

HISTORY MAKERS

Cohorts

Hearing Jesus and Doing What He Says



Equipping Leaders.
Spreading the Gospel.



HISTORY MAKERS

COHORTS

Hearing Jesus and Doing What He Says

Look at the nations and watch and be utterly amazed. For I am going to do something in your days that you would not believe, even if you were told.

Habakkuk 1:5



V2.1

Copyright © International Leadership Institute All Rights Reserved



Copyright © International Leadership Institute.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®. Copyright ©1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide. www.zondervan.com

Scripture quotations marked ASV are from the American Standard Version, which is in the public domain.

Scripture quotations marked MSG are from THE MESSAGE. Copyright © by Eugene H. Peterson 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 2000, 2001, 2002. Used by permission of NavPress Publishing Group. All rights reserved. www.navpress.com.

Scripture quotations marked NRSV are taken from the New Revised Standard Version Bible, Copyright © 1989, Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked NASB are taken from the New American Standard Bible Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation, La Habra, California. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked Phillips are taken from The New Testament in Modern English, revised edition — J. B. Phillips, translator. © J. B. Phillips 1958, 1960, 1972. Used by permission of Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc.

Scripture quotations marked TNIV are taken from the Holy Bible, Today's New International Version® TNIV® Copyright © 2001, 2005 by Biblica®. All rights reserved worldwide.

Scripture quotations marked KJ21 are taken from the The Holy Bible, 21st Century King James Version® (KJ21®) Copyright ©1994 by Deuel Enterprises, Inc., Gary, SD 57237. All rights reserved.

WELCOME

Dear Leader,

Greetings in the Name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

We are excited you have taken the time from your busy schedule to participate in this dynamic and transformational experience. It is a privilege to make an investment in your development as a leader for the sake of God's Kingdom.

History Makers is the leadership development curriculum developed by the International Leadership Institute. It is offered to Christian leaders around the world through four models: in-person, online, on-demand, and hybrid. Our vision is to change history by accelerating the spread of the Gospel through leaders of leaders empowered by the Holy Spirit. Our mission is to train and mobilize men and women with the best leadership and discipleship tools and provide an opportunity for a transformational encounter with God.

By taking part in a History Makers Cohort experience, you are joining an international community of leaders in more than 130 nations of the world. We are a network of passionate Christians who want to see the Kingdom of God advance and the lost reached with the Gospel.

In Ephesians 3:20, Paul says,

“Now unto Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us.”

Simply put, God can do above and beyond what you can ask or think. If you can think or ask for it, God has something greater for you. The cohort experience is an opportunity to deepen your relationship with God and your fellow cohort members. Together we will listen deeply as the Lord draws us close in richer intimacy and calls us to allow Him to shape lives around the Eight Core Values that center our ILI curriculum. Our prayer is that God makes this an unforgettable experience for you.

When you committed to this experience, you became part of our global family. We offer ongoing online and in-person opportunities for you to connect with others and further your leadership development. We look forward to connecting with you and hearing about your experience and how the Eight Core Values have impacted your life.

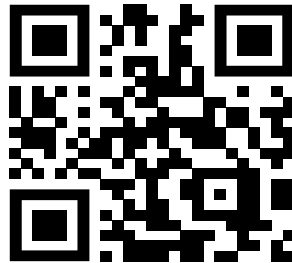
The Global ILI Team



GET CONNECTED

Join the movement of over 350,000 leaders in more than 100 nations around the world who are committed to making an impact for the Gospel.

Scan the code below and sign up to join the team today! You'll be inspired and challenged through devotions and updates from global ILI leaders. You'll also be informed of training events near you, prayer campaigns you can join, and online global summits.



Stay connected with the ILI Team on social. Get a first-hand look at leaders being equipped and lives being transformed!



[Instagram/ILITeam](#)



[Facebook.com/ILITeam](#)



[Vimeo.com/ILITeam](#)



[@ILI_Team](#)

welcome to **HISTORY MAKERS**

COHORTS

Welcome to your History Makers Cohort experience! We are so excited you're here.

This experience will introduce the Eight Core Values of effective Christian leaders.

If you have already experienced a History Makers training event, your investment of time and reflection with your fellow cohort participants will deepen your grasp on the Eight Core Values and serve to integrate them more deeply into your life and ministry.

CORE SESSIONS AND WORKSHOPS

start here

Introduction
Intimacy with God
Passion for the Harvest
Visionary Leadership
Visionary Leadership Training
Culturally Relevant Evangelism

Multiplication of Disciples and Leader
Family Priority
Family Prayer Retreat
Faithful Stewardship
Integrity
Finishing Well Closing

Ready for more?

EXPERIENCE THE *full* HISTORY MAKERS TRAINING

Did you know? The full History Makers Journey includes 30 sessions experienced over a six day conference. The training can also be taken in two steps; Module 1 training consisting of 15 sessions and Module 2 training consisting of an additional 17 sessions.

HISTORY MAKERS JOURNEY

the full experience

30 teaching sessions and workshops

MODULE 1

discovering the eight core values

15 teaching sessions and workshops

MODULE 2

completing your training

17 teaching sessions and workshops



CONTENT

History Makers Cohorts

GENERAL

Introduction: Listening Twice	1
About Our Process Together	13

INTIMACY WITH GOD

Week 1	17
Week 2	23
Week 3	29

PASSION FOR THE HARVEST

Week 4	33
Week 5	39
Week 6	43
Week 7	49

VISIONARY LEADERSHIP

Week 8	53
Week 9	57
Week 10	63
Week 11	67

CULTURALLY RELEVANT EVANGELISM

Week 12	71
Week 13	75
Week 14	81

MULTIPLICATION OF DISCIPLES AND LEADERS

Week 15	85
Week 16	89
Week 17	93

FAMILY PRIORITY

Week 18	97
Week 19	103
Week 20	107

STEWARDSHIP

Week 21	113
Week 22	117
Week 23	121

INTEGRITY

Week 24	127
Week 25	131
Week 26	135

FINISHING WELL

Week 27	139
Endnotes	143



INTRODUCTION

Listening Twice

Jesus is above the fray.

“The fog of war” causes confusion. In the battle, understanding what is going on is impossible for those on the ground. Tactical commanders, committed to a plan, miss opportunities or vulnerabilities because of deeply entrenched presuppositions, faulty communication, and confusion. The discipline of training can cripple insight and initiative.

Pastor Herb was preaching to a congregation confused and divided over a denominational directive threatening their church. The situation was out of their control. They were panicked. Herb was near retirement, but the Lord used his high empathy, many years of pastoral experience, and his time in World War II as a B-29 Super Fortress pilot to focus their attention.

Herb told a story. He was on a bombing run over Japan. The mission brief detailed a specific flight approach over the target for maximum effect. The plan directed the pilots in the formation to pull up and to the right after dropping the payload. The maneuver ensured a successful delivery of the bombs over target and an orderly retreat for the squadron to avoid mid-air collision in the midst of the engagement.

Herb commanded the third plane in the line of attack. As he approached the target, he saw the lead plane drop its payload and make the right turn for home. As the lead made the turn, enemy anti-aircraft fire from the ground hit the plane dead center, and it went down in a ball of fire. He watched the second plane, with good military discipline, approach over target, drop its load, turn to the right, and again, hit by ground fire, go down in flames.

He realized that the Japanese had zeroed in on their flight plan. Every plane that followed orders was going to be hit. Herb had a thought, “This plane is not going down.” Herb dutifully dropped the payload over the target and instead of following the plan of pulling up and to the right, he pushed the nose of the Super Fortress into a dive and turned left.

Herb stood before his anxious congregation, looked them in the eye and said, with great passion, “This plane is not going down!”

The first thing that Herb “heard” on the mission that day was great threat. He saw two planes in front of him go down. The dense bursts of the anti-aircraft fire from the ground filled the skies around him. The roar of his engines receded into the background of his mind as the voice of fear filled his heart.

But Herb listened twice. He heard another voice, a still, small voice giving him an option, an idea that if obeyed just might make the difference between life and death.

Herb heard from Jesus in the cockpit that day over Japan. Jesus saved his life, the life of his crew members and the lives of many behind him in the raid. The anxious congregation heard from Jesus that Sunday morning.

We are in a time that Mark Sayers describes as a “gray zone.” A gray zone is a period of transition between the fading of one era and the emergence of a new one. A number of close observers of history and culture have recognized that we are in a period of great transition and turbulence. ¹

In *A Non-Anxious Presence* Mark Sayers characterizes a gray zone as “confusing and contradictory, filled with change and conflict. Everything seems to be up in the air.” ² He reflects upon the impact of the gray zone on the church,

Many Christian leaders—who have been formed by procedure, clear boundaries, and sharp definitions—find this moment challenging to comprehend and operate within. ³

That feels like an understatement.

Politicized cable news, incendiary social media platforms, empowered identity groups, enduring and emerging injustices, and economic dislocations generate an intensity few now living have experienced. We are indeed in a gray zone of transition.

Pastors and leaders are seeking a way forward. They are asking searching questions: What is going on? How should we respond? What does God want?

That last question is key. More than ever, we need to turn to the Lord and ask, “What do You want?”

THE CONTEMPLATIVE AND THE ACTIVE

Classically, the church exists in two modes, the Contemplative and the Active. The Contemplative Mode is the inner-life, the retreat, the life of prayer and deep reflection. This is where we seek God’s presence and direction, where we hear His voice.

Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where He prayed.

Mark 1:35

The Active Mode is the life of engagement with a hurting, broken world. It is the response to The Great Commission, “Go, and make disciples of all nations...” (Matt. 28:19). It is the world-changing dynamism of Spirit-filled leaders God has used throughout time to change the world from Moses to Wesley and beyond.

And Simon and those who were with Him searched for Him, and they found Him and said to Him, “Everyone is looking for You.” And He said to them, “Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out.” And he went throughout all Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and casting out demons.

Mark 1:36-39

This resource integrates the Contemplative Mode and the Active Mode to equip the church and its leaders to both hear from Jesus and do what He says.

The group process outlined here uses the *Discipled by Jesus* (DBJ)⁴ method of discipleship that coaches people to slow down to listen to Jesus. It was developed by Hal and Debbi Perkins and has been used by many disciple makers to open others to the living presence of Jesus as The Master Disciple Maker who continues to speak and work through His people. It recognizes the importance of the Contemplative Mode.

Along with DBJ, this resource incorporates the training experience of the International Leadership Institute (ILI) focusing on Eight Core Values used by hundreds of thousands of leaders-equipping-leaders around the world. Anchoring in the first core value, Intimacy with God, it serves to accelerate leaders into active engagement in the world.

Our prayer is that as you meet with Jesus and gather with a small group of faithful others, you will hear deeply from Jesus that He may encourage you and equip you to lead the church in these challenging times.

Paul described ministry as a time of battle, not against flesh and blood but against powers and principalities threatening to hinder the Kingdom work Jesus calls us to. As we press on, we are encouraged.

Jesus is above the fray. And He speaks.

ABOUT THE EIGHT CORE VALUES

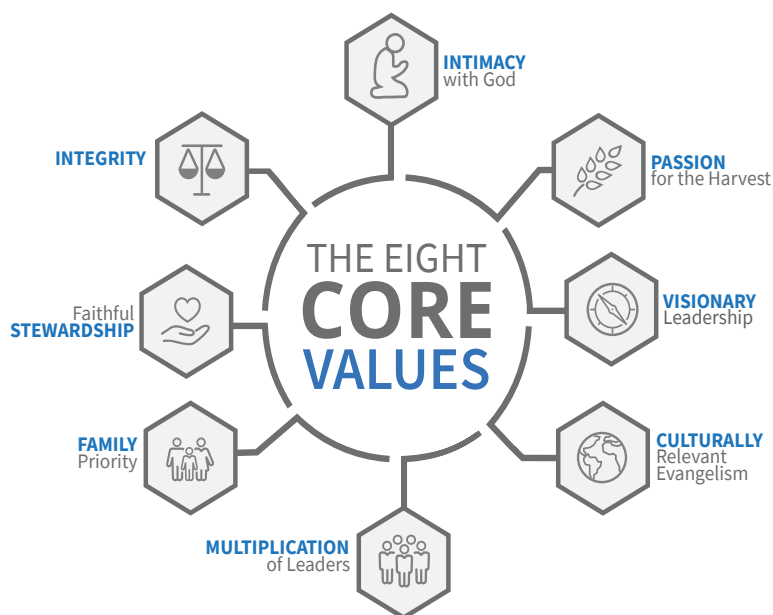
At the turn of the century, God called together a team of leaders from around the world with a shared focus on the Great Commission of making disciples of all nations. This global team focused on a central question:

What is the single most important factor impacting the acceleration of the spread of the Gospel?

They came to recognize that throughout the history of the church God has used leadership empowered by the Holy Spirit to advance His mission. As they sought God together, a clear vision emerged for changing history through leaders equipping leaders grounded in core values expressing Christ-centered, Spirit-filled faithfulness.

What were those core values? After much searching prayer, deep reflection and global research, the Lord led them to identify Eight Core Values emerging from Scripture and validated in the lives of faithful men and women around the world. Those core values form the foundation of ILI leadership training.

1. Intimacy with God
2. Passion for the Harvest
3. Visionary Leadership
4. Culturally Relevant Evangelism
5. Multiplication of Leaders
6. Family Priority
7. Faithful Stewardship
8. Integrity



These Eight Core Values will provide the broad outline for our time together.

ABOUT THE DISCIPLED BY JESUS (DBJ) MODEL

While the ILI Team was hearing from God around the Eight Core Values, Hal and Debbi Perkins had been developing a model of discipleship recognizing that intimacy with God is foundational to a life of faithfulness. In the Great Commission, after Jesus called us to “go and make disciples of all nations,” He promised to be with us “to the end of the age.” Jesus is present in our discipleship and he continues to speak through the Scriptures, by His Spirit and through His body—the church. The core task of faithful discipleship is to learn to hear His voice with the commitment to do what He calls us to do.

The core process the DBJ model coaches involves simply slowing down to pay attention to and to test our thoughts. The conviction is that while the Lord speaks in a variety of ways, the normal way the Lord communicates with us is by inspiring true thoughts as we interact with His Holy Spirit, the Bible, one another, and the circumstances of our day. As we slow down and listen deeply, we have the opportunity to be discipled by Jesus as we follow Him through our day.

In 1 Thessalonians Paul gives us a punchy list of exhortations as we walk with Jesus. Among them is “pray without ceasing” (1 Thess. 5:17). Peter Scazzero in *Emotional Healthy Discipleship* affirms this central aim:

...the goal of spending time alone is not just to devote that time to prayer, but to become a person who prays always. A person who prays always has a continual and easy familiarity with God’s presence at all times—while working, playing, cooking, leading a meeting, driving, visiting friends, as well as during worship, prayer, and Bible study. In other words, the goal is to be continually conscious of God, remembering Him, abiding in Him, all through every waking hour.⁵

As we slow down, embrace the disciplines of stillness and silence, and learn to listen to Jesus throughout our day, we will hear Him. He will encourage us, teach us, and lead us. In short, *He will disciple us*. He is the Master Disciple Maker.

In Jesus’ ministry, Hal and Debbi discerned five key questions Jesus asks that open our hearts to His active presence in our lives.

1. *Who do you say that I am?* (Matthew 16:13-16)
2. *Do you understand what I have done for you?* (John 13:12)
3. *Are you listening to Me?* (Matthew 17:5, inferred question)
4. *Do you love Me? Feed My sheep.* (John 21:15-17)
5. *Do you believe Me?* (John 11:25-27)

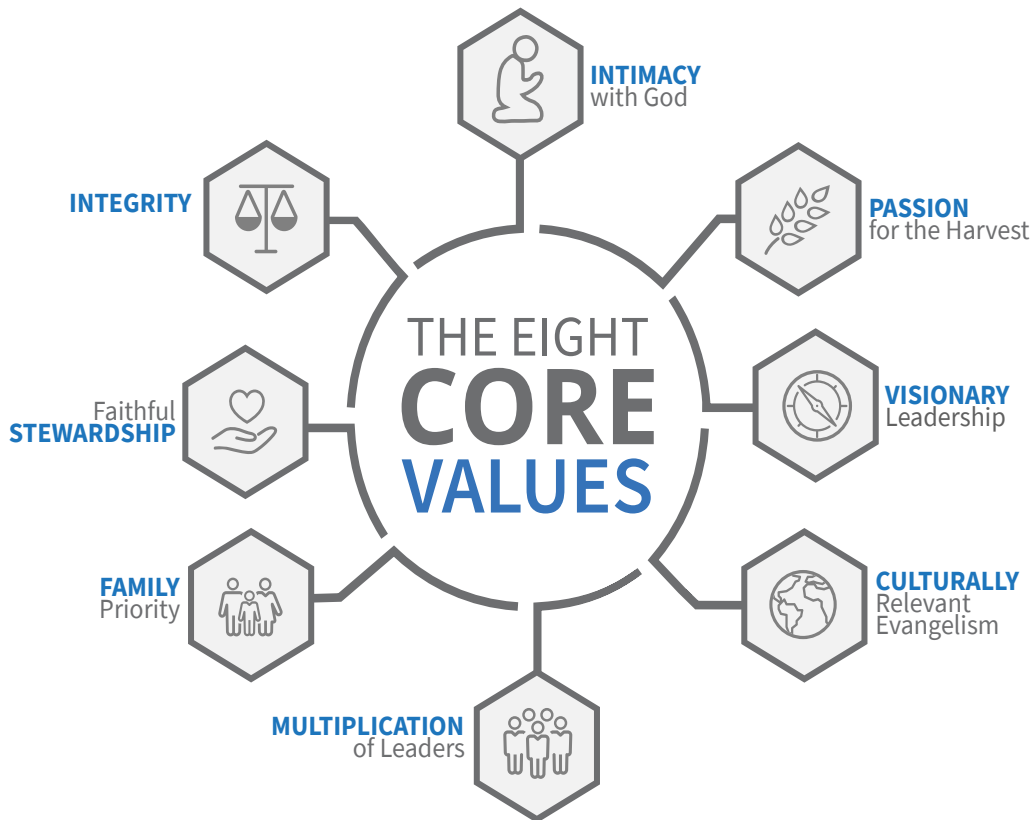
Our conviction is that Jesus is present and active in our lives. When we pay attention to Him, read the Scriptures and gather in His name we give Him the chance to shape our lives. As we interact with Him, we grow in our ability to hear His voice clearly. He truly becomes the Disciple Maker in our midst.

While the Eight Core Values provides our outline of reflection, these questions from Jesus center our process as we meet with him together.

THE EIGHT CORE VALUES: A Taxonomy of Christian Faithfulness

In Botany and Zoology, a taxonomy helps students identify and categorize the vast diversity of life we experience in nature. It groups together things that have similarities to help us better understand the complexity we see all around us.

In a similar way the Eight Core Values pull together the essential components of Christian faithfulness to help us better understand our spiritual lives. Our walk with the Lord is multifaceted, shaped by endless influences as varied as family, history, economic class, educational background, culture, and more, to say nothing of our unique personalities and giftedness. While recognizing that our Christian lives will reflect these varied distinctions, the Eight Core Values help us reflect upon how we grow in Christ and express our faithfulness to Him. They focus our attention on dimensions of our walk that are common to all believers. They help us recognize areas of our spiritual lives that need work and attention. In short, the Eight Core Values help us measure and increase our growth and ministry in Christ.



A CLOSER LOOK AT THE EIGHT CORE VALUES



The first core value is *Intimacy with God*.

God looks for consecrated men and women who lead from an intimate relationship with God.

Romans 8:15 expresses the deep longing of the human heart.

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.”

When we come alive in Jesus, we open our hearts to His presence by the Holy Spirit. As we grow in Christ, we learn to hear His voice. He satisfies our deepest longings. He quiets our fears. He challenges our presuppositions. He lifts us beyond worldly priorities and rewards that leave us empty. He gives us what we have been searching for all along: His life and kingdom.

The world needs people who are deep in their spiritual lives. True intimacy with God deepens us as we respond to His direction and, with intentionality and discipline, embrace a new way of being in the world with Him and one another.



The second core value is *Passion for the Harvest*.

God looks for men and women who share a passion for those without Christ. Jesus came to “seek and to save the lost” (Luke 19:10). God desires that everyone be reached with the life-transforming power of the Gospel.

In the book of Acts, after His resurrection Jesus gives his followers an amazing promise and a challenging commission.

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

Acts 1:8

Jesus’ compassion reaches out to the whole world. The Holy Spirit fills our lives so that we might embody His living, active, caring presence. His directive to bear witness to His presence begins where we are but extends beyond our reach to every corner of the globe.

Two-thirds of the world has yet to respond to God’s love. Until all are reached with the Gospel, we are called to the privilege and responsibility of proclaiming the Gospel, extending His care to all people everywhere in both word and deed.



The third core value is *Visionary Leadership*.

