person friend, maybe it's that friend who moved away. The one who has always been an encouragement to you. The key is to prepare your heart for evangelism and begin by praying.

Not sure where to start? Here's a sample prayer you could customize for your situation:

*Lord, I need Your help. I want to share my faith more with other people in my life: my friends, neighbors, co-workers, family, and loved ones. Help me to have the right words, whenever I speak. Help me to share my faith fearlessly. Bring to mind another friend who can pray for me and alongside me on this faith journey.
In Jesus' Name, Amen.*

REFLECT

1. Try crafting a "Top 10 List" of people in your sphere of influence who need Jesus. Keep it in a place where you can pray over it regularly, and ask that God opens their hearts to know Him personally.
2. There is no limit to creative ways God might want to use you to introduce others to a relationship with Jesus. Ask three believing friends to share their faith story with you.
3. Who in your life might be someone you could invite to pray for boldness when you share your faith?

PRAY

Pray for boldness in your encounters with those who aren't close to God right now.

The Samaritan woman said to him, "You are a Jew, and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?" (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.) Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water."

JOHN 4:9-10



How Did Jesus Show Compassion?

She could have been home that day resting, but she found herself out in the middle of the day, a time when most people probably would have avoided the public square in the high heat. But perhaps that was her intention ... *Just slip in and slip out. Grab the water from the well and head home. Try to avoid making eye contact. Then maybe nobody will notice me?*

We can picture the Samaritan woman from John chapter 4 plotting her pathway to minimal interaction in her community. We don't know her full story, but as someone who'd already been married five times, now living with a new boyfriend (*John 4:18*), we can guess she might have been avoiding any unwelcome shame from her neighbors.

We can also imagine her surprise when she came face-to-face with the actual Messiah.

“The woman said, ‘I know that Messiah’ (called Christ) ‘is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us.’ Then Jesus declared, ‘I, the one speaking to you — I am he.’”

JOHN 4:25-26

It's safe to say, up to this point she knew *about* Jesus. But this day would forever change her story, she was actually meeting Jesus in real life. Through a personal encounter with the God of the Universe who intentionally came to see her that day, right in the middle of her mundane.

Jesus crossed a number of cultural and physical boundaries in this conversation. Let's take a closer look at four lessons Jesus shared:

First, He traveled out of His way.

Going through Samaria wasn't the typical route for someone to go from Judea to Galilee, but *John 4:4* tells us He purposefully went that way. Sometimes we, too, need to "go out of our way" and break from our usual routine to introduce someone to Jesus.

Second, He crossed cultural boundaries.

In this encounter, we not only see a man speaking to a woman (very unusual for the time — the disciples were "shocked" in *John 4:27*) but also a Jewish man speaking to a Samaritan woman. Based on thousands of years of bad history together, Jews and Samaritans didn't exactly get along. Samaritans were considered "less than" by Jewish people. Maybe we don't have any ancient ancestral conflict with someone, but perhaps we come from different cultures or backgrounds. This could even be as simple as a Cubs fan sharing the Gospel with a White Sox fan ... or a shy introvert introducing Jesus to an outgoing extrovert.

Third, He got very personal, very quickly.

Speaking about uncomfortable topics and addressing her sin directly, Jesus didn't mince words, and He didn't waste time. We don't always know how long we'll have to share the Good News with someone, so we need not be afraid to address the real, eternal issues at hand, even if they see it as foolishness at first. (See *1 Corinthians 1:17-18*.)

Finally, Jesus spoke with grace and compassion.

This approach certainly wasn't very typical for that period in history. Both the Pharisees and the Sadducees, the religious and political leaders of the day, were heavy on "following the law" and very light on extending grace. They thought following man-made rules and rituals could lead to salvation, and all sin deserved harsh punishment. But rather than condemning the Samaritan woman for her prior sins, Jesus addressed her with kindness and offered her living water and eternal life.

Jesus' example reminds us to go out of our way to reach the lost, acknowledge our differences (but not let them hinder us), embrace the tough conversations, and extend true compassion, knowing that God went out of His way to extend His grace in rescuing us, too.

As *Ephesians 2:8-9* reminds us, "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast."

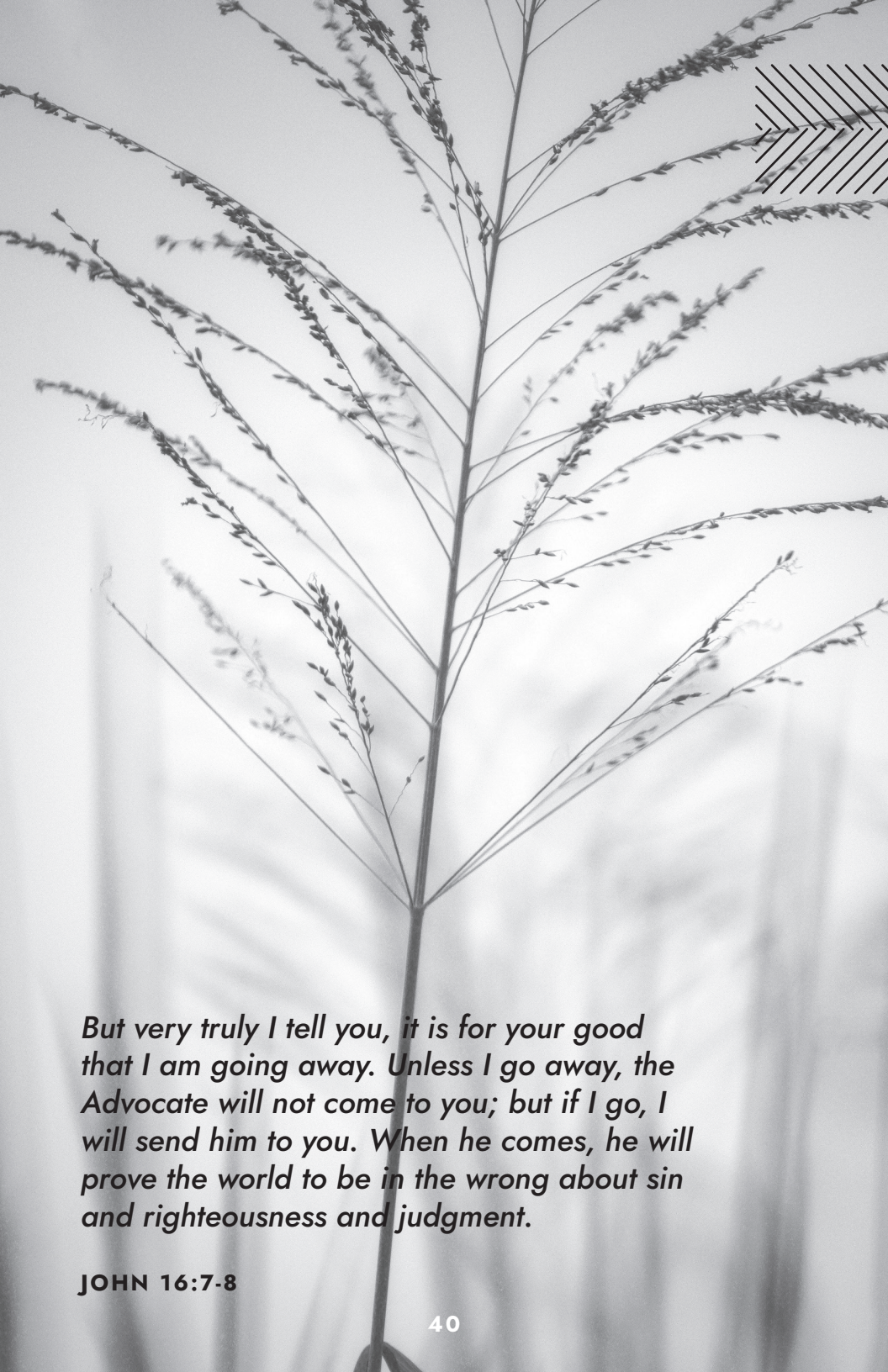
In the end, not only was the Samaritan woman's life forever changed, but so was her entire village. "Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, 'He told me everything I ever did.'" (*John 4:39*) May our influence on others' lives be equally as compelling!

REFLECT

1. *Romans 5:8* says, "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." How has Jesus met you in your sinful state?
2. When you think about the "Samaritan woman," who comes to mind in your life as someone who needs to hear about Jesus?

PRAY

Ask God to help grow a compassionate side in your heart to reach the lost with an understanding that every one of us has fallen short and desperately needs God's grace. Thank Him for His compassion and goodness in your life.



But very truly I tell you, it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. When he comes, he will prove the world to be in the wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment.

JOHN 16:7-8

WEEK 2 | DAY 4

What is My Role vs. God's Role? PART 1

Have you ever had a good friend, or a family member stand up for you?

Maybe it was a silly disagreement, and you knew they had your back. Or even a more serious allegation or a legal matter, and someone took your side. Whatever the circumstances, there is tremendous strength in knowing you've got someone alongside you to help fight your battle.

When it comes to sharing our faith, this is the role of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit serves as an *advocate*, a helper, right alongside us when we begin to share the Good News.

By definition, an advocate is "a person who speaks or writes in support or defense of a person, cause, etc." As one part of the Trinity, God Himself — in the form of the Holy Spirit — helps us introduce others to have a personal relationship with Him!

In some of His last moments with the disciples, Jesus explained how the Holy Spirit would be coming to every believer after the Lord's resurrection. This would happen once Christ returned to Heaven, and would accomplish a greater good on earth, since Jesus was physically only in one place at a time.

In addition, the Holy Spirit would make it possible to fulfill the Great Commission, God's commandment to tell the whole world about Jesus. (More about that next week!)

Bill Bright, founder of college ministry Cru, was fond of explaining how success in witnessing is simply "taking the initiative to share Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit and leaving the results to God."

We see this principle found in *1 Corinthians 3:6-7*, which says, “I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow. So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow.”

In other words, we play *a part* in telling others about Jesus, but God, through the Holy Spirit at work, plays an even bigger part.

Longtime evangelist Billy Graham put it like this, “Prayer is crucial in evangelism: Only God can change the heart of someone who is in rebellion against Him. No matter how logical our arguments or how fervent our appeals, our words will accomplish nothing unless God’s Spirit prepares the way.”

Essentially that means God prepares the seed of someone’s heart, then we get to do the planting, *and* then ultimately, God is the one who makes things grow.

As we think about the ways we can share our hearts with the people around us, let’s remember that God cares more for souls of those far from Him than any of us ever could. The Holy Spirit can burden our hearts with someone who needs to know Jesus, and then later can empower and equip us with boldness to share our faith in meaningful and effective ways.

