

Deeper Together

A 10 Week Exercise in Growing as Followers of Jesus

SMALL GROUP LEADERS GUIDE



International Evangelical Church
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Introduction.

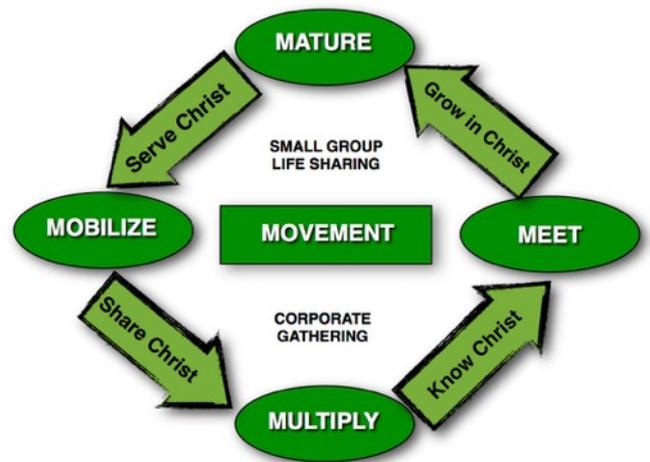
Thank you for being willing to join us on this 10 week journey of discipleship. This journey is really meant to kick start us in our growth with God. We all are coming from many different places in our journeys. Some of us just recently came to Christ and others of us have been walking with Him for decades. However, the thing that is common among all of us is the following Jesus is meant to be a journey where we keep going deeper and deeper, expecting to be conformed to His image.

On this journey, there are some ideas that will frame our times together.

1. These teachings are delivered with the Overall Discipleship Process (Life Development Process) that we have developed at IEC in mind. We look at 5 Ms of Discipleship.

These are:

- A. Meeting Jesus** (coming to faith and continuing to encounter Him)
- B. Maturing in Christ** (growing up to resemble Jesus more)
- C. Mobilizing as Equipped, Empowered and Released Jesus Followers** (we are made for ministry and get the privilege of engaging in it).
- D. Multiplying Disciples who Make Disciples.** Our desire is to see Kingdom multiplication as we share life on life discipleship with others).
- E. Movement.** God is moving and we long to be caught up in what He is doing.



Our hope is that throughout this time together we will grow in all of these areas. However, these 10 weeks are simply to give us a taste of what is possible. We have classes we offer to help train in these areas, too, such as: VISION, PRAYER, DISCOVER, SHARE, and more. Please join us for them and keep growing. The primary aim is for you to grow as someone who is self -feeding and willing to choose to grow as a Jesus follower day by day in relationship with Him.

2. Small Groups. We believe discipleship happens best in relationship. We did not design these 10 weeks to be a personal journey, but rather we purposefully are asking you to be in a small group or at least a pair of people going through this material. Discipleship cannot happen in a vacuum. We need each other.
3. Discussion. Each week we will have a teaching. But much of our learning is going to be in discussing things together and reflecting together on scriptures. The beauty is that God has called together a diverse group with those who are far along on their journeys with Jesus and others very new. We will learn together with some simple rules for sharing.
4. Reflection. At the end of each lesson there is group reflection, but also steps to take during your week. Growing as a disciple means a daily walk with Jesus. So, we encourage you to use the **This Week's Application - To take Home** section to use during your week to grow in Christ.
5. Gathering. On Sundays we also will be looking at some similar topics to what we'll talk about each week. So, we encourage you to gather together with us at our worship services where we grow in worship, fellowship, study and prayer together.

May we grow in Christ during this season,
The Elders and Ministry Leaders of IEC.

Rules for Sharing

Because much of our time together is going to be in discussion oriented settings, there are some basic rules for sharing that we are going to ask every person to follow.

1. Please engage freely. To learn we need to feel free to share and discuss.
2. Any feedback given to someone is to be done without any shame or condemnation.
3. No domination of the discussion. This is a discussion, not a time to preach.
4. People are free to share their perspectives and viewpoints. You also are free to disagree with those viewpoints. However, every discussion is to be handled with love, respect, grace and mercy.
5. What is shared in the group, stays in the group. A group is to be a safe place where a person can feel free to share. No gossip will be tolerated.
6. Be ready to learn. Even if you think you are the wisest person in the room, there is much to learn from others seated around you. Be open to hearing the Holy Spirit speaking through others to you.
7. Be open to making new friends. While teaching and discussion is part of a small group experience, one of the greatest benefits is the community that develops. We seek to be disciples who walk side by side with others on this journey of life. Be open to how God might develop those kinds of relationships over time.
8. Be ready for prayer. There will be opportunities to pray together as well as share prayer requests. Don't feel ashamed or like you don't have something to share. Prayer is just us talking with God. Be open to having others pray for you as well as engaging in prayer yourself.

We are praying for your group. May this be a season where you go deeper together while discovering an amazing season of transformation in relationship with other Jesus followers.

SCHEDULE / TABLE OF CONTENTS

Week 1 - Meet Jesus. Responding to God.....	PAGE 5	(Sept 18 - 24)
Week 2 - Mature in The Family.....	PAGE 9	(Sept 25 - Oct 1)
Week 3 - Mature in The Word.....	PAGE 13	(Oct 2 - 8)
Week 4 - Mature in Prayer.....	PAGE 17	(Oct 9 - 15)
Week 5 - Overcoming Growth Hurdles I There is an Enemy.....	PAGE 20	(Oct 16 - 22)
Week 6 - Overcoming Growth Hurdles II Where is God in the Midst of Suffering?.....	PAGE 21	(Oct 23 - 29)
Week 7 - Overcoming Growth Hurdles III How Does God View Money?.....	PAGE 33	(Oct 30 - Nov 5)
Week 8 - Mobilizing for Ministry.....	PAGE 29	(Nov 6 - 12)
Week 9 - Sharing My Faith.....	PAGE 38	(Nov 13 - 19)
Week 10 - Multiplying Disciples as The Church's Mission.....	PAGE 41	(Nov 20 - 26)

The material in this course has been sourced and adapted from the following materials:

- The Discipleship Ministry www.BibleStudyCD.com
- Mizizi: Plugging in to Your God Purpose, Mavuno Church, Nairobi, Kenya
- Navigators

1. Meet Jesus. Responding to God.

Introduction

As we start this journey together, we want to make sure that we all are on the same page and have a solid foundation together. So, we'll start with the basics.

If you died today, how sure are you that you have Eternal Life?

Not Sure

Maybe

Absolutely

Why did you place your mark where you did? (Discuss)

Let us look at the Bible where we will find that being sure you have Eternal Life involves being certain of your Decision to trust in Jesus Christ as Savior!

The following Four Truths explain this important decision.

1. God, Our Creator, Loves Us!

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." John 3:16

Let's break this familiar passage apart a bit:

What word describes God's attitude toward us. (loved)

How did God demonstrate His Love toward us? (gave)

What must we do to obtain Eternal life? (believe)

Who is Eternal life offered to? (whoever)

So, how do we know that God loves us?

Now lets look at John 10:10.

"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I (Jesus) have come that they may have life, and have it to the full." John 10:10

Why did Jesus say that He came? (they may have life)

What kind of life does He want us to have? (full life)

How do we receive this kind of full life? (through faith in Jesus)

Here God's Love stands out to us. But what is Love?

Love is translated from the Greek word Agape which describes a Love that is sacrificially active. Where as emotional love is often self- centered, Agape Love values the thing loved, and seeks its best no matter the cost to the one loving it.

That is the kind of Love God showed us. It cost Him greatly to rescue us.

2. Our Sin Has Separated Us From God!

Let's look at these 2 passages.

“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,” Romans 3:23

“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Romans 6:23

Who has sinned according to Romans 3:23? (all)

What is the result of sin according to these two passages? (death, fall short)

According to Romans 3:23 are you a sinner?

According to Romans 6:23 do you deserve death?

Read Romans 3:9 - 20

We only have to look around to see the effects of sin in our broken world. If we take a bit closer look, we also see the effects of sin in our own lives.

The problem is that the separation between Sinful Man and God is so vast that, no matter how “good” we may be, we are powerless to bridge it. In order to be in the Presence of a Holy and Perfect God, requires us to be Holy and Perfect. However, we cannot arrive there on our own. We cannot be good enough to gain God’s approval. Our sin is too great.

The penalty for our Sin is Death. In Genesis, we saw this death take place. Adam and Eve rebelled against God and their sin left them separated from God. They could not bridge the gap that their sinful decision caused between them and God. They were separated from God because of sin and so are we. Sin leaves us dead and helpless of changing our situation on our own.

This death is more than just our bodies dying; it is spiritual separation from God. And without intervention, this separation will become eternal separation at our physical deaths.

3. Jesus Christ, God’s Son, Died On the Cross for Our Sins!

“Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” John 14:6

What three things does Jesus claim about Himself in John 14:6? (way, truth, life)

Why are these 3 ideas important to people lost in sin?

Who is able to come to God apart from Christ? (No one)

“But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” Romans 5:8

How did God demonstrate His love for us in Romans 5:8? (Christ died for us)

What condition we were in when God loved us? (We were still sinners)

Why is it significant that God demonstrated His love for us even before we loved Him?

Take a look also at 1 Corinthians 15. Someone read it. “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 Peter, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers 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, as to one abnormally born.” 1 Corinthians 15:3-6

What four things did Christ do according to 1 Corinthians 15:3-6? (died, buried, raised, appeared)

Do you believe that He raised from the dead? How then does His resurrection change everything?

4. We Must Receive Jesus Christ As Savior and Lord!

“Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God” John 1:12

What 2 things must we do to become Children of God? (Receive Him. Believe in His Name)

Have you done those 2 things?