God looks for men and women who are biblically committed to cast vision, set goals, mobilize the Body of Christ, and overcome obstacles in order to reach the nations for Christ.

Throughout the story of the Bible God advances His work through men and women who carry God’s vision to transform a broken world.

Vision is a compelling picture of God’s desired future. It focuses leaders and the

community, it generates a deep sense of team, empowers the faithful use of resources and so much more.

A passage in Habakkuk captures the energy unleashed in a God-given vision:

*“Record the vision and inscribe it on tablets, that the one who reads it may run.”
Habakkuk 2:2, NASB*

Our world, our communities, our families need Spirit-filled servant-leaders living out of God’s vision for the kingdom who know how to set goals, mobilize the Body of Christ, and overcome obstacles in order to meet needs and bring Christ to the nations.



The Fourth Core Value is ***Culturally Relevant Evangelism***.

God looks for men and women who live and teach the Gospel with cultural relevance, sensitivity, and power, so that the eternal truth of the Gospel will be understood and received in every culture of the world.

The life-transforming power of the Gospel must be shared by word and deed in the power of the Holy Spirit in a way that fits the unique cultures and circumstances of people’s lives. The Gospel transforms. Nothing else will ever do what the proclamation of the Lordship of Christ can do to unite and bless God’s global community.

Paul writes to the church in Corinth,

*I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some.
2 Corinthians 9:22*



The Fifth Core Value is ***Multiplication of Disciples and Leaders***.

God looks for men and women who disciple, coach, and mentor other leaders, who in turn become leaders of leaders who effectively train others.

God has been transforming the world for thousands of years through one simple but challenging directive:

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

What the Lord wants to teach us will take a lifetime to learn. As we grow the Lord calls us to take others by the hand and help them learn to hear His voice and respond faithfully that they too might join in the great work He calls us to.



The Sixth Core Value is *Family Priority*.

God looks for men and women who are convinced that the family is God's building block for society and who make their families a priority in developing leaders.

From the beginning God has ordained the family to be the primary vehicle He uses to reveal His glory in the world.

*So God created man in His own image,
in the image of God He created him;
male and female He created them.*

And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

Genesis 1:27–28; 2:24 (ESV)

The family is the first place the Lord calls us to share and express His love and presence. In the family, we discover God's gift of others, where we encounter the first blessing of community, of not being alone. In the New Testament, we see the household as the primary place He shapes faithful disciples and raises up powerful kingdom leaders.



The Seventh Core Value is *Faithful Stewardship*.

God looks for men and women who are faithful stewards of finances, time, and spiritual gifts in their personal lives and leadership with the result that people are reached with the Gospel.

Stewardship is the ancient concept of entrusted responsibility given from the owner to a faithful servant. In the beginning God gives us our original mandate as a stewardship to exercise faithful dominion over all that He has made. Jesus embraces this high act of delegation in entrusting us with the time and resources we need to fulfill His work.

"His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'"

Matthew 25:23



The Eighth Core Value is *Integrity*.

God looks for men and women of integrity who live holy lives and who are accountable to God and to the Body of Christ. Integrity glorifies God, protects leaders from stumbling, and encourages growth.

Integrity is what salvation looks like in the world. As we learn to hear the Lord's voice and respond faithfully to His presence in our lives, He makes us whole. Competing

distractions lose their allure. Deeply entrenched temptations lose their power. We become people true to our word because we are true to His. Others recognize an authority in our lives that can be trusted.

Integrity protects us for a lifetime of faithful service. At the end of our course, we can say with Paul,

*I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.
2 Timothy 4:7*

A FRAMEWORK FOR LIFE

The Eight Core Values give us a framework for life with the Lord. As we embrace these priorities, they come to shape our lives. They become a part of who we are. We develop a lifestyle saturated in God's presence, shaped more by what He wants and less conformed to familiar worldly pressures. By attending to the Eight Core Values, we develop the skills to resist the demands of others so that we can respond faithfully to His direction.

Our conviction is that Jesus wants to build these Eight Core Values into our lives. As we take the time to listen to Him and respond faithfully to what He says, we discover Him to be the Master Disciple Maker equipping us for a lifetime of faithful service.

THE FIVE QUESTIONS OF DBJ: Listening to Jesus

Jesus promised that He would be with us always, especially in our disciple making (Matthew 28:20) and that He would never leave us nor forsake us (Hebrews 13:5). In meeting with Jesus together, we open ourselves to hearing Jesus as He develops the Eight Core Values in our lives. As we gather in His name, Jesus will speak to us through scripture, one another, and the thoughts He inspires in our reflections.

As we meet with Jesus, He asks us five questions focusing our attention on the key practices of faithful discipleship.

➤ The first question centers us in Praise: *Who do you say that I am?*

Jesus asks this question of his disciples when He gathers the twelve in Caesarea Philippi. Simon, inspired by the Father, responds with pure praise:

"You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."

Matthew 16:16

Jesus invites us to take time to respond to Him in expressing praise for who He is as He reveals Himself through the Bible and His Spirit's work in our lives. Praise grounds us in pure worship. As we talk with Jesus about who He is he deepens the foundation of our first core value, Intimacy with God. As we praise him, we take the time to quiet ourselves and listen to Him. It is very likely He wants to say something back to us in response to our praise. The Lord deepens our experience of Himself and grows our awareness and appreciation of His presence in our lives and in the world. He wants us to know Him better.

➤ The second question leads us to Thanksgiving: *Do you understand what I have done for you?*

After Jesus washes His disciple's feet in the Upper Room just before He is betrayed, He focuses their attention on this stunning act of service (John 13:12). Do they understand that all Jesus has done and will do will transform them through new understanding and experiences?

Hal Perkins remarks that Jesus was not only washing their feet, but washing their minds as well.

We recognize that Jesus is at work in us, through us, and all around us. Reflecting on how we have experienced Jesus and thanking Him for his faithfulness keeps us sensitive to His active presence throughout our day. We want us see him better.

Very likely, He has moved already in marvelous ways to develop the Eight Core Values in our lives. Slowing down and reflecting upon what He has done, encourages us to know that he will do even more.

➤ The third question dials us into his Voice: *Are you listening to me?*

On the Mount of Transfiguration, Peter gets ahead of himself and comes up with a great idea to enshrine the experience on the mountain. The Father intervenes with a clear affirmation and a pointed admonition:

“This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!”

Mark 9:7

Jesus carries the key role in our discipleship, our disciple making, and our leadership. We learn to hear Him by His Holy Spirit, in the scriptures, through one another, and by paying attention to the thoughts flowing in our hearts as we walk with Him through our day. As we slow down and pay attention to Him, He speaks to both encourage and equip us. As we listen to Him, He invites us to share our deepest thoughts, struggles, hopes and fears. We then listen again as He speaks into our lives. He wants us to hear Him better.

➤ The fourth question calls us to Service: *Do you love Me? Feed My sheep.*

After Jesus' resurrection, he knows Peter is paralyzed with shame following his three-fold denial. Jesus meets with Peter on the shore of the Sea of Galilee and asks Him three times, “Do you love Me?” With each response from Peter, “Lord, You know I love You,” Jesus calls him to “feed my sheep” (John 21:15-17). Jesus cares for Peter so much. He takes the time to restore His wayward disciple and get him back on track with loving Jesus through loving others.

Jesus moves us to embody his caring, compassionate, active presence in the world. The key to ministry is recognizing that we truly are loving Jesus as He leads us to care for those around us.

Jesus moves us to embody His caring, compassionate, active presence in the world. We love Jesus by expressing His love to those within reach and those around the world. He wants us love Him and partner with Him better.

➤ The fifth question affirms Faith: *Do you believe Me?*

Jesus is at the tomb of Lazarus. He is filled with compassion for His friends Mary and Martha and for a world still in the grip of death. Jesus knows what he is about to do.

As Martha scolds Jesus for arriving too late to save her brother, Jesus says to her,

“Your brother will rise again.” (John 11:23)

Martha does not want to hear theological platitudes about the last days when the righteous dead are to be restored. She is grieving deeply for her brother.

Jesus looks deeply into her soul and says,

“I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; 26 and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?”, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?” (John 11:25-26)

As Jesus speaks these words all of heaven is waiting to hear what Martha will say in response. Will she take Jesus’ words to heart and believe that Jesus can do anything? Or will she continue to be shaped by the crippling emotions triggered by the power of death and by the inadequate beliefs of her religion? Will Martha partner with Jesus in this moment giving Jesus the opportunity to display His power and authority over sin and death, or will she allow what the world understands, that death is all powerful and everyone must submit to its pain and despair, to determine her reality?

Martha’s response is the response of faith,

“Yes, Lord; I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world. (John 11:27)

In response to Martha’s faith, her deep trust in her friend Jesus, Jesus lifts His voice,

“Lazarus, come out!”

And Lazarus comes out. Jesus displays His glory, in partnership with Martha and her expression of faith.

The final question Jesus asks, “Do you believe Me?” invites us to enter into that divine-human partnership God intended from the beginning. Through us and our faith, Jesus moves to repair what is broken, to find that which is lost, and to restore all things.

As we respond to Jesus, He fills us with the confidence to know that He will empower us to do everything He calls us to do. He wants us to trust Him better.

OUR DISCIPLESHIP

Our discipleship is all about following Jesus so that we can become, truly and deeply, all that the Father has intended us to be all along.

The work of making disciples, is allowing Jesus, by his Spirit, to direct us, empower us, and equip us to help others to do the same.



ABOUT OUR PROCESS TOGETHER

27 WEEK COMMITMENT

We are committing to spending 27 weeks together, listening to Jesus as He leads us through a deepening exploration of ILI's Eight Core Values. We ask that all of us be sensitive and responsive to the Lord's presence in our time together.

RELEVANT INFORMATION

Part of our goal is to give you information, the knowledge that will help you in your life and leadership. But in a limited time, we can provide only so much information. So, rather than overloading you, we hope to stimulate and inspire you to see more for yourself.

90 MINUTE TIME FRAME

Our commitment is to keep our gathering to an hour and a half, that means 90 minutes, and not a minute over! In each gathering we will take a few minutes to connect and warm-up, but we want to jump right into the process because the time is short.

JESUS LEADS

Our conviction is that Jesus really is the leader of our time together. Most believers are comfortable talking about Jesus in small group settings. The goal of our gathering is to affirm Jesus' presence and practice talking to Him and hearing from Him as He shapes our lives.

AN IMPORTANT CAVEAT

As we learn to hear Jesus speaking by His Holy Spirit, from the scriptures, through one another, and in our own thoughts, we also recognize that many other influences are at work in our lives as well—from our own desires, the world, and the evil one. The mature disciple of Jesus has come to realize that not every idea that comes to mind is from the Lord.

It is important to practice "testing our thoughts." Certainly not every thought that enters our mind is from the Lord. But, if we are to take the Bible seriously, it is equally certain that some thoughts are from the Lord—maybe more than we realize. As we slow down and pay attention to our thoughts, seeking to discern the Lord's voice, we recognize two things: 1) the Lord would never say anything that contradicts scripture,

2) the Lord would never say anything that violates the quality of God’s character as fully revealed in Jesus, the word made flesh who has made the Father known (John 1:14, 18).

As we listen to Jesus by attending to our thoughts, it is helpful to share our thoughts with humility--inviting the group to help discern whether or not what we are hearing is from the Lord.

In sharing what we believe we have heard from the Lord, use provisional language that is open to validation or correction from one another. Instead of saying, “The Lord says...”, be a little more tentative, “I think the Lord might be saying...” We want to be free to share what we hear, with the confidence that the group will affirm or correct our sense of the Lord’s voice.

JOURNALING THROUGHOUT THE WEEK

The Lord wants to meet with us day-by-day. Take the opportunity to walk with Jesus as we progress through the Eight Core Values not just in our weekly encounters, but personally with Jesus each day as well. Jesus wants to speak deeply into your life--intimately, personally, uniquely. Give Him the time and opportunity to transform you.

We encourage you to journal through this experience. You will find the Lord speaking into your life as you listen more and more.

GOING DEEPER RETREATS

As we spend time listening deeply, the Lord will equip us around the Eight Core Values. To maximize that experience, we recommend setting aside time to get away together for some extended exploration and prayer. One gathering will focus on important leadership skills, another on praying for our families and a final, closing session on *Finishing Well* as faithful servants of the King.

We have provided an Appendix incorporating key sessions of ILI’s leadership training curriculum, an outline to guide the group through praying for our families, and a final session to encourage our resolve to fulfill the call the Lord has entrusted to us.

The Appendix also includes an outline for introducing the cohort experience in three sessions following the Introduction beginning on page 1.

We anticipate great things as we journey tother with Jesus!

THE EIGHT CORE VALUES OF ILI

INTIMACY WITH GOD

God looks for consecrated men and women who lead from an intimate relationship with God.

PASSION FOR THE HARVEST

God looks for men and women who share a passion for those without Christ. Jesus came to “seek and to save the lost” (Luke 19:10). God desires that everyone be reached with the life-transforming power of the Gospel.

VISIONARY LEADERSHIP

God looks for men and women who are biblically committed to cast vision, set goals, mobilize the Body of Christ, and overcome obstacles in order to reach the nations for Christ.

CULTURALLY RELEVANT EVANGELISM

God looks for men and women who live and teach the Gospel with cultural relevance, sensitivity, and power, so that the eternal truth of the Gospel will be understood and received in every culture of the world.

MULTIPLICATION OF DISCIPLES AND LEADERS

God looks for men and women who disciple, coach, and mentor other leaders, who in turn become leaders of leaders who effectively train others.

FAMILY PRIORITY

God looks for men and women who are convinced that the family is God's building block for society and who make their families a priority in developing leaders.

FAITHFUL STEWARDSHIP

God looks for men and women who are faithful stewards of finances, time, and spiritual gifts in their personal lives and leadership with the result that people are reached with the Gospel.

INTEGRITY

God looks for men and women of integrity who live holy lives and who are accountable to God and to the Body of Christ. Integrity glorifies God, protects leaders from stumbling, and encourages growth.

THE FIVE QUESTIONS JESUS ASKS IN DBJ

PRAISE: to better know Him

Who do you say that I am?

THANKSGIVING: to better see Him

Do you understand what I have done for you?

LISTENING: to better hear Him

Are you listening to Me?

CALL TO SERVICE: to better love and partner with Him

Do you love Me? Feed My sheep.

FAITH: to better trust Him

Do you believe Me?



INTIMACY WITH GOD

Week 1

God looks for consecrated men and women who lead from an intimate relationship with God.

Imagine you are on a boat over the Great Barrier Reef in Australia. When you look down on the reef, the image is blurry, but you can make out the rock formations and coral beneath you. You can even detect the outline or shadow of some fish. Now, imagine that you put on a mask and dive beneath the surface of the water. Suddenly, you realize you are in one of the most beautiful places on earth. You are awestruck by the variety of plant and animal life; multicolored fish swim gently among a kaleidoscope of sea fans and coral. Had you not dived into the depths, you would have missed knowing the true beauty of this special place.

Now imagine exploring a cave and traveling deep into the earth until you discover unusual rock formations, including stalactites and stalagmites. Perhaps you even find gorgeous gems such as quartz, amethysts, turquoise, rubies, or diamonds. If you go deep enough, you might even discover something no one else has ever seen.

In both examples, you experience the beauty of the ocean reef or the majesty of a cave only when you take the time to explore the depths. The same is true of our relationship with God.

You can have a surface relationship or you can go deeper and develop an intimate relationship with Him.

Deep within every soul stands a meeting place, a castle, where the believer and God can commune. For some believers, the castle is filled with warmth, joy, and laughter. For others, it is empty, lonely, and virtually non-existent. The choice is yours: cultivate a rich, fruitful inner life with the Lord, or let it remain stagnant and barren.⁶



BIBLICAL FOUNDATION

The Bible gives us three very special images of our relationship with God that help us understand different aspects of this intimate relationship: best friends, father and son, and the marital relationship.

Best Friends, Intentionality

The Bible reports many examples of people walking in intimacy with the Lord, but His relationship with Moses was special. Moses and God were friends:

As Moses went into the tent, the pillar of cloud would come down and stay at the entrance, while the LORD spoke with Moses... The LORD would speak to Moses face to face, as one speaks to a friend.

Exodus 33:9,11

The image of best friends speaks of intentionality. We are not best friends with every acquaintance we make, but only with those we take time to know in depth. Friendship also speaks of mutuality. Both speak and both listen. In the interaction, the relationship deepens, trust is born, love is shared. To say that we are friends of God affirms that both parties are engaged and intentional in a developing relationship.

Parent and Child, Union

Jesus referred to the almighty God as His Father. To a Jew, even to pronounce the name of Yahweh was prohibited. Such an intimate way of addressing God must have surprised many. In His last prayer recorded in the Gospel of John, Jesus prayed that we would know the Father as He knows the Father.

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

John 17:20–21

To compare our relationship with God as to a parent and child, reveals God’s desire for union with us. A father’s hope for his children shapes their destiny. As a good father will never forsake his children, always caring, always available for counsel, ready with every resource in time of need to ensure that his children thrive, so God is our Father. He will never forsake us as He draws into ever deepening intimacy that we may know and live His will.

Marital Relationship, Love

The prophet Jeremiah was God’s special instrument to proclaim God’s message. He prophesied often against idolatry and called people to fully follow God. Through Jeremiah, God said,

“I will give them a heart to know Me, that I am the LORD. They will be My people, and I will be their God, for they will return to Me with all their heart.”—Jeremiah 24:7

The word “know” translated in this verse and other Old Testament texts has a deeper meaning than the mere head knowledge implied by our post-Enlightenment rationalism. The same word is often used to express relationship with another person, and in its most intimate form it includes the intimate physical relationship between husband and wife (Gen. 4:1).

The Song of Solomon uses the image of physical love between spouses as a metaphor for the relationship between God and His people. The New Testament calls the Church “The Bride of Christ” and describes our final consummation as the marriage feast of the Lamb.

To look at our relationship with God in terms of the intimate love between spouses speaks of intimacy in the greatest depths of our being. This is where our innermost secrets are open before God and God shares His deepest desires with us. In Christ, we partake with Him in the divine, unconditional love.



LISTENING TO JESUS

Praise: *Who do you say that I am?*

Explore together the three images the Lord reveals about Himself, our Friend, our Father, our Beloved. Allow the Holy Spirit to bring to your awareness how these qualities have touched your life.

After talking about the Lord together, direct your conversation to the Lord in praise. Include how the Lord as Friend, Father, or Beloved has touched your life so that your praise is not merely an expression of abstract knowledge, but rather an authentic expression of personal encounter with our Living Lord.

Now take time to listen. Rest in the silence for a few moments, paying attention to the thoughts that are flowing through your mind. It is likely that the Lord wants to say something back to you in response to your praise. What might the Lord speak to you or to the group?

Record what you hear in your journal.

Thanksgiving: *Do you understand what I have done for you?*

The Lord has been working all your life to reveal Himself to you and to draw you into a life of intimacy with Him. Take some time to think about just what the Lord has done to open you to Himself. As we identify the specific ways He has moved in our lives, He deepens our sense of gratitude. He also helps us learn to see His active work in our lives from day to day.

Share with the group just how the Lord has worked in your life to draw you into intimacy with Him. What people did He use? What events? What circumstances? What scriptures? Get in touch with the details. No small movement of the Lord should go unnoticed!

After a time of sharing, direct your gratitude to the Lord in thanksgiving. Thank Him for the specific ways He has moved to reach you.

Again, take time to listen. How might the Lord respond back to your expressions of thanksgiving?

Record what you hear in your journal.

MEETING WITH THE LORD DAY BY DAY



Throughout this next week, take time to meet with the Lord as He asks you these two questions: Who do you say that I am? and Do you understand what I have done for you?

Keep your journal close. The Lord wants to speak into your life. When He does, you will want to capture what He says.

The Bible is filled with powerful images of who the Lord is.

He is the Good Shepherd (Psalm 23),

The Everlasting Rock (Isaiah 26:4),

The Living Water (John 7:38),

The King of Glory (Psalm 24:7),

The Lamb Who Was Slain, (Isaiah 53)

and much, much more.

Who do you say that I am?

Each day this week, take time to reflect on one of these or some other description of who God is. Make it personal. Invite the Lord to reveal Himself to you in the deep places of your heart.

After a time of praise, listen to what the Lord might say in response. Write down what He shares with you in your journal.

Do you understand what I have done for you?

Next, think about what the Lord has done to reveal Himself to you in that special way. Take time to be specific. Remember, no small movement of the Lord should go unnoticed!

After thanking the Lord for what he has done, what might He say in response?



INTIMACY WITH GOD

Week 2

God looks for consecrated men and women who lead from an intimate relationship with God.