The question is, *will we let Him?*

REFLECT

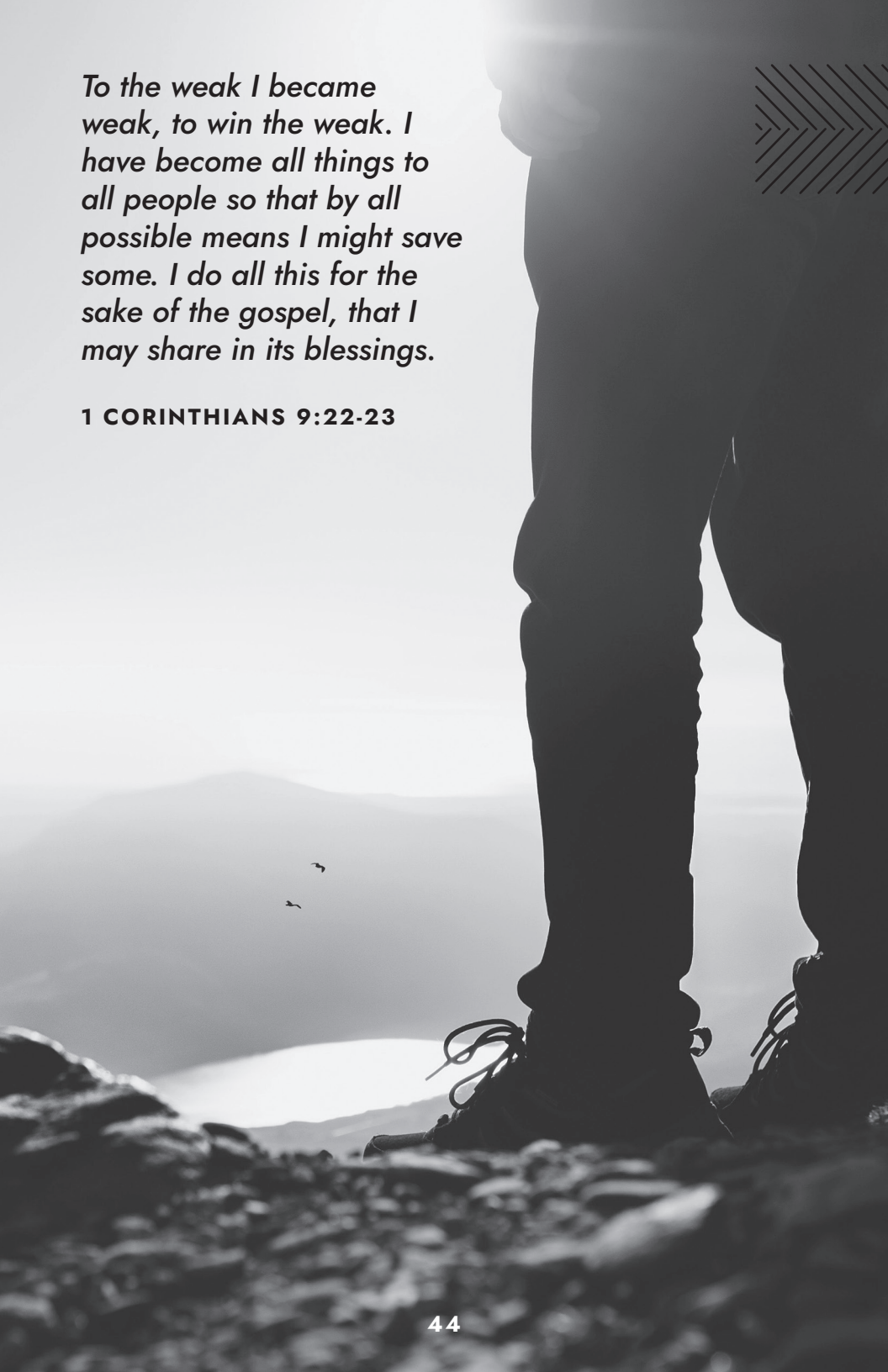
1. When you hear about the Holy Spirit, what type of power comes to mind?
2. What are some ways you have seen the Holy Spirit working alongside believers?
3. How does knowing the Holy Spirit’s role give you more confidence in sharing your faith with someone?
4. If the idea of the Holy Spirit is new to you, bear in mind that *walking in the power of the Holy Spirit* happens best when we are

daily connecting with God through prayer and studying His Word. Commit to a practical game plan to pursue Him daily, even if it's in small doses.

PRAY

Ask God to lead you to the people whose hearts He wants to see turn toward Him, so they can know Him intimately. Pray for the Spirit to soften and open their hearts toward truth. Pray that God will empower you to walk faithfully in step with His Holy Spirit.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are approximately 20 lines visible. The paper has a slight shadow on the right side, suggesting it's resting on a surface.



To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.

1 CORINTHIANS 9:22-23

What is My Role vs. God's Role? PART 2

In yesterday's devotion, we took a closer look at God's role in evangelism, through the power of the Holy Spirit. And today we'll examine what our role really is: actually, sharing our faith and changing lives. While we find encouragement that God Himself is our advocate, God still uses His people to carry out His life-saving message for a hurting world.

In *1 Corinthians 9:1b*, Paul demonstrates that changed lives are the true evidence that God was at work, using Paul as an apostle. Paul asks the believers at Corinth, "Are you not the result of my work in the Lord?"

Just how are these changed lives accomplished?

We see Paul's effective strategy in *1 Corinthians 9:22-23*: "To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings."

First, he suggests finding common ground with the people in our sphere of influence.

In the preceding verses (*1 Corinthians 9:20-21*), Paul mentions becoming like a Jew to the Jews when he's with Jewish people, and like the Gentiles when he's with people who didn't grow up with a Jewish background. When we go out of our way to help others feel like they belong, people notice. The NLT says "Yes, I try to find common ground with everyone, doing everything I can to save some." (*1 Corinthians 9:22*)

Next, demonstrate humility.

Paul doesn't have any kind of a "know-it-all" attitude here. He's flexible enough to keep on learning new things and engaging in two-way conversations so that he might save some people along the way. He also reminds those who are mature in their faith to show that they are still learning and growing (hence, "became weak to win the weak").

Third, make others feel accepted.

When Paul describes himself becoming weak "to win the weak," it's a reminder of the importance of finding commonalities with people from all different backgrounds. Whether that's a common interest or a similar struggle, look for ways to relate to those in your sphere of influence.

Finally, look for opportunities to talk about Jesus.

God gives us the chance to share our faith — we just need to be available and faithful to seize the opportunities when they come up! Of course, this is far easier said than done sometimes. In the coming weeks, we'll talk more about practical ways to help make that happen.

As humans, it can be difficult to wrap our brains around just why an all-powerful God uses us in the process of salvation. But let's remember these opportunities are a privilege, our chance to be part of making an eternal impact.

REFLECT

1. What special gifts has God given you to share your faith with others?
2. Jesus was known as a friend of sinners. (*Matthew 11:19*) As you think about your personal story, consider journaling some ways you can relate to people far from God right now. Ask yourself, how can I share my story of having Christ help me overcome the power of sin?

PRAY

Ask God to help you find opportunities for conversations about the Lord, as you also look for ways to find common ground.

[illegible]

Group Discussion Guide

CONVERSATION KICK-STARTER

- If your group has been together for some time, ask this: Have people say the name of the person to their right or left and three things they like.
- If your group is new to meeting, discuss this: Have each person memorize the group members' first and last names. A chosen leader will point to any person and the group will have to say their first and last name. Switch the chosen "name caller" if you desire.

DEVOTIONAL DISCUSSION

- What challenged or impacted you from your reading and journaling this week?
- What from your processing this week are you feeling prompted by God to act on?

Group Facilitator | Consider picking one question from each Daily Reflection and discussing as a group.

The Bible's advice on how we should treat our neighbor is very clear. The Bible says, "Love your neighbor as yourself" eight times. Not once. Not twice. Eight times!










Loving your neighbor as yourself is so important to God that He not only repeats Himself, but also makes it a command. And it's not just one in a long list of many commands. Notice: Jesus coupled loving your neighbor along with the command to love God! (*Mark 12:30-31*)

The question is: "Who is my neighbor?" Jesus told the parable of the Good Samaritan (*Luke 10:25-37*). Consider reading the passage together. In the story, Jesus defines neighbor real broadly. We will do the same.

GROUP REFLECTION

1. How have you been the recipient of neighbors' acts of kindness? Or vice versa.
2. As a group, brainstorm simple ways to love non-Christians in your sphere of influence. Consider what this could look like in your neighborhood, workplace and other places where you frequent, such as your gym, coffee shop or school).
3. Can you name eight of your neighbors? What are their names and write down some info about them and their family (Ex. They cheer for Da Bears, they have been married 25 years, they have two kids, she works for All State, etc.). Fill out this map to the best of your ability with the information of those neighbors:

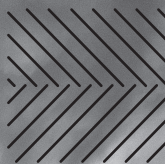
WHO IS MY *Neighbor?*

		
	 YOU ARE HERE	
		

4. What practical steps could you take to build more relationship with the neighbors on this chart?

*"I tell you the truth," Jesus answered,
"before Abraham was born, I am!"*

JOHN 8:58



Who is Jesus?

As we examine today's question, let us begin by reviewing the nine "I am" statements Jesus makes in the Gospels.

- "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" Peter answered, "The Christ of God." (*Luke 9:20*)
- I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty. (*John 6:35*)
- I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life. (*John 8:12*)
- I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. (*John 10:9*)
- I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. (*John 10:11*)
- I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. (*John 11:25-26*)
- I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. (*John 14:6*)
- I am the true vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. (*John 15:5*)
- I tell you the truth, Jesus answered, before Abraham was born, I am! (*John 8:58*)

Jesus of Nazareth is the most controversial figure in human history. Throughout the Gospel accounts, Jesus is found doing outrageous things...things that only God can do. He commands the winds and sea to obey Him...and they do (*Mark 4:39*). He forgives sin... something only God can do (*Matthew 9:1-8*). He miraculously feeds thousands of people (*Matthew 14:13-21; Mark 8:1-9*). He raises the dead back to life (*Mark 5:21-43; John 11:38-44*).

But He not only did outrageous things, He made outrageous claims... about Himself...about who He is. What mere human could claim things such as, being the way, the truth, and the life? That the only way to salvation is through Him? The difference with Jesus of course, is that He backed it up.

The Bible passages above are known as the “I am” statements. In English, these two little words are not overly worrisome to most. But in the language of biblical times, they pack quite a punch! That is made very clear by the reaction of the Jews:

“‘I tell you the truth,’ Jesus answered, ‘before Abraham was born, I am!’ At this they picked up stones to stone him.”

JOHN 8:58-59

Jesus said the Divine Name of God, declared to be so holy, that it was never to be said out loud. And not only did Jesus say it out loud, He went even further. He claimed it as His own name! He claimed the covenant name of God, revealed to Moses, as His own.

“Moses said to God, ‘Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them’, ‘the God of your fathers has sent me to you’, and they ask me, ‘what is his name?’ Then what shall I tell them? God said to Moses, ‘I AM who I AM’. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: ‘I AM has sent me to you.’”

EXODUS 3:13-14

The holy name of God (YHWH) is most often written in our Bibles as LORD (all upper case). Since this name is not to be verbalized, the Jews came up with a rather ingenious method of being able to read the Hebrew text without saying the name out loud (which holds true today). Originally, Hebrew was not written with vowels, only consonants. So as the consonants YHWH are written in Hebrew, they supplied vowels to YHWH from the word, Lord (Adonai). Only the vowels would then be pronounced (you would hear the word, Adonai) when reading the divine name, YHWH (the name Jehovah comes from the combination of the consonants YHWH and vowels for Adonai).

Jesus, intentionally, deliberately, and rightfully declared Himself to be God. There is no mistake who He claimed to be...the one true God!

REFLECT

1. Do you remember a time when you did not believe Jesus to be God? What convinced you?
2. How does your understanding of who Jesus is, increase by knowing who God is?
3. Study the "I am" statements Jesus made. What do these statements say about what God has done for you?