What does it mean to receive Him?

The phrase ‘Receive Christ’ is used to describe the act of putting my faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, and trusting in all He has done on the Cross to purchase my forgiveness.

What does it mean to believe in His Name?

It is not simply stating Jesus’ Name, but to believe in His Name, means that I believe that He is who He said He is. Because that is true I choose to put that belief into action by choosing His Way rather than my own way.

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

We believe in Christ to save us because we were helpless to save ourselves.

How does that make you feel to know that Our works cannot save us, so therefore we must rely on Christ to do so?

But How can I be sure that I am saved?

Eternal Life is not based on how good we are, or how we feel. Rather the Bible shows us that it is based on our faith in Jesus Christ.

The way to have assurance that I am saved, is not based on my actions, rather it is based in whether I know Jesus as my Savior and Lord. It is based on my surrender of myself into God’s plan of salvation found in Jesus Christ - God’s Gift to us. God is the one who gives us the assurance.

Listen to these words from 1 John 5, “And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.” 1 John 5:11-13

What has God given us if we are in Jesus Christ? (eternal life)

So, we rejoice that:

- 1.Christ died on the cross for me.
- 2.If I have put my faith and trust in Christ, then God has forgiven me, welcomes me into fellowship with Himself and will receive me in heaven when I die because He promised He would.
3. Therefore, I have Eternal Life because I have Christ!

Application as a group.

There are two applications to consider this week.

1. If you have never responded to Jesus, then now is the time. If you are not sure about whether you know God or not, come to Jesus. Please talk to a leader about choosing to follow Him.
2. The second application is that we talk about Jesus becoming Savior and Lord. To make Him Savior is to acknowledge I need a Savior to rescue me. To make Him Lord means that I surrender everything to Him. I make Jesus THE BOSS of my life. He becomes my Master. I no longer live my life on my terms, but now I live my life for Him. These two go together. Jesus rescues us and saves us out of sin so that we can live our lives with meaning for Him. Today, is there an area of life that you need to invite Him to be Boss and Master over? Invite Him as we pray together.

This Week's Application. - To take Home

1. Take some time to reflect on where you are as a Follower of Jesus. What might help you to draw closer to Him over these next 10 weeks?
2. Start reading the Daily Bible Readings found on Page 14 in the Participant Guide.

2. Mature in God's Family.

—Before we move into this week's lesson, let's take a moment to share how our Application time at home went this past week. Did anyone experience God's Forgiveness in a new way this past week?

Introduction:

How many of us have been around a young baby? What do we expect from that baby? Not much, right? Sleep. Eat. Sleep. Eat. It is so sweet and cute.

But overtime we expect that baby to grow. He needs to grow in all ways; physically, emotionally, relationally, spiritually. Over time he starts interacting with his world and he grows into taking action on his own.

What was cute for a 2 month old would not be cute any longer in a 20 year old. We expect growth and maturity.

The Bible shows us that we should also expect spiritual growth in one another. In 2 Peter 3:18 we read:

"But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever! Amen." 2 Peter 3:18

What are we called to grow in? How do we do so? (grace, knowledge of Jesus)

When God placed His Holy Spirit in us when we trusted Christ for Forgiveness, we were "born again" spiritually. Instantly, we became members of God's eternal family, "new creations" in Christ, created to grow to maturity and destined to glorify Christ through our lives.

So, we should expect growth from one another in this new identity. And the way that God has designed this growth to occur is in community together, as a church. Here in this room we have a gathering of believers who together are seeking God. We are The Church gathered together in this room as a small group. We also are The Church gathered together on Sunday mornings. These gatherings are vital for our growth in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. These gatherings are vital for us to grow up in The Lord.

You and I have been welcomed into this family we call The Church by putting our faith and trust in Jesus Christ. Our Physical Families helped us in one way or another to grow into who we are today. Sometimes it was functional and other times dysfunctional, however it was in relationship with family members that I matured in one way or another. So, it is with our Spiritual Family, God's Family, The Church. In this Family we grow together.

So, how can we contribute and receive in This Family so that we might grow in The Lord?

We must Establish strong relationships with other growing Christians.

Even as coals burn hotter longer when piled together, in the same way Christians who join together in Spiritual Fellowship will stoke one another's faith in God, and inflame each other's love for Him!

We need each other. Without fellowship our flame for Christ will diminish, but piled together we burn brightly.

How many of us have known someone who grew up in the Church and seemed to be on fire. But then they went off to college or they dropped out of fellowship with other believers and suddenly they had backslidden? **Anyone want to share one personal example?**

So what do we need to give each other as a Family together in The Lord?

1. Encouragement

Encouragement is like oxygen to our souls. Without it we become unhealthy.

Read Hebrews 10:25 “Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another and all the more as you see the Day approaching.” Hebrews 10:25

What must we not do according to this passage? (not give up meeting together)

Notice the words give up. The words mean to “completely abandon” or “utterly forsake”. Christians are forbidden to forsake meeting together. So, ‘Giving up’ is not an option!

What action are we to do? (encourage one another)

Encourage is the translation of a Greek word that means “to call alongside”, and presents the beautiful picture of a person encouraging another while walking side by side together. We often find it easier to criticize, or shame, or judge another person who does not measure up to our standards, but God asks us to encourage, to stand alongside, those who are wavering.

How do we encourage each other practically?

What most encourages you? Listen as others share, so that you know how best to encourage each other.

2. Inspiration

“Do not be misled: ‘Bad company corrupts good character.’” 1 Corinthians 15:33

What should we not be? (mis-led)

The word “mis-led” means to be led astray from the truth! We find this teaching throughout the Bible, perhaps because we have a habit of thinking we know the way, even after God has told us the correct way!

What misleads people to think that we really don’t need God’s Family and we can go this journey alone?

What is the effect of Bad company? (corrupts good character)

Have you ever met people who, thinking they could help other people deep in sin, have instead been drawn into sin themselves? Life is full of examples of Christians who chose to remain with bad company only to find their faith corrupted.

“Do not be misled”! We will become like the company we keep! If our goal is to grow spiritually and become a mature Christian, then we must spend time with Christians who are growing spiritually to maturity!

In what specific ways does bad company corrupt good character?

In what ways can good company inspire good character?

We inspire each other to grow in The Lord. Now, this does not mean that we stop befriending unbelievers or that we take on a fortress kind of mentality where we simply protect ourselves from the world. However, it means that we must always cultivate deep relationships with other believers that become our lifeline that keeps us tethered to God's Family in a dark world.

3. Restoration

"Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently."

Galatians 6:1a

What should brothers and sisters in The Lord do with their fellow Christians caught in sin? (restore gently)

What does it mean "you who are spiritual"? What are the marks of a spiritual person?

How are they to restore their fellow Christian?

~ Too often we can be harsh and judgmental with other Christians caught in sin, but here we are exhorted to be gentle.

Gently: The word "gentle" is a translation of the same Greek word from which "meek" is translated. A person who is "meek" is one who is humble toward God. This humility comes from the realization that God is the Creator and we are simply His creation! This keeps us from the pride that would hinder us from helping other Christians caught in sin!

In the first part of the verse, What can happen to the unsuspecting Christian? (Galatians 6:1) (caught in sin)

The word "caught" means to be entrapped by surprise.

Have you ever found yourself in trouble and needing help, but unable to find someone to call?

Nothing is more frustrating and dangerous! Like getting caught in a strong ocean current, Christians can find themselves being swept away by sin's temptations. A Believer who has a good spiritual friend is so fortunate, because they have someone who can jump in and rescue him from danger!

Think for a moment about the sins you regularly commit. Do you see how traps were set for you to be caught unexpectedly?

Being committed to God's Family both helps us to see the traps but also helps us to cry out to others when we are in trouble.

Encouragement. Inspiration. Restoration. Three great marks of God's Family that we are welcomed into. However, just because we are together in this room does not mean that it will come naturally.

How can we grow in these areas as God's Family together in this room?

Here are some more ideas.

1. Create an atmosphere of honesty. We will need to be real with each other.
2. Meet together regularly. We will need to get to know each other by being in proximity to one another. It means, committing to being together. Making this a family commitment.
3. Engage. Your thoughts and opinions matter. The Bible tells us that we become like iron that sharpens iron. It can mean that sparks fly in our midst as we grow together despite our differ-

ences in opinion and personality. However, healthy relationships are ones where we do not need to agree, but rather we sharpen each other together as we both stay focused on The Lord.

4. Encourage each other. We will need some time to speak life over each other, pray with each other and even meet one on one outside of the group to breathe life into each other.
5. We will serve together. Let's find a way that we can make a difference in our world together. **Who could we serve together with the love of Christ?** Together as a group of coals heaped together we can make a difference while also growing together as a family.
6. Share how God is growing you. When we study The Bible together as well as in our times of fellowship, may we share what God is doing in our lives, so that we can spur one another on.

Application as a group.

To help us better understand why we exist as part of God's Family, lets form a circle.

1. Everyone take your neighbors hand and Reach Up as high as you can. We exist so that together we might **REACH UP** to worship God with our voices as well as our lives. When we meet together, We inspire each other to keep reaching up.
2. Take your hands and put them all in the Middle. As a Family we also **REACH IN**. Look at every face around the circle. These are your brothers and sisters in the Lord. We have differences in background and opinion. However, we are able to breathe encouragement into each other despite those differences. Our aim is to REACH IN, encouraging each other and restoring each other weekly to keep growing in The Lord.
3. Now turn 180 degrees. Everyone is still in a circle, but facing outward, shoulder to shoulder. Everyone can stretch their arms out. We also are here to **REACH OUT**. We are standing shoulder to shoulder but we are reaching out to our world. We will reach out together as a group, but also we will encourage and inspire one another to REACH OUT during our times apart. We will celebrate our victories together and mourn together in defeats and struggles. We will share the love of Christ as we REACH OUT during our weeks and in our times together.