BARRIERS TO INTIMACY WITH GOD

Every Christian leader recognizes the importance of an intimate relationship with God. The depth of our relationship with God will determine the quality of our lives and leadership. At the same time, we must admit certain obstacles serve to block this relationship. The following obstacles are some of the many barriers that may hinder the deepening of our intimacy with God.

Superficiality

Richard Foster writes,

“Superficiality is the curse of our age. The doctrine of instant satisfaction is a primary spiritual problem. The desperate need today is not for a great number of intelligent people, or gifted people, but for deep people.”⁷

Jesus describes superficiality in the parable of the sower:

Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root.

Matthew 13:5–6

Paul celebrates our access to the depths of God’s heart:

Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His paths beyond tracing out!

Romans 11:33

As in our friendships with one another, it is true in our relationship with God: there is no shortcut to having a deep relationship. Depth demands authenticity, vulnerability and trust. We must be honest with ourselves and with God about how we feel in life—joys and disappointments, hopes and fears, excitement and frustrations.

God's best truths, like priceless treasures, are hidden in depths most people never take the time to discover. This is often because we never take the time to enter the depths of our own lives in real intimacy with God.

Failure to Prioritize

Our days are marked by the demands of pressing schedules and pressured commitments. We often feel as though we must always be “on,” performing, delivering, and maximizing productivity. We often find that the “tyranny of the urgent” leaves us feeling strung out, impatient, occasionally resentful, and even worse—empty.

Jesus challenges our ease of distraction.

*“Why do you call Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say?”
Luke 6:46*

The psalmist calls us to seek the Lord because our life depends on him.

*As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for You, my God.
My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?
Psalm 42:1-2*

Focus on Information Instead of Intimacy

One can know a great deal about God without really knowing Him. Too often we make the mistake of valuing ideas that we can hold and apply over the wisdom that comes from hearing the Lord in intimate conversation, doing what He says, and thereby discovering new realities about Him, ourselves and the world that can come no other way. Nobody wants to be cut open by a surgeon who has completed the course work of medical school but has never held a scalpel!

Paul warns the Corinthians about the lure of abstractions, the vanity of mere ideas.

*We know that “We all possess knowledge.” But knowledge puffs up
while love builds up.
1 Corinthians 8:1*

He warns Timothy to be wary of those who are “always learning but never able to come to a knowledge of the truth (2 Timothy 3:7).

Unconfessed Sin

Finally, unconfessed sin can keep us at an arm's distance from God. Cherished but harmful habits, unsundered thoughts or feelings, and frankly, the distorting power of guilt and shame can keep us in spiritual isolation.

We all know the temptation of avoiding difficult conversations with those who have

harmed us or we have harmed. There is no real relationship there. What is true in relationship with others, is certainly true of our relationship with God.

Surely the arm of the LORD is not too short to save, nor His ear too dull to hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God: your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear.

Isaiah 59:1-2

The good news of our life in Christ is that forgiveness is always near at hand:

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

1 John 1:9

God desires to draw us into an ever-deepening relationship with him. As we listen to Him and respond faithfully, He will lift us past every barrier and bring us into that quality of communion that is the well spring of life.



LISTENING TO JESUS

Who do you say that I am?

Discuss together these familiar barriers. Which one do you tend to struggle with the most?

What do these barriers suggest about who the Lord is? What is true about the Lord if we are tempted to settle for superficiality or mere information rather than true intimacy? Why would the Lord be concerned about our failure to prioritize Him or our unconfessed sin? What does this reveal about Him?

After talking together about who God reveals Himself to be through these issues, spend time in praising the Lord for who He is.

As is becoming familiar by now, take time to pause and listen. What might the Lord say back in response to our praise?

Record what you hear in your journal.

Do you understand what I have done for you?

Now is the time to share those exciting stories of what the Lord has done. Take a moment to remember a time when the Lord did something either in you that led to real transformation or through you to touch the life of somebody else.

As we recognize the Lord moving through us, how wonderful it is to give thanks to Him.

Through expressing our thanks, a number of important things happen. First, the Lord deepens our sense of dependency upon Him. More and more we recognize that all of life comes from His hand. Second, in giving thanks, the Lord cultivates in us a heart of gratitude. Third, in paying attention to what the Lord has done so that we can give thanks, we learn to recognize God at work. Seemingly small things suddenly take on an eternal significance when we can see that God is at work.

Record what you hear in your journal.

MEETING WITH THE LORD DAY BY DAY



Spend time with the Lord this week in His psalms of intimacy. Each day pick a fresh psalm as the Lord invites you to praise and thank Him.

Some familiar psalms of intimacy include

Psalm 1, Delight in the Law of the Lord

Psalm 23, The Good Shepherd

Psalm 42, Longing for the Lord

Psalm 46, Be Still and Know

Psalm 84, How Lovely Is Your Dwelling Place

Of course, there are many others. Begin in silence and hear the Lord ask you his initial questions inviting praise and thanksgiving.

Who do you say that I am?

As you meditate upon the psalm, allow the images to draw you into the fulness and majesty of the Lord who is present to you right now.

Simply praise Him. Do not thank him for anything. He is enough.

What might the Lord be saying in response to your praise? Capture what He says in your journal.

Do you understand what I have done for you?

As the Lord has centered you on who He is, think about the blessings he has poured into your life out of who he is. Record those blessings and thank Hhim for each one.

Again, what might the Lord say in response to your gratitude?



INTIMACY WITH GOD

Week 3

God looks for consecrated men and women who lead from an intimate relationship with God.

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

The Path to Intimacy with God⁸

Athletes train. Actors rehearse. Musicians practice. Too many contemporary Christians sit idle and wonder why nothing ever changes.

God has provided every believer with ways to experience His grace and grow in a deepening relationship with Him. The path is found in spiritual disciplines, those time-tested practices that bring us before the throne of Grace. The most common and helpful disciplines involve prayer, worship, the Bible, and service.



The Holy Spirit uses these elements to move us past the superficial appearances of conventional life into the unseen depths of spiritual reality. They are “means of grace” that help us to present ourselves with hungry hearts before God that He may draw us close.

In worship, we surrender our lives to God and express our love. Through the Bible we come to understand His character and hear His voice. In prayer, we share our deepest longings and receive direction and encouragement. In service, we allow ourselves to be used by Him in reaching out to others.



LISTENING TO JESUS

Who do you say that I am?

Consider the four elements on the path to intimacy with God: Worship, the Bible, Prayer, and Service. What do they suggest about who God is?

After reflecting together, express your thoughts to the Lord in worship. Work hard not to slip into thanksgiving. Again, we will get there. At this stage we want to focus our hearts on who He is, not on the gifts He has given us. This is pure praise. A helpful discipline of praise is to begin every expression with the words “You are...”

Now listen. Move into silence. Pay attention to the thoughts that emerge in your minds. It just might be the Lord responding back to us.

Record what you hear in your journal.

Do you understand what I have done for you?

The spiritual disciplines of the church are ancient, proven tools the Lord has used for generations to cultivate true intimacy in the lives of Jesus’ followers. John Wesley followed the church in calling them the “means of grace.” Familiar disciplines include solitude, silence, scripture memorization with meditation, intercession, fasting, visiting the sick, and much, much more.

Think about the key disciplines the Lord has used in your life to draw you into a deeper relationship with Him. Share together first, and then spend time thanking the Lord for how He has used particular practices to bring you close to Him.

And again, what might the Lord say in response?

An exercise in Paying Attention

After sharing together about what the Lord has done, as an exercise in paying attention, pick one particular story and see if you can identify specific details which just might have been the Lord at work. Very little that happens in our lives is the result of some single act. Usually, a number of seemingly insignificant events lead up to a miracle. Those little things are never accidental, incidental or coincidental. We can rest assured that the Lord has been at work all along the way.

After a closer examination of the event, hear the Lord ask again, “Do you understand what I have done for you?” Take some time to give thanks to the Lord for various things He did leading to the end result.

Might the Lord be saying something in response to your thanksgiving? Take a moment to be silent and listen. Share what thoughts are crystalizing in your mind. It just might be the Lord.

Record what you hear in your journal.

MEETING WITH THE LORD DAY BY DAY



Throughout this next week, take time to meet with the Lord as he asks you these two questions: *Who do you say that I am?* and *Do you understand what I have done for you?* James 1:17 focuses us on a simple reality,

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with Whom there is no variation or shadow due to change

We can know for sure, that if we have received truly good things, they have come from the Lord. That is why we call them blessings.

In what ways has the Lord blessed you, your family or your church through your relationship with Him? List at least five good things.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Who do you say that I am?

As you meet with the Lord each day, focus on one of those blessings. What does the blessing suggest about who the Lord is? What does the act of the Lord or the gift from the Lord say about who the Lord is.

As you identify who the Lord has revealed Himself to be through what He has done for you, take time express your praise to Him. Remember, don't slip into thanksgiving yet! That comes next. Begin your praise with "You are...."

After a time of praise, enter into restful silence. Pay attention to your thoughts. How might the Lord respond to your praise? Record what He says in your journal.

Do you understand what I have done for you?

Now take the blessing that has elicited your praise, and spend some time thanking the Lord for what He has done. Sit quietly in His presence and allow Him to help you recognize the little things that he did leading up to the blessing. Thank Him for each movement as you recognize His hand at work in your life.

Again, what might the Lord be saying in response?



PASSION FOR THE HARVEST

Week 4

God looks for men and women who share a passion for those without Christ. Jesus came to “seek and to save the lost.” God desires that everyone be reached with the life-transforming power of the Gospel.

FROM INTIMACY TO PASSION

Intimacy with God leads to God’s heart and passion for the lost. God’s passion becomes our passion. Just as our intimacy must be continually rekindled, so must our passion. Vision is directly related to passion; when passion decreases, vision also becomes more distant and dim.

A.W. Tozer once said,

“The great of the Kingdom have been those who loved God more than others did.”

All other passions should build upon or flow from our passion for Jesus. A passion for souls grows out of a passion for Christ. A passion for mission builds upon a passion for Christ.⁷

Passion is a force burning within us. It seizes us with a power that moves us beyond ordinary human activity. Passion will not let us go until God’s work is done. Passion is the fire and urgency that vision needs to remain alive and active.



BIBLICAL FOUNDATION

Passion comes from the Latin root word *passio* which means “to suffer for.”
“Passion is what you hunger for so intensely that you will sacrifice anything to have it.”⁸

Many biblical characters inspire us with their passion and zeal for God.

Passion ignites when we identify with God’s burden for justice, compassion for the lost, and desire for our own restoration and wholeness.

Here are just three of many examples of passion in the scriptures.

Jeremiah—Passion is a fire that comes from God and cannot be extinguished.

But if I say, “I will not mention His word or speak any more in His name,” His word is in my heart like a fire, a fire shut up in my bones. I am weary of holding it in; indeed, I cannot.

Jeremiah 20:9

Peter and John—Passion is a compelling conviction that demands radical obedience, even in the face of persecution.

Then they . . . commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John replied, “Which is right in God’s eyes: to listen to you, or to Him? You be the judges! As for us, we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.”

Acts 4:18-20

Paul—Passion is a crucified life lived by faith in Christ.

I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

Galatians 2:20

These are a just a handful of the many men and women in the Bible who burned brightly with God’s passion, ignited for faithful, and often, sacrificial, service.



LISTENING TO JESUS

In this session we will explore the third question Jesus asks us, “Are you listening to Me?” Before we go there, we want to spend some time with Jesus in praise and thanksgiving.

Who do you say that I am?

Explore the three examples of passion, Jeremiah, Peter and John, and Paul. What do they reveal about who the Lord is in our lives? After identifying a number of qualities, pick one and spend some time praising the Lord together.

Now quiet your hearts. What might the Lord say in response?

Do you understand what I have done for you?

When we walk with the Lord in the world He knows, loves, and longs to reach, He fills our lives with passion as we experience the broken world all around us.

Think about a time the Lord filled your life with a divine passion. Perhaps it involved some great injustice you became aware of in your community. Maybe He revealed to you some need in your life or family that fired you up. It could involve some international issues or distant people group.

First share together and then direct your conversation to the Lord in thanksgiving for His gift of pain and passion.

As you pay attention to your thoughts, might the Lord be saying something to you or the group?

Are you listening to me?

In the third question Jesus asks, He invites us to listen deeply to Him through scripture. In this process we take three simple steps, whether we are in a group together or meeting alone with the Lord.

Step 1: Read the passage.

Simple. It could be one verse or a longer passage. As you get more and more familiar with listening to Jesus through the Bible, He will likely deepen the conversation by taking you through longer passages. Initially, though, it’s helpful to begin with shorter passages of scripture, perhaps even just a single verse.

Step 2: Explore the context.

This step involves taking the time to make sure we are reading rightly and well, not importing our own ideas into what we are reading. We want to hear from the Lord, not validate our own ideas and presuppositions.

Where does the passage sit in the broader text? Is it part of a broader movement or story? What's the occasion of the original setting? Are there any words that are unfamiliar or themes that are new to you? Is something surprising or strange that needs a little bit of digging to get clear? This step can take some time, but it is important to understand what the passage is communicating to ensure we hear Jesus clearly. The intention is not to write a research paper. But, to learn what is necessary to understand the simple message of the verse or verses.

Step 3: Hear Jesus in your context.

After reading the text and becoming familiar with the context, sit quietly with the Lord. He asks, "Are you listening to Me?" What might Jesus be saying to you from the passage? An encouraging word? A correction? A call to action?

A helpful exercise is to hear the Lord as if He is writing you a personal note. In your journal, begin with "Dear..." putting your name in, just like an intimate message from your spouse or close friend. Following the salutation, write out what you hear in the second person, using "you language" as Jesus speaking personally to you.

Resist the habit of slipping into "Jesus is telling me He loves me," moving into the third person as if you are coming up with ideas from the passage. Keep it direct and personal, from Jesus: "I love you." Using "you" language, second person, helps us hear Jesus intimately as He speaks to us. It will likely feel awkward at first. Stick with it. Over time it will become second nature and you will experience the wonder of hearing from Jesus directly through His word.

Putting It into Practice

Consider Galatians 2:20, Paul's expression of Passion for Christ.

First read it, then explore the context together, and finally listen to Jesus by putting His word into a personal note from Jesus to you. Write it down in your journal.

After the exercise share together what you have heard from Jesus.

MEETING WITH THE LORD DAY BY DAY



Spend time each day with the Lord in some of the passion passages in scripture. The Bible is filled with them. Here are some suggestions:

Exodus 3:12, Moses at the burning bush

Joshua 5:14-15, Joshua on the eve of Jericho

1 Kings 19:11-13, Elijah in the cave

Luke 5:8-11, Jesus calling Simon Peter

1 Corinthians 1:21, Paul writing to Corinth

James 1:2-4, James on trials

Who do you say that I am?

Identify who the Lord reveals Himself to be in the passage. Spend time praising Him, and after praising Him, listen for His response. Record what you hear in your journal.

Do you understand what I have done for you?

Can you remember a time when the Lord moved in your life in way that relates to what's going on in the text? If so, take the time to remember and reflect on that experience. Thank the Lord for what He has done and taught you. And listen.

Are you listening to Me?

Each day, move through one of the passages listed above following the three simple steps.

1. Read it.
2. Explore the context.
3. Hear the Lord and write a note from Him to you.



PASSION FOR THE HARVEST

Week 5

God looks for men and women who share a passion for those without Christ. Jesus came to “seek and to save the lost.” God desires that everyone be reached with the life-transforming power of the Gospel.

INTRODUCTION

Intimacy with God leads to God’s heart and passion for the lost. God’s passion becomes our passion. Just as our intimacy must be continually rekindled, so must our passion. Vision is directly related to passion; when passion decreases, vision also becomes more distant and dim.

All other passions build upon or flow from your passion for Jesus. A passion for souls grows out of a passion for Christ.

Passion is a force burning within you, which seizes you; a power that moves you beyond ordinary human activity. Passion will not let you go until God’s goals are reached. Passion is the fire and urgency that vision needs to remain alive and active.

Passion and the Harvest

As we grow deeper in our relationship of intimacy with God, we will personally experience more of His passion for others. In Luke 19:10, Jesus proclaims that He came to “seek and to save the lost.” God desires that everyone be reached with the life-transforming power of the Gospel.

Just as Jesus sought lost people when He walked on earth, still today He seeks the lost and we are his messengers. Jesus desires to ignite his passion for the lost in our lives. He refers to those living without a relationship with God as “the harvest.” After speaking with the woman at the well in Sychar (John 4:1-42), the woman rushed back to the village and told everybody she could about what had just transpired. The villagers began streaming out to the well. When Jesus saw them coming he said to His bewildered disciples,

“Don’t you have a saying, ‘It’s still four months until harvest’? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest.”

John 4:35

When Jesus began his public ministry, He reached out to the people of Galilee. He recognized the great need of the whole world in the crowds that pressed around Him. He challenged His disciples by telling them that more workers were needed to bring in the harvest. Jesus also invites us to join Him in the harvest:

When He saw the crowds, He had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into His harvest field.”

Matthew 9:36–38

The Latin roots of the word “compassion” literally means “to suffer together.” If we look at the world with Jesus’ eyes, we will also see human needs and our hearts will be moved to action with his compassion.



LISTENING TO JESUS

Last week we explored Jesus' third question, "Are you listening to Me?" This week we will hear Him ask us, "Do you love me? Feed my sheep." But first, a time of praise.

Who do you say that I am?

In Matthew 9:36 Jesus has compassion on the crowds. Explore together what it means for Jesus to be compassionate. After a time of sharing together, direct your heart to Him in praise of His compassion.

Remember, do not thank Him for his compassion yet. That's coming. Simply praise Him for who He is, the one who embodies compassion for us and the world.

After a time of praising, listen. What might the Lord want to say?

Do you understand what I have done for you?

How have you experienced the Lord's compassion? Take a moment to remember a time when the Lord moved in your life with compassion. Share the story and then thank the Lord.

What might the Lord say in response to your thanksgiving?

Are you listening to Me?

Matthew 9:36-38

Step 1: Read the text.

Step 2: Explore the context. Where does the story sit in the gospel? Are there any words or themes that should be examined more closely? For example, what did a harvest look like in Jesus' day? Does that have bearing on the meaning of the text?

Step 3: What is the Lord saying to you personally? In your journal, begin with a salutation to yourself from Jesus, "Dear..." Write a note in Jesus' voice to you.

Share together what Jesus has expressed to you.

Do you love Me? Feed My Sheep.

Jesus' fourth question invites us to embody His presence by his Spirit in the world. We love Him by loving those around us.

Did any needs come to mind while you were listening to Jesus through the scripture? The thought might have come from Him! Do any needs come to mind now? Is there something simple Jesus might want you to do to express His love through you this week?



MEETING WITH THE LORD DAY BY DAY

The gospels are filled with stories celebrating Jesus' passion for the lost. Spend time with the Lord dialoguing with Him as He asks you the four questions we have been working with so far. Record what you hear in your journal.

Who do you say that I am?

Do you understand what I have done for you?

Are you listening to Me?

Do you love Me? Feed My sheep.

Here are just a handful of the many options:

Jesus cleanses a leper, Luke 5:12-16

Jesus calls Levi, Luke 5:27-32

Jesus heals a paralytic, Mark 2:1-12

Jesus heals on the Sabbath, Matthew 12:9-14

Jesus protects a woman caught in adultery, John 8:1-11



PASSION FOR THE HARVEST

Week 6

God looks for men and women who share a passion for those without Christ. Jesus came to “seek and to save the lost.” God desires that everyone be reached with the life-transforming power of the Gospel.

THE GREAT HARVEST

We live in one of the most exciting periods in God’s salvation history. Patrick Johnstone, author of *Operation World*, states, “We are living in the time of the largest gathering of people into the Kingdom of God that the world has ever seen.”

In the last century, the world population had multiplied 3.7 times. The percentage of Christians in North America has remained about the same. In Europe, Christians have not kept pace with the population, growing only 1.5 times. However, in Asia, there are 15 times more Christians than 100 years ago, and in Africa, by 38.

The growth of Christianity hasn’t slowed down in the 21st Century. On the contrary, the proportion of Christians to the world population has grown by one percentage point in the first two decades of the new Millennium. If the trend continues, Christians will constitute 36% of the world population by 2050.⁹

This growth is mainly happening in the “global South”, where the Christian faith continues to grow.

At the same time, two millennia after Jesus gave the Great Commission, the Gospel still hasn’t been taken to “every nation” as Jesus commanded. The Church of Jesus Christ faces three formidable challenges in our generation.

Challenges Confronting the Church

As we grow deeper in our relationship of intimacy with God, we will personally experience more of His passion for others. In Luke 19:10, Jesus proclaims that He came to “seek and to save the lost.” God desires that everyone be reached with the life-transforming power of the Gospel.

Challenge Number 1 – The Gospel for Every Person

We should celebrate the continuing growth of the Christian faith. However, we must not forget that 40% of the world still has little or no access to the message of the Gospel. The unfinished task is still daunting. In spite of significant progress in the last decade, the reality of the current time is:

There are 2,000 languages without a Bible, and over 3,000 with only portions translated.