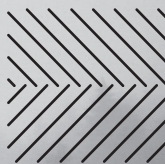
PRAY

Write a praise to God thanking Him for sending Jesus, the God-Man!

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

ROMANS 5:8



Why Did Jesus Die on the Cross?

Mother Goose, Tom Thumb, lullabies, nursery rhymes are perhaps memories many of us have from our childhood or as a parent reciting or singing them to our children at bedtime. Perhaps you may remember some of them: Hey Diddle Diddle, Jack Sprat, Twinkle Twinkle Little Star, Baa, Baa Black Sheep, Hickory Dickory Dock, Jack and Jill, Mary Had a Little Lamb...and then there is of course, Humpty Dumpty:

Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall,
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall.
All the king's horses and all the king's men
Couldn't put Humpty together again.

Humpty is typically depicted as an egg, although that may come from the more modern version of what most of us know. Falling off a wall (some claim he was pushed!) most often does not bring a good result for an egg. And as you think of it, this nursery rhyme would not be the most comforting story you could tell your little ones before they go to sleep! Humpty ends up splattered all over the ground and more than likely is made into omelets (sweet dreams!). This rhyme ends in despair.

And while this tale was written in Britain sometime around 1797, it seems fitting as a commentary on our day. Some of us may feel like Humpty Dumpty. Perhaps at times we feel like we've fallen off the wall and lay splattered on the ground. We get upended physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Think especially about those outside of Christ who are lost and are without real hope. They are left with the fact that the king's horses and the king's men could do nothing. They are left abandoned and alone. Ellis Potter in his book, *3 Theories of Everything*, suggests an additional line:

Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall,
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall.
All the king's horses and all the king's men
Couldn't put Humpty together again.

...but the KING could!

But the KING could. Just a few pages into the Bible in the Book of Genesis, Adam and Eve had a great fall. They believed a lie, listened to someone other than their Creator, and ended up running and hiding in the bushes in their sin. God asks them a simple question,

“Who told you that you were naked?”

GENESIS 3:11

From this point on, the rest of the Bible is all about how the KING acts to bring salvation, forgiveness, and righteousness into every human heart that seeks it. The KING not only saw us sitting on the wall, He not only saw our great fall, but He came in the Person of Jesus Christ to put us back together again. He pulled us out of despair and brought hope, meaning and purpose into our lives.

Without the death of Jesus Christ on the cross, none of this would be possible. Jesus went to the cross for the express purpose of taking our sin upon himself, bearing the full wrath and judgment of God that we deserved, making it possible to be reconciled in our broken relationship with the KING.

REFLECT

1. Describe a time when you felt like Humpty Dumpty, broken and splattered on the ground.
2. Describe when you placed your trust in Jesus as your Savior. What are some ways in which He put your life back together again?

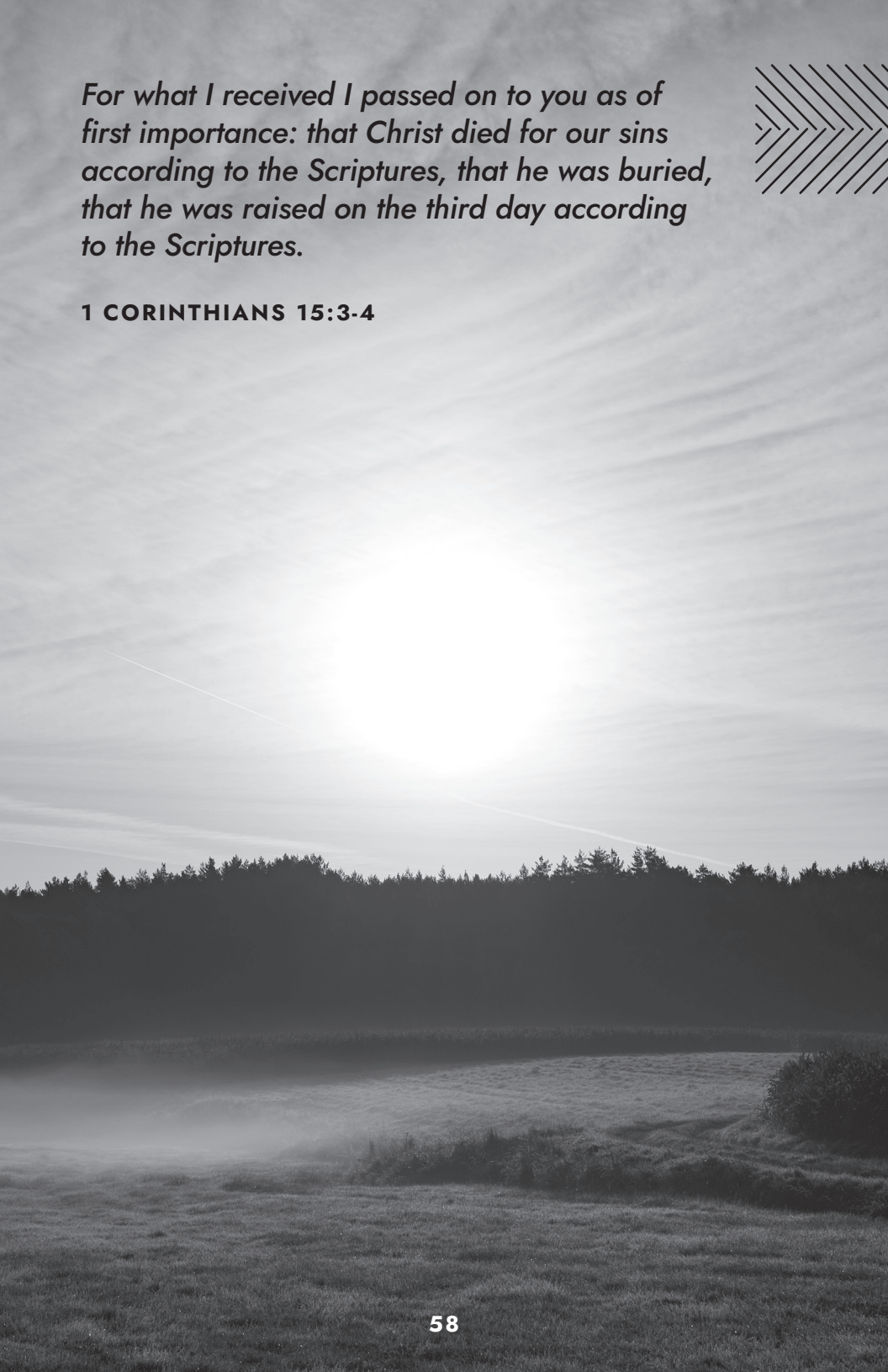
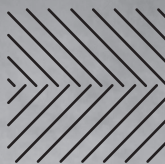
PRAY

Thank God for His indescribable gift! (2 Corinthians 9:15)

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For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.

1 CORINTHIANS 15:3-4



Why Did Jesus Rise from the Dead?

There is little doubt that the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is the single most significant act in all human history. The Apostle Paul boldly declares that if Christ has not risen, then our faith is useless (*1 Corinthians 15:14*). That's quite a statement. It's understandable why Mary was clinging to Jesus after His resurrection! He was her hope... her life.

The writer to the Hebrews certainly understood this. He captures it in the form of a blessing.

"Now may the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

HEBREWS 13:20-21

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is not "just something" that took place over 2000 years ago. We are living now in light of His resurrection. His resurrected life is to show up in ours. This resurrected Great Shepherd equips us with everything we need to follow Him and walk with Him in obedience! Consider a few:

Absolute assurance. Think of Peter's response to Jesus when asked if they would walk away from Him: "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life" (*John 6:68*). We do not have to live our lives looking over our shoulder for someone else. The resurrected Jesus holds the keys to life and death and life after death.

Empowered obedience. Once we have received Christ as Savior, we are co-resurrected with Him and empowered to live unto Him through the Holy Spirit. Paul fills in some details: "Since then you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God....Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature...as God's chosen people... clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility gentleness and patience...bear with each other...forgive as the Lord forgave you" (*Colossians 3:1,5,12-13*).

Endurance in suffering. Paul reminds us, "I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings..." (*Philippians 3:10*). Paul says this without any hesitation or second thoughts. He knows that living a co-resurrected life with Jesus comes at a cost...but one that has an amazing return on investment!

REFLECT

1. What is your reaction in realizing that you have been co-resurrected with Christ?
2. What are some areas in your life where you feel equipped to accomplish His will?
3. List some areas that you resolve to surrender over to Him?
4. How does living in light of His resurrection help you endure suffering and challenges in your life?

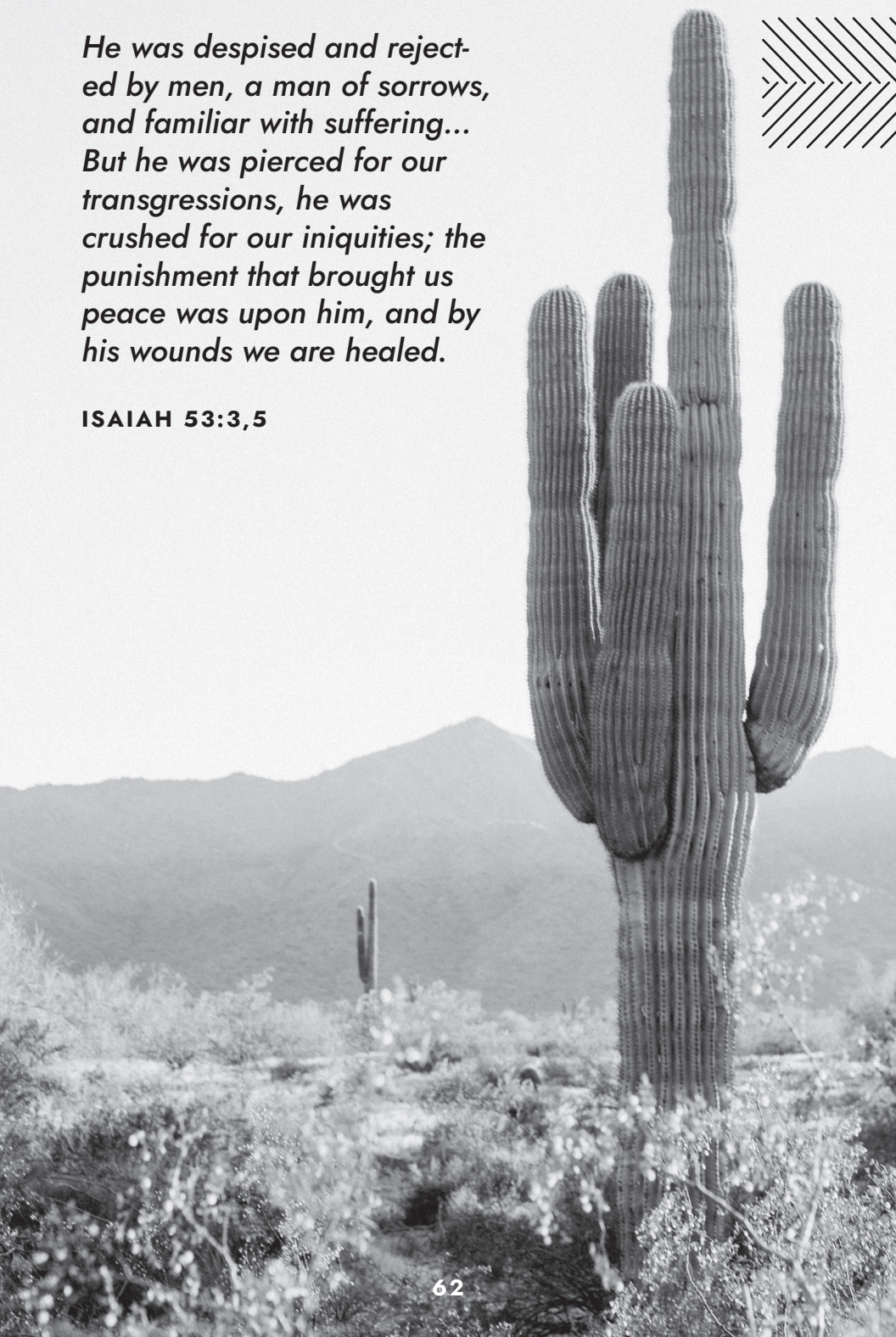
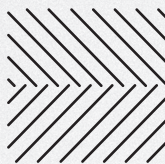
PRAY

Ask God for opportunities to use how He has equipped you to further His kingdom.