TO CLOSE:

While we are in this circle, we are going to take some time to pray. Turn back towards the center. Each Person whoever would like to pray can pray a short 1 minute prayer for our group. We will take turns around the circle. Then the leader will close.

This Week's Application. - To take Home

1. Pray daily for each of the members of your group this week.
2. Continue in the Daily Bible Readings found on Page 14 in your Participant Guide.

On this night, try to plan some snacks or a meal so that people can spend more time lingering together, sharing with each other and praying together.

3. Mature in God's Word.

—Before we move into this week's lesson, let's take a moment to share how our Application time at home went this past week. Did you have any examples of Reaching In toward other believers this week? What would have been helpful to you this past week?

Tonight we will look at how to grow in knowing God by growing in His Word.

Let's start with a question.

Have you ever faced a situation where someone was not walking in Truth? What feelings did you have as you tried to break through deception?

A follower of Christ is one who lives in the Truth not deception.

He sees all things as they really are, not as they appear to be. Because of this, he is able to discern the empty promises of momentary pleasures and superficial success. **But how do we determine what is true or real? How can we separate the genuine from the counterfeit?**

Our problem in discerning The Truth is:

1. Most people depend on their physical senses and intellect.
2. Some people include intuition. But our adversary, the devil, is the preeminent deceiver and even the smartest among us are fooled!
3. Our lust for possessions, prominence, power and pleasure can lead any of us down the wrong path.

As the writer of Proverbs noted ... "There is a way which seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death." Proverbs 16:25

Interpretation

1. **What makes something appear 'right' to us?**
2. **What examples might apply to Proverbs 16:25?**

Without a standard, we will leave truth up to our own ideas. Without a foundation, truth becomes relative to every situation and everyone makes up their own truth to best serve themselves and their own situations.

This is why as Believers, The Bible, God's Word, becomes our standard.

Consider 1 Timothy 3:14 - 16.

"¹⁴ But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, ¹⁵ and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶ All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, ¹⁷ so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."

In verse 15, what do The Scriptures do? (make us wise for salvation through Jesus Christ)

What does it mean the Scriptures are God-breathed? (answers vary)

What is the usefulness of the Scriptures according to v. 16? (teaching, rebuking, correcting, training)

What is the final aim for the servant of God through the Scriptures? (equipped in good work)

Read Romans 12:2. “Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.
2 Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.”

What is God’s desire for us according to Romans 12? (living sacrifices, transformed. able to know God’s will)

The word to conform means to press into a mold. **Who is God molding us to be? (like Christ)**

What does it mean to not conform and to be transformed by the renewing of our minds?

God’s Word is the key to both not conforming to our world as well as transformation through the renewing of our minds. As He speaks to us through His Word, we expect a conforming of ourselves to His image rather than our own desires.

So, His Word is important, but how can we read God’s Word in a way that brings transformation - renewing our minds?

We’re going to look at some ideas about studying God’s Word and then practice together.

What is Scripture? The Inspired, Authoritative communication (The Word) from God which is our guidance and authority in every area it addresses.

To understand God’s Word means that we must interpret it. We must understand what He said, the specific culture in which He said it, why He said it, what it says about Him and how it changes the way we live today.

To study God’s Word we must recognize two factors that influence how we read God’s Word.

1. Our nature as the readers. **What biases do we have that could cloud our reading of The Bible?**
2. The nature of Scripture. God’s Word has eternal relevance. However God chose to speak His Word through human words so it also has a historical uniqueness. We must understand that God spoke His Word into a specific language, time and culture. This means that we read Poetry different than History and The Prophets different than Narrative or The Law.

However, with these two ideas in mind, we must always remember that Scripture never contradicts Scripture. **It is God’s Revelation of Himself to us as humans, so He never contradicts Himself.**

To understand God’s Word to us, we must interpret at 2 different levels.

I. We try to understand the meaning of the original author to the original audience (Exegesis)? We want to hear the Word as the original audience would have heard it.

Why do you think this is important?

The text cannot mean to us today what it never could have meant to its original author or audience. So, when we hear God’s Word today, we must keep in mind what it meant originally to the original hearers.

So, we ask questions about:

- A. **Context.** First, what is the **historical context** . What was the time, culture, occasion, and purpose of the writing? And second, what is the **Literary context?** Words only have meaning in terms of sentences, paragraphs, etc, therefore we read whole passages of Scripture to understand the whole meaning rather than picking out a verse to prove our point. When we simply pick a verse out of context, it is possible that we distort the meaning of what God was truly saying. We call this practice Proof Texting.

To understand Context, we try to answer the following questions, “Who, What, When, Why, Where and How?” For example, “Who was the audience?” “What was happening culturally?” “What was God saying?” “Why did He say it?” “How did God want them to respond?”

B. Content. What is the plain meaning of the words, figures of speech, choice of original words, and the relationship of verses to one another. We also keep in mind that the Bible is the Narrative of God’s Mission. Therefore, we can use Scripture to help us interpret Scripture, because from Genesis to Revelation this is God’s Story.

II. What is the relevance and application of this passage to my life today? (Hermeneutics)

- A. The significance of a text may change, but the meaning will not. The Biblical text can never mean more to us than it did to the original audience. This is why Exegesis (above) is so important. We must not jump to application too quickly or we will miss God’s meaning.
- B. Here, we ask the question, “How does this passage apply to me?”
Is this an appropriate application of the original meaning?
What truths am I to embrace?
What changes should I make in my beliefs or in my life?

A common tool to use for application when studying a passage is called SPECS (like spectacles, glasses).

S - What are the SINS I should forsake?

P - What are the PROMISES I can claim?

E - What are the EXAMPLES in the text that I should follow?

C - What COMMANDS should I obey?

S - What STUMBLING BLOCKS or errors should I avoid?

PRACTICE

We are going to practice these principles together on a passage. Turn to Philippians 4:10 - 20.

1. Pray for insight.
2. Let’s read the passage together.
3. Now, let’s read the passage again, and try to answer some basic questions:
 1. Who was writing? Who was it written to?
 2. What was the reason for writing?
 3. When was this written? What events had happened leading up to this writing?
 4. How does what happened to Paul explain his words here?
 5. Why was Paul writing? What was he hoping the Church at Philippi would put in practice?
 6. What should the Church at Philippi put into practice as a result? What attitudes should change for them?

Don’t rush this part. Rather, together, try to understand the whole picture of what was going on. Some in your group may have a Study Bible with footnotes or a Study Bible with an introduction. Ask them to share information from there. We have included a copy of one kind with this lesson in the participant guide so that you have a reference.

4. Application. Try applying SPECS to this passage, together. Ask for observations.

- S - What are the sins I should forsake?**
- P - What are the promises I can claim?**
- E - What are the examples in the text that I should follow?**
- C - What commands should I obey?**
- S - What stumbling blocks or errors should I avoid?**

One thing that should jump out is Philippians 4:13. This verse is used as a Proof Text all of the time, yet in context it means something other than the way it is often used.

Talk about the application of this verse in context. How does it differ in context from how we often quote the verse?

This Week's Application. - To take Home

This week we learned the importance of studying God's word and its usefulness to us. This week, spend some time in God's Word. Together we are going to read through 1 Thessalonians .

Try the following each day:

1. Pray for insight, focus and clarity.
2. Read one chapter in 1 Thessalonians (there are 5 chapters).
3. Re-read the chapter, asking the Who, What, When, Where , Why and How questions.
4. Journal a bit about what this passage might have meant to the original audience.
5. Journal what God is showing you in this passage using SPECS from above.
6. Bring something that God showed you and that you are willing to share to next week's small group.

Week 4 - Mature in Prayer

—Before we move into this week’s lesson, lets take a moment to share how our Application time at home went this past week. What did you sense God speaking to you as you spent time in His Word?

Introduction

Let’s perform a test. Take three deep breaths and hold the last one. Now how long can you go without breathing? A few days? Of course not! Not even a few hours! The longest humans can last without air is a few minutes at best.

Prayer is like that. Prayer is to our Spiritual Lives as air is to our physical lives. It is what energizes our New lives in Christ and refreshes our Soul . Without it, our Christian lives become spiritually stagnant . Why? Because ...

“Prayer is the one activity that brings us into an ongoing, minute by minute, encounter with the Living God!”

Tonight we are going to consider 4 Aspects of Prayer using an acronym - ACTS.

1. Adoration
2. Confession
3. Thanksgiving
4. Supplication

Adoration

“Who can utter the mighty acts of the LORD? who can show forth all his praise?” Psalm 106:2

What does it mean to Adore God? (Discuss). (Worship / Praise.)

The Psalmist in Psalm 106:2 uses a common literary tool by expressing the same idea in two different ways.

To praise God then is to proclaim His “mighty acts”.

Consider the ways David adored God;

“Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor, for everything in heaven and earth is yours. Yours, O LORD, is the kingdom; you are exalted as head over all. Wealth and honour come from you; you are the ruler of all things. In your hands are strength and power to exalt and give strength to all. Now, our God, we give you thanks, and praise your glorious name.” 1 Chronicles 29:11-13

Share, “What mighty acts has God done in your life?”

Confession

Another important aspect of Prayer is the Confession of our sins.

Read the following Scriptures, together on Confession.