There are 3,000 people groups with zero exposure to the Gospel.

There are 1 million villages without a Church (not even as much as a local group of believers).

There are 3.5 billion Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists living with very few Christian workers among them.

The first challenge is simply sharing the Gospel with all people.

Challenge Number 2 – A Church for Every People

The Great Commission is about “making disciples of all nations.” The original Greek word translated to “nations” is “ethne,” which refers to ethnic or people groups. The Church has certainly gone a long way to make disciples in most geopolitical “nations” of the world. On the other hand, if we look at our world through the lenses of “people groups” we get a whole new perspective on our mission.

What Is a People Group?

For evangelization purposes, a people group is the largest group within which the Gospel can spread as a church planting movement without encountering barriers of understanding or acceptance. There are more than 17,400 people groups in the world today. Almost 10,000 have at least minimal Gospel influence.

UNREACHED GROUPS: These groups have less than 2% evangelical individuals and less than 5% Christian adherents. There are 7,400 unreached people groups with a total population of more than three billion people.

FRONTIER GROUPS¹⁰: This is a subset of unreached people groups, defined as having less than 0.1% Christians of any kind and no evidence of a sustainable Gospel movement. There are 4,994 frontier groups in the world, with a population of nearly two billion.

This second challenge involves planting the church in every people group that does not have a consistent Christian witness in their culture and language.

Challenge Number 3 – The Least of These

Many opportunities exist to show the love of Christ by our actions and our words in fulfillment of Christ’s passionate desire to demonstrate God’s love. Jesus said,

“For I was hungry and you gave Me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave Me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited Me in, I needed clothes and you clothed Me, I was sick and you looked after Me, I was in prison and you came to visit Me.’ “Then the righteous will answer Him, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You something to drink? When did we see You a stranger and invite You in, or needing clothes and clothe You? When did we see You sick or in prison and go to visit You?’ “The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for Me.’”

Matthew 25:35–40

I WAS HUNGRY AND THIRSTY

An estimated 820 million people did not have enough food to eat in 2018.¹¹ Almost the same number of people in the world do not have access to clean water, making them susceptible to preventable diseases, which kill more people every year than all forms of violence, including war.¹²

I WAS NAKED

Approximately 700 million people, 10% of the world population live below the extreme poverty line, (as determined by the World Bank) having to survive on less than USD 1.90 a day.¹³

I WAS SICK

For every one thousand children born, 39 will die before their fifth birthday. Some leading causes of death among children are pneumonia, malaria, and diarrhea.¹⁴ There were 229 million cases of malaria in 2019, with an estimated 409,000 deaths, 67% of them being children.¹⁵

I WAS IN PRISON

There are approximately 10.35 million men, women, and children in prisons around the world.¹⁶ Globally, prisons are usually crowded, unsavory, and violent. According to the United Nations, at the end of 2020, there were 82.4 million forcibly displaced people. Of that total, 26 million live as refugees, and 48 million are internally displaced.¹⁷ Forty million people worldwide are currently enslaved in forced labor or prostitution through human trafficking.¹⁸ According to Open Doors, approximately 215 million Christians experience high, very high, or extreme persecution for following Jesus. Nearly one of every twelve Christians in the world lives in an area or culture in which Christianity is illegal, forbidden, or punished.¹⁹

When Jesus calls, He always equips. These challenges are truly opportunities for God to reveal His glory through us.



LISTENING TO JESUS

Jesus' vision for the church is for us to make disciples of all nations (Matt. 28:19) and to proclaim the gospel throughout the whole creation (Mark 16:15). As we listen to Jesus, let us hear Him in light of the three great challenges. But first, he asks us,

Who do you say that I am?

Read Matthew 25:31-46. Discuss who Jesus shows Himself to be. After a few minutes, direct your discussion to Him in praise. Then, listen quietly. What might Jesus say back?

Do you understand what I have done for you?

Remember a time when the Lord used you to reach out to share the gospel with another. What were the circumstances? What did the Lord do through you? What were the results?

Thank the Lord for what He had done through your faithfulness.

Are you listening to Me?

Matthew 25:35-40

Step 1: Read the text.

Step 2: Explore the context.

Step 3: Hear the Lord and write a note from him to you.

Do you love me Me? Feed My sheep.

Consider the three challenges, the gospel for every person, a church for every people, and the least of these. How might the Lord be calling you to respond?

Is there a friend or family member who needs to hear the gospel that you can reach out to in some practical way? Are you aware of a particular people group you can lift up in prayer? Perhaps you know a missionary working in a difficult setting you can pray for or support with an email or financial gift. Is there a way you can be Jesus' hands and feet to one of "the least of these" in the community or in some of the troubled but often overlooked places in the world?

Spend some time listening for the Lord's direction. If an idea comes to mind, it might just be the Lord calling you to love Him by loving others. Write it down in your journal. If you believe this idea is from the Lord, determine what it would take to obey and commit to it.

Next week we will have the opportunity to report on what the Lord does through our faithfulness.

MEETING WITH THE LORD DAY BY DAY



The gospels are filled with stories celebrating Jesus' passion for the lost. Spend time with the Lord dialoguing with him as he asks you the four questions we have been working with so far. Record what you hear in your journal.

Who do you say that I am?

Do you understand what I have done for you?

Are you listening to Me?

Do you love Me? Feed My sheep.

Passages focusing on the Harvest:

Witnesses from Jerusalem to the World: Acts 1:6-11

Salvation for All Who Believe: Romans 1:16-17

No Longer Strangers and Aliens: Ephesians 2:17-22

A Royal Priesthood Proclaiming Him: 1 Peter 2:9-10

Our Joy Made Complete: 1 John 1:1-4



PASSION FOR THE HARVEST

Week 7

God looks for men and women who share a passion for those without Christ. Jesus came to “seek and to save the lost.” God desires that everyone be reached with the life-transforming power of the Gospel.

HOW TO FULLY EXPERIENCE GOD'S PASSION FOR THE HARVEST

Passion is the direct result of our intimacy with God, our love for Christ, and our commitment to Him. Passion results in no longer living for ourselves, but living for God's glory.

For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that One died for all, and therefore all died. And He died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for Him who died for them and was raised again.

2 Corinthians 5:14-15

Passion Comes from God

Wesley Duewel writes in *Ablaze for God*:

“We cannot light this fire. In ourselves we cannot produce it. No man can kindle in himself that celestial fire; it must come from the live coal from the altar above.”²⁰

How do we fully experience God's passion for the harvest? We ask, we seek, we knock because,

Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father...

James 1:17

“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.”

Matthew 7:7-8

Passion Must Be Nurtured

Since passion comes from God, it is maintained through our intimacy with God. As God feeds and nurtures our souls through spiritual disciplines and his presence, our passion increases and sustains our vision. Passion must be nurtured and maintained like a fire.



LISTENING TO JESUS

Who do you say that I am?

Consider the challenging passage, 2 Corinthians 5:14-15. Who does the Lord reveal himself to be?

After a time of reflection together, direct your thoughts in praise to Jesus. Then listen quietly. What might be the Lord be saying in response?

Do you understand what I have done for you?

Last week we considered how the Lord might have us express our love for him by responding to one of the three great challenges: the gospel for every person, a church for every people, and the least of these.

Did anyone act on what the Lord called them to do? If so, share with the group briefly what the Lord asked you to do. Then, respond to Jesus' question by thinking about what the Lord did through your faithfulness and thanking him.

Are you listening to Me?

Look again at 2 Corinthians 5:14-15, this time with an ear to what the Lord might speak to you personally follow the three steps in the process.

Step 1: Read the text.

Step 2: Explore the context.

Step 3: Hear the Lord in your context and write a note from him to you.

Do you love Me? Feed My Sheep.

Take some time to be silent and examine your thoughts. Is the Lord calling you to express your love for Him by caring for someone within reach? Write any ideas in your journal and consider what it would look like to obey. Be specific and commit to obedience.



MEETING WITH THE LORD DAY BY DAY

One of the most exciting aspects of walking with the Lord is hearing him direct us to care for others in our lives, families, churches, and those we encounter throughout the day.

This week we will pay particular attention to listening to the Lord as he leads us to care for his “sheep” as he cultivates a deeper passion for the lost in our lives.

Begin meeting with the Lord through each question, recording what you hear in your journal. When you come to the fourth question, “Do you love me? Feed my sheep.” Be attentive to whom the Lord brings to mind. Is there someone in your social circle the Lord would have you reach out to with his love? Resist the temptation to grasp for the big and spectacular. Hear the Lord lead you to simple gestures of love and concern. Be mindful of what the Lord does in response to your faithfulness.

When you meet with the Lord each day and he asks you, “Do you understand what I have done for you?”, consider what the Lord might have done through you or in you as you reached out in love in response to his direction the day before. The Lord is always at work. Record what he has done and give him thanks.

Who do you say that I am?

Do you understand what I have done for you?

Are you listening to Me?

Do you love Me? Feed My sheep.

In these passages from the Gospel of John, we see Jesus responsive to the needs of the people He encounters. Use these scriptures to get you started:

Jesus at the Wedding in Cana, John 2:1-11

Jesus with Nicodemus, John 3:1-15

Jesus with the Woman at the Well, John 4:7-26

Jesus and the Invalid of Bethesda, John 5:1-9

Jesus Feeds the Five Thousand, John 6:1-14

VISIONARY LEADERSHIP

Week 8

God looks for men and women who are biblically committed to cast vision, set goals, mobilize the Body of Christ, and overcome obstacles in order to reach the nations for Christ.

INTRODUCTION: The Importance of Leadership

One discovery that revolutionized the world was the compass, a simple object in which a metal needle always points to the Earth's magnetic north. Its invention allowed travelers, especially mariners, to travel long distances safely under any weather condition.

Just as a compass always points to the north, true biblical leaders are focused on God and his kingdom for their lives and leadership. Biblical leaders rely on the unchangeable Word of God. They are rooted and grounded in Christ-centered love and they know how to follow the lead of the Holy Spirit who is always speaking into their lives.

Leadership may well be one of the most studied and least understood areas of human knowledge. Many definitions will focus on one of a variety of aspects of leadership. One of the simplest definitions of leadership comes from J. Oswald Sanders and was popularized by John Maxwell. In simple terms, "Leadership is influence."¹⁹



BIBLICAL FOUNDATION

We see leadership throughout the Bible as men and women responded faithfully to the Lord and acted to lead the people entrusted to them. Simply, the biblical pattern is that “God changes the course of history through the selection of men and women who will act on his behalf.”²⁰

Below are some examples of how God used men and women to execute his will in Scriptures.

Abraham (Gen. 12:1–3). God called him to be the father of a great nation through which the Savior would come.

Moses (Exod. 3:1-12). God called Moses to be the deliverer and leader of His people when they were slaves in Egypt.

David (1 Sam. 16:1-13). God called and anointed David to be the king who would unite the nation of Israel and lead it to prosperity.

Esther (Esther 4:12-17). God positioned Esther as queen and called her to preserve the Jewish nation when they were threatened with genocide in the Persian Empire.

As evidenced through these examples of faithful leaders, God moves through His people when men and women hear His call and step up to lead.



LISTENING TO JESUS

Who do you say that I am?

As a group, pick one of the four leaders identified above and explore who the Lord reveals himself to be in the passage. After talking about the Lord, direct your hearts in praise to him.

Do you understand what I have done for you?

Consider how the Lord called you to leadership on his behalf. Who were the people, what were the circumstances, the gifts, and the experiences the Lord has used to call you into a leadership role? Identify some of those elements and give thanks.

Are you listening to Me?

Explore together Luke 5:27-32 giving special attention to Levi's experience in his community. Work through the three steps on the process,

Step 1: Read the text.

Step 2: Explore the context.

Step 3: Hear the Lord in your context and write a note from him to you.

Do you love Me? Feed My Sheep.

One of the most important sheep in the flock entrusted to you is yourself. As a kingdom leader, your most important responsibility is to seeing that you are well fed and rested.

Share together the key disciplines that the Lord has led you to cultivate in your life to keep you attentive to His presence and direction.

Is the Lord calling you to do something new or to return to a familiar practice that has been neglected? Share what you hear. What specific action is the Lord directing you to embrace in this next week?

Write your commitment in your journal and be prepared to share your progress next week.



MEETING WITH THE LORD DAY BY DAY

The Lord has called you to embrace or renew a particular spiritual discipline this week. As you do what he has called you to do, spend time with Jesus interacting with him on examples of faithful leadership in the Bible.

Who do you say that I am?

Do you understand what I have done for you?

Are you listening to Me?

Do you love Me? Feed My sheep.

Here are some vivid examples of biblical leaders, but the Lord may lead you to others.

Joshua: Joshua 1:1-9

Deborah: Judges 5:1-11

Gideon: Judges 7:1-8

Samuel: 1 Samuel 7:3-11

Isaiah: Isaiah 6:1-8



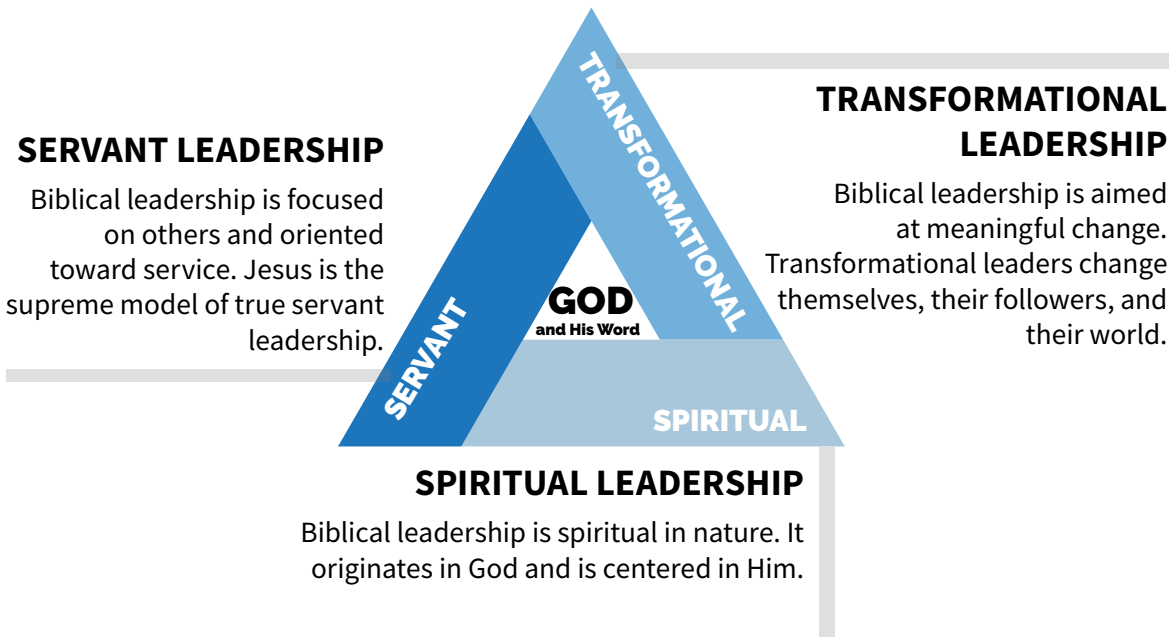
VISIONARY LEADERSHIP

Week 9

God looks for men and women who are biblically committed to cast vision, set goals, mobilize the Body of Christ, and overcome obstacles in order to reach the nations for Christ.

THE BIBLICAL LEADERSHIP TRIANGLE

Biblical leadership can be represented by the image of an equilateral triangle—a triangle in which all sides have the same length. This triangle is a symbol of strength and stability. The three sides represent essential characteristics of biblical leaders. The triangle’s sides are the same size, meaning the three aspects of biblical leadership have the same weight and importance in the life of the biblical leader.



This week we will explore Spiritual Leadership.

Spiritual Leadership

In the natural world, leadership depends on human ability and skills. Spiritual leadership does not discard natural abilities but results from blending a person's natural and spiritual qualities in the service of God and for His glory.

J. Oswald Sanders states,

“The spiritual leader influences others not by the power of his own personality but by that personality initiated and interpenetrated and empowered by the Holy Spirit.”

Spiritual leadership is based on the Word of God and exercised in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Spiritual Leadership in the Life of Moses

Moses is an excellent biblical example of spiritual leadership. In his calling as Israel's deliverer, we see four essential aspects of spiritual leadership.

Spiritual Leadership Originates in God

When Moses sought to lead the people from his own strength, he failed miserably (Exod. 2:14). Forty years later, when he was not seeking a position of leadership, God called him. The vision of delivering God's people from captivity and establishing them in the Promised Land also originated in God.

When the LORD saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, “Moses! Moses!” And Moses said “Here I am.”

Exodus 3:4

Spiritual Leadership Is Exercised with Authority from God

The fundamental difference from Moses' attempt to lead before he spent forty years in the desert was the source of his authority after God called him from the burning bush. The staff of God was the instrument by which God displayed His power to Moses, to the Israelites, and to the court of Pharaoh. Moses held it for the rest of his life, and it represented God's authority coming from God's calling, God's presence, and God's character shaping power.

So Moses took his wife and sons, put them on a donkey and started back to Egypt. And he took the staff of God in his hand.

Exodus 4:20

Spiritual Leadership Deploys the Gifts Given by God

As a leader called by God to accomplish God's vision with God's authority, God empowered Moses with both natural and supernatural gifts to accomplish the vision. Leaders cast vision and use words to mobilize people. Biblical spiritual leaders speak and write words inspired by God. They are God's mouthpieces, sharing God's vision.

“Now go; I will help you speak and will teach you what to say.”
Exodus 4:12

Faith fuels spiritual leadership in the power of the Holy Spirit. God's Spirit provides true spiritual leaders with supernatural power to back up their words and accomplish His vision.

“Take some water from the Nile and pour it on the dry ground. The water you take from the river will become blood on the ground.”
Exodus 4:9

Spiritual Leadership Reflects the Character of God

As Moses continued to exercise spiritual leadership, he grew more intimate with God and reflected His character. This particular aspect of spiritual leadership developed over much time spent with God serving him. Moses' godly character was the result of a long-term relationship of intimacy with God.

Now Moses was a very humble man, more humble than anyone else on the face of the earth.
Numbers 12:3

True spiritual leadership leaves no doubt that the true source of effective leadership is always found in God and not in ourselves. Nobody feels that truth more greatly than the spiritual leaders themselves. While God will move through his faithful ones, often working great miracles, the glory always goes to God.



LISTENING TO JESUS

Who do you say that I am?

Review the verses from Exodus and Numbers illustrating the spiritual leadership God developed in Moses. Discuss what they reveal about God. After a few minutes talking about God, direct your thoughts to God in words of praise.

Listen for how the Lord might respond.

Do you understand what I have done for you?

Last week the Lord invited you to implement or renew a spiritual discipline in your life. Share with the group what you experienced the Lord doing in you as a result of your obedience. After sharing together, spend time thanking the Lord for what he has done for you.

Are you listening to Me?

Consider the passage revealing Jesus' gifts to the church found in Ephesians 4:7-12.

Work through the process together to hear what the Lord might be saying to you about your spiritual leadership.

Step 1: Read the text.

Step 2: Explore the context.

Step 3: Hear the Lord in your context and write a note from him to you.

Do you love Me? Feed My Sheep.

Often, the Christian leader is the most neglected sheep in the flock because of the leader's focus on caring for others. Guard diligently your own time with the Lord, being careful to carve out time for you to meet with Jesus.

What do you hear the Lord calling you to do this week to deepen your relationship with him?

Do you believe Me?

The fifth question the Lord asks us tests the depth of our intimate relationship with Him. Faith is that quality of the soul that is convinced that God is able to do anything He desires to do. Oftentimes the battle is believing that He is able to do anything He desires to do...through us!

This question centers us on the divine partnership Jesus has forged with us. There is no question that Jesus can do miracles. The only real question is, do you believe that Jesus can do miracles through you!

As you consider God's call to you to be a true spiritual leader abiding in His presence and inviting His power to flow through you, he asks, "Do you believe me?"

Think about who God has called you to be and what He has called you to do. Let the immensity of it fill you. It might intimidate you, or even scare you. As you feel the weight of your calling, see Jesus looking right into your eyes asking you, "Do you believe Me?"

How do you respond? Share together and then pray together.



MEETING WITH THE LORD DAY BY DAY

Spiritual leadership comes out of our intimacy with God as He cultivates that quality of relationship which invites his constant presence.

Spend time with Jesus each day exploring these key Bible passages. Set aside time to hear Him ask you the Five Questions. After responding to him, be sure to listen to what He might say back.

John 14:12-14

John 15:1-11

Galatians 2:20

Ephesians 3:14-21

2 Peter 1:3-8

Who do you say that I am?

Do you understand what I have done for you?

Are you listening to Me?