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He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering... But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.

ISAIAH 53:3,5



Why is There So Much Suffering in the World?

People have always found it convenient to blame the Christian God for pain and suffering in the world. Whether it be personal afflictions, premature death, violence, natural disasters, famine and yes, even pandemics, God must be behind it all. If God is sovereign, if He is loving, then human suffering doesn't seem consistent with who He is. Yet the Bible provides the most thorough explanation possible.

The Bible tells us that the world is broken and how it came to be that way. In our impatience, we demand swift resolution. We require that God right the wrong immediately. But the Bible tells us that God spread His purposes across thousands of years through all the mess of human history...and in the center of it all, as one writer expresses beautifully, he stakes the cross of his beloved Son.

Theologian John Stott has written,

"I could never myself believe in God, if it were not for the cross. The only God I believe in is the one Nietzsche ridiculed as 'God on the cross'. In the real world of pain, how could one worship a God who was immune to it? I have entered many Buddhist temples in different Asian countries and stood respectfully before the statue of the Buddha, his legs crossed, arms folded, eyes closed, the ghost of a smile playing round his mouth, a remote look on his face, detached from the agonies of the world. But each time after a while I have had to turn away. And in imagination I have turned instead to that lonely, twisted, tortured figure on the cross, nails through hands and feet, back lacerated, limbs wrenched, brow bleeding from thorn pricks, mouth dry and intolerably thirsty, plunged in God-forsaken

darkness. That is the God for me! He laid aside his immunity to pain. He entered our world of flesh and blood, tears and death. He suffered for us. Our sufferings become more manageable in the light of his."

Through the cross, God has provided the ultimate solution to suffering. He provided Jesus. In the shortest verse in the Bible, are found some of the most powerful words, "Jesus wept" (*John 11:35*). Jesus wept over the death of His friend Lazarus...even though He would momentarily raise him from the dead. The God of the Bible does not watch our suffering from a distance...He takes it upon Himself...He feels it as we do. He walks with us through it.

Christian author Rebecca McLaughlin writes,

"From a Christian perspective, there is not only hope for a better end; there is intimacy now with the One whose resurrected hands still bear the scars of the nails that pinned him to his cross. Suffering is not an embarrassment to the Christian faith. It is the thread with which Christ's name is stitched into our lives."


REFLECT

1. All of us have gone through varying degrees of pain and suffering. What were your feelings about your situation and about God?
2. Jesus will still bear His scars from the crucifixion throughout all of eternity (*John 20:24-29*). We will see them. How do His scars help you live in light of yours?
3. How does the emotion that Jesus displayed over the death of Lazarus, help you grow in your compassion for others?

PRAY

Confess your concerns to God and ask Him to reveal His love to you in the midst of your suffering.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.



*God is spirit, and his worshipers
must worship in spirit and in truth.*

JOHN 4:24

Who is the God of the Bible?

God, as described in the Bible, is unique from all other gods. He has spoken and has revealed Himself to us as *One*, yet in three distinct Persons; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God is personal, He has made Himself known to us so that we might know Him...He desires to walk with us and for us to walk with Him. He desires for us to be in community with Him.

The Godhead, Father, Son and Holy Spirit beautifully reveals this about Him. Because God is three in one, there is a holy submission, a holy deference that exists. There is a concentrated centering of attention on each of the others...all at the same time! As the Apostle Paul challenges us to, "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves" (*Philippians 2:3*), he is telling us to imitate Jesus, because He models this in the Godhead. Each member of the Godhead submits (defers) to the other. One theologian observes that each member of the Godhead points faithfully and selfishly to the other, in a gracious circle. They shine a spotlight on each other!

In *Matthew 17:5*, God speaks from heaven and says, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!" God the Father shines a spotlight of attention on God the Son. He declares that everything that you need to know is found in the Son...listen to everything He says! But then God the Son turns around and shines a spotlight of attention on God the Father. In *John 5:19* Jesus says, "Very truly I tell you, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does." God the Son then shines a spotlight of attention upon God the Holy Spirit. In *John 14:26* Jesus says, "But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will

teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.” Jesus goes on to say that the role of the Holy Spirit is to glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you (*John 16:13-14*).

The Father says...listen to my Son. The Son says...I look to the Father. The Holy Spirit says...I want the Son to be glorified in everything that I do. This is the God who is revealed in the Bible. There are no equals.

Our relationships with each other will be different because of Him... our marriages, our parenting, our friendships, our compassion for others must reveal His character. We are to live in holy deference of one another...as we live in holy deference to Christ. There are over 50 one another commands in the New Testament...commands such as love one another (*John 15:12*), honor one another (*Romans 12:10*), serve one another (*Galatians 5:13*), and forgive one another (*Ephesians 4:32*). We are called to show a watching world who our God is by placing Him on display through our lives.

REFLECT

1. What misconceptions or false images of God do you have?
2. How does your understanding of holy deference in the Godhead help you in your relationship to God? To Jesus? To the Holy Spirit?
3. How does it impact your relationship to others?

PRAY

Thank God for the ways He reveals Himself to us, and for providing us the evidence of being a triune God.

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Group Discussion Guide

CONVERSATION KICK-STARTER

- What are some of this past year's biggest events and news? Why would they be considered a big deal?
- How does hearing or sharing big news, personal news or headline news, feel?

DEVOTIONAL DISCUSSION

- What challenged or impacted you from your reading and journaling this week?
- What from your processing this week are you feeling prompted by God to act on?

Group Facilitator | Consider picking one question from each Daily Reflection and discussing as a group.

The Gospel of Jesus Changes Everything

In the Bible, the Gospel isn't merely pragmatic or just information: How to get saved, how to go to heaven after we die, how to have a personal relationship with God, how to experience forgiveness, how to be a better person.

The Gospel is a story! It is the very true story of Jesus: the story of how the Kingdom of God came from heaven to earth through Jesus' life, death, resurrection and ascension.

The climax of the story told through the Bible is the Gospel, the Jesus story, the big news. Jesus is the something that has happened! Everything will be made right in the future and now, in the present, there exists the real potential for everything to become different and new. Jesus has died for our sins. God has raised Jesus from the dead for our salvation.

The word salvation is overladen with so many religious clichés that many of us have lost sight that at its core, salvation implies rescue. When God saves us, God rescues us from death, destruction, sin, and hell in order to bring us safely to the good life — eternal life. You are invited to believe this Good News, trust in this royal announcement, and experience salvation at the intersection of the Jesus story and your story.

We all need a story big enough to help us make sense of the world. It's common for our minds to make up a story whenever we lack information. The Gospel gives us the very true story of Jesus, a story bigger than us, a story of God's never-ending love. Once we lose ourselves in this story, we discover who we are supposed to be.

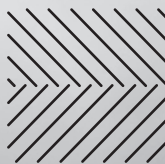
As we enter into the Gospel story, we become people of the cross and resurrection: people of the Spirit. This Gospel shapes the contours of our mission. We are gathered by the Gospel that we may be scattered into the world.

GROUP REFLECTION

1. What is one of the “big news” events of your life? How did you feel when you were sharing that news to others?
2. How does the Good News, the Gospel, about Jesus change everything?
3. Bring to mind your PEARL person (who you are seeking to relationally evangelize to). How could you help them see the value in Jesus' story weaving with their story?

*When Jesus saw their faith, he said,
"Friend, your sins are forgiven."*

LUKE 5:20



What Does God Expect of Me?

Araminta (Minty) H. Ross escaped to freedom in 1849, taking the long and dangerous 90-mile trip from Maryland to Philadelphia, along the Underground Railroad. Between 1850 and 1860, she would take the same trip 19 more times, becoming the most well-known “conductor” and bringing more than 300 other slaves to freedom. Her courageous leadership and undaunted passion for freedom earned her the nickname “Moses.” Later, she would join the ranks of the Union Army as a cook, nurse, armed scout and spy to free over 700 more slaves. Today, her image and name can be found on awards, statues, buildings, and even U.S. money. You know Minty by her married name — Harriet Tubman.

Can you imagine what it would look like if someone had a similar passion for freeing people from the bondage of sin as Harriet Tubman had for freeing people from slavery? There are examples of similar boldness all around the globe, but the relative safety and security of the United States means that we don’t have a lot of examples in our context and culture. But does God expect any less from us? Today we will examine the story of some friends who had a relentless drive to help their paralyzed friend find freedom through Jesus.

One day Jesus was teaching, and Pharisees and teachers of the law were sitting there. They had come from every village of Galilee and from Judea and Jerusalem. And the power of the Lord was with Jesus to heal the sick. Some men came carrying a paralyzed man on a mat and tried to take him into the house to lay him before Jesus. When they could not find a way to do this because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and lowered him on his mat through the tiles into the middle of the crowd, right in front of Jesus. When Jesus saw their faith, he

said, "Friend, your sins are forgiven." The Pharisees and the teachers of the law began thinking to themselves, "Who is this fellow who speaks blasphemy? Who can forgive sins but God alone?" Jesus knew what they were thinking and asked, "Why are you thinking these things in your hearts? Which is easier: to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up and walk'? But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins." So he said to the paralyzed man, "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home." Immediately he stood up in front of them, took what he had been lying on and went home praising God. Everyone was amazed and gave praise to God. They were filled with awe and said, "We have seen remarkable things today."

LUKE 5:17-26

Can you imagine what it might have been like to stand in the room where this miracle occurred? What was the chatter like as the light, dust and chunks of roof fell from the ceiling? Was there outrage or silence as the paralytic's body descended to interrupt their precious moments with Rabbi Jesus? Did the friends above crane through the skylight in hopeful anticipation or lean away hoping not to be recognized and reprovved for their destructive tactics? Did the man on the mat know what his friends were about to drag (and drop) him into? Did they even give him a choice? Did the friends on the roof really understand what they were about to dig into? This story is a smorgasbord for the imagination, and much could be said about the revelation of Jesus here. However, there's one phrase in this pericope that is easy to overlook but requires our attention; "when Jesus saw their faith," (*Luke 5:20*).