“If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened;” Psalm 66:18

What happens if we cherish sin in our hearts according to Psalm 66:18? (Sin short circuits our Fellowship with God, and keeps Him from hearing our prayers).

“Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions to the LORD’ - and you forgave the guilt of my sin.” Psalm 32:5

“Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are proved right when you speak and justified when you judge. Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me... Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.” Psalm 51:2-5,10 & 12

In these two passages, what is David’s attitude? Specifically, what is David’s attitude after committing adultery with Bathsheba in Psalm 51?

What is God’s response?

What specifically does David ask God to do at the end of Psalm 51? How might those same things transform our relationship with God.

Genuine Confession results in a desire to obey God. Notice that after acknowledging his sins to God, David prays that God would give him an obedient heart.

Take a Moment to Reflect, “What sins might you be holding on to that God would call you to confess to Him?”

Thanksgiving

A third aspect to Prayer is Giving Thanks.

“give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.” 1 Thessalonians 5:18

In what circumstances are we to give thanks? (Thessalonians 5:18)

Why does this passage tell us that we should give thanks?

The verb ‘give thanks’ is a command . God requires that, as an act of our wills, we give thanks in all circumstances.

Read Romans 8:28

“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.” Romans 8:28

Why are we able to give thanks in all circumstances according to this passage?

What can God work for the good of those who love Him?

What are the benefits of being a Thankful person?

Knowing this, we can genuinely give thanks to God in all things. It does not mean that we love our circumstances, but we can find our Peace and Hope in Him, and that He has the final word.

Discuss, How have you seen God bring good out of a dark time? How were you able to give thanks to Him either in that moment or later with a new perspective?

Supplication

Supplication is the bringing of our requests to God. Too often, we become worried and forget the One who can help!

Read Philippians 4:6 below.

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” Philippians 4:6

What does Philippians 4:6 teach us about being anxious?

What things can we ask God for?

What is the result of us bringing our requests to God?

What requests do you have of God today?

But Why Doesn't Prayer Always Work?

Have you ever wondered why some of our prayer requests do not seem to be answered? The Scriptures below explain some reasons why.

“When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.” James 4:3

“This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask— we know that we have what we asked of him.” 1 John 5:14-15

“If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you.” John 15:7

“If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer.” Matthew 21:22

What are some of the reasons given that we might not receive what we ask for?

What are some conditions given for answered prayer?

Whether our Prayers are Answered the way we wanted or appear to go unanswered, we are reminded of God's Sovereignty when we pray. There are times where we do not know why a prayer is answered in a different way than what we had hoped. To place blame on a person or their lack of faith is not biblical.

Consider Jesus in John 9 . “As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. ² His disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” ³ “Neither this man nor his parents sinned,” said Jesus, “but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him.”

The culture wanted to blame a young man's blindness on either generational sin or on his own sin. But, Jesus pointed to God's Sovereignty and how He would use the situation. Here Jesus healed him, but we don't see any mention of faith. Other places he seemed to see healing as dependent on the disciples' faith. Other times he said "Your Faith has healed you." While faith and prayer go hand in hand, we must be careful in drawing conclusions and putting guilt and shame on people where it might not be true. We are better to rest in Gods' Sovereignty in how He answers and when He answers, while also always having an attitude of faith and prayerfulness, ourselves.

Consider the words of Arthur Pink,

"The sovereignty of God may be defined as the exercise of His supremacy. Being infinitely elevated above the highest creature, He is the Most High, Lord of Heaven and Earth. Subject to none, influenced by none, absolutely independent; God does as He pleases, only as He pleases, always as He pleases. None can thwart Him, none can hinder Him." from 'Attributes of God' by Arthur Pink

Prayer gives us the privilege of deepening relationship with The Sovereign, Living God, bringing before Him our joys and concerns and putting our lives fully in His hands.

It is with His Sovereignty in mind that we read the following about prayer:

"I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for every-one-- for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness." 1 Timothy 2:1

"Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective." James 5:16

"And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints." Ephesians 6:18

Who should we pray for? How hard is it to pray for those in authority that we do not agree with?

Yet, Our Sovereign God calls us to prayer. May we meet Him.

Application:

Spend some time as a group praying through the ACTS Model, out loud. Make it a time of intercession together, including for the authorities of our land.

Then, when you are finished, pray for each other. Take some time to hear each other's prayer needs and then simply pray for those needs.

This Week's Application. - To take Home

1. Share prayer request around the room. Commit to pray for each other.
2. If you see God intervening in your request during the week, send an email, letting people know how God is answering.
3. Next week come prepared to share what God did in you as you prayed for others, or the encouragement you felt in knowing that others were praying.
4. Daily commit to spending 10 minutes in prayer using the ACTS Model.

Week 5 - Overcoming Growth Hurdles. There is An Enemy.

—Before we move into this week’s lesson, lets take a moment to share how our Application time at home went this past week. How did God move in prayer this past week?

Introduction:

Ask, Who is our enemy? What does an enemy do?

Today we are going to look at 3 different ways the enemy of our souls tries to misdirect our walks with Christ. Many times we think of an enemy as being another human being, a different tribe, the leadership of a country or a different religious grouping. However, the Bible directs us to look beyond what we see as flesh and blood and to consider that there is a different kind of enemy that seeks to distort and destroy the good things of God.

Read Ephesians 6:12, “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.”

The fact is that there is a real enemy who wants to make sure we don’t finish the race. He wants to cause as much devastation and destruction as he possibly can. He wants to distract us from God’s glory and God’s Ways.

Let’s start in Genesis 3:1-19. Here we see this enemy and the way he distorts God’s plan in paradise.

What destruction do you see him bringing? What methods did he use to deceive Adam and Eve?

Now read, Genesis 3:15. **What is the promise here?** Even though the enemy tried to destroy God’s plan, God put a rescue mission in operation. Imagine, even there in the garden, God was intent on Jesus coming to save us from the enemy’s grip.

While God put a rescue mission in place and we know that Jesus defeated the enemy through the cross and resurrection, the enemy still is at work today. 1 Peter 5:8 reminds us of this reality, “Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.”

So, how can we make sure we endure to the end and finish well? Let’s uncover 3 ways the enemy attacks so that we know how to stand strong.

1. The Enemy Within.

Read Romans 7:15 - 25.

“¹⁵ I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. ¹⁶ And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. ¹⁷ As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. ¹⁸ For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. ¹⁹ For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. ²⁰ Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it. ²¹ So I find this law at

work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me. ²² For in my inner being I delight in God's law; ²³ but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me. ²⁴ What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? ²⁵ Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in my sinful nature a slave to the law of sin." Romans 7:15 - 25

How do these verses describe reality for you? Do you ever struggle to do the right thing?

While these verses describe the reality of our desire to do evil, notice verse 25. God delivers us through Jesus Christ our Lord. We are now a slave to God's law.

What is God's law? One idea here is that Paul is pointing to the perfection of God's Law in Love as Jesus taught it. Loving God with my heart, mind, soul and strength. Loving my neighbor as myself. This is the Law of Love.

So, I am no longer a slave to my desires, but now I am rescued and have Jesus as my Master - He has set me free to love Him and love others.

A battle still wages. My selfish desires keep crying out to me. My sinful nature remains. Yet, in Christ I have been set free.

Read Romans 6:6 - 8, 11.

In this battle, I am no longer enslaved to sin. I have a choice.

Read Romans 8:11- 14. **What is my new choice?**

I have the Holy Spirit in me who empowers me to refuse to be ruled by sin. As I am led by Him, I will overcome the flesh and move forward in victory.

But there are some practical steps or choices we can take which help us in this battle.

1. **Practice honesty.** Read 1 John 1:9 and James 5:16. **What advice do we get here?**
2. **Stop Feeding My Flesh.** Read Galatians 5:24 - 26. **What does it mean that those who are in Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires?**

What steps might I need to take to stop feeding the flesh?

An example. If I struggle with lust, then I will want to steer clear of being alone with someone. If I struggle with alcohol, then I won't want to hang around a bar. And if I am prone to take what is not mine, then I will choose to distance myself from having control over the finances for an organization.

God leads us to make choices that will stop feeding the flesh and allow it to die.

3. **Walk in The Spirit.** Read Galatians 5:16 - 18.

What helps us to turn away from the desires of the flesh?

How do we choose to walk in the Spirit? What helps you to have that moment by moment awareness of His Presence with you?

B. The Enemy Without. While there are the internal issues, we also face an external battle, too.

Read 1 John 2:15 - 17.

What is “this world” that we are told to not love?

What are some of the characteristics of it?

Why is it important for us to battle against this enemy that is outside of us?

1. Look at 1 John 2:15. **What is true of us if the love of the world is in us?**

The problem is that Love for the things of the world will always crowd out our love for God. Remember Jesus teaching in Matthew 6:24, “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.”

How does the love for the world crowd out love for God? What steps can we take to correct the situation?

2. Look at 1 John 2:17. **What happens to the world?**

How can we focus on eternal matters and turn away from what is temporary?

We read that the one who does the will of God lives forever. That’s a great promise isn’t? It is a promise that is so much more inviting than the temporary pleasures and desires that the enemy tries to entice us with through the world.

We must recognize that the enemy is a good counterfeiter. He entices us by the false. Sex is good, but He entices us with lust. Money is not evil, but the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil. We need food to survive, but excess kills us physically, emotionally and spiritually.

3. We win this battle, not by withdrawing, but by engaging the world on God’s terms.

Read 1 John 2:6 - 11. **What does this passage tell us?**

- a. Do not love the world. (darkness)
- b. Follow Jesus Example.
- c. Love one another.