Do you love Me? Feed My sheep.

Do you believe Me?



VISIONARY LEADERSHIP

Week 10

God looks for men and women who are biblically committed to cast vision, set goals, mobilize the Body of Christ, and overcome obstacles in order to reach the nations for Christ.

SERVANT LEADERSHIP

Spiritual leadership develops as we abide in Christ and deepen in our intimate relationship with him. Servant leadership comes to characterize Christian leaders who have been shaped by Jesus' presence in their lives.

For years, leadership has been perceived as the ability to command and control others. From that perspective, to be a leader and a servant at the same time seems like a paradox. Today the value of servant leadership is increasingly recognized.

To lead through service is different from simply being a servant. Servants serve the will of the person they are serving. Servant leaders, in contrast, serve those around them but their agenda is determined by the will of their Divine Master. A wise servant leader once expressed "I am your servant, but you are not my master." Servant leaders will be agents of social and spiritual revolution and leave a long-lasting legacy of positive change when they are authentically rooted in Jesus, their Master who has called them to serve.

Two thousand years ago, Jesus left the glory of His heavenly throne and became a servant on our behalf.

Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant...

Philippians 2:6-7

Jesus led through service and provided His disciples a model of leadership based on service to God and to others. As he spoke then, so he speaks today,

...whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all.

Mark 10:43-44

The Biblical Model of Servant Leadership

Jesus led by being a servant to all and taught his disciples to imitate him and lead in the same fashion. The most important occasion when Jesus modeled servant leadership for the disciples, and for us, was when he washed the feet of his twelve disciples.

Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under His power, and that He had come from God and was returning to God; so He got up from the meal, took off His outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around His waist. After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash His disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around Him.

John 13:3-6

As Jesus served those closest to him at dinner before serving the world on the cross, so we are to serve.



LISTENING TO JESUS

Who do you say that I am?

Explore together who Jesus shows himself to be as he washes his disciples' feet. Pay particular attention to the verbs in John 13:4-6. After a time of discussion direct your conversation to Jesus in praise.

How might Jesus respond?

Do you understand what I have done for you?

This question comes from this story. How has Jesus taught you to follow Him in becoming a servant? Who are the key people? What are the key events? Share together and then give thanks to Him.

Are you listening to Me?

Step 1: Read the text.

Step 2: Explore the context.

Step 3: Hear the Lord in your context and write a note from Him to you.

Do you love Me? Feed My Sheep.

Consider your family. Out of our zeal for serving the Lord and the church we often neglect those who are closest to us. How might the Lord be calling you to serve your family this week? Listen carefully and share together.

Do you believe Me?

Do you believe the Lord will do something special in the life of your family this week? If you do, invite the Lord to work through you this week.



MEETING WITH THE LORD DAY BY DAY

Dialogue with the Lord around these servant passages using the five questions Jesus asks.

Who do you say that I am?

Do you understand what I have done for you?

Are you listening to Me?

Do you love Me? Feed My sheep.

Do you believe Me?

What does the Lord stir up in you? How does He challenge you? What does He affirm?

Luke 24:22-27

John 12:20-26

Gal. 5:13-14

2 Cor. 4:5-6

Phil. 2:1-8



VISIONARY LEADERSHIP

Week 11

God looks for men and women who are biblically committed to cast vision, set goals, mobilize the Body of Christ, and overcome obstacles in order to reach the nations for Christ.

TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Biblical leadership is spiritual by nature because it originates in God. Biblical leaders are also servants in mission because they follow Jesus by focusing on others. Finally, biblical leaders are transformational because they are called by God to be transformed in their own lives and to work to bring a kingdom transformation in the world around them.

Biblical leaders work toward real transformation in two separate arenas. First, leaders transform their world by being agents of significant change within their sphere of influence. They not only see the world as it is but also how God intends it to be. They give themselves to being used of God to bring about that change.

Second, leaders elevate those whom they lead. Through prayer, encouragement and a variety of ways of equipping, God uses us to transform others to be leaders who come to serve beyond what they think is possible.

Through our transformation, the Lord transforms others and the world is changed.

Jesus—The Ultimate Change Agent

In Matthew's gospel, Jesus establishes from the beginning of His ministry that He was to bring significant and meaningful change. In The Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) Jesus inverts the accepted value structure by affirming the poor in spirit, the meek, those who mourn, and those who long for peace. He heightens our concern for others by deepening the Father's expectations expressed in the Ten Commandments. He calls all who would follow Him to be radical agents of transformation as He calls us to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world.



LISTENING TO JESUS

Who do you say that I am?

Consider the beatitudes in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:1-12). As you reflect upon these blessings, who does the Lord reveal Himself to be? Spend some time sharing together and then give praise to the Lord for who He is.

Do you understand what I have done for you?

Last week we spent time reflecting on Jesus' call to be a servant. In any age, that demands real transformation. As you respond to this question, share more about what the Lord has revealed to you as He has worked to transform you into a true servant.

How has the Lord blessed you in becoming more attentive to the needs of others? Have there been any real surprises or struggles? Where are you resistant? Where have you experienced the joy in serving?

After sharing express your thanks to Jesus. What might Jesus say back?

Are you listening to Me? Matthew 5:43-48.

Work through this challenging passage together following the three-step process:

Step 1: Read the text.

Step 2: Explore the context.

Step 3: Hear the Lord in your context and write a note from him to you.

Do you love Me? Feed My Sheep.

Transformational leaders work toward positive change in the world, helping others to be transformed into kingdom leaders. Is there someone in your life the Lord might be calling you to pour your life into? What is the Lord directing you to do?

Do you believe Me?

Do you believe the Lord can use you to change the world?



MEETING WITH THE LORD DAY BY DAY

Jesus used his first followers to change their world. Meet with the Lord and listen deeply and respond faithfully as he calls you into true transformation through scriptures of transformation. Invite the Lord to speak into your life as he asks his five questions:

Who do you say that I am?

Do you understand what I have done for you?

Are you listening to Me?

Do you love Me? Feed My sheep.

Do you believe Me?

Here are a number of challenging passages to work through. The Lord may lead you to others.

Romans 5:1-5

Romans 12:1-3

1 Corinthians 1:26-31

Ephesians 4:17-24

Philippians 1:3-10

Philippians 4:4-9

Colossians 1:24-29



CULTURALLY RELEVANT EVANGELISM

Week 12

God looks for men and women who live and teach the Gospel with cultural relevance, sensitivity, and power, so that the eternal truth of the Gospel will be understood and received in every culture of the world.

THE GREAT WORK BEGINS

Jesus gathers His closest followers for one more special meeting. He delivers one of His most important messages, explains His purpose, promises His power and gives His disciples clear and final instructions. This last encounter between Jesus and His closest followers has become known as “The Great Commission.”

The four Gospels and Acts include different accounts of this event. Immediately before his ascension, Jesus commissions His disciples to go and preach the Gospel, make disciples of all nations, and be His witnesses. Jesus’ emphasis detailed in the different accounts of the biblical narrative makes it crystal clear that evangelism is a top priority for every Jesus follower and Christian leader.

What is Evangelism?

One of the terms used most frequently in the New Testament to describe the Christian message is the Greek word euangelion which means “good news.” The English word “evangelism” is derived from that word and simply means “sharing the good news.”

In the Roman world it was used in the declaration of a new Caesar or the announcement of a great victory. It is not a how-to book or a philosophical treatise. It is the bold proclamation that something has happened that has changed the world and will change our lives.

When Jesus began His ministry, His call was clear,

“The time has come,” he said. “The kingdom of God has come near.
Repent and believe the good news!”

Mark 1:15

The King has come, His kingdom is breaking into the world of darkness. Turn to the king and give your life to the wonder of His new reality.

The Lausanne Covenant defines evangelism as:

The proclamation of the historical, biblical Christ as Savior and Lord, with a view to persuading people to come to Him personally and so be reconciled to God.²¹

In Ephesians 4:11, Paul identifies evangelism as one of the unique equipping gifts along with apostle, prophet, pastor and teacher. However, it is clear that the early Church did not generally think of evangelism as a special activity to be delegated to experts, but rather sharing the Good News was the natural outcome of Christians just being Christians.

The blessing of the work of evangelism comes out of a life of those with three commonly shared characteristics.

A Personal Experience—The person of Jesus Christ centers the Gospel. A person who experiences Jesus can share the Gospel effectively.

A Passion for the Lost—God’s passion for those without Christ anchors the Gospel. Christians should share that passion.

The Power of the Holy Spirit—Every Christian needs the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit in the work of evangelizing.

The great privilege of all followers of the King is to bear witness to the reality of his presence at work in the world, through his people, and in our lives.



LISTENING TO JESUS

We will take time this week and next week to listen to one another's stories and to thank God for just how He has moved in our lives to invite us into His life.

Who do you say that I am?

The Lord reveals Himself in the Bible, certainly, but we also recognize Him in the witness of faithful believers that comes to us through the creeds, hymns, and stories of faithful generations.

Take a second look at the Lausanne Covenant's definition of evangelism. What can we discern about who the Lord is? After a time of conversation together, direct your conversation to the Lord in words of praise.

Do you understand what I have done for you?

How wonderful it is to remember and celebrate what the Lord has done to bring us to Himself. Take time to reflect upon how the Lord moved in your life to reveal Himself to you and invite you into relationship with Himself. How did the Lord work through the people in your life? What were the circumstances? After sharing together, give thanks to Jesus.

Are you listening to Me? 1 Corinthians 15:1-11

Many believe the clearest expression of the gospel in the New Testament is 1 Corinthians 15:1-11. Here Paul recounts Jesus' death, burial, resurrection and appearances to many in the early church.

Work through 1 Corinthians 15:1-11 together with the Lord. What is the Lord saying to you?

Step 1: Read the text.

Step 2: Explore the context.

Step 3: Hear the Lord in your context and write a note from him to you.

Transformational leaders work toward positive change in the world, helping others to be transformed into kingdom leaders. Is there someone in your life the Lord might be calling you to pour your life into? What is the Lord directing you to do?

Do you love Me? Feed My sheep.

It is easy to overlook our families in the telling of how we came to Jesus. Take time this week to share your story with them.

Do you believe Me?

Tell Jesus how much you trust him to reach the lost people around you in the same way he reached you. Express your confidence in him directly to him in prayer.



MEETING WITH THE LORD DAY BY DAY

The Cross of Christ

The heart of the gospel is Jesus' death and resurrection.

This week spend much time dialoguing with the Lord around the second question He asks us, *Do you understand what I have done for you?* How did you first hear the message of the cross? What were the circumstances around your dawning awareness of Jesus' transformational power through His death and resurrection? Was it gradual, like the sun coming up in the morning or was it sudden like a lightning bolt?

If you have always known the Lord, think about what the Lord has done to touch you with His great act of sacrifice. What did the Lord do? How did He change you? What impact did He have on your family and friends?

As you sit with Jesus and his five questions, do not feel like you need to move through all of the questions. Sit with him in thanksgiving each day.

Who do you say that I am?

Do you understand what I have done for you?

Are you listening to Me?

Do you love Me? Feed My sheep.

Do you believe Me?

Listen deeply as you talk with Lord through these scriptures of the cross.

Matthew 27:45-50

John 19:16-30

Acts 2:22-28

1 Corinthians 1:18-25

Ephesians 2:11-16

Capture your thoughts and feelings and what the Lord shares with you in your journal.



CULTURALLY RELEVANT EVANGELISM

Week 13

God looks for men and women who live and teach the Gospel with cultural relevance, sensitivity, and power, so that the eternal truth of the Gospel will be understood and received in every culture of the world.

THE HOLY SPIRIT IN EVANGELIZATION

The Holy Spirit is the primary agent in the miracle of bringing someone to Jesus.

The Holy Spirit prepares the hearts.

Like the experience of Cornelius in Acts 10, the Holy Spirit goes before us and prepares hearts to receive the message. He creates the hunger and thirst in the soul of one who awakens to the emptiness of the world and the need for something more. He brings the conviction of sin and the deep loneliness of a self-centered life.

The Holy Spirit is our senior partner.

Paul affirms that we are God's "fellow workers" (1 Cor. 3:9). One will plant, another will water, and still another will reap the harvest, but it is the Holy Spirit who leads us to do our part as he reaches out to draw a lost one to himself.

The Holy Spirit works in the heart of the lost.

During the time when we are sharing the Gospel message, the Holy Spirit works in the heart of the hearer, leading the listener to God's truth (John 16:13). The hardened heart begins to soften. The closed door to the empty heart begins to open as the Holy Spirit moves deeply in the heart that he has been preparing all along.

The Holy Spirit is the presence and power of God.

Jesus has promised His presence and power when we evangelize (Matt. 28:20). Evangelism is often accompanied by demonstrations of God's power through the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8, 5:15). Paul reminds the Corinthians that,

I came to you in weakness with great fear and trembling. ⁴ My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, ⁵ so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on God's power.

1 Corinthians 2:3-5

The Invitation to Receive

The Holy Spirit will use us in the great work. Whenever we share about the Lord with a not-yet-believer, it is always important to be sensitive to what he is doing. The time of conversion may be at hand. Always be prepared to invite others to open their hearts to Jesus and enter into new life.

Let us never forget the wonder of being instruments of God at work in the world through His Holy Spirit!



LISTENING TO JESUS

Who do you say that I am?

Look again at 1 Corinthians 2:3-5. Who does the Lord show Himself to be? After a time of exploring together, direct your praise to Him.

What does He say in response?

Do you understand what I have done for you?

Continue sharing the stories of how the Lord has moved in your life to bring you to Himself. Remember to take the time to look at the early, often unexamined details of what the Lord did to prepare your heart.

After talking together about what the Lord had done in your life, direct your conversation to Jesus in thanksgiving.

Again, what might He say in response to our gratitude?

Are you listening to Me? 1 Corinthians 2:3-5

The Lord is present with power. Listen deeply as you work through this testimony of Paul's following the three-step process:

Step 1: Read the text.

Step 2: Explore the context.

Step 3: Hear the Lord in your context and write a note from him to you.

Do you love Me? Feed My sheep.

Do your friends know how you came to Christ? Who might the Lord have you tell your story to?

Do you believe Me?

Do you have the confidence that the Lord will use you as you share your story? Your sharing may not lead to conversion. But do you believe the Lord will begin to prepare the heart? If so, pray that the Lord might use us this week.



MEETING WITH THE LORD DAY BY DAY

The most effective way to share the Good News of Jesus Christ is person-to-person. Most people come to know Jesus Christ because of a friendship with a believer whose life example and personal testimony witness to God's love. Nothing communicates the truth of the Gospel better than a life transformed by the power of God. In 1 Peter 3:15, the apostle writes that every Christian should be prepared to "give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have."

As you meet with the Lord this week, spend time thinking through and preparing a formal "personal testimony" of how you came to the Lord or how he came alive to you for the first time. Think of it as the "elevator speech" that will intrigue a friend and invite more conversation. It should be about three minutes.

Talk with the Lord as you go through the process this week. Begin with praise (*Who do you say that I am?*) and thanksgiving (*Do you understand what I have done for you?*) Be listening all along (*Are you listening to Me?*) Allow him take the lead in the task.

Day One: Life without Christ

Spend time with the Lord exploring your life before Him. What were you doing? What were you feeling? How did you relate to those around you, and how did they experience you? What was missing in your life and how did you experience that? Loneliness? Frustration? Emptiness? Joylessness? Invite the Lord to bring those times to mind.

Be sure to capture key thoughts and feelings in your journal. You'll be putting it all together on Day Four.

Day Two: How You Came to Christ

Just what did the Lord do to bring you to himself? Ask Him. He will tell you. Who were the key people involved? How did Jesus' death on the cross move you? Conviction? Gratitude? Clarity? What did you experience, think, and feel? Be as specific as you can. Avoid generalities. People are far more interested to hear about what specifically happened to you than they are to hear your general reflections upon it.

Day Three: Life with Christ

What has changed now that you are walking with the Lord? How are your relationships different? Your attitudes? Your hopes and fears? Can you connect important events in your life directly to what Jesus has done? How do you experience the Lord day-by-day?

Day Four: Putting it Together

Review your thoughts over the past three days. Write out a simple testimony incorporating the three elements: Life without Christ, How You Came to Christ, and Life with Christ.

Be careful not to spend too much time on your life without Christ. We all have plenty of war stories. These can be titillating but distract from the central theme. Another temptation is to put yourself in the center of the testimony with a subtle pride that can take the focus away from Christ. Your life without Christ should convey the truth of what life was like, but do not spend too much time here. Try to put some feeling into this section, but also include where your head was at during this time. What did you think about the Lord?

The key part of your testimony is how you came to Christ. Be specific about how his death on the cross awakened you to his presence and his love. This movement is both what is most mystifying to not-yet-believers and what is most important for them to hear.

The final section must be authentic and real. Be honest about the difference Jesus makes in your life without trying to sugar coat the rough spots. Be clear about the blessings the Lord brings, and if you can put it in the context of common struggles, all the better!

Work hard to keep it brief and simple. Remember, think of it as that elevator speech. You will likely have plenty of opportunity to share more in other conversations. However, it is also possible that the Lord will bring you into a chance encounter where he will want you to share your story. So work to be concise, clear, and simple.

Before	After
Guilt	Forgiveness
Strife	Peace
Jealousy	Love
Emptiness	Fulfillment
Fear of death	Peace about death
Depression	Hope
Rejection	Acceptance
Loneliness	Friendship
Selfishness	Concern for others
Pleasure lover	Satisfaction in God
Fear of spirits, witchcraft, charms	Freedom from these fears

Day Five: Sharing Your Testimony

How did you do? Take the opportunity to share your testimony a few times with trusted friends. Ask for feedback. Was the balance right between the three elements? Were you concrete in the telling or did you veer into abstractions or platitudes? See if you can share it with a not-yet-believer to get their input. What stood out to them from your story?



CULTURALLY RELEVANT EVANGELISM

Week 14

God looks for men and women who live and teach the Gospel with cultural relevance, sensitivity, and power, so that the eternal truth of the Gospel will be understood and received in every culture of the world.

HEARING OUR STORIES

This week we will take the time to hear one another's testimonies. It is always inspiring to hear how others came to Christ.

Workshopping Your Testimony

Begin with praise and thanksgiving.

Who do you say that I am?

Explore together who the Lord is in light of his call to us to share the gospel. After talking together, direct your thoughts to the Lord in praise.

Do you understand what I have done for you?

We have spent significant time thinking about what the Lord has done in our lives to bring us to himself. Spend time giving thanks to Jesus for what he has done to draw you to himself.

Sharing, Hearing and Shaping Your Testimony

In the time remaining we will workshop one another's testimonies.

Assign a time-keeper. The time-keeper's task is to track the length of the testimony. The goal is three minutes. Like Goldilocks, we want the porridge not too hot and not too cold, but just right!

As each participant shares their testimony, the rest of the group is to listen for the key elements.

1. Life without Christ

Did the testimony clearly convey the need that opened the person to hearing about Jesus? Was emotion communicated in addition to events and ideas? Did it share appropriate negative elements without being overly dramatic. Did it seem to be the right length?

2. How You Came to Christ?

Was Jesus' death on the cross clearly expressed? Was there a clear moment of surrender or acceptance? Did the testimony communicate a shift in the internal experience of the person, a clarity of understanding, a feeling of warmth or forgiveness?

3. Life with Christ

Did the testimony communicate a clear difference in life after receiving Christ? Did the new life feel authentic, not phony? Was it believable and relatable? Did it convey an ongoing walk with the Lord or suggest a "fire insurance" finality that would not lead into a life of discipleship?

After hearing each testimony, give some feedback. Too long? Too short? How can it be improved? Was it too rational or too emotional? Did it strike a right balance between the three elements? Was it compelling? Did it invite further conversation? Would it be natural to invite the listener to receive Christ in response?

Be sure to manage the time so that everyone has a chance to share their story and receive feedback from the group. If time remains, invite Jesus into the conversation. What might the Lord say in response to this experience?



MEETING WITH THE LORD DAY BY DAY

Spend time with the Lord this week talking through the first chapter of 2 Timothy. Take a small section of the chapter and meet with the Lord as he asks you the five questions. Remember, your goal is not to think about the text to come up with great ideas and applications, but rather to dialogue with the Lord seeking to hear what he might share with you as you move through the five questions with him.

Capture as well as you can the dialogue in your journal. It would be fun to hear what the Lord does in this time with him.

Who do you say that I am?

Do you understand what I have done for you?

Are you listening to Me?

Do you love Me? Feed My sheep.

Do you believe Me?



MULTIPLICATION OF DISCIPLES AND LEADERS

Week 15

God looks for men and women who disciple, coach, and mentor other leaders, who in turn become leaders of leaders who effectively train others.

Christianity started as a small group of Jewish followers of an obscure Rabbi in a remote corner of the Roman Empire. Three centuries later, the Christian faith had not only survived terrible persecution, but had transformed the empire itself.