The vehicle for the paralytic's forgiveness and healing was not his own faith but the faith of the men who carried him to Jesus and refused to be dissuaded by the crowd or the tile roof. Additionally, their faith was not captured in an abstract belief or internal hope. Their faith was active, such that "Jesus saw their faith." Finally, the substance of their faith was not observed in a doctrinal statement, synagogue attendance, or pious rituals, but a relentless pursuit of freedom for their friend and dogged determination to get him to Jesus.

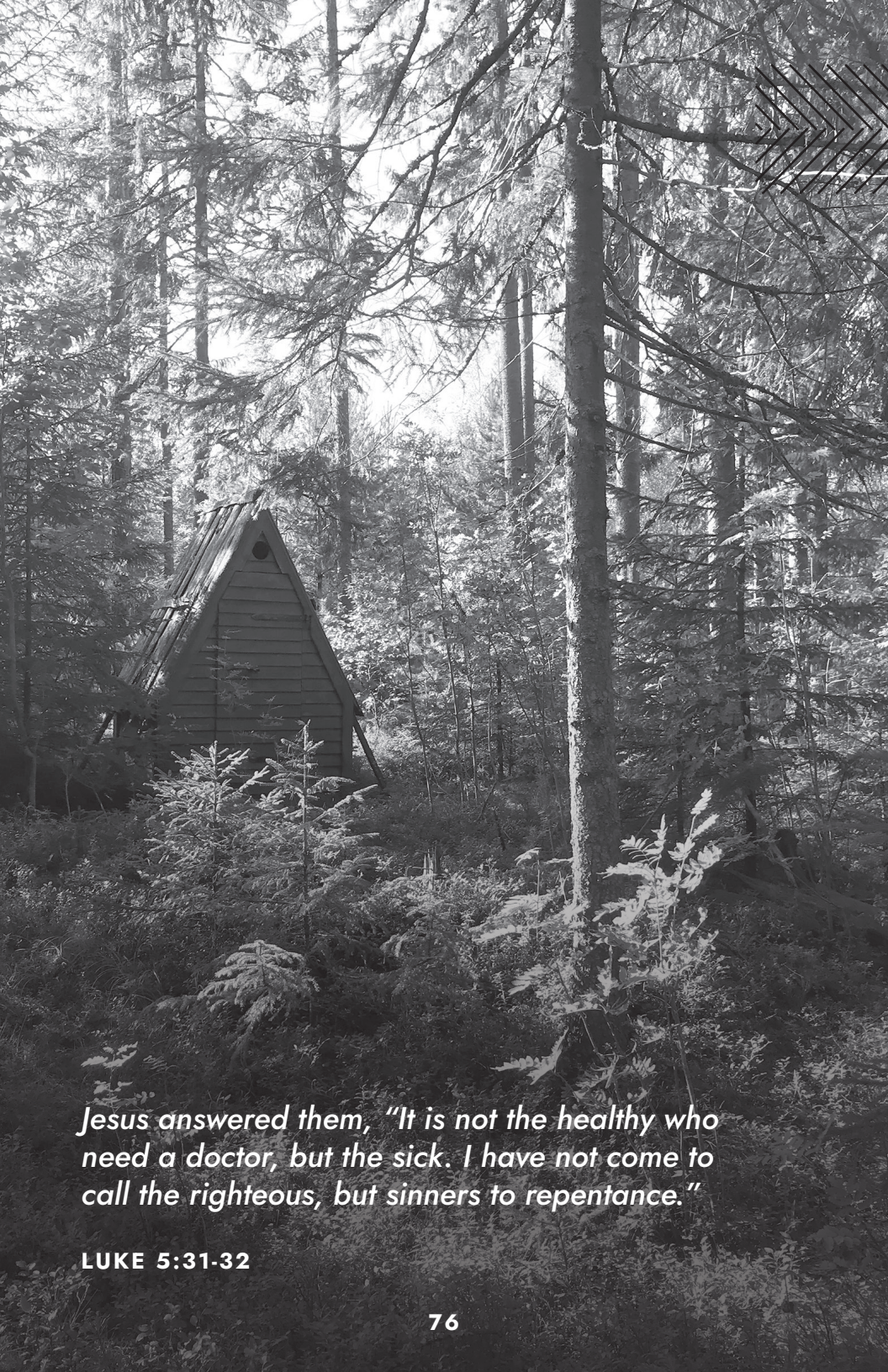
The faith of these four friends calls to mind the words of *James 2:22* which declares that faith and deeds work together. Faith is completed or perfected by what we do. We can't claim to love God and love our neighbor if we're not actively working hard to carry bound and broken people to freedom in Jesus. We will spend the next four days unpacking what active faith looks like.

REFLECT

1. Who do you know that has an active faith and a relentless passion to see bound and broken people find freedom in Jesus?
2. What parallels and lessons can be drawn from Harriet Tubman's daring efforts to bring her fellow slaves to freedom?
3. Think about the obstacles that are most daunting in preventing you from bringing your family, friends, neighbors or acquaintances to Jesus. How will you address and overcome these?
4. Where and how can you put action to faith today by bringing someone closer to Jesus?

PRAY

Today, pray that God would grant you the courage to overcome the obstacles that dissuade you from bringing your friends to Jesus. Pray that God would guide you to the right routes to take as you attempt to bring your friends to Jesus. Pray that your faith would be active today.



Jesus answered them, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

LUKE 5:31-32

What Does God Expect of My Home?

George was a gambler, a thief, and a drunk. He grew up in Germany in the early 1800's and made his way to university despite his habits. One night he was invited to a Bible study and agreed to attend, intending to make fun of them afterward. However, once there, God showed up. For the first time, he encountered people who truly knew and loved God. Through their kindness, George surrendered his life to Jesus.

God radically changed George's path and after college, he became the pastor of a small church in England. Each day as George walked the streets, he saw orphaned children everywhere. They lived on the streets or in state-run poorhouses, where they were treated badly. George felt God calling him to open his home to take care of the children. So that's exactly what he did.

Throughout George's lifetime, he cared for more than 10,000 orphans and had up to 60 children living in his own home at one time. He funded many homes and also founded many schools. He was passionately dedicated to this ministry until he died at the amazing age of 93! His ministry still continues to this very day as the George Müller Foundation.

Do you know what leads a guy like George Müller to open his home and heart to do life with over 300 orphans at a time and over 10,000 over time? The answer is simple – Jesus. When we encounter Jesus, we begin seeing every gift from God as a tool to help others encounter Jesus too – especially our homes.

After this, Jesus went out and saw a tax collector by the name of Levi sitting at his tax booth. "Follow me," Jesus said to him, and Levi got up, left everything and followed him. Then Levi

held a great banquet for Jesus at his house, and a large crowd of tax collectors and others were eating with them. But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law who belonged to their sect complained to his disciples, "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?" Jesus answered them, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

LUKE 5:27-32

What George and Levi shared in common is called "hospitality." Today it describes a multi-billion dollar industry from resorts and hotels, to restaurants and theaters. But the biblical meaning of hospitality is very different. Rosaria Butterfield, author of *The Gospel Comes with a Housekey*, defines it as, "strangers becoming neighbors becoming family of God." Her definition is quite appropriate considering the New Testament Greek word for hospitality is "philoxenia." It is the combination of two words, "philo," which means love, and "xenia," which means stranger. Literally, biblical hospitality means loving the stranger, which means it's more appropriately associated with evangelism than fellowship as we use the terms today.

The Bible is filled with examples of and encouragement toward hospitality. *Leviticus 19:34* calls us to:

"treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God."

The motivation for hospitality is twofold. First, we've all been strangers at one time or another. Second, hospitality is bound up in the nature of God. Simply put, we were strangers and God showed us hospitality.

The means of hospitality are captured well in *Isaiah 58:7*

"Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter — when you see the naked, to clothe them, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?"

This verse ironically comes in the context of fasting. In other words, don't be a glutton and consume all that God provides for you. Rather,

hit the brakes and share! There are flesh and blood bodies all around us that lack food, clothing, shelter and proper care while most of us have excess. Take your home for instance, it should be viewed less as a hideaway from the world and more as a hospital for the world.

Jesus' words in *Luke 5:31* affirm this Old Testament thinking; "it is not the healthy that need a doctor, but the sick." Similarly, in *Luke 14:12-14*, Jesus tells us to throw a banquet and do not invite the rich and likable, but rather the poor, broken and needy. Based on Jesus' teaching, we can glean at least three important lessons about hospitality. First, hospitality should bless, not impress. It's not about the guest list, the size of your home, or the extravagance of the fare. Second, the focus is not meeting expectations, but meeting needs. Don't worry about the laundry in the living room or the clutter in the kitchen. That will only discourage you from recognizing spontaneous opportunities. Instead, let the piles remind you of how lavishly God has blessed you and the extent to which you can share. Finally, hospitality is risky and rewarding. Jesus' reputation was questioned because of Matthew's hospitality. Don't be surprised if the neighbors gossip and your kindness becomes scandalous. According to *Luke 14:14*, God rewards this type of scandalous hospitality.

REFLECT

1. Who do you know who practices biblical *philoxenia*? What does that look like?
2. When have you experienced hospitality from God and His people throughout your life?
3. Who has God placed in your regular paths who needs a taste of biblical hospitality?
4. What would it look like to practice scandalous hospitality in your home?

PRAY

Today, pray the 4-Open Prayer. Pray that God would *open* your eyes to the opportunities around you, *open* your home to be a hospital for the hurting, *open* your mouth to invite the stranger in, and *open* their hearts to His love and salvation.

*Taking the five loaves and the two fish
and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks
and broke them. Then he gave them to the
disciples to distribute to the people.*



LUKE 9:16



What Does God Expect of My Stuff?

William and Catherine Booth had a passion for evangelism. Though a pastor, William struggled to stay in the pulpit and maintain his sacramental duties. Instead, he routinely ventured into the streets to share the Gospel and set up open-air evangelism campaigns in the countryside of London. Thieves, prostitutes, gamblers, and drunkards were among his first converts to Christianity. As his ministry grew, the Gospel of Jesus Christ was spread far and wide to the poor, the vulnerable, and the destitute. Catherine believed that loving God meant loving people through action and, consequently, they established the East London Christian Mission in 1865 to share the Gospel through meeting the needs of the alienated and most destitute of London. Their efforts, however good, were met with significant opposition from both sacred and secular groups. Christians opposed their unconventional approach and ousted them from both the pastorate and the church. The alcohol industry mounted personal attacks on their character and even physical attacks on their volunteer force for fear that their impact would disrupt their revenue by persuading the poor to stop drinking. Nevertheless, the Booths persisted. Within 10 years, their movement enlisted over 1,000 volunteers committed to meeting the needs of the poor and sharing the Good News. Their campaign throughout the British Isles from 1881-85 won over 250,000 converts and soon spread throughout Europe, Asia, and Africa. Today, their movement is one of the largest humanitarian organizations in the world, sharing the Gospel and meeting the needs of the most destitute in over 100 countries. You know it as The Salvation Army.

Some see meeting needs as a means to sharing the Gospel. Others see meeting needs as part of the Gospel. Regardless of one's view, need-meeting and gospelizing go hand in hand — especially in the ministry of Jesus throughout the Gospels.