We are called to not love the world, but rather to be a counter-cultural loving force. Consider Jesus teaching about the City on a Hill (Matthew 5:14). **How might we use His instruction in order to make His redemption known in our world?**

3. The Enemy Above.

Our enemy also brings oppression. At times we sense his oppression in our lives or the lives of others. He brings discouragement or he actively distorts relationships.

The Bible warns us about his activity in our world.

Ephesians 4:27.

1 Timothy 3:7.

Revelation 2:10

1 Timothy 5:15.

We are not to be afraid of the enemy's plans, but rather we become aware of his plans, and we submit ourselves to God more deeply. As we do so, we press into God and resist the enemy and his plans.

One of the clearest places where the enemy attacks believers is in the area of un-forgiveness. Here, he brings confusion as we find ourselves attacked from within, without and above all at the same time.

So, in order to protect ourselves against this kind of attack from the enemy, we must better understand what to do with unforgiveness in our lives and how to walk in forgiveness.

We need to understand what we should do with sin.

Let's try to answer 4 questions...

1. What is Sin?
2. Who Sins?
3. What is God's Solution for Sin?
4. What Should We Do When We Sin?

1. What is Sin?

The word sin is a translation of a Greek word which means "missing the mark" . It describes the distance between where an arrow lands and the bull's eye of the intended target. Notice how it is used in the following Bible passage.

"for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God," Romans 3:23

Romans 3:23 describes Sin as falling "short of the glory of God". Sin is Man's failure to live up to the perfect standard of God. We have all broken God's perfect moral law, either in action or in thought .

2. Who Sins?

"If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us... If we claim we have not sinned, we make (God) out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives." 1 John 1:8,10

What happens if we as Christians claim to be without sin?

3. What Is God's Solution for Sin?

"When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross." Colossians 2:13-14

What did God do with our sins?

By "nailing it to the cross" God was in essence making His Son, Jesus, pay for our sins by dying on the cross in our place. If Jesus didn't pay for our sins, we would have to!

So, Jesus finished the work of forgiveness for us. Through Jesus sacrifice you and I are set free from our sins. We are forgiven and do not have to pay for them anymore. Jesus took our place - He became our substitute. So, our sins are forgiven, past, present and future.

The Death of Jesus Christ satisfied two attributes of God. It satisfied His Holiness which required that Sin be punished, and it satisfied His Love which desired Man's salvation. Through the sacrifice of Jesus. God is able to demonstrate His Love for Man while maintaining His Holiness!

This is why Theologians describe Christ's death on the cross as Vicarious Atonement because He is our Substitute, taking the punishment for our sins upon Himself!

The enemy always wants to remind us of what we did wrong in the past. If he can keep us focused on our past regrets, we will never get around to living life today. However, we need to be reminded that Jesus took our place. He is our substitute. In Him we are forgiven. Any attack of the enemy where he brings accusation, regret or condemnation, can easily be countered by remembering that Jesus took our place on the cross.

4. What Should We Do When We Sin?

"If we confess our sins, (God) is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. 1 John 1:9

Unconfessed sin keeps us hiding in the dark rather than living in the light. The enemy wants to paralyze us by keeping us buried in under shame rather than walking in freedom and honor.

But 1 John 1:9 gives us the key. We confess our sins.

The word "Confess" comes from a Greek word which means to agree. To confess is to agree with God that we have sinned! Notice also that the above verse is a conditional statement.

If we confess our sins, What are the two things God will do? (forgive & purify us)

Application as a group.

1. Pray and ask God to reveal any sins which you have not confessed to Him.
2. Confess them to God by agreeing that you have sinned. Don't make excuses for your sins.
3. Turn away from sin and ask God to help you keep from committing them again.
4. Claim the two promises which God makes to those who confess their sins according to 1 John 1:9.
6. Thank God for His forgiveness as an expression of your faith!

This Week's Application - To Take Home.

1. Pray daily using the ACTS model for at least 10 minutes. However, this week focus on the confession part of the prayer.
2. Ask God to make you more aware this week of the ways the enemy is trying to distract you. As you become aware, ask God to re-center you on Himself and His purposes.
3. Help others to see the forgiveness that is offered in Christ. Especially think about brothers and sisters in Christ and how you might be able to speak words of forgiveness that leads to freedom over them rather than judgement and condemnation.
4. Continue in the Daily Bible Readings on Page 14 in the Participants Guide.

Week 6 - Overcoming Growth Hurdles.

Where is God in the Midst of Suffering?

—Before we move into this week’s lesson, let’s take a moment to share how our Application time at home went this past week. Would anyone like to share how you saw the enemy’s attempt to distract you this past week? How did you stand in Christ?

Introduction

Ask the Group,

“Where have you seen suffering this week?”

“How are you suffering?”

There are many theologies around that say that a believer should not suffer or that the presence of suffering shows that there is some kind of defect in our spiritual walks. However, when we look at the Bible, this kind of theology becomes problematic.

Suffering and walking with God go hand in hand.

Suffering is also something that keeps some people from growing in Christ. They start growing, but then a season of suffering causes them to question God’s goodness. Or, they don’t even believe in a Good God in the first place, because they cannot see how it is possible that He would permit suffering to happen in our world. It is a big topic in our world today. How we respond to the presence of suffering in our world, and in our lives, will either cause us to grow up in Christ or to compartmentalize our lives in unhealthy ways.

Tonight we are going to look at an image of suffering in the Bible as well as some ideas about how we can grow through seasons of suffering.

Read Romans 8:16 - 39,

¹⁴For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. ¹⁵ The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, “Abba, Father.” ¹⁶ The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. ¹⁷ Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

¹⁸ I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. ¹⁹ For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. ²⁰ For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope ²¹ that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God. ²² We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. ²³ Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies. ²⁴ For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? ²⁵ But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.

²⁶ In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. ²⁷ And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God. ²⁸ And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. ²⁹ For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. ³⁰ And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.

³¹ What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³² He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? ³³ Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. ³⁴ Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. ³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? ³⁶ As it is written:
“For your sake we face death all day long;
we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.”

³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹ neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

This long passage written by Paul is written by a man who knows suffering. He was a Jesus follower who faced a lot of opposition. He was shipwrecked, bitten by a poisonous snake, persecuted, mocked, imprisoned and had many who talked bad about him. So, when we look at his life, we do not see someone who escaped opposition, but rather one who kept drawing near to Jesus in the midst of it.

In these verses, what stands out to you?

Let's look closely at a few things in this passage.

- 1. Verse 14 shows us the importance of being led by the Spirit, demonstrating that we are children of God? What does it mean to be led by the Holy Spirit? Might He lead us into opposition? Why or Why Not?**
- 2. Verse 15. What does Fear and Suffering have to do with each other? How does a reminder to not be afraid prepare us to face opposition?**
- 3. Verse 15. Notice that we are adopted as Sons and Daughters and we cry out “Abba, Daddy to God.” What is special about calling “Our Father, Abba / Daddy,” that helps us to grow during suffering?**
- 4. Verse 17. What does it mean to be an heir of Christ? How does sharing in His sufferings change this picture for you?**
- 5. How can Paul write that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory revealed in us? How is that glory revealed?**
- 6. Verses 19 - 22 talks about the suffering of creation around us. Where do you see the evidence of this suffering? Read Revelation 21:1 - 8 . How does this give you hope?**
- 7. Verse 22 - 25. What is our hope in times of suffering?**

8. Verses 26 - 30. How does the Spirit help us in our weakness? What does He remind us of?

9. Verses 31 - 34. What comfort do you find in these verses? How does the fact that God gave up His Son for us bring comfort when we endure suffering?

10. Verses 35 - 38. What can separate us from God's love for us? How does that bring you comfort? What is our focus during seasons of suffering?

11. Verse 37. What does it mean to be a conqueror in Christ? Read it in context, how is Paul's instruction focused on enduring suffering rather than escaping it?

So, it seems clear that we don't escape suffering as Believers. Actually there is evidence that perhaps we endure even more suffering as we follow God rather than conforming to our world. Following Jesus is never the easy way out, but rather it often leads us through the valley of the shadow of death, persecution and hardship. The key is that we know His Presence with us and that we do not walk alone. He leads us.

When we see suffering, how can we respond?

1. Press in to Him and His Love for us.

v. 15 - 17, v. 35 - 39.

2. Cry out in The Spirit.

v. 14, 26 - 30.

3. Keep Perspective.

v. 18 - 25.

4. Walk with Others. (make note of how all of these pronouns are plural (you plural, we)

v. 31 - 37.

Application:

1. Pray for the suffering in our world.

2. Lay hands on those who are suffering.

3. Choose as a group to serve those who are suffering - visit the sick, the elderly. Make a plan to serve the poor, the orphan, or the forgotten and oppressed some time in the near future as a group.

This Week's Application - To Take Home.

1. Daily bring before the Lord any suffering in your life. Come into His Presence and ask Him to meet you in the midst of your suffering and to make His undying Love known.
2. Using the ACTS model, pray for those who suffer around you. Also, bring your suffering before God.
3. As you move around the city this week, ask God that He would open your eyes to those who are suffering. Then ask Him how He might have you respond to their suffering.
4. Continue in the Daily Bible Readings on Page 14 of the Participant Guide.

Week 7 - Overcoming Growth Hurdles.

How Does God View Money?

—Before we move into this week's lesson, let's take a moment to share how our Application time at home went this past week. How did God open your eyes to suffering this week?

Tonight we'll talk about a more controversial topic, but one that is vital to understand to grow as a Jesus follower. **Money.**

The Bible has a lot to say about money. We also recognize that one of the hardest things for us to surrender fully to God is Money and Resources.

Let's discuss some of the Bible's verses about Money as well as see ways that we might grow as Disciples in how we use the resources God has placed in our hands.