There are many reasons for the explosive growth of Christianity. One of them is best expressed by Paul's words to Timothy,

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

2 Timothy 2:2

Christianity grew exponentially because Jesus established a pattern of multiplication instead of simple addition. Every Christian was taught to make disciples. By the process of multiplication in which disciples make disciples, Christianity became a global movement.



Multiplication is a process involving three stages: discipling, coaching, and mentoring. The following diagram illustrates the entire process. The higher you take a person in the growth process, the greater the multiplication and the more people will be reached with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.



BIBLICAL FOUNDATION

Before ascending to the Father, Jesus gave us a clear directive:

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, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.

Matthew 28:19–20

While there are four verbs in the Great Commission, in the original Greek, the only verb given as a command is to “make disciples” of all nations. The other verbs describe how to fulfill the command given by Jesus in one way or another: going, baptizing, teaching.

Jesus and Disciple-Making—The Example

Jesus modeled how to make disciples. He selected key individuals and invested His life into them over a period of time. In the gospels, we see Jesus interacting with a variety of groups of people.

The Crowd—Large crowds followed Jesus. He preached and served them by healing the sick and miraculously feeding thousands of people. However, the large crowds were not the main focus of Jesus’ ministry (Matt. 4:25, Luke 9:11).

The One Hundred and Twenty—When the Holy Spirit came on the Day of Pentecost, there were 120 believers gathered in Jerusalem. They were faithful followers of Jesus Christ (Acts 1:15).

The Seventy-Two—Jesus entrusted seventy-two disciples with a special task of going in groups of two and ministering in the villages where He would preach (Luke 10:1–24).

The Twelve—Jesus invested personally for three years in twelve of His followers; they are known as the Apostles (Mark 3:14). The Church was founded upon the witness and leadership of the Apostles.

The Three—Jesus invested further in three of his closest disciples: Peter, John, and James. He took them with him when he raised the daughter of Jairus from the dead (Mark 5:37), they were present when Jesus was transfigured (Matt. 17:1–9), and Jesus met privately with them in the garden of Gethsemane the night before he was killed (Matt. 26:37). These three became key persons in the early Church. They truly became leaders of leaders.

Jesus was mindful to touch lives at every level from the multitudes to his most intimate companions. His greatest influence was with those few He poured His life into, both before and after the cross. What He did then, He is still doing today.



LISTENING TO JESUS

Who do you say that I am?

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

Matthew 28:19-20

Explore who Jesus shows himself to be in this familiar passage. What is the most important quality of Jesus when it comes to making disciples? Discuss it and try to come to consensus. After talking about Jesus for a brief time, direct your conversation to Jesus in praise.

Listen attentively. How might the Lord respond to your praise?

Do you understand what I have done for you?

Last week we spent time with the Lord in 2 Timothy, Chapter 1. Would anyone be willing to share what the Lord did for you during that time? Any fresh insights? Any calls to action? Any results?

Give thanks to the Lord for his faithfulness.

Are you listening to Me?

Work through Matthew 28:19-20 following the three-fold process.

Step 1: Read the text.

Step 2: Explore the context.

Step 3: Hear the Lord in your context and write a note from him to you.

Write a personal note from the Lord to you.

Do you love Me? Feed My sheep.

Consider the people in your circle of influence who identify as Christians and may attend church, but really have not experienced a quality of discipleship that puts Jesus in the center of their lives. Allow the Lord to bring three or four people to mind.

Is it possible that the Lord would have you pray for these that they might open themselves to a deeper walk with the Lord through intentional discipleship?

Would the Lord have you invite them to begin a discipling relationship with you? What would that look like specifically? Write in out in your journal.

Do you believe Me?

Do you believe that the Lord could use you to move dramatically in their lives? If so, pray for them now as we come to a close and commit to pray for them regularly and then watch and see what the Lord might do.



MEETING WITH THE LORD DAY BY DAY

As you did last week in chapter 1 of 2 Timothy, spend time with the Lord this week in Chapter 2. Go slowly through the chapter meeting with the Lord as he asks you the five questions. Don't worry about getting through the whole chapter. Let the Lord determine the pace. The important thing is to talk with the Lord and giving him plenty of time to speak back into your life.

Keep your journal nearby. How wonderful it is to record (and remember!) what the Lord has said and done.

Who do you say that I am?

Do you understand what I have done for you?

Are you listening to Me?

Do you love Me? Feed My sheep.

Do you believe Me?



MULTIPLICATION OF DISCIPLES AND LEADERS

Week 16

God looks for men and women who disciple, coach, and mentor other leaders, who in turn become leaders of leaders who effectively train others.

DEFINITION OF A DISCIPLE AND DISCIPLESHIP

A disciple is someone who is living out the decision to follow Christ in everyday life. He or she knows Christ inwardly, recognizes his voice, experiences his love, and lives from his power. The disciple is committed to living outwardly in love and obedience to him moment by moment.

Discipleship is the relational process of helping someone grow spiritually from new believer to mature disciple. This is done by helping people read and live from God's Word, enjoy the power and encouragement of Christian fellowship, and develop the practices of the spiritual life so that he or she is equipped to hear, discern, and follow the voice of Jesus and the promptings of the Holy Spirit in their everyday life.

PAUL AND DISCIPLE-MAKING

Paul made disciples wherever he went on his missionary journeys. When writing to the Philippians he gives them the following instructions.

Keep putting into practice all you learned from me and heard from me and saw me doing...

Philippians 4:9 NLT

Discipleship is practical and focuses on real-life faithful engagement with the Lord as you hear his voice in the Bible, in the church, and by the Holy Spirit. The examples of Jesus and Paul outline a process of multiplication by discipleship that guarantees the growth of the Church. You are a follower of Christ today because of this multiplication process that has been producing faithful disciples for more than two thousand years.

This process is represented by a continuous timeline beginning with Jesus and continuing through the centuries to our own generation.





LISTENING TO JESUS

Who do you say that I am?

Consider 2 Timothy 2:1-2,

You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. 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.

Who does Jesus reveal himself to be? Share together and then direct your thoughts to the Lord in praise.

Do you understand what I have done for you?

Who taught you the foundations of the Christian faith and helped you grow from a simple believer to a disciple of Christ? Write that person's name in the empty arrow below.



What did that that person do to develop your walk with the Lord? Do you think it might have been the Lord all along working through their faithfulness to shape your life with him? Looking back, how do you think the Lord was involved specifically?

Share together who the Lord used and what you learned. After talking together, give thanks to the Lord for using that faithful disciple maker and for the specific things you learned through them.

Are you listening to Me? 2 Timothy 2:1-2

Work through this passage following the three-fold process.

Step 1: Read the text.

Step 2: Explore the context.

Step 3: Hear the Lord speaking into your context.

Write a personal note from Jesus to you.

Do you love Me? Feed My sheep.

In 2 Timothy 2:1, Paul exhorts us “to be strengthened in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.” Is there some spiritual discipline the Lord would have you explore, adopt or affirm in your life to experience a strengthening of the Lord’s grace?

What would he have you do or continue to do?

Do you believe Me?

Pray together with the conviction that the Lord will do great things in our lives as we respond faithfully to his direction.



MEETING WITH THE LORD DAY BY DAY

Continue meeting with the Lord in 2 Timothy. As is now becoming a part of your daily discipline, listen deeply as the Lord asks you the five questions. Remember, allow Jesus to set the pace.

Record your interaction with the Lord in your journal.

Who do you say that I am?

Do you understand what I have done for you?

Are you listening to Me?

Do you love Me? Feed My sheep.

Do you believe Me?



MULTIPLICATION OF DISCIPLES AND LEADERS

Week 17

God looks for men and women who disciple, coach, and mentor other leaders, who in turn become leaders of leaders who effectively train others.

CHARACTERISTICS OF A DISCIPLE

The following are characteristics of a faithful disciple. In the beginning of the discipleship process, these characteristics are seeds that need to be cultivated, but as the disciple grows, these character traits become more evident in his or her attitudes and actions.

Heart for God

True disciples of Jesus will hunger for God's presence. They will look for opportunities to experience God and be in fellowship with Him. David expressed his longing for God,

As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for You, O God.
Psalm 42:1

Seekers and new believers often hunger for more of God in their lives. As understanding grows, the desire to continually experience God's presence and intimate fellowship with Him only increases in a true disciple's heart.

Available to God

God wants to bless and use those who are available to him. From the early stages, disciples open their hearts to God's calling as described by the prophet Isaiah:

Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I. Send me!"

Isaiah 6:8

Availability requires faith and a willingness to go where God sends. It may be tentative at first, but in time the new disciple's faith will strengthen as he or she takes steps in the direction of God's purpose and will.

Faithful to God and Others

God is looking for those who will be faithful followers, who listen deeply and follow through as the Lord directs them. Paul instructs Timothy to entrust the message to those who are reliable and faithful,

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

2 Timothy 2:2

Faithfulness doesn't mean disciples are absolutely perfect, but that they are willing to let God lead their life. A faithful disciple desires to walk sincerely with God in the discipleship process.

Teachable Spirit

Invest in those willing to learn. In Matthew 13, Jesus compares those who hear God's Word to different types of soil. The teachable person is compared to fertile soil where the seed of God's Word grows and bears fruit.

“But the seed falling on good soil refers to someone who hears the word and understands it. This is the one who produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.”

Matthew 13:23

God is looking for seeds of these qualities—humility, eager acceptance of God's Word, a teachable spirit—in the lives of the people whom you disciple. If these seeds are present and increasing in new believers, they will be on the path toward spiritual maturity.

LIFE-TO-LIFE INVESTMENT IS THE BOTTOM LINE

To apply the principle of multiplication by discipleship, you will have to commit to intentionally invest in discipling one or more new believers this year. It will require a personal investment in time, prayer, and patience to see the disciple grow. Furthermore, it will take a consistency in your Christian life that will inspire another person to want to mature in his or her own spiritual life. The result will be that God will be glorified and we will produce much fruit. John wrote the following words that relate to discipleship,

I have no greater joy than to know that my [spiritual] children are walking in the truth.

3 John 1:4



LISTENING TO JESUS

Who do you say that I am?

Paul shares an encouraging word with his friends in Philippi.

I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart and, whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the gospel, all of you share in God's grace with me.

Philippians 1:3-7

Explore who the Lord reveals himself to be. After sharing together, direct your praise to the Lord.

What might the Lord share with you in response?

Do you understand what I have done for you?

Two weeks ago, we began praying for those in our lives the Lord might have us invite into a discipling relationship. Have you seen the Lord do something in their lives or yours to move you toward a new discipling relationship? If so, share together and give thanks.

Are you listening to Me?

Listen deeply together through Philippians 1:3-7. Work through this passage following our familiar three steps.

Step 1: Read the text.

Step 2: Explore the context.

Step 3: Hear the Lord speaking into your context.

Write a personal note from Jesus to you.

Do you love Me? Feed My sheep.

Is the Lord calling you to invite someone into a discipling relationship? If so, might he be asking you to talk with that person this next week? Will you be willing to share with the group how the conversation goes?

Do you believe Me?

Pray with great faith, believing that the Lord will work mightily through us this week.



MEETING WITH THE LORD DAY BY DAY:

2 Timothy 4

This week we wrap up 2 Timothy with chapter 4. In what is possibly Paul's final words to Timothy, he gives challenging and encouraging exhortation. Through Paul's passionate thoughts, we hear the voice of Jesus speaking to us each day.

Record your interaction with the Lord in your journal.

Who do you say that I am?

Do you understand what I have done for you?

Are you listening to Me?

Do you love Me? Feed My sheep.

Do you believe Me?



FAMILY PRIORITY

Week 18

God looks for men and women who disciple, coach, and mentor other leaders, who in turn become leaders of leaders who effectively train others.

INTRODUCTION: THE CHALLENGE OF FAMILY PRIORITY

Family is the foundation for all cultures. It constitutes the root of every human society. The Bible begins with the creation of the world and the first family established by Adam and Eve. God originally designed the family to be a place of blessing and a reflection of the Trinity; however, the devastating consequences of sin have negatively impacted family structures.

Christians are not spared the effects of these negative forces. Christian homes are often places of blessing, but they can also be places of struggle and pain. From Genesis to Malachi and Matthew to Revelation, God consistently uses family illustrations to describe His relationship with the human race.

EVERYONE IS BORN INTO A FAMILY. Your family may be loving and living according to the best ideals of a godly family or your family may be broken and dysfunctional with many difficulties and challenges. Whether you are single or married and whether you come from a whole or broken family, God desires your family to be a place where you experience God's presence and grace. The Bible provides extensive teaching on how to develop a godly family.

EVERY FOLLOWER OF CHRIST IS PART OF THE FAMILY OF GOD.

Along with your nuclear and extended family, the family of God connects all believers with other followers who are your brothers and sisters, mothers and fathers, grandparents, and perhaps even sons and daughters in the Christian faith. In Christ, you are part of a connected community of faith which can be especially important if your immediate family members are not followers of Christ. By your baptism and the work of the Holy Spirit in your life, you are reminded that you are never alone.

WE LONG FOR THE DAY WHEN CHRIST RETURNS. There will be a day when Christ returns and your family who are in Christ, both by blood and by faith, will be reunited through Christ, and all the family struggles and pain you have experienced will be no more. Until that day, your challenge is to be a faithful member of your family and the family of God.



BIBLICAL FOUNDATION

God created family and the best way to understand the family is by examining the Bible. Consider the following Scriptural truths:

The First Family:

The Bible begins with a family. God created the first family and commanded Adam and Eve, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground” (Genesis 1:28).

The Trinity and Family: God created humankind “in His own image” (Genesis 1:27). As a reflection of the Trinity, the family is a place of community, in which we have fellowship, communion, and appropriate intimacy, modelled for us by the relationship between God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In God’s perfect design, family manifests the fruit of the Holy Spirit including love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5.22).

Singleness: Singleness is a gift from God and was modelled by Jesus Christ. Paul exhorts single men and women to use singleness for personal growth and as a platform to “promote good order and to secure your undivided devotion to the Lord” (1 Corinthians 7:35 ESV).

Marriage: Marriage is a model of the relationship between Christ and the Church. It is an exclusive holy covenant between one man and one woman. Jesus said, “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, the two will become one flesh. So they are no longer two, but one flesh” (Matthew 19:5-6). The Bible begins and ends with a marriage (Genesis 1:28, Revelation 19:6-9).

Whether married or single, we all have an opportunity to reflect God to a world that desperately needs to see faithfulness and fidelity lived out. God wants to use our relationships to transform the world. Neither marriage or singleness more greatly displays how God interacts with the world, but together they give a complete picture.

Summarizing these biblical truths, the nuclear family unit is the union between a man and a woman in marriage and the biological or adopted children resulting from that union. In addition to the nuclear family, multiple generations and relatives make up the extended family. As a follower of Christ, you are also a part of the family of God.

God’s Perspective on the Family

Every Christian needs to feel God’s heartbeat for the family. A key New Testament text is Matthew 22:36–40.

“Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” Jesus replied: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

Our first “neighbor” is our own family—from there our ministry extends to the ends of the earth. To fulfill your calling, your family must be seen as your first priority to serve.

Our families are a gift from God, a ministry from God and a responsibility from God. In our families we learn and teach the foundational lessons of love. Our earliest relationships in our families shape our souls. For some, trauma experienced in the family distorts their ability to relate to others in a healthy way. Conversely, family interactions centered in love and respect prepare us to treat others in a way that is honoring to them and the Lord.



LISTENING TO JESUS

Who do you say that I am?

Consider the Greatest Commandment from Matthew 22:36-40.

What does this very familiar directive from Jesus reveal about Jesus? What does it reveal about God that, “All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

After spending a few minutes discussing together, focus your hearts and minds on Jesus and praise him as you answer the first question.

Do you understand what I have done for you?

Consider Jesus’ question in light of your family. What blessings has the Lord brought in and through your family? What challenges have the Lord used to refine you?

Share together how the Lord has moved through your family. Then, direct your words to him in expressions of thanks.

Take a moment between each expression of thanksgiving to examine your thoughts. Might the Lord want to say something back in response to your thanksgiving?

Are you listening to Me? Matthew 22:36–40

Work through this familiar text again with an ear toward what the Lord might say to you personally with respect to your family. Follow the three-fold process and write a personal note from Jesus to you.

Step 1: Read the text.

Step 2: Explore the context.

Step 3: Hear the Lord speaking into your context.

Write a personal note from Jesus to you.

Do you love Me? Feed My sheep.

Our family is made up of special members of the flock the Lord has entrusted to us. Take a moment and listen. Might the Lord be calling you to care for a family member in a special way this week as an expression of your love for him?

Do you believe Me?

Close together in prayer with the confidence born of faith that Jesus will do a great thing in us and through us.



MEETING WITH THE LORD DAY BY DAY:

Genesis 2:4-25

This foundational text conveys profoundly the intimacy God intends between us and one another. God spoke to all of us when he said, “It is not good for the man to be alone” (Gen. 2:18). Even those who are not married,

As we have been practicing, work through this wonderful chapter deliberately, allowing the Lord to speak to you as you respond to him. Just take a few verses at a time. Listen deeply.

Who do you say that I am?

Do you understand what I have done for you?

Are you listening to Me?

Do you love Me? Feed My sheep.

Do you believe Me?



FAMILY PRIORITY

Week 19

God looks for men and women who disciple, coach, and mentor other leaders, who in turn become leaders of leaders who effectively train others.

The wonderful opportunity the Lord gives us in our families is to develop the “muscle memory” of healthy relationship. What we learn to do in our families becomes the relational habits we bring into the world as we interact with others. Sometimes we learn very helpful things: how to listen, how to help others out, the importance of being together. Sometimes we learn things that are not so helpful, things the Lord wants to heal and transform.

SIX CHARACTERISTICS OF STRONG FAMILIES²²

Researchers in more than 30 countries have found remarkable similarities among families of different cultures. Families that describe themselves as strong commonly share a number of broad qualities or traits. In studying families around the world, it is significant to note that strong families in the global community are more similar to each other than they are different. The qualities they share in common far outstrip cultural distinctions. In short, God creates people for relationships, and we learn about relationships best within families in common ways. The researchers identified the following six important characteristics of strong families.¹⁴

Strong Commitment—Strong families believe in the value of the family and consider family a priority in their lives. They are dedicated to one another’s well-being, and they invest time and energy in family activities. They recognize that sacrifices must be made for the sake of family togetherness, and family members make those sacrifices willingly.

Spending Enjoyable Time Together—Strong families spend time together doing meaningful things. One study of 1,500 school children asked, “What do you think makes a happy family?” Few children replied that money, cars, fancy homes, television sets, or trips to Disney World made a happy family. Most children thought of a happy family as one that is active together and that genuinely enjoys time spent with other family members.

Good Communication—Strong families communicate. In addition to commonplace exchanges, family members encourage one another to express their feelings and convictions, knowing that they will be received with respect and understanding.

Appreciation and Affection for Each Other—Strong families express appreciation for each other; they are intentional about encouragement and support. Family members seek to express their love in ways that others will receive as authentic. Families share a rich and genuine emotional life.

Ability to Solve Problems and React in Crisis—Strong families deal well with conflict. They have learned the value of using “win-win” strategies to solve disagreements. They face crisis situations with good communication and a sense of security. Family members are quick to be patient and readily forgive.

Shared Spiritual Life—Strong families have a shared spiritual life where, in the case of Christian families, the Bible, prayer, and worship are central. Such families experience faith as individuals and as a community. The family understands the importance of the spiritual well-being of each family member. This understanding is manifested in love, compassion, accountability, and celebration.

Each of these characteristics are challenging, but they are also powerful! Reflect upon your own family and closest friendships. Where are you doing well? Where can you invest a little more effort?



LISTENING TO JESUS

One of the central texts in the life of Israel is the Shema, named after the key word in the passage: “Hear.” Deuteronomy 6:4-9 not only focuses attention on the one God of Israel, it calls Israel’s families to take great care to bring their children into the life-giving reality of God in their midst.

Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.

Deuteronomy 6:4-9

Quiet your hearts and attend to Jesus’ presence as he asks us the five questions.

Who do you say that I am?

This is one of Israel’s most sacred texts. What does the Lord reveal about himself? What does his care for our children reveal about who he is? Share together first, and then direct your thoughts to the Lord in praise.

Do you understand what I have done for you?

Last week the Lord directed us to care for a family member in a special way as an expression of our love for him. Does anybody have a report to share of what the Lord has done through your faithfulness?

Explore what the Lord has done. Look for subtle movements of the Lord in the event. Respond to Jesus’ question with thanksgiving.

Are you listening to Me?

Listen carefully and deeply as the Lord speaks through Deut. 6:4-9. Record your personal note from Jesus to you in your journal.

Step 1: Read the text.

Step 2: Explore the context.

Step 3: Hear the Lord speaking into your context.