Late in the afternoon the Twelve came to him and said, "Send the crowd away so they can go to the surrounding villages and countryside and find food and lodging, because we are in a remote place here." He replied, "You give them something to eat." They answered, "We have only five loaves of bread and two fish—unless we go and buy food for all this crowd." (About five thousand men were there.) But he said to his disciples, "Have them sit down in groups of about fifty each." The disciples did so, and everyone sat down. Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke them. Then he gave them to the disciples to distribute to the people. They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over.

LUKE 9:12-17

A pastor once commented that the most amazing miracle in this story is not the multiplication of fish and loaves, but that Christ-followers were willing to share. Ouch! The church is full of resources and our pockets are as deep as God's, but when the world looks at the church, they often see extravagance and opulence rather than compassionate generosity. The sentiment is captured famously by Mahatma Gandhi who said, "I like your Christ, I do not like your Christians. Your Christians are so unlike your Christ."

What stands in the way of Christ followers living and giving more like Jesus? The answer may be found in one small word in today's passage, "*only*." Both Jesus and the disciples saw the need, but they viewed the fish and loaves very differently. The disciples saw "*only five loaves of bread and two fish*." Jesus foresaw the seven baskets of leftovers. The disciples had a scarcity mentality while Jesus had an abundance mentality. The difference in view is largely dependent upon who we see as the provider and owner of our stuff. Does God provide and own or do we?

If we view ourselves as the providers and owners of our things, we will hold them closely and miss seeing the God-sized possibilities that begin with seemingly small opportunities. *Only* a small home... *only* a little food in the fridge... *only* a few pairs of shoes in my closet...

only a little gas in the tank... and we miss out on being the only Jesus someone may meet that day.

However, when we view God as the provider and owner of all that is in our possession and everything as a tool for building God's Kingdom, we will hold them loosely and open the door to sharing a lot more than food, clothing, resources and space. Each time we share, we become the answer to someone else's prayer and the Kingdom of God is proclaimed through our generosity. It is a tangible declaration that God is not far off. It is a validation that God is love. It is the manifestation of what God's whole redemptive plan points toward – justice and peace. When we practice Jesus-shaped generosity, the footprint of God's eternal Kingdom grows.

REFLECT

1. Who do you know who holds possessions loosely and shares spontaneously? What does that look like?
2. When have you experienced spontaneous generosity throughout your life? How did you feel about it?
3. Who has God placed in your regular path who has tangible needs you can meet?
4. What would it look like to practice spontaneous generosity in your social circles and routines?

PRAY

Today, ask God to guide you through an inventory of your possessions. Ask Him to help you see your material possessions through His eyes and to hold them loosely. Ask God to give you eyes to see opportunities for spontaneous giving throughout your days and courage to give generously, trusting Him to be your provider even as He uses you to provide for others in need. And pray that through your generosity, God might open the opportunity to also share the Good News of Jesus.

He answered, "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"

LUKE 10:27



What Does God Expect of My Time?

Corrie ten Boom was a simple, Dutch watchmaker carrying on the family business. She loved her work and, more so, loved working with her family. When not making jewelry or timepieces, they joined together in worship, Bible study or service to the community. In her 30's, she founded a "girls' club" where she taught classes in Bible, performing arts, sewing, and handicrafts. She was passionate about caring for people with disabilities.

Her world turned upside down in 1940 when the Nazis invaded the Netherlands. Her girls' club was shut down and many of her neighbors were persecuted. Yet, in the face of imminent danger, Corrie chose to invest her time protecting the most vulnerable. Over the next four years, she and her family saved over 800 Jews and vulnerable people.

On February 28, 1944, Corrie's home was invaded and the whole family was imprisoned. Within two weeks her father died, and she and her sister, Betsy, were assigned to Ravensbrück, a women's labor camp in Germany. There, they invested their time ministering to less fortunate prisoners and hosting secret Bible studies and prayer. Many prisoners came to faith and the German soldiers were profoundly impacted. In December 1944, Betsy died and, 12 days later, Corrie was released due to an inexplicable clerical error.

After the war, she returned home to establish a retreat and rehabilitation center for survivors and to speak about her experiences. In 1946, she returned to Germany to share her story and was brought face to face with two German soldiers from Ravensbrück. By God's grace Corrie forgave them. For the next 30 years, Corrie shared the story of Jesus' forgiveness and the freedom found in Him.

This simple watchmaker understood the value of time. She saw herself as a servant of God and her time as a precious gift to be invested for the Kingdom.

What leads a successful woman like Corrie ten Boom to forgo the typical pursuits of this life to serve the most vulnerable and proclaim the Good News? Simply put, Corrie loved God and loved people.

On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus.

"Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

"What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?"

He answered, "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"

"You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live."

But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

In reply Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.'

"Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?"

The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him."

Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."

LUKE 10:25-37

Time is our most valuable asset. We can grow more food, earn more money, and accumulate more things. We cannot manufacture more time. Nobody can corner the market on time. The rich have no more of it than the poor. There is no advantage to the powerful. Not a second is promised and no one can tell what a day may bring.

This reality leads one person to be selfish with their time and another to be generous. The priest and Levite could not be bothered by the half-dead man in their path. We're not told why they refused to dirty their hands with the business of mercy, but nonetheless, they could not be interrupted. The Samaritan, however, saw the stranger as a *"neighbor"* and generously invested his time and treasures as if he were family. And so, we're not tempted to believe that such an investment is validated by results, Jesus never reveals the final state of the man. Rather, the return on investment is seen in Jesus' command, *"go and do likewise."* By this merciful investment, the very word *"Samaritan"* is redeemed, and his example is exalted. Loving God by loving people is always a wise investment of time, regardless of the outcome.

REFLECT

1. How do you view your time?
2. When have you been more like the priest and Levite and passed by an opportunity to serve or show mercy?
3. Who has God placed in your regular path who needs a merciful investment of your time?
4. What adjustments would you need to make to your life and routines to be more free to invest your time for Kingdom purposes?

PRAY

Today, ask God to slow you down and open your eyes to opportunities to serve others. Ask God to put names and faces on your heart who need a merciful act of service today. Finally, ask God for the courage and self-control not to pass these opportunities by, but rather to embrace them. Then, *"go and do likewise."*

"No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money."

LUKE 16:13



What Does God Expect of My Money?

Isabella Lilius Trotter was born to a wealthy family living in the privileged West End of London in 1853, during the Golden Age of Victoria. She enjoyed the luxuries of wealth, private tutors, extravagant travel, and affluent connections.

Two great discoveries occurred for Lilius in her twenties. First, her faith was ignited during a Christian conference where she was challenged to robust faith and practice. Soon after she began volunteering at the fledgling YWCA of London where she met destitute women and, consequently, leveraged her influence and wealth to help these “lost sheep” achieve “honorable employment” and meet the Good Shepherd.

Secondly, Lilius’ remarkable artistic talent was discovered by the famous John Ruskin, the foremost art critic of the day. Ruskin believed that, with the right training and dedication, Lilius would become one of the world’s greatest living artists. Presented with the opportunity to learn under Ruskin, Lilius wrote, “I cannot give myself to painting in the way he means and continue to ‘seek first the Kingdom of God and His Righteousness.’” Friends and family were shocked and disappointed that she would squander such an opportunity.

Resolved to seek the Kingdom, Lilius poured herself into mission work on the streets of London until May, 1887, when she listened to a message about Muslims in North Africa who had never heard the name Jesus. She quickly applied to the North African Mission but was rejected. Undeterred, she financed her own mission and, by the next March, without learning Arabic, was living in Algiers sharing Jesus.

During her 40 years in North Africa, she pioneered means, methods, and materials to reach the Arab people, which were revolutionary then and are still followed today. At the time of her death in 1928, Lilius had established 13 mission stations across North Africa committed to bringing “the light of the knowledge of God, in the face of Christ” to the Arab people.

What leads a woman with fortune, favor, and a promising future to invest it all in a land that, at best, does not welcome such women, much less, the message she would bring? For Liliás, it was nothing less than the mission of God.

Jesus told his disciples: "There was a rich man whose manager was accused of wasting his possessions. So he called him in and asked him, 'What is this I hear about you? Give an account of your management, because you cannot be manager any longer.'

"The manager said to himself, 'What shall I do now? My master is taking away my job. I'm not strong enough to dig, and I'm ashamed to beg - I know what I'll do so that, when I lose my job here, people will welcome me into their houses.'

"So he called in each one of his master's debtors. He asked the first, 'How much do you owe my master?'

"'Nine hundred gallons of olive oil,' he replied.

"The manager told him, 'Take your bill, sit down quickly, and make it four hundred and fifty.'

"Then he asked the second, 'And how much do you owe?'

"'A thousand bushels of wheat,' he replied.

"He told him, 'Take your bill and make it eight hundred.'

"The master commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly. For the people of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind than are the people of the light. I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings.

"Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much. So, if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches? And if you have not been trustworthy with someone else's property, who will give you property of your own?

"No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money."

LUKE 16:1-13

The shrewd manager stands as one of the most confusing parables in the Gospels. Is Jesus, through the words of the master, commending dishonesty (*Luke 16:8*)? Is Jesus suggesting that worldly wealth can purchase eternal dwellings

(Luke 16:9)? Who is this confusing master and who are we to follow? It helps to read the parable through Jewish eyes.

A Torah-literate Jew would understand that the Law prohibited lending money at interest. To circumvent the law, it was common to charge interest through commodities such as oil or grain instead. Additionally, collectors, like the dishonest manager, would inflate the bills to better pad their own pockets. It seems that the manager in question was gouging to his master's detriment. Therefore, the discounted bill was not so much cheating the master as securing favor for him by correcting his own greed.

Additionally, a Torah-literate Jew would recognize the master in this parable as God himself and the manager as Israel, the steward of God's creation tasked with drawing the nations to Yahweh. However, rather than leveraging the wealth of the kingdom to bless their neighbors, Israel's selfishness pushed away those they were commissioned to win. The Law that was meant to guide them in righteousness and justice was abused for selfish ends to the detriment of the nations.

While the lesson is clear for Israel, the implications are no less clear for us today. Everything in our possession is not ours, it all belongs to God. We've been made temporary stewards of the wealth of the Kingdom in order to draw the nations to our master, King Jesus. There's nothing under our care, be it talent or treasure, that we should not willingly sacrifice for the sake of winning our neighbor to heavenly dwellings.

REFLECT

1. Who do you know that demonstrates Godly stewardship for the sake of God's Kingdom? What does that look like?
2. When have you managed God's resources well? When have you been unfaithful?
3. Where can you make room in your budget to better invest in Kingdom purposes? What can you cut or adjust to make a bigger Kingdom impact?

PRAY

Today, ask God to increase your generosity and make you a better, wiser, and more shrewd manager of His resources. Ask God to put people and ministries on your heart who might need your support to help draw lost sheep to the Good Shepherd. Ask God to give you spontaneous opportunities to leverage your wealth to draw a neighbor or friend closer to Jesus.

Group Discussion Guide

CONVERSATION KICK-STARTER

You will need paper and pen for participation in a simple game.

Ask a series of “What if” questions and have others in your group draw what you ask. Ex. “What if...Dogs have chicken legs...Forests were made of candy...?”

DEVOTIONAL DISCUSSION

- What challenged or impacted you from your reading and journaling this week?
- What from your processing this week are you feeling prompted by God to act on?

Group Facilitator | Consider picking one question from each Daily Reflection and discussing as a group.