Read Matthew 6:33. "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."

What was Jesus instruction to us? How does Money get in the way?

Consider how money determined the fates of some of the wealthiest men in history during the 20th century.

1. Charles Schwab, President of the largest Steel Company, died bankrupt, living on borrowed money for five years before his death
2. Howard Hubson, President of the largest Gas Company faced criminal fraud charges and lived his final years in obscurity and poor health, including questions about his psychological well being.
3. One of the greatest commodity traders , Arthur Cutton , faced many legal issues before he died from a heart attack at age 66 in the midst of an investigation for tax evasion.
4. Richard Whitney, President of the New York Stock Exchange, was a poor manager of his wealth, went into great debt and embezzled in order to keep his lifestyle. He was caught and served a jail sentence.
5. Albert Fall, a member of the United States' President's Cabinet , served a jail sentence for fraud and eventually was given parole.
6. The greatest "bear" on Wall Street , Jessie Livermore, won and lost four multi-million dollar fortunes. He committed suicide.
7. President of the world's greatest monopoly , Ivar Krueger, was found guilty of having falsely claimed \$250 million in assets in order to gain personal wealth. He committed suicide.
8. Leon Fraser, President, Bank of International Settlement, committed suicide

These are sad cases of how seeking first Money caused great personal destruction. What we must understand is that everyone of us has this same potential in us. It is easy for us to make Money and acquiring wealth a god in our lives.

How do Jesus' words in Matthew 6:33 speak into their situations?

How do Jesus' words speak to our situations?

The Bible actually talks about money more than faith and prayer combined. Jesus talked more about money than about heaven and hell combined. **Why do you think He did so?**

One answer is in Luke 16:10 - 14. ¹⁰ "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. ¹¹ So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches? ¹² And if you have not been trustworthy with someone else's property, who will give you property of your own? ¹³ "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." ¹⁴ The Pharisees, who loved money, heard all this and were sneering at Jesus. ¹⁵ He said to them, "You are the ones who justify yourselves in the eyes of others, but God knows your hearts. What people value highly is detestable in God's sight."

Money easily becomes a Master. But, we can only serve one Master. Will it be God or will it be Money?

What is a Biblical Perspective on Money and Stewardship, then?

1. **God owns everything.** Psalm 24:1 "The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it;"

How does the fact that everything belongs to God, change my outlook?

If everything belongs to God, and therefore everything in my hands is a gift from Him, then what does that make me?

2. Our role is to be good Managers / Stewards.

Genesis 2:15, "The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it."

What did God command Adam to do?

What is our role today, then?

1 Timothy 6:17 - 19, ¹⁷ "Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. ¹⁸ Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. ¹⁹ In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life."

What will happen to our resources?

How should we then use our money?

How is generosity to rule our lives?

3. Management Requires godly Action.

Giving. Proverbs 3:9 - 10. "Honor the Lord with your wealth, with the first fruits of all your crops; ¹⁰ then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine."

The Bible points to people giving their first fruits to God. For them, this was giving up their security to God. The same is true for us.

Giving the first 10% of my income to God's Work is an act of obedience. It is an act of trust that God can provide all that I need through the other 90% that is remaining. It is discipleship.

It is interesting that we trust God with our eternal security, but when it comes to our financial security, it is hard for many people to give a tithe. 10% just seems like too much. However, we remember that Our God is generous toward us, so as an act of worship, in response to His great grace, we give to Him.

What holds you back from giving a tithe? What would make it easier?

How might God be calling you to a step of Trust in His Provision?

Besides the tithe, we also talk about offerings. These are gifts that are given in addition to the tithe that provide for a variety of situations in the Scriptures. We are called to obedience in tithing and we respond with generosity when we give offerings.

These offerings might be for work among the poor, missions, helping others in need, ministries, etc.

2 Corinthians 9: 6 - 11. ⁶ Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. ⁷ Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. ⁸ And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. ⁹ As it is written: "They have freely scattered their gifts to the poor; their righteousness endures forever." ¹⁰ Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. ¹¹ You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God."

Paul was reminding The Church at Corinth to be very generous in their offering to the Church of Jerusalem that was in great need.

With what spirit are we to give?

What are some of the blessings of being generous?

How does our giving to Missions become an important part of this generosity?

B. Taxes. Romans 13:6 - 7. "This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing. Give to everyone what you owe them: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor."

Believers and unbelievers alike do not like paying taxes. **Why is that so?**

But the Bible clearly states that we are expected to pay our taxes to enable the government to carry out its task. Believers, and especially Believing Business owners, must remember to pay their taxes. To not do so is illegal (tax evasion), it gives a poor witness and it goes against our mandate as Jesus followers.

Remember, Jesus words, "Give to Ceasar what is Caesars'." These were Jesus words. Now, if Jesus gave us these words in under one of the most oppressive tax settings in all of history and in

under a government that actively persecuted Jesus' followers, then we do not have a reason to not actively pay our taxes today. It doesn't feel comfortable to pay, yet it is the right thing to do so.

C. Savings. Proverbs 6:6 - 8. "Go to the ant, you sluggard; consider its ways and be wise! ⁷ It has no commander, no overseer or ruler, ⁸ yet it stores its provisions in summer and gathers its food at harvest."

Savings is what we keep out of our earnings today to help us in the future. Most people spend more than they bring in, leading to debt. However, we read that those in debt have an active oppressor.

Savings is when we set aside a bit, each month, so that we buffer unexpected expenses, allow us to purchase major items without going into debt, as well as to fund education, retirement and health care.

Savings also allow us to have some margin in our lives. We do not have to spend everything that we have. Rather, savings gives us freedom to do what God leads us to do.

D. Lifestyle Spending.

Most of our income, after Giving, Taxes and Savings, is used for daily living. Rent, Transportation, Food, Clothing, etc. What we many times do is over spend in these areas which then means that there is nothing left over to share with others.

1 Timothy 6:6 - 8 " But godliness with contentment is great gain. ⁷ For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. ⁸ But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that."

1 Timothy 6:17- 18. "¹⁷ Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. ¹⁸ Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share."

Luke 16:10 - 11 "“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. ¹¹ So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches?"

How does a Generous God expect us to live?

Budgeting is very important here and it is a spiritual discipline. If we live within our means, then we from time to time will have more than enough so that we can share with others. Budgeting also means that I choose to live within how God is blessing me currently rather than how I hope that He will bless me in the future. To not have a budget is not faith. Rather it is foolishness.

Jesus' instruction in Luke 16 points to this idea. He talked about being trustworthy in Kingdom matters. By living within a budget, we show that we can be a trusted steward of God's resources.

What influences you to live outside of God's Provision? What voices tell you that you need more?

E. Making a Budget.

A budget template has been provided in the Participant Guide. Please work on it this week at home.

Here is what to do with it:

1. Start with your actual income. It might be salary as well as any other income.
2. Immediately set aside the Tithe 10%.
3. Consider other ways God might lead you to give - offerings, family gifts, Missions, etc.
4. Savings. Set aside a percentage, even small at first, for monthly savings.
5. Debt Repayments. Who do you owe money to? Make it a priority to pay them back. If you do not, then you will spend your monthly income without thinking of re-paying them. Debt repayment is not fun, but it is necessary.
6. Living Costs. Utilities. Rent. Food. Transport. Pocket Money. Insurances.
7. Long Term Costs. Set aside some money to replace items that might wear out or for vacation, weddings, education, special occasions.

F. Living Debt Free.

The Bible warns us against being in debt.

Prov. 17:18 "One who has no sense shakes hands in pledge and puts up security for a neighbor."
 Prov 22:7 "The rich rule over the poor, and the borrower is slave to the lender."
 Prov 22:26 - 27 "Do not be one who shakes hands in pledge or puts up security for debts; ²⁷ if you lack the means to pay, your very bed will be snatched from under you."

Why is it important for us to not get into debt?

What helps us to choose to live within our means rather than in debt?

So, tonight we recognize that God is the One who owns everything. What we have is simply on loan to us to use for His glory. Therefore, our aim is to follow His desires with this resource rather than following our desires. May we do so with our lives.

Application as a group.

1. Let us join in a circle and pray together. We will commit each other and the resources God has given us into His care.
2. How might God call us to be generous together? What needs are around us. Who are the poor that we might be able to support as part of our group.

This Week's Application - To Take Home.

1. Confess to God the ways you have held back resource from Him for your purposes rather than His.
2. Commit to start tithing. Start this Sunday.
3. Work on a Budget / Spending Plan. Pray and ask God to guide you in this process.
4. Keep reading the Daily Bible Readings on Page 14 in your Participant Guide.

Week 8 - Mobilizing for Ministry.

—Before we move into this week’s lesson, lets take a moment to share how our Application time at home went this past week. What did God show you about how to serve Him with your Money and Resource?

Last week we talked about stewarding God given resources for His Kingdom. Tonight we will talk about stewarding another kind of resources - **Our Selves** and what it means to be mobilized for Ministry.

What does it mean to mobilize?

It is a word we often use to describe an army or a relief team. People are trained up, empowered and then released to go and make a difference either on a battle field or in a devastated setting.

When we look at our world we see that there is devastation and our world is like a battle field. At times we can be discouraged and think that it is a battle that we are losing. However, the Bible continually reminds us that God has already won and that a day is coming when He will make all things new. In the meantime, we become His agents of restoration and renewal in our world as The Body of Christ, His Church.

Tonight we are going to look at 1 Corinthians 12:12 - 27.