Do you love Me? Feed My sheep.

As we did last week, the Lord might be calling you to care for a family member. Listen quietly and share together how the Lord is calling you to serve those closest to you.

Do you believe Me?

How wonderful it is to know that Jesus wants to use us to bless our families. Pray together believing that the Lord will do great things.



MEETING WITH THE LORD DAY BY DAY:

Ephesians 5:15-6:4

In Paul's letter to the Ephesians, he gives wonderful instruction in how we are to walk with the Lord together, especially in our families. Spend time with the Lord as he walks you through these encouraging and challenging words.

Have your journal in hand as the Lord opens up this dialogue on family with you.

Who do you say that I am?

Do you understand what I have done for you?

Are you listening to Me?

Do you love Me? Feed My sheep.

Do you believe Me?



FAMILY PRIORITY

Week 20

God looks for men and women who disciple, coach, and mentor other leaders, who in turn become leaders of leaders who effectively train others.

BIBLICAL LEADERSHIP AND FAMILY PRIORITY

In 1 Timothy 3:1–13, Paul gives Timothy two lists of prerequisites for church leadership. Paul is more interested in character traits and personal qualities than in skills. These elements bear witness to the deep transformation that the Lord works in the faithful heart of a believer.

Several of these requirements are related to family life; they qualify a man or woman of God to lead in the Church.

Loving and Gentle

The leader must care for his or her family with love, respect, and self-control so the home is peaceful.

Now the overseer is to be above reproach, faithful to his wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach...

1 Timothy 3:2

Paul begins with a clear concern for true transformation rooted in an intimacy with God and a life of faithful discipleship.

Good Caregiver and Family Manager

The leader must care for his or her family properly and provide good leadership in the home putting family priority in action.

He must manage his own family well...

1 Timothy 3:4

The household (Greek: oikos) in Scripture refers to more than just the family. The word includes servants, extended family, and employees living in the same house as well as close friends, business partners, and clients. It conveys the essential community of the working family, those who share life together.

Monogamous

The Christian leader should be married to only one spouse (1 Tim. 3:2,12). Language often translated “the husband of one wife” could be translated, “a one-woman-man.”

This emphasis was important because in New Testament times, polygamy was socially accepted and rooted in a male dominated patriarchy that diminished the value of women. It spoke not only to marriage but also to fidelity in the marriage relationship in a time when philandering was broadly acceptable as an expression of social power.

Today, the phrase “one-woman-man” speaks of faithfulness to the spouse, a stable marriage relationship, and a recognition of the full participation of the man and the woman in a partnership of full mutuality, both in the home and in the church.

Godly Spouse

In addressing deacons (Greek: diakonos, minister or servant) in verse 11, Paul makes the difficult requirement that the leader’s spouse must also have some key qualities.

In the same way, the women [or wives] are to be worthy of respect, not malicious talkers but temperate and trustworthy in everything.
1 Timothy 3:11

The spouse also manifests the qualities of transformation: not slanderers (Greek: diabolos) who falsely accuse others, sober-minded--meaning temperate or self-controlled, and faithful in all things meaning trustworthy and dependable.

The responsibility of having a godly spouse is on the shoulders of the leader (male or female). He or she is responsible for creating a family environment in which a Jesus-centered, Christian community takes root and flourishes nourishing everybody.

Leadership in the Home

Finally, it is clear by Paul’s words that the Christian leader must be a faithful leader first with their children, fully committed to them and their growth in the Lord.

He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him, and he must do so in a manner worthy of full respect.
1 Timothy 3:4

In our current environment, perhaps this quality is the deepest manifestation of true transformation and the commitment to family priority. It is also likely the greatest challenge.

The truth of our character will always show itself in the attitude of our children, and especially in our attitude toward them as they maneuver through the difficulties of our turbulent age. As they rise and fall, succeed or fail, we pray without ceasing, provide counsel with an open heart, and expect great things as we entrust them to God.

Even the best Christian parents, committed to the priority of family, cannot guarantee results. Christian parenting is a prioritized act of faith—trusting God will bring fruit from our efforts in the lives of our children. Every parent lives with parenting regrets—especially those who started following Jesus when their children were older. Our present obedience qualifies us for leadership. And, neither our past disobedience nor the current disobedience of our adult children can disqualify us.



LISTENING TO JESUS

Who do you say that I am?

Read carefully Paul's qualifications for Christian leadership in 1 Timothy 3:1-13. Discuss what these standards reveal about who God is. When the time is right, direct your thoughts to the Lord in praise.

Listen carefully for what the Lord might say in response.

Do you understand what I have done for you?

We have been spending recent weeks intentionally listening to the Lord's direction in caring for our families. Does anyone have a report of what the Lord has done in you or through you as you have responded to his call? Share together and then give thanks to the Lord for his faithfulness through you.

Are you listening to Me?

Listen carefully and deeply as the Lord speaks through Deut. 6:4-9. Record your personal note from Jesus to you in your journal.

Step 1: Read the text.

Step 2: Explore the context.

Step 3: Hear the Lord speaking into your context.

Do you love Me? Feed My sheep.

What is the Lord calling you to do?

Do you believe Me?

Do you believe God will help you obey and bless the results?



MEETING WITH THE LORD DAY BY DAY:

Titus

The usual setting of church in the New Testament was the household. Paul's encouragement to Titus to "put what remained into order" (Titus 1:5), presumes that family setting in the life of the church.

Work through Paul's letter to Titus with the Lord, as he calls you to make your family a priority in ministry.

Journal through the book listening deeply as the Lord leads you.

Who do you say that I am?

Do you understand what I have done for you?

Are you listening to Me?

Do you love Me? Feed My sheep.

Do you believe Me?



STEWARDSHIP

Week 21

God looks for men and women who are faithful stewards of finances, time, and spiritual gifts in their personal lives and leadership with the result that people are reached with the Gospel.

“Jesus is Lord!” was the first creed of the early Church. More than a statement of belief, this simple phrase is an affirmation of his position in the lives of his followers. As it did then, it carries serious implications for our daily lives as Christians and leaders. If Jesus is Lord, we are servants, living under his authority, direction, and resourcing presence.

The biblical word that encompasses the dynamic way of living under the Lordship of Jesus Christ in the world is “stewardship.” The dictionary defines a steward as:

One employed in a large household or estate to manage domestic concerns (as the supervision of servants, collection of rents, and keeping of accounts).²³

The steward is not the master of the great family, but the master entrusts his wealth and resources to his or her care. The steward manages the resources of the master on behalf of his master.

For our lives, stewardship applies to everything we are and everything we will be. It applies to our material possessions, our time, our spiritual gifts, our body, and certainly our leadership for everything we have comes from God.

If Jesus is Lord, he is master and we are stewards of everything entrusted to us.



BIBLICAL FOUNDATION

God Owns Everything

The natural way to look at material possessions, the time at our disposal, and our very lives (everything within our domain of active agency), is to think these things belong to us. Biblical truth stands in contrast with this human notion—God is the owner of everything.

Who is like you, Lord God Almighty?

You, Lord, are mighty, and your faithfulness surrounds you.

You rule over the surging sea;

when its waves mount up, you still them.

You crushed Rahab like one of the slain;

with your strong arm you scattered your enemies.

The heavens are yours, and yours also the earth;

you founded the world and all that is in it.

You created the north and the south;

Tabor and Hermon sing for joy at your name.

Your arm is endowed with power;

your hand is strong, your right hand exalted.

Psalm 89:8-13



LISTENING TO JESUS

Who do you say that I am?

Spend time together joining the psalmist in praising God as the Lord of all. Allow the majestic language of Psalm 89:8-13 to guide you as you worship together with expressions of praise.

After declaring God's glory, enter into silence together. Listen carefully as you attend to your thoughts. What is the Lord speaking to you in response?

Do you understand what I have done for you?

Identify the resources the Lord has entrusted to you. Include spiritual gifts and experiences in addition to the people, education, finances, facilities and more at your disposal. Make a list and identify the two or three that you feel are key and strategic to your sense of the Lord's call upon your life. Share them with the group and then give thanks to the Lord for giving you a stewardship over them.

Are you listening to Me? Psalm 89:8-13

Step 1: Read the text.

Step 2: Explore the context.

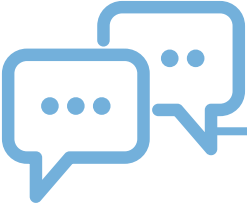
Step 3: Hear the Lord speaking into your context.

Do you love Me? Feed My sheep.

Consider God's ownership of everything. Is there something the Lord would have you do to more completely recognize his place in the world and in your life?

Do you believe Me?

Do you trust God to be the owner of all that you have and all that you are? Tell him how much you trust him in a prayer of faith.



MEETING WITH THE LORD DAY BY DAY

The Psalms bear witness to God as the owner of all things. As you meet with the Lord this week, hear him speak into your life out of these psalms as you work through the five questions.

Who do you say that I am?

Do you understand what I have done for you?

Are you listening to Me?

Do you love Me? Feed My sheep.

Do you believe Me?

Psalm 23, The Lord Our Shepherd

Psalm 24, The Earth is the Lord's

Psalm 50, The Cattle on a Thousand Hills

Psalm 100, It Is He Who Made Us

Psalm 104, You Cause the Grass to Grow



STEWARDSHIP

Week 22

God looks for men and women who are faithful stewards of finances, time, and spiritual gifts in their personal lives and leadership with the result that people are reached with the Gospel.

We Are Managers (Stewards) of God's Resources

In the very first chapter of the Bible, immediately after the creation of the human race, the Bible affirms that God created human beings to manage earth's resources. Here are the words of God to the man and woman:

God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

Genesis 1:28

God is the owner of all He created. Human beings are the stewards of God's creation. God created us to carry his will into creation with resources he entrusts to us. This includes our money, material properties, family, time, gifts, and experiences.

We Are Accountable to God

In the parable of the talents (Matt. 25:14–30), the owner called each of his servants to give an account of what they had done with the resources entrusted to them during the time the master had been traveling. When he returns, the master asks for an accounting for what he had given them. He generously affirms the faithful and sternly rebukes the fearful.

For whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them.

Matt. 25:29

In another parable on stewardship Jesus says,

"Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much."

Luke 16:10

God will entrust more resources to us if we show ourselves faithful with what He gives us now. God holds us accountable for the wise and effective use of all the resources he grants, both the material and non-material

The simple awareness of this accountability should move us to reflect deeply on our use of these resources in our daily lives.

Effective Stewardship Is a Learned Skill

The world does not naturally form in us a sense of stewardship. In fact, just the opposite is true. The forces of a consumer-based economy work to reinforce a sense of ownership, entitlement, and clamoring need. We neither recognize possessions as belonging to God nor know how to manage those resources on God's behalf. The scriptures, as well as mature Christians, can teach us how to be faithful stewards of what God has entrusted to us.

Paul instructs Timothy to teach about the faithful stewardship of material resources:

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. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. 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.

1 Timothy 6:17-19

God is the Owner of all things and He entrusts what He has made to His people. As anyone would, He calls upon us to give an account for what He has given us. He wants us to succeed and flourish. He equips us with the skills to do both.



LISTENING TO JESUS

Who do you say that I am?

Consider Jesus' parable of the talents in Matthew 25:14-24. Explore together who Jesus is and then spend time praising the Lord.

Do you understand what I have done for you?

Our role and identity as stewards are critical for our ministry. Reflect on what the Lord has done to shape you as a faithful steward. Who were the key people and what were the forming events? Discuss first and then give thanks.

Are you listening to Me? Matthew 25:14-30

Step 1: Read the text.

Step 2: Explore the context.

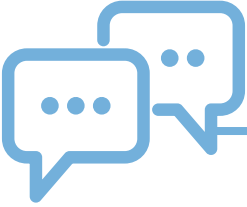
Step 3: Hear the Lord speaking into your context.

Do you love Me? Feed My sheep.

The Lord gives us spiritual gifts to “equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ (Eph. 4:12).” As you consider the gifts entrusted to you for the sake of the body, how might he have you more fully develop them as a faithful steward and servant of Christ?

Do you believe Me?

Pray with faith, thanking God in advance for the development of your gifts for the sake of the body.



MEETING WITH THE LORD DAY BY DAY

Colossians 1

In Paul's letter to the church in Colossae we see his faithful stewardship of the gospel in all its passion. How might the Lord encourage you in your stewardship of the gospel?

Meet with the Lord and journal with him through the first chapter of this passionate letter.

Who do you say that I am?

Do you understand what I have done for you?

Are you listening to Me?

Do you love Me? Feed My sheep.

Do you believe Me?

STEWARDSHIP

Week 23



God looks for men and women who are faithful stewards of finances, time, and spiritual gifts in their personal lives and leadership with the result that people are reached with the Gospel.

FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP— THREE PRINCIPLES

The Scripture presents us with three material stewardship principles that can help us manage God’s resources wisely, adequately providing for our needs and becoming a blessing to others and the Kingdom of God.

The Principle of Faithful Tithing

The Scripture commands God’s people to tithe, or return 10 percent of their income or the product of their work to God for use in worship and service. The command from God is present in the Law of Moses. It is important to notice the Scripture affirms the tithe is holy and belongs to the Lord.

“A tithe of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, belongs to the LORD; it is holy to the LORD.”

Leviticus 27:30

Malachi 3:8–12 is a well-known text about tithing. Malachi is holding God’s people to account for merely going through the motions of ritual without entering into the fulness of worship. His accusation labels those who fail to tithe as an expression of true worship as robbers. Many highlight this negative aspect, but look closely at the benefits of tithing.

Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,” says the Lord Almighty, “and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it. I will prevent pests from devouring your crops, and the vines in your fields will not drop their fruit before it is ripe,” says the Lord Almighty. “Then all the nations will call you blessed, for yours will be a delightful land,” says the Lord Almighty.

Malachi 3:10-12

God challenges us to test his faithfulness by bringing our tithes to him. He makes three powerful promises to those who are faithful.

1. Blessings will overflow to those who tithe.
2. Protection from anything that can corrode resources.
3. A reputation for success to those who are faithful.

The Principle of Sound Management

Tithing is the first step, but there is more to faithful stewardship. The Bible says God owns the other 90% as well; our responsibility is to manage it wisely. Jesus focuses our attention on planning and management:

“Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Won’t you first sit down and estimate the cost to see if you have enough money to complete it?”

Luke 14:28

The direction of this text is for us to count the cost of discipleship, but it certainly encourages us to count the cost and plan the use of our material resources as well.

The Principle of Generous Giving

Giving is as great a blessing to the giver as it is to the receiver. The Bible often affirms the blessing of giving. One of the often-preached subjects in the Church today is giving and the promise of prosperity. Here is a biblical perspective on the issue:

“Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.”

Luke 6:38

There is a clear promise of prosperity in Jesus’ words; however, this must be balanced with other Scriptural text to help us put the issue in a healthy perspective.

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

God does not promise prosperity for its own sake. According to James, it is possible to get a negative answer to our prayers based on our desires. In other words, prosperity is not granted as an end in itself, but as a means to something greater.

“I will make you into a great nation,
and I will bless you;
I will make your name great,
and you will be a blessing.

Genesis 12:2

God promises to prosper Abraham so he may become a blessing to others. Likewise, God's promise of material blessings is always with the goal of blessing others with the resources God gives his children.

We live in a selfish materialistic world. Unfortunately, the Church has been so influenced by the world that in many places it has taken its shape. Money and material goods have become the goals of life, rather than the means for God to bless others. He calls us to learn to be faithful stewards of his gifts and not users of his grace.



LISTENING TO JESUS

Who do you say that I am?

Explore together Malachi 3:8-12. Who does God reveal himself to be in this challenging passage? After sharing together, direct your praise to the Lord.

After praising him, settle into silence. What might the Lord say in response?

Do you understand what I have done for you?

Can you identify specific blessings the Lord has given you through the discipline of tithing? Share together and then thank the Lord.

Are you listening to Me?

Malachi was prophesying in the time after God's people had returned from exile and had renewed the temple institution in Jerusalem. Share together with the Lord as you listen deeply to him through Malachi 3:8-12.

Step 1: Read the text.

Step 2: Explore the context.

Step 3: Hear the Lord speaking into your context.

Write a personal note from the Lord to you. Write it in your journal to preserve the Lord's word to you.

Do you love Me? Feed My sheep.

Our personal identity as stewards before the Lord is critical in our life of ministry. What would the Lord have you do to more deeply enter into a deeper level of mature stewardship?

Do you believe Me?

Tithing, stewardship and generosity require faith. We must trust God to supply our needs and give us wisdom. Do you trust him with your finances and resources? Tell him in a prayer of faith.



MEETING WITH THE LORD DAY BY DAY

In Ephesians 3 Paul identifies “the stewardship of God’s grace” given to him for the gentiles. We too have been entrusted with a stewardship.

Work through this powerful chapter with Jesus listening deeply as he asks you the five questions.

Who do you say that I am?

Do you understand what I have done for you?

Are you listening to Me?

Do you love Me? Feed My sheep.

Do you believe Me?



INTEGRITY

Week 24

God looks for men and women of integrity who live holy lives that are accountable to God and to the Body of Christ. Integrity glorifies God, protects leaders from stumbling, and encourages growth.

INTRODUCTION

The greatest challenge of leadership is to maintain integrity. Even in the world of business, education, and politics, character is recognized as a major issue for leaders. Christians are called to be holy and live a life of purity. When leaders fail to maintain integrity, their families, ministries, and the work of the Church, suffer the consequences.

Al Vom Steeg says,

“An essential goal for any spiritual leader is to gain people’s trust through genuine integrity. Trust is hard to earn and easy to lose.”²⁴

The word “sincere” comes from the Latin word for “without wax.” In the ancient world, dishonest potters would disguise cracks in low quality clay pots by covering them with wax. The pots looked perfect, but when exposed to heat, the wax would melt, exposing the cracks (and the potter’s dishonesty), rendering the pots useless, not only the pot but the potter becomes untrustworthy. Integrity is a sincere life others can depend upon.



BIBLICAL FOUNDATION

In Psalm 24, we see integrity having both an inward and an outward aspect.

Who may ascend the mountain of the Lord?
Who may stand in his holy place?
The one who has clean hands and a pure heart,
who does not trust in an idol
or swear by a false god.
They will receive blessing from the Lord
and vindication from God their Savior.

Psalm 24:3-5

Inward

Integrity begins from within and is based on holiness and sincerity (a pure, undivided heart). Disordered desires, conflicting goals, excessive emotional dependency upon those around us, and a diminished sense of God's presence in life all work to splinter a core sense of self. A heart that lacks this purity of intention will be ruled by many "masters" instead of being ruled by God alone. A pure heart desires one thing above all else, God himself. A pure heart prays with Jesus, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

Outward

Integrity includes our behavior, what others see. The psalmist calls us to be blameless (clean hands and a truthful mouth). With integrity, others experience us as consistent and reliable. What we do inspires others to faithfulness; we do nothing to cause others to stumble. We recognize the role of accountability as a blessing to keep us where we desire to be and are quick to recognize cues that signal we are wandering. People trust us because of how God has transformed us.

The kind of integrity characterized by both "clean hands and a pure heart" is a compelling witness to the active presence of God in our lives.



LISTENING TO JESUS

Who do you say that I am?

Psalm 24 invites us to draw near to the Lord in the integrity of holiness. Most of us are still on the road to that full sanctification. Focus in on Psalm 24:3-5 and spend time exploring who the Lord reveals himself to be in this invitation to draw near to him. After a brief time of discussion, direct your praise to God.

Do you understand what I have done for you?

How has the Lord worked in you to call you to a life of holiness? Did he expose you to a faithful person who modeled holiness for you? Did he draw you through a rising sense of deep dissatisfaction with the world? Did some event or circumstance grab your attention? Share together and then give thanks to the Lord.

Are you listening to Me? Psalm 24:3-5

Step 1: Read the text.

Step 2: Explore the context.

Step 3: Hear the Lord speaking into your context.

Do you love Me? Feed My sheep.

Ask the Lord to search your heart and reveal any inward thought or outward action that is less than holy.

Search me, God, and know my heart;
test me and know my anxious thoughts.
See if there is any offensive way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting.

Psalm 139:23-24

Once revealed, confess it to the Lord. If it has offended someone else, commit to ask that person for forgiveness, and make amends.

Do you believe Me?

Do you believe that God forges and restores? Do you believe that he is making you holy? Tell him how much you believe in a prayer of faith.



MEETING WITH THE LORD DAY BY DAY

Psalm 51

Psalm 51 is David's deep, passionate, and compelling expression of repentance after his great sin—committing adultery with Bathsheba and then murdering her husband Uriah. It powerfully bears witness to God's willingness to forgive our failure and move us toward lives of true integrity.

Meet with the Lord this week working through Psalm 51. Take it slowly. Allow the Lord to stir the dialogue each day as he asks you his five questions.

Who do you say that I am?