Follow Me

In the Bible, read *Mark 1:15*. In it, what does Jesus ask people to do?

Repentance is a rich biblical term that signifies an elemental transformation in someone’s mind, heart, and life. When people repent, they turn from walking in one direction to running in the opposite direction. From that point forward, they think differently, believe differently, feel differently, love differently, and live differently.

Fundamentally, then, repentance involves renouncing a former way of life in favor of a new way of life. So often we assume that the essence of the Christian life is about being forgiven of our sin (although that is important). Many professing Christians are stuck there: believing that Jesus has cleansed them from their sins, yet lacking true, authentic, real, radical change in their lives.

Read *Ezekiel 36:26* in the Bible. In it, what does it say God will give to you as you follow Him?

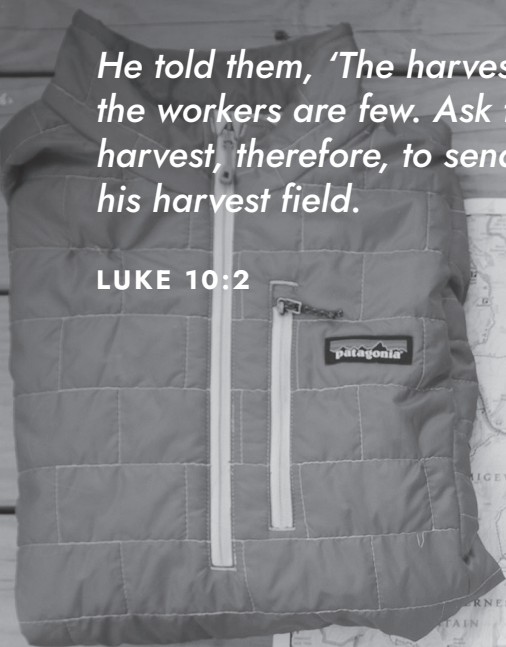
The Christian life becomes nothing less than the outliving of the indwelling Christ. This concept could greatly affect how you use your time, money, energy, schedule, and stuff.

GROUP REFLECTION

1. Read *Matthew 13:44-46*. What did people give up for the pearl or the field? To them, why was it worth it to do so?
2. What are the most challenging sacrifices that come with prioritizing those far from God in your calendar or schedule?
3. In the busyness of our life, we can easily forget about our non-Christian friends and family members. What are practical ways, or tools, to keep them in mind – both for prayer and for living out PEARL?

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.'

LUKE 10:2



How Do I Develop the Habit of Prayerfully Pursuing People?

Have you ever wondered what Jesus would do if He were to walk in your shoes today? What would He wake up thinking about? What would He do before heading out the door to work or school? What would He listen to on the way? Who would He eat lunch with? What would He focus on, talk about, prioritize? Would He be more proactive or reactive in His interactions with others? What would captivate and drive Him? As we study the life and teachings of Jesus, we actually have a pretty good window into the answers to these questions.

One thing for sure, prayer was extremely significant in the life of Jesus. Check out the following scripture passages:

“One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God. When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles: Simon (whom he named Peter), his brother Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Simon who was called the Zealot, Judas son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.”

LUKE 6:12-16

“My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.”

JOHN 17:20-21

“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.’”

LUKE 10:2

Did you notice the significance of Jesus’ priority and practice of prayer? Consider these observations and how they may play out in your life:

- In *Luke 6*, Jesus prayed seeking guidance from God the Father regarding in whom to invest. Many people were drawn to Jesus because of His teaching and miracles. He needed guidance from the Father regarding in whom to invest more deeply, so He asked.
- In the middle of the most stressful time of His life (right before His arrest and crucifixion), Jesus prayed specifically for people to come to faith in Him through the work of His followers, through us (*John 17*)!
- In *Luke 10:2*, Jesus sent His followers on mission! At the outset, He told them that the harvest is plentiful. In other words, many around them were ready to hear and respond to the Gospel. The problem was that the workers are few. There weren’t enough people with the message of the Gospel going out and sharing the Good News with those ready to respond. The solution was to ask the Lord of the harvest to send out workers. Jesus instructed His followers to pray for more workers; then He sent them out to find them. Where did they look for help bringing in the harvest? They looked in the harvest itself. God’s plan to reach the world with His Good News is to engage us, His followers, in reaching people who need to hear. New believers then join the work force and share with those around them, and so it continues!

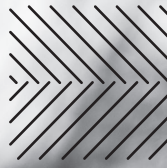
REFLECT

1. What kinds of things do you find yourself typically praying for?
2. What is your response to the idea that the “*harvest is plentiful*”? How might these words of Jesus apply to your situation today?
3. Who are the people in your life who need the hope of Jesus? Make a list of 10, then pray and ask the Lord to help you zero in on five of them to focus on intentionally.

PRAY

Ask God to work in the hearts of your Top 5, preparing them to hear and understand the Gospel, drawing them to Himself. Pray that you would have an opportunity to talk with, meet with, and share with them.

[illegible]



*Now the tax collectors and sinners
were all gathering around to hear
Jesus. But the Pharisees and the
teachers of the law muttered, 'This man
welcomes sinners and eats with them.'*

LUKE 15:1-2



How Do I Develop the Habit of Relational Eating?

Have you ever stopped to think about how much of life, community and connection with others revolves around food? During the Covid-19 pandemic, this has become especially apparent to many of us as we've had to figure out where and how to connect with others, often without being able to meet in homes, restaurants and cafés. It's true, isn't it? There's something about sharing food that brings people together and contributes to the building of relationships. Most of us enjoy partaking in food, we all need to eat, and we often slow down and focus over food. Yes, eating is a great way to connect with others and grow relationships.

In Hebrew culture, eating with someone (often referred to as “reclining at table”) was actually more than simply sharing food. It signified associating with them. By choosing to eat with someone, you were communicating that you were okay identifying with them, being lumped together with them, having them reflect on you. In this way, eating with others is a powerful form of being incarnational (becoming like someone else in order to connect and relate). This was extremely significant and could even be scandalous in a largely segregated first century society where “like” hung out with “like.” Eating with someone who lived by a different social and/or moral code was not the norm and very much frowned upon. Our current reality certainly has some similarities with life in the time of Jesus.

Consider this account from the Gospel of Mark:

“As he (Jesus) walked along, he saw Levi son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax collector’s booth. ‘Follow me,’ Jesus told him, and Levi got up and followed him. While Jesus was having dinner at Levi’s house, many tax collectors and sinners were eating with him and his disciples, for there were many who followed him. When the teachers of the law who were Pharisees saw him eating with the sinners and tax collectors, they asked his disciples: ‘Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?’ On hearing this, Jesus said to them, ‘It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.’”

MARK 2:14-17

Tax collectors during the time of Christ were disrespected, distrusted and generally dishonest. They betrayed their own people to the Roman government and enjoyed the financial gain at the expense of those suffering around them. They were viewed poorly, largely because they simply weren’t honorable, moral people. In spite of this, Jesus did not hesitate to call Levi (commonly known as Matthew) to become one of His closest followers. And Jesus didn’t just see Matthew, he saw Matthew’s friends as well, people that the religious establishment avoided. He had no problem associating with those despised and rejected. And in this context, we get one of the most revolutionary statements that Jesus ever made, a statement that shapes our interaction with the world thousands of years later.

“It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.”

MARK 2:17

Whether interacting with those similar to us or those very different from us, sharing a table with others is a great way to deepen relationships and to open up the door for spiritual conversation.

REFLECT

1. The church has often been referred to as a “holy huddle” or said to suffer from “koinonitis” — a twisted version of “koinonia” (the Greek word for Christian fellowship) where we focus inwardly and distance ourselves from those far from God. Have you unintentionally slipped into this mindset and practice? How?
2. How might you, even in the midst of a pandemic, eat with those who aren’t yet followers of Jesus? What other ways, if eating isn’t an option, might you pursue time with those far from God in your life?
3. How might you need to reprioritize your time and focus in order to be aligned with the heart of Christ for those far from Him. What might you need to give up or change?

PRAY

Ask the Lord to align your life with His priority of intentionally engaging with others, whether through eating together or some other way of spending time with those who need the hope of Jesus in their lives. Pray about who to pursue and get it on the calendar.

[illegible]



*When a
Samaritan woman
came to draw
water, Jesus said
to her, 'Will you
give me a drink?'*

JOHN 4:7

How Do I Ask Questions that Lead to Spiritual Conversation?

In the four Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John), Jesus asks 307 questions, He is asked 183 questions, and He only gives a direct answer to three of these. Similar to His use of parables, Jesus employed a brilliant strategy of using questions to draw people into a process of understanding.

In his book, *Jesus is the Question*, pastor and educator, Martin Copenhaver, speaks of Christ's methodology, "The goal is not to communicate knowledge but to elicit new understanding in the listener. Information is not the goal. Transformation is.... Answers can be offered as a conclusion. Questions are an invitation to further reflection. For the most part, answers close and questions open...."

Jesus was interested in a lot more than passing on head knowledge, He wanted to connect relationally and change hearts. In our desire to model our interactions with others after Christ's example, the use of questions is a powerful tool!

Consider a handful of the questions Jesus asked. You might find it helpful/interesting to check out the questions within the context of the broader passages.

“When Jesus saw him lying there and learned that he had been in this condition for a long time, he asked him, ‘Do you want to get well?’”

JOHN 5:6

“Why do you call me good?”

LUKE 18:19

“What do you want me to do for you?”

LUKE 18:41

“‘You don’t know what you are asking,’ Jesus said. ‘Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?’”

MARK 10:38

In some cases, like the woman at the well (*John 4*), Jesus asked a question in order to start a conversation. It was a legitimate question out of real need, He was thirsty. When we engage people from a place of humility and need, it can open up relational doors. Once the conversation had started, He continually steered it toward spiritual/life transformation.

In other cases (*John 5* and both *Luke 18* passages), His questions probed deep into the person’s heart and motivations, causing them to face who they were, who He was and their preconceived ideas and beliefs.

Still in other situations (*Mark 10*), His questions were intended to push people to deeper commitment to Him and understanding of His plan.

Church planter and author, Matt Tebbe, puts it this way, “Jesus is the Master of questions. He expertly digs down into reality to produce both self- and God-awareness in others. If we are going to be on mission with Him, we must become careful and wise in asking good question....”

Our reality is that we aren’t Jesus, but as His followers, we are seeking to be like Him. Here are a few pointers that might be helpful in your use of questions with your PEARL/person/people:

- Ask open questions. These are questions that cause them to think and share (try not to ask yes/no questions). “What do you think?” “How does that make you feel?”
- Ask authentic questions. You want to hear and understand instead of driving your agenda.

- Ask “others-centered” questions. Again, you are focusing on them and not you. Avoid things like “I would like to know...” or “Can you tell me...?”

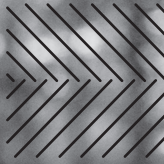
REFLECT

1. What are some personal areas of need out of which you would be able to authentically ask your PEARL for help?
2. Come up with a list of questions (keeping in mind the suggestions above) that you could use with those you are engaging with.

PRAY

Ask the Lord to give you an ability to ask penetrating, open-ended questions; a desire to hear and understand those you are in conversation with, a curiosity and commitment to listen well, and His leading in steering the conversation toward spiritual truth.

[illegible]



But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and who called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles.