“¹² Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. ¹³ For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. ¹⁴ Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many. ¹⁵ Now if the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. ¹⁶ And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. ¹⁷ If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? ¹⁸ But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. ¹⁹ If they were all one part, where would the body be? ²⁰ As it is, there are many parts, but one body. ²¹ The eye cannot say to the hand, “I don’t need you!” And the head cannot say to the feet, “I don’t need you!” ²² On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, ²³ and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, ²⁴ while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has put the body together, giving greater honor to the parts that lacked it, ²⁵ so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. ²⁶ If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it. ²⁷ Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.”

How does the image of a body describe how The Church is meant to function?

What would happen in our physical bodies if one part thought it was more important than another?

How do our bodies’ systems work in cooperation with one another?

One of the clear things from this passage is that no believer can survive alone. We grow together and we suffer together. When we come to know Jesus we are included as part of His Body. We, together, make up the Body of Christ and we truly need one another.

This Passage also points to another truth, You and I have a role to play in the Body of Christ. Too many people come to know Jesus and then become spectators. They never find out the way that God has made them to contribute to His Body. Tonight we want to search together how God has made us and what part in His Body we might play.

Are you an Ear, an Arm, a Leg, an Eye? Each part is important. Each part is necessary. Without all parts, the Body cannot function as it was designed.

So, as a Jesus follower, You are included in The Body and you are needed.

Before we talk about how God has made you, let's look at some passages that describe how we are to work together as a Body.

1. The Body gives us an opportunity to Love God Through others. 1 John 4:19 tells us that "We love because he first loved us." We get the opportunity to grow in God's love by showing His love to those around us, even those who might not deserve it. Disagreement, Opportunities to Forgive and Loving during hard times all help us to grow in the Love of God.
2. The Body gives us an opportunity to Serve. "Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good." 1 Corinthians 12:7.

Why are we given gifts?

What has God given you that could be used for the good of THE BODY?

3. The Body gives us an opportunity to be cared for and to care for others. Philippians 2:1 - 5.

"Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, ² then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. ³ Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, ⁴ not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. ⁵ In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:

What 4 things do we see in this passage that we are to do?

These are not for super spiritual people, but rather these are to be the experience of every believer. God has given us the resources to then care for others.

This thinking leads us to a whole list of One Another verses in the Bible. These speak to us about the quality of love we are to show one another. Some of these seem impossible, but with God's help they are what we aim for. They are not impossible, but rather they are God's Best that is meant to be poured out of our lives.

Take some time to read them:

Romans 12:10
Romans 12:16
Romans 15:7
Romans 15:14
1 Corinthians 12:25
Galatians 5:13
Galatians 6:2
1 Thessalonians 5:11
1 Thessalonians 5:13
1 Thessalonians 5:15

Ephesians 4:2
Ephesians 4:32
Ephesians 5:21
Colossians 3:13
James 5:16
1 Peter 1:22
1 Peter 4:9
1 Peter 5:5
1 John 1:7

These sound wonderful. Imagine a community where these are in operation. Often times we read these verses and we feel let down by other believers. We see this beautiful dream spoken of in these verses, but our reality has been different. Here is where we can change. No matter what our experience has been in the past, we are empowered by The Holy Spirit to see these truths in operation in our current situation. If you have not felt loved, cared for, encouraged, etc., you have a choice. You could nurse your pain, but honestly it will get you no where. Instead, be part of the solution. Choose to show the love, caring and encouragement to others that you want to receive.

How can we start making these One Anothers' known in The Body of Christ? What part could we play?

These verses describe a beautiful Body that is growing and is thriving. But lets talk about one more area of The Body that is important.

God has given you a Unique SHAPE so that you can play a part in This Body. If you imagine this group, and our church to be a massive puzzle, each one of us has a unique place that we fit. We have a ministry to embrace. We have a role to play in the Body. If we do not play that part, then there will be gaps and holes in the Body.

How has God Shaped You? In the Discover class we talk about this in a lot more depth, but lets think about it and discuss it a bit tonight.

As I read each of these areas, reflect a bit on how God has made you. And we'll take some time to share along the way, too.

S
H
A
P
E

S - Spiritual Gifts. We already read that God has given gifts in His Body as He saw fit. A spiritual gift is an extraordinary ability that God has given you, freely by His Grace. Every one of us has at least one gift. There is a partial list in the Participant Guide. **What gift do you think God perhaps has given you?**

H - Heart. God has made you passionate about something. Maybe it is a People Group. Maybe it is Justice. Maybe Healing. Maybe Evangelism. **What are you Passionate about?**

A - Abilities. God has given you certain abilities that make you different. Maybe you are artistic? A great planner? Good with numbers? Great with languages.

When you look back over your life, what abilities has God given you? What do you enjoy doing?

P - Personality. God has given you a unique personality.

Do you love being around people or prefer to be alone?

Are you a risk taker or do you prefer playing it safe?

Are you a deep thinker or a deep feeler?

Do you look at the facts of a situation or are you more concerned with keeping relationships in tact?

The personality that God has given you helps to determine the part you play in His Body.

E - Experiences. You also have lived through a number of experiences, both positive and negative that have shaped who you are.

Perhaps you had a wonderful loving home, so you want others to experience the same.

Perhaps you had a horrible growing up so you want to see healing come to others who are experiencing the same.

Perhaps you grew up poor or you know what it means to be unemployed.

Maybe you have struggled with illness.

Maybe you had experiences teaching and your loved it or your jobs have called you to use your hands and you love building and repairing things.

God has given you a Unique Shape. He has made you to serve. He calls each of us to find our place in the Body and play our part.

How has God Shaped you? You might be confused and unsure. But let's recap a few ideas.

1. God has placed you in His Body.
2. The Body needs all members working together in order to fulfill God's calling.
3. That means you play an important and necessary role in His Body, for the benefit of others.
4. God has uniquely SHAPed you for Service, to show His love and grow in His love.

Application as a group.

Let's take some time to pray for each other. We are going to ask God to show each of us our SHAPE.

Then we are going to pray over each other. We will bless the ways we see His SHAPE in each other. And we will encourage each other to keep displaying His goodness in those ways that we see.

This Week's Application - To Take Home.

1. Ask God to show you your Unique SHAPE This week. Be aware of things you enjoy doing or different opportunities that God seems to put in your path. Prayerfully consider how they are part of how God has made you to serve His Body.
2. Read through the list of One Anothers again. Ask God to make those known in our community. How can you make some of those One Another verses a reality for others in this group?

Chapter 9 - Sharing My Faith

—Before we move into this week’s lesson, lets take a moment to share how our Application time at home went this past week. As you read through the list of One Anothers, what stood out to you? How can we start practicing these toward each other in this group?

Tonight we are going to start with Matthew 28:18 - 20. “¹⁸ Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

This passage has become one of the most quoted passages in many churches. It shows our responsibility as Jesus followers. Now that we have come to know Him, we need to share Him with others.

But look at these verses. What are the elements that we are called to do?

- Make disciples of all nations
- Baptize
- Teach them to obey everything.
- And we do these things with the understanding that The Holy Spirit is with us, empowering us along the way.

If we are making disciples, baptizing and teaching someone to obey everything that Jesus commands, what is a necessary component?

We need to be close enough to people to share the Good News.

The word Evangelism has become a word that makes many of us feel guilty. We know that we should be sharing about Jesus, but we feel uncomfortable. Or we feel unequipped to share. We believe that there are those who are gifted as evangelists, but we know that we are not one of them.

Tonight we hope to De-Mystify evangelism.

One person once said, “Evangelism is One Beggar telling another Beggar where to find bread.”

What does this phrase assume?

How does it make evangelism a bit easier to understand?

Rebecca Pippert wrote, “Our problem in evangelism is not that we don’t have enough information - it is that we don’t know how to be ourselves. We forget we are called to be witnesses to what we have seen and know, not to what we don’t know. The key is authenticity and obedience, not a doctorate in theology.” *Out of the Salt Shaker and into The World*

How does the idea of being directed by authenticity and obedience make sharing Jesus seem more possible in our lives?

Tonight we are going to look at a number of people who shared their faith in Jesus. You will notice a few things. One is that there are many models that we can use. Each one of them has advantages and disadvantages. Each one of them is based around the current context as well as the personality of the person sharing. And each one has the capacity to bear fruit.

As we look at these different styles, be thinking about what style you feel most comfortable with. What are the advantages and disadvantages as you have experienced them. And, also see how sharing Jesus can truly be just like breathing - or one beggar telling another beggar where to find bread.

1. Read Acts 2:38 - 41.

How would you describe Peter's style?

What was the effect of his use of a more Confrontational Style?

What could be a disadvantage of this style? How well do you think you might need to know someone before using it?

2. Read Acts 17.

How would you describe Paul's style here? An Intellectual Style.

Why do you think Paul used this style here?

What are advantages or disadvantages of it?

3. Read John 9:25

How would you describe the blind man's sharing? Testimonial Style

What is there in your story of how Jesus rescued you that might help others to see?

4. Read Luke 5:27 - 31.

How would you describe Matthew's style? Interpersonal / Relational Style

What makes this style so powerful?

Whose life have you invested in deeply enough that it might be time to share about Jesus with them?

5. Read John 4:28 - 29.

How would you describe the woman's style?

What made it so powerful?

What might be a disadvantage of this style?

6. Acts 9:36.

How would you describe Dorcas' style?

How might it be hard to move from serving to talking?

What would help to share the Gospel in Word as well as deed here?

Out of these styles of sharing Jesus, which one do you feel most comfortable with? Why?

Which one caused you to respond to the Good News?

Out of these styles, which one do you feel most uncomfortable with?

What do all of the styles have in common?