GALATIANS 1:15-16



How Do I Share My Story in Spiritual Conversation?

The most powerful apologetic for a disciple of Jesus is an authentic life lived in relationship with God and people. To put it differently, it's not just what we say that communicates our belief in Christ, but it's also how we live. Have you found this to be true? It is one thing to believe intellectually, it is a completely different thing to live out that belief daily.

The Bible has quite a bit to say about this interplay between our words and actions. Consider the following verses:

“And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”

COLOSSIANS 3:17

The Apostle Paul makes it clear here that God doesn't just want that which comes out of our mouths to be “true, noble, right, pure, lovely and admirable” (*Philippians 4:8*), He desires that our actions and deeds are lined up with His heart as well. Our words are not enough. Our actions also need to be done in the name of Jesus.

“Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.”

1 JOHN 3:18

In agreement with Paul, the Apostle John says that our talk isn't enough on its own. In order for our words to hold weight with others, what we say always needs to be backed up with how we live our lives.

This is where the power of story comes in. Have you ever noticed what happens in a presentation or sermon when a story, especially one that is personal, is shared? Almost as one, the audience's gaze shifts upwards and all eyes focus in on the speaker. People love a good story but not just in presentations and sermons. By far the majority of stories are told one-on-one or in smaller groups. Good stories pass the "RAP test".

Relatable: Can others relate to the point or message of the story you tell? You might need to contextualize your story in order for it to connect with your listeners.

Authentic: Is my story real and true? Dramatic isn't bad, but exaggeration and tall tales aren't helpful when you share your life with others through story.

Personal: Does my story pull back the curtain and reveal something about myself? So often when we open up to others, they reciprocate and a depth of connection occurs.

So, you might ask, what does the harmony of our words and deeds have to do with the power of story?

- It is through the revealing of our stories that our words are often validated. We can share important truths with our words, but when we back these up with something relatable, authentic and personal from our lives, it connects with peoples' hearts.
- As we share the story of how God has intersected with our lives personally, we can help people see what it could look like for God to connect with their story.

Think of it in terms of: *My Story, Your Story, God's Story*

As I share *My Story* with you, points of connection emerge that relate to *Your Story*. You see how *God's Story* converges with *My Story*, and you understand how *God's Story* could intersect with *Your Story*. Here's an example: I share my story of experiencing loneliness with a friend. In the midst of this struggle, God showed up and met me in my need. I help my friend see how God, in the same way, could meet their need, regardless of what it might be.

REFLECT

1. Think of a story that someone has told you which impacted your life. How was it “RAP” (*relatable, authentic, personal*)?
2. What are some universal human emotions, like loneliness, that you’ve experienced? How has God met you in those situations?
3. Write your story out using one the situations you just thought of. Keep “RAP” and *My Story, Your Story, God’s Story* in mind.
4. In the journaling space below, try identifying five aspects of your story and how they translate to God’s salvation story.

PRAY

Ask the Lord to help you see and engage in opportunities to share your story with your PEARL and help them see how *God's Story* intersects with their *Story*.

[illegible]

They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need.

ACTS 2:45



How Do I Tangibly Love People into the Kingdom?

You might remember the story. The couple was young, newly married and very poor. In fact, they were so poor that they had no money to spare to buy each other gifts for their first Christmas together. He so wanted to buy her something special to communicate his love. So, he sold his most valuable possession, a silver pocket watch, and bought her a special comb for her beautiful long hair. She also longed to give him something that would in a small way express her affection for him. So, she cut her hair and sold it to a wig maker and bought him a silver chain for his pocket watch. While the gifts ended up not being “useful” from a practical perspective, what touching, tangible expressions of sacrificial love! It turned out that the love that they both expressed to each other truly was the gift!

Two important aspects of communicating tangible love are highlighted in this story:

Intentionality: Both the husband and the wife were intentional about thinking through an expression of love that would be meaningful to the other. As a student of their mate, they each were able to come up with a fitting gift that would communicate love to the other.

Sacrifice: Both the husband and the wife sacrificed something very valuable to themselves in order to express their love in a tangible way.

In *Acts 2:42*, we read about exciting growth and development of the early church, including numerical growth as new believers joined the fledgling community. Here’s how the passage concludes, “...And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.” (*Acts 2:47b*)

What was it about the early church that attracted people to make the significant, life altering switch, often at a steep price, in order to join? There are a number of potential answers to this question. Things like:

- radical, yet attractive message
- welcoming community
- signs and wonders

You might venture to say that one of the attractive attributes of the early church which most contributed to drawing new people in, was its commitment to loving tangibly.

“They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need.”

ACTS 2:45

Talk about intentionality and sacrifice! They saw and understood the needs around them. Their eyes were wide open — no averting their gaze or pretending not to see. Paying attention and being aware of needs around us is crucial for our PEARL loving habits and is also personally honoring to those we are called to love. But they didn’t stop with knowledge and understanding, they also got practical. They saw needs and met them at their own expense — literally! Like the newlywed couple and their Christmas gifts, they sold their things in order to live out tangible love. They sacrificially met material needs while loving people into the Kingdom. That’s commitment! That’s convicting!

REFLECT

1. Think of a time when you genuinely felt loved by someone? What was it about the situation that really touched you? How did intentionality and sacrifice play into it?
2. What would it look like for you to tangibly love your PEARL with intentionality and sacrifice?
3. What will you do and when will you do it this week?

PRAY

Ask the Lord to help you love those you're reaching out to in real, tangible ways, and that this love will draw them to Jesus.

[illegible]

Group Discussion Guide

CONVERSATION KICK-STARTER

If you won a million dollars what would you do with it? How much would you spend on yourself and loved ones? How much would you spend on others and the community?

DEVOTIONAL DISCUSSION

- What challenged or impacted you from your reading and journaling this week?
- What from your processing this week are you feeling prompted by God to act on?

Group Facilitator | Consider picking one question from each Daily Reflection and discussing as a group.

PEARL in Practice

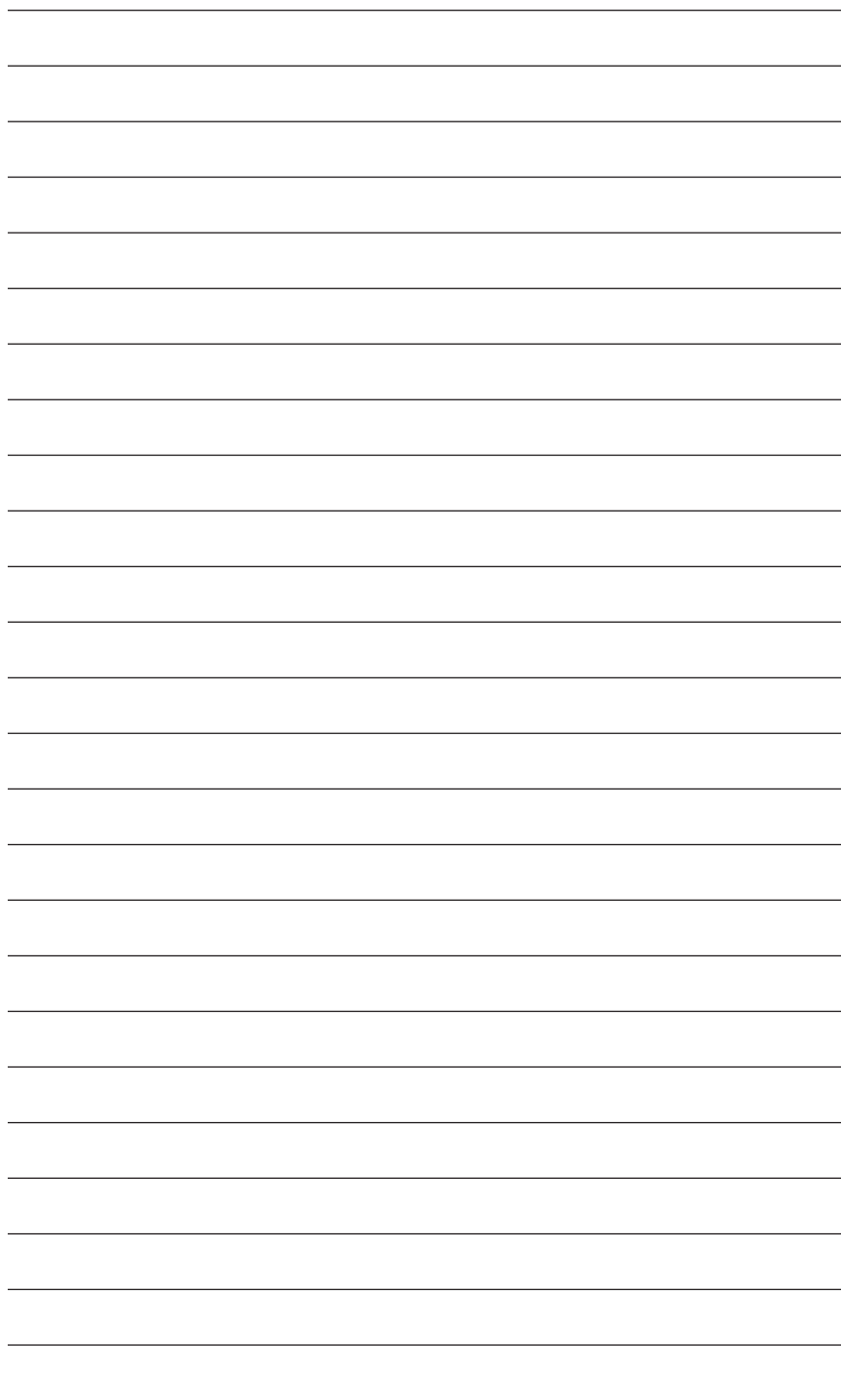
We have been discussing a particular technique for relational evangelism called PEARL – Pray, Eat, Ask, Reveal and Love. PEARL is one way to process how to take practical steps in sharing your faith with another person.

Read *John 4:1-42*.

- What do you notice about the encounter between Jesus and the Samaritan woman? What were some of the ways Jesus blessed her?
- How does Jesus' example correlate to loving your own neighbors?
- Which of the everyday ways to love your neighbor found in the PEARL acronym do you most look forward to practicing? Which do you find most challenging?

GROUP REFLECTION

1. As a group, read and pray through the following PEARL commitment:
 - P. I commit to **pray** for my neighbors. My example is Jesus, who started His earthly mission with prayer (*Luke 6:12-16*). Prayer is both how I discover my mission and how I do the mission of Jesus.
 - E. I commit to **eat** with my neighbors. My example is Jesus, who consistently shared meals with the “sinners” (*Matthew 9:9-13*). Eating with others is how I move a relationship from an acquaintance to a friendship.
 - A. I commit to **ask** good questions and listen to my neighbors. My example is Jesus, who loved others by asking questions and then listening to them (*Luke 18:40-42*). Asking and listening is how I give dignity to others, and it is a gracious expression of love.
 - R. I commit to **reveal** my story with my neighbors. My example is Jesus, who shared the Good News of His own story with others (*John 3:1-17*). Sharing my story gives others a clear understanding of how God’s love and the life of Jesus can change their lives.
 - L. I commit to **love** my neighbors by serving. My example is Jesus, who did not come to be served, but to serve others (*Matthew 20:28*). Serving others is a tangible way I can demonstrate the love of God to others.
2. What is your next step toward living out this PEARL commitment?





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