1. They need to be prayerful.
2. They need to be timed for the right point in a relationship.
3. They need to be done in a way that the relationship may continue; no matter the outcome.
4. They all require the work of the Holy Spirit in the person's life that I share with.
5. They all require courage.
6. They all require that I get around to talking about Jesus at some point in time.

Tonight, who has God put in your life for you to share with them about Jesus?

What is one possible way you might start sharing with them about Jesus and what He came to do?

Application as a group.

1. Give everyone 2 minutes to share. You can even set a timer. In 2 minutes share how you came to know Jesus. As you share, think about how you might be one beggar telling another beggar where to find bread.
2. Talk about the people in your life who you are praying for that they might come to know Jesus. What do you think the next step is in sharing Jesus with them in Word or Deed? What similarities are there among group members in those next steps?
3. Pray for each person you want to see come to Jesus by name.

This Week's Application - To Take Home.

1. Read The Bible Passages for This week.
2. Continue using the ACTS model for a daily prayer time.
3. Each day this week pray for 5 people you would like to see come to know Jesus. At the same time pray for opportunities to share with them glimpses of who God is.
4. Take some time to think about Your Story. What were you like before Jesus? What has He changed in you? How are you different now? Use those ideas to help you think more deeply about how you share Jesus with others.

Week 10 - Multiplying Disciples as the Church's Mission

Welcome to Week 10. The last week in our study!

—Before we move into this week's lesson, lets take a moment to share how our Application time at home went this past week. Did anyone have any encounters with the people you have been praying for this past week? What happened?

We started this study by sharing our hope that all of us would grow in Christ over these 10 weeks. Remember our Aims: Meet Jesus. Mature in Christ. Be Mobilized as Equipped, Empowered and Released Jesus Followers. Multiply Disciples who Make Disciples. And Movement - being caught up in God's Movement by growing in sensitivity to His Spirit.

These 5 M Words incorporate our Discipleship Process here at IEC. Now, our hope has been to introduce us to a broad range of discipleship topics. However, we also offer many classes here at IEC to help us grow more deeply. If you have not taken the VISION, PRAYER, DISCOVER, or SHARE Classes, please sign up for the next one. These will help you to keep growing.

One of the other things that has happened over this time is that we have grown together. We have loved being together over these weeks and now we come to a decision. Would we like to keep meeting as a group? We hope that you have grown in your walk with The Lord and also with others in this group.

If you would like to see this group continue, lets talk about the best format for it. Where will we meet? Does this time work? What shall we study together?

Tonight's Topic is the Church's Mission of Multiplying Disciples.

If you remember back to last week, you will remember Matthew 28:19 - 20. We talked about making disciples, baptizing and teaching.

Throughout recent history, the practice of churches has been to focus on seeing people come to faith in Jesus through evangelism. However, the full picture has not been presented because it not only is about someone coming to Jesus as Savior, but it is about following Jesus with all that they have and all that they are as full blown disciples, surrendered and obeying everything He taught us.

So, we are called to walk the long road relationally with those around us, so that the Kingdom doesn't just grow by addition, but rather it grows exponentially through multiplication.

Think of an ear of corn. If I plant a kernel of corn, I get a corn stalk that maybe grows 8 ears on it. It doesn't seem like much, right? But every one of those kernels on every one of those ears has the potential to grow a stalk that also produces 8 ears of corn. Lets say every ear has 400 kernels on it. That means that now every kernel of corn has the potential of producing 3,200 other kernels of corn. Now every single one of those 3,200 kernels has the potential of producing 3,200 other kernels of corn. And on and on. See how exponential growth of the Kingdom can happen?

But it takes a lot of intentionality for a kernel of corn to reach its potential and to grow into a corn stalk with ears. It has to be planted, die, germinate, be fertilized and grow. It takes intentionality.

So, it is with discipleship. We are not just sharing Jesus to see someone come to faith. Rather, we are in the practice of seeing others reach their full potential as disciples of Jesus Christ who multiply other disciples.

But, how do we do so?

We Reproduce Disciples One-by-One.

Physical growth is a gradual process, something we can notice only over time. But we know that a baby has become a child when she can stand on her own and feed herself. That same child has become an adult when she can produce a baby and help that baby grow into a child. Spiritual growth is also a gradual process, but we can tell that a new believer has become an established disciple of Jesus when he is feeding himself on God's Word and is standing firmly in his faith. That same disciple of Jesus should continue to mature spiritually as he becomes equipped to reproduce spiritually by sharing Jesus with others as he has been helped. This process of spiritual reproduction usually occurs on a one by one basis, with the help of a spiritual parent.

What is One-To-One Discipleship?

1. Paul's desire for the Colossian Christians was that they would be rooted in Christ (Colossians 2:6 - 7. "So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, ⁷ rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness."

How is a well-rooted tree like a growing, established Jesus follower?

What helps us to get rooted?

2. Paul's goal for Timothy went beyond seeing him established in his own walk with the Lord. What was Paul's goal for Timothy as stated in 2 Timothy 2:1-2? "You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. ² And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others. "

What goals might we say that God has for us like Timothy?

Who were the spiritual descendants Paul hoped for through his spiritual son, Timothy?

3. Think for a moment about spiritual fathering or mothering.

Read Exodus 33:11 - Who did Moses raise up?

Read 2 Kings 2:2 - Who did Elijah raise up?

Read 1 Samuel 3:1 - Who did Eli raise up?

What was the hope of the spiritual father in each of these cases?

Only a disciple can make a disciple. "Disciples are not manufactured wholesale. They are produced one by one, because someone has taken the pains to discipline, instruct and enlighten, to nurture and train one that is younger." Sanders, Spiritual Leadership

4. Read 2 Timothy 3:10 -11. **What did Timothy and Paul's life on life relationship look like?** ¹⁰ You, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, ¹¹ persecutions, sufferings—what kinds of things happened to me in Antioch, Iconium and

Lystra, the persecutions I endured. Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them. ¹² In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted...

How do you think Timothy benefitted?

What would this kind of relationship cost you?

5. Both Jesus and Paul served crowds of people, but they disciplined only a few individuals. Jesus chose 12 apostles and was extremely focused on 3 of them. Paul chose Timothy and a few others to disciple.

Read Luke 6:12 - 15 and Philippians 2:19 - 23. **How did they select the ones they should disciple?**

¹² One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God. ¹³ When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles: ¹⁴ Simon (whom he named Peter), his brother Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, ¹⁵ Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Simon who was called the Zealot, ¹⁶ Judas son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor." Luke 6

¹⁹ I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, that I also may be cheered when I receive news about you. ²⁰ I have no one else like him, who will show genuine concern for your welfare. ²¹ For everyone looks out for their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. ²² But you know that Timothy has proved himself, because as a son with his father he has served with me in the work of the gospel. ²³ I hope, therefore, to send him as soon as I see how things go with me."

Read Mark 3:13 - 14. **What were the 12 Apostles and Timothy expected to do as a result of being disciplined?**

¹³ Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted, and they came to him. ¹⁴ He appointed twelve that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach ¹⁵ and to have authority to drive out demons."

What then should we hope to see in disciples of Jesus today?

How did they learn how to do these things?

How should we expect disciples to learn today?

When we look at the Biblical Examples of Disciplining others, we see that there are 3 Characteristics that it will take in our lives, for us to give birth to other disciples.

1. Faithful....Loyal, trustworthy, dependable, true and devoted. To God and to a spiritual child.
2. Available...At hand, not too busy. Accessible, willing to spend time together with disciples.
3. Teachable....Humble, eager to learn and apply instruction, willing to change.

Which of these might you need to grow in, so that you can disciple others?

6. We also recognize that some things are caught, not taught. Jesus' example is that he brought the disciples with Him everywhere. While He taught them a lot formally, there also were many things they learned simply by being around The Master. They not only heard what The Master said, but they also watched what He did. They saw His attitudes and His actions.

What are 2 things you caught from being with another person, rather than being taught?

7. Read Acts 11:23 - 24.

²³ When he arrived and saw what the grace of God had done, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts. ²⁴ He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and a great number of people were brought to the Lord. “

What do you see about discipling from Barnabas' example?

Growing disciples is not about having it all together. Rather, it is about sharing life together with others and sharing what I know about Jesus with them. It is about studying the Scriptures together, allowing the Fruit of the Spirit to shine through, demonstrating by example and praying together. Discipleship is then taught and caught by the other person.

What would it take for you to invest in a One To One Discipleship relationship with someone? Discuss These Questions as a Group.

- 1. Recognize what the basics of the Christian Life are. What do you think should be included - List Them.**
- 2. Invite someone who is not as far along in their walk with Jesus to start spending some intentional time together.**
- 3. Read together some Bible passages. Maybe even read through a book of the Bible together. Discuss what makes sense and what does not.**
- 4. Give the person time to simply be together. Allow them to see how you interact with others, with your family. Sit together and serve together at Church and in the community.**
- 5. Pray together. Encourage each other and start asking more vulnerable questions of each other.**
- 6. Give the person practical suggestions about how they could keep growing in The Lord. It might be things that have worked for you or things you feel might be helpful for them. If you need help, ask someone who is further along than you to help guide you.**
- 7. Start praying for someone that your friend could start meeting with as you see them growing in The Lord.**

Application as a group.

1. What fears hold you back from discipling others? What do you think God would say about these fears?
2. Go around the circle. Answer the question, “Who could I start discipling?”
3. Take time to pray for each of those people by name.
4. Lay hands on each other and pray for each other for the following:
 1. The courage to start discipling someone else.
 2. An openness to The Holy Spirit to give you what you need in those times.
 3. A quieting of the voice that will tell you that you're not qualified to disciple anyone else.

Application for This Week.

1. Start seeking God about WHO you can ask to be in a one on one discipleship relationship.