Do you understand what I have done for you?

Are you listening to Me?

Do you love Me? Feed My sheep.

Do you believe Me?



INTEGRITY

Week 25

God looks for men and women of integrity who live holy lives that are accountable to God and to the Body of Christ. Integrity glorifies God, protects leaders from stumbling, and encourages growth.

WHAT IS INTEGRITY?

Put in simple terms, integrity is being the same in heart, mind, and actions. Integrity is about who we are, our willingness to make principled commitments that we stand on and the ability to act in a way consistent with those commitments.

What I Am: Whole

God desires that we be whole or complete in Christ. Integrity means beliefs, attitudes, words, and actions that reflect God's nature and are empowered by his indwelling. Jesus models integrity by living a whole and integrated life in which His inner life (intimate relationship with the Father) and outer life (what others saw and heard) were consistent.

“Teacher, we know you are a man of integrity. You aren't swayed by others because You pay no attention to who they are; but you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth.”

Mark 12:14

What I Stand On: A Commitment to My Promises

Integrity means we are faithful to the words we speak and the promises we make.

“All you need to say is simply ‘Yes’ or ‘No’; anything beyond this comes from the evil one.”

Matthew 5:37

Integrity in its simplest terms is keeping promises. The person of integrity is one who when he or she says something, can be trusted. When he or she gives their word, you can count on it.²⁵

What I do: Actions Consistent with My Promises

Words spoken become more than an expression of intention. As the Holy Spirit works in our lives through our responsiveness to his direction, he aligns our mind, emotion, and will in conformity with his will. The result is a quality of commitment, words backed by actions, that others find remarkable.

“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of My Father who is in heaven.”
Matthew 7:21

Leith Anderson writes,

The Christian life is to be an uninterrupted continuity between all beliefs and practices and relationships. It is to be an integrated life as opposed to a segregated life.²⁶

When who we are aligns with what we say and do in conformity to God’s intention for us, we become compelling people. Others begin to trust us with their lives and will give themselves to God’s vision expressed through our lives. Even more, God will unleash real kingdom power through us, His faithful servants made whole. And the world will change.



LISTENING TO JESUS

Psalm 63 celebrates the deep satisfaction God brings to us

Who do you say that I am?

Read Psalm 63:1-4. Identify who the Lord shows himself to be. After a bit of discussion turn your words to him and praise him.

Do you understand what I have done for you?

Last week we sat with the Lord as he ministered to us through Psalm 51. Would anyone be willing to report what the Lord did for you as worked through that powerful psalm with him?

Are you listening to Me? Psalm 63:5-8

Dial in on Psalm 63:5-8. Listen deeply as the Lord speaks to you through these verses.

Step 1: Read the text.

Step 2: Explore the context.

Step 3: Hear the Lord speaking into your context.

Do you love Me? Feed My sheep.

What is the Lord calling you to do?

Do you believe Me?

Do you believe he will help you?



MEETING WITH THE LORD DAY BY DAY

Psalm 19

Psalm 19 beautifully places the glory and order of creation alongside the glory and order of the Torah, the law. The last verse expresses well a key component of integrity:

May these words of my mouth and this meditation of my heart
be pleasing in your sight,
Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer.

Psalm 19:14

Invite the Lord to encourage you as you sit with him through this beautiful psalm. Again, go slowly. Allow the Lord to set the pace as you listen deeply.

Who do you say that I am?

Do you understand what I have done for you?

Are you listening to Me?

Do you love Me? Feed My sheep.

Do you believe Me?



INTEGRITY

Week 26

God looks for men and women of integrity who live holy lives that are accountable to God and to the Body of Christ. Integrity glorifies God, protects leaders from stumbling, and encourages growth.

ACCOUNTABILITY—ENCOURAGEMENT TO LIVE A LIFE OF INTEGRITY

A personal commitment to integrity is a good start, but it is not enough. The secret to living a life of integrity is to live in active fellowship, receiving the encouragement and accountability that you need from others who are running the same race and share the same goal.

God is aware of the challenges and struggles we encounter as we seek to grow into integrity. Paul's words to the Roman church are as true for us as they were for the believers he addresses in his letter. Read Eugene Peterson's wonderful rendering in his translation, *The Message*:

Don't become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You'll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognize what he wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed maturity in you.

Romans 12:2

True maturity reflects a life of integrity. God wants to form us to his standards.

Accountability is the bridge that spans the gap between wanting to live with integrity and *being* a person of integrity. There are four levels of accountability.

Accountability to God

Our most intimate fellowship will always be with the Lord through his Spirit. He meets with us in the intimate and secret places of our hearts. Paul writes,

So then, each of us will give an account of ourselves to God.

Romans 14:12

Accountability to Ourselves

We can be our own worst critics, but as we respond to God’s grace, he restores our conscience and allows us to look at ourselves through his loving eyes. In 1 Timothy 4:16, Paul exhorts Timothy, “Watch your life and doctrine closely.”

Accountability to an Intimate Few

The “intimate few” are our closest friends, the trusted handful who know our story and share our dreams. These intimate few grow with us. We willingly submit ourselves to them and trust their advice because they have our best interests at heart.

Proverbs 27:17 states, “As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.”

Accountability to an intimate few sharpens our integrity and protects us from falling.

Accountability to the Community of Faith

We are part of the community of faith that is the Church, the Body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:27). In the midst of this broader fellowship, we give and receive spiritual nurture and guidance. In the Church, God makes accountability possible through an environment of grace, a place to find wise men and women willing to give their counsel and encouragement.

When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and elders, to whom they reported everything God had done through them.

Acts 15:4

Accountability to those who love us is the power behind the kind of integrity that transforms lives—our own and others.



LISTENING TO JESUS

Who do you say that I am?

Galatians 6:1-5 equips us to care for one another deeply as we grow in integrity. Take a look at this encouraging passage and discuss who the Lord shows himself to be. After talking together, direct your attention to the Lord in words of praise.

Do you understand what I have done for you?

Some of our most powerful times of growth have been when others have held us accountable. Think of a time when the Lord did a deep and abiding work in you through the faithfulness of others who loved you enough to call you to God's highest hopes for you. After sharing, give thanks the Lord for his care through others.

Are you listening to Me?

Paul's final instructions to the church in Galatia attests to the intensity of the issues and conflicts he was dealing with. Work through Galatians 6:1-5 with an ear for what the Lord would speak to you in regards to his call for a life of integrity.

Step 1: Read the text.

Step 2: Explore the context.

Step 3: Hear the Lord speaking into your context.

Do you love Me? Feed My sheep.

What is the Lord calling you to do?

Do you believe Me?

Do you believe he will help you?



FINISHING WELL

Week 27

THE FINISH LINE

In Acts 20, the apostle Paul addressed the elders of the Church at Ephesus. “Compelled by the Spirit,” he was on his way to Jerusalem. He confessed he did not know what his future would hold for him, except that “the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me” in every city (verse 23). Paul then makes a profound statement that is also the prayer of every Christian who desires to finish well the race of the Christian life.

“I consider my life worth nothing to me; my only aim is to finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the good news of God’s grace.”

Acts 20:24

God desires that we “finish the race.” He encourages us to steward well what He has entrusted to us, that we complete our call. He never guarantees we will appear successful in the eyes of others or win accolades from the crowds or end up in comfortable surroundings. The last we hear of Paul in the Book of Acts is that he is under arrest in Rome. The apostle John was exiled to the island of Patmos. Most would consider them failures. God calls them faithful.

The hard truth is that many do not finish well. Some drop out when circumstances get hard. Others plateau, accommodating themselves to the comforts the world offers. Still others disqualify themselves through moral error, falling into one of the many traps laid for those seeking to serve the Lord.

HOW DO WE LOSE INTEGRITY? — ONE STEP AT A TIME

Seldom does just one factor or influence cause one to not finish well; rather, it is often just one step that starts us in a direction that, if not checked, would cause us not to finish well in life.

Four familiar factors that work to undermine the integrity of faithful leaders are money, sex, power and pride. These are the big four that capture headlines. They have always threatened the life of faithfulness, and the Bible gives us fair warning:

“Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them. For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world.”

1 John 2:15-16

Four more subtle elements also threaten to diminish faithfulness.

Mental stagnation dulls the mind and lures us into complacency. Jesus calls us to learn from Him (Matthew 11:29) and Proverbs 1:5 reminds us that “the wise listen and add to their learning.”

Compromising with the pressures and temptations of the world around us can weaken our character and convictions without throwing us into dramatic moral failure. The regular affirmation of our call and commitments keeps us on the solid foundation that is Christ.

Another subtle source of danger is losing sight of the value of our influence in the lives of others and the legacy we leave behind. Jesus certainly had this in mind when He prayed,

For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.
John 17:19

Finally, and the most critical of all, is the loss of intimacy with God. The demands of a busy life, especially in ministry, can come to substitute for that true heart-to-heart relationship with God that keeps us in His care and under His protection. With David we should ever long for the Lord’s presence in our lives.

One thing I ask from the Lord,
this only do I seek:
that I may dwell in the house of the Lord
all the days of my life,
to gaze on the beauty of the Lord
and to seek him in his temple.
Psalm 27:4

THE PRAYER OF THE FINISHER

Paul’s clarity in his farewell address to the elders of the church of Ephesus focuses us as we consider our own lives before the Lord. Let it be for us our prayer of renewed commitment to the great kingdom call:

“I consider my life worth nothing to me; my only aim is to finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the good news of God’s grace.”
Acts 20:24



LISTENING TO JESUS

Who do you say that I am?

We have completed a journey together, or better, we have traveled together for a season with Jesus. The life of faith is a life-long journey of discovery, adventure, transformation, and service. Paul's example encourages us to commit ourselves to finishing well, to live faithful, fruitful lives as we hear Jesus' voice along the way.

“Do you understand what I have done for you?”

Jesus' second question invites us to reflect upon the last year of exploring the Eight Core Values with Him and one another.

Spend some time together thinking about our shared journey. How has the Lord moved through our time together? What new discoveries were made? What challenges did the Lord bring and overcome? How did the Lord reveal himself in new or fresh ways? In what ways have your life and ministry changed?

After a time of sharing, direct your thoughts to the Lord in expressions of thanksgiving. And as has become second nature by now, pause and listen to what the Lord might say in response.

Next Steps: “Do you love me? Feed my sheep.”

A variety of possibilities open up to us as we think about what is next as we seek to love Jesus by loving others.

Join the ILI team.

Over 350,000 leaders in more than 100 nations around the world are committed to making an impact for the Gospel. **Go to ILITeam.org** to sign up to receive updates on what the ILI Team is doing around the world to equip leaders to accelerate the spread of the gospel. You can also register to begin online training.

Adopt the *Discipled by Jesus* model as a key discipleship tool. In his book, *Discipled by Jesus*, Hal Perkins lays out the process in great detail. *Discipled by Jesus* empowers disciple makers to help believers begin to hear Jesus' voice in the Scriptures, by His Spirit, and through one another. To experience this disciple making model connect with Hal Perkins and he will help you connect with a group putting the model to work. **You can email Hal at halperkins28@gmail.com**

Invite other emerging leaders to become a part of a new History Makers Cohort experience. Our vision is to extend the network of leaders equipping leaders around the world to accelerate the spread of the gospel. You can introduce others to the Eight Core Values and the work of ILI simply by inviting others to become part of a new cohort.

Become a facilitator or co-facilitator of a new History Makers Co-hort. We will be there to support and encourage you as the Lord uses you to equip others in the great work of the kingdom. Talk with your cohort facilitator to explore possibilities and opportunities.

Participate in a History Makers training event in the United States or somewhere around the world. The International Leadership Institute supports training events going on almost every week around the world. To explore possibilities, **reach out to Kyle Phillips at Kyle@ILITeam.org**.

ENDNOTES

INTIMACY WITH GOD

1. William Straus and Neil Howe, writing in 1997 in *The Fourth Turning: An American Prophecy - What the Cycles of History Tell Us About America's Next Rendezvous with Destiny*, predicted this period in American life. Journalist George Packer documented the early stirrings of disorientation in, *The Unwinding, An Inner History of the New America*, published in 2014. A year earlier Charles Murray, an American Enterprise Institute scholar published, *Coming Apart, The State of White American 1960-2010* detailing the deepening economic class divide in the U.S., George Friedman in, *The Storm Before the Calm: America's Discord, the Crisis of the 2020s, and the Triumph Beyond* recognizes our turbulence in earlier times of transition in our history. Peter Zeihan in a series of books beginning in 2015 with *The Accidental Super Power* and most recently in 2022 with *The End of the World is Just the Beginning: Mapping the Collapse of Globalization*, puts the transition on a global scale.
2. Mark Sayer, *A Non-Anxious Presence* (Chicago, IL, Moody Publishes), pg. 22
3. Ibid. p. 23.
4. Hal and Debbi Perkins (Kingdom Change, 2018)
5. Peter Scazzero, *Emotionally Healthy Discipleship* (Zondervan Reflective, Grand Rapids, MI) p. 56.
6. Wirt, Sherwood E. *The Inner Life of the Believer. Here's Life*, 1989.
7. Richard J. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978).
8. Ibid.
9. Earls, Aaron. "7 Encouraging Trends in Global Christianity." *Lifeway Research*, 2015. <https://lifewayresearch.com/2015/03/11/7-encouraging-trends-in-global-christianity>.
10. "Frontier Unreached Peoples". *Joshua Project*, <https://joshuaproject.net/frontier>. (Accessed September 2021).
11. "World hunger is still not going down after three years and obesity is still growing-UN report". *World Health Organization*, ©15 July 2019, <https://www.who.int/news/item/15-07-2019-world-hunger-is-still-not-going-down-after-three-years-and-obesity-is-still-growing-un-report>.
12. "Why Water?" <https://www.charitywater.org/global-water-crisis>. (Accessed August 2021).
13. "Poverty headcount ratio at \$1.90 a day (2011 PPP) (% of population)." *The World Bank*, Approximately 700 million people, 10% of the world population live below the extreme poverty line, (as determined by the World Bank) having to survive on less than USD 1.90 a day. (Accessed August 2021).
14. "9 World Poverty Statistics that Everyone Should Know". *Lifewater*, <https://lifewater.org/blog/9-world-poverty-statistics-to-know-today>. (Accessed August 2021).

15. "Malaria". World Health Organization, © 1 April 2021, <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/malaria>.
16. "More than 10.35 Million People Are in Prison around the World, New Report Shows." More than 10.35 Million People Are in Prison around the World, New Report Shows. | *World Prison Brief*, 2016, www.prisonstudies.org/news/more-1035-million-people-are-in-prison-around-the-world-new-report-shows.
17. "Refugee Data Finder." *UNHCR, The UN Refugee Agency*, <https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics>. (Accessed August 2021)
18. "Forced Labour, Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking (Forced Labour, Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking)." *International Labour Organization*, © 1996-2018 International Labour Organization (ILO), www.ilo.org/global/topics/forced-labour/lang-en/index.html.
19. Lowry, Lindy. "215 Million Believers Face Persuasion for Their Faith in Christ." *Open Doors*, 10 January 2018. <https://www.opendoorsusa.org/christian-persecution/stories/215-million-believers-persecution-for-their-faith-in-christ>.
20. Duesel, Wesley L., *Ablaze for God* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1989), 112..
21. Maxwell, John. *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership*. Nelson, 1998.
22. Dr. Isaac Lim is former president of the Trinity Annual Conference of the Singapore Methodist Church and pastor of one of Singapore's largest Christian churches. He is one of the authors of the Biblical Leadership Series in the ILI curriculum.
23. The Lausanne Covenant is a document written and signed by the participants at the Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization in 1974. It is the result of a cooperation between evangelical Christians from diverse backgrounds and nationalities. According to the organizers of the congress, "The Covenant was a statement intended to define the necessity, responsibilities, and goals of spreading the Gospel." For more on the history and content of the Lausanne Covenant, go to www.lausanne.org/covenant.
24. Based on pioneering and much-quoted research by Nick Stinnett and John DeFrain, *Secrets of Strong Families* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1986).
25. "Steward." Merriam-Webster. Merriam-Webster, n.d. Accessed June 2012. <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/steward>.
26. Alvern Vom Steeg, ILI International Director Emeritus
27. McCartney, Bill in a chapter by Gary Smalley and John Trent. *What Makes a Man?: Twelve Promises That Will Change Your Life*. NavPress, 1992.
28. Leith Anderson, *Winning the Values War in a Changing Culture: Thirteen Distinct Values That Mark a Follower of Jesus Christ* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1994).

APPENDIX

VISIONARY LEADERSHIP TRAINING

The Power of Vision	a147
Vision and Mission Workshop 1	a145
Goalsetting	a161
Overcoming Obstacles.....	a169
Endnotes.....	a176

FAMILY PRIORITY RETREAT

a177

FINISHING WELL CLOSING

Finishing Well	a179
Endnotes	a187



THE POWER OF VISION

Knowing God's Vision For Your Life



CORE VALUE

God looks for men and women who are biblically committed to cast vision, set goals, mobilize the Body of Christ, and overcome obstacles in order to reach the nations for Christ.

TEACHING OBJECTIVES

This session explores the vital importance of vision for effective leadership. A special focus is upon the process that God normally uses to birth vision in the life of Christian leaders.

Proven leaders demonstrate contagious, compelling vision!

INTRODUCTION

All effective leadership begins with vision!

A blind person's world is bounded by the limits of his or her touch; an ignorant person's world by the limits of his or her knowledge; a great person's by the limits of his or her vision.¹ —E. Paul Hovey

Vision is the single most important factor that differentiates good leaders from great ones. Review the introduction to the opening session - The Vision (page 1). Vision is the common thread among leaders who change the course of history. It is fuel that propels leaders forward and ignites passion in them, as well as their followers.



WORKSHOP

Are you a visionary Leader? On the following page, take a moment to complete the Visionary Leadership: Personal Inventory.

Every God-given vision is at least one size too big!

ARE YOU A VISIONARY LEADER?

The questions below are not a scientific survey, but seek to stimulate your thoughts. Answer them honestly and then add your scores to help determine if you are a visionary leader. Rank your answers on a scale of 1 to 7 for the following questions:

Visionary Leadership: Personal Inventory

False Sometimes True

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

	I have a clear sense of the primary need I am called to meet.
	I spend the majority of my time working specifically toward my life's central goal.
	I am confident that God is the source of vision for my life.
	I have experienced deep and powerful emotions, even pain at times, just thinking about my greater goals.
	I talk about God's vision for my life frequently to those who are close to me and those who are under my authority.
	I have every expectation that I will achieve God's vision for my life.
	I expect God's vision for my life to leave a significant impact on the world long after I am gone.

Scoring:

42—49: I am a solar observatory telescope.

35—41: I have eagle vision.

28—34: I miss some of the fine print.

21—27: I am a little nearsighted.

7—20: Who turned out the lights?

WHAT IS VISION?

Vision for ministry is a clear mental image of a preferable future imparted by God to His chosen servants, and is based upon an accurate understanding of God, self, and circumstances.² —George Barna

Vision is a clear mental picture that leads people to reach out to the future. True vision stirs emotions. It is seeing that which is not yet here and visualizing something before it actually exists. By the power of the Holy Spirit, God gives vision to Christian leaders to bring into creation that which is not yet reality.

WHAT IS VISION LIKE? THREE ANALOGIES



EYE OF THE EAGLE

An eagle can see farther than other animals. In the same way, visionary leaders see beyond a maintenance mentality and envision a mission that makes an apostolic difference for Christ.

MAGNIFYING GLASS

A magnifying glass brings objects into clearer focus. Vision from God allows a leader to see with greater clarity and focus.



BANKS OF A RIVER

The banks of a river provide direction for the flow of the water. Vision provides direction and keeps us moving in the direction that God wants to take us.

THE BENEFITS OF VISION

Vision provides at least nine positive benefits: vision clarifies purpose, establishes clear priorities, sets standards of excellence, inspires expectation, motivates commitment, maximizes productivity, expands horizons, fuels passion, and provides focus for reaching your fullest potential.

Who is the greatest visionary leader that you know? What makes that person a visionary leader?

THE BIRTH OF VISION: A LESSON FROM NEHEMIAH

The story contained in the book of Nehemiah is a model that will help us understand God's process of birthing vision in the heart of His servants.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

After the death of Solomon, God judged the nation of Israel for idolatry and sin. By 586 B.C., the twelve tribes of Israel no longer existed. The Babylonians, under King Nebuchadnezzar, captured the city of Jerusalem, burned the house of God (the temple), broke down the protective wall, destroyed the city's valuable articles, and stole the national treasures.

The Jewish people were captured, forced into slavery, and marched 1,400 kilometers (approximately 870 miles) to Babylon. Psalm 137 is written at this time: "How can we sing the songs of the LORD while in a foreign land?" (v. 4).

For seventy years, the Jewish people lived in captivity, and then God began to restore Jerusalem through three people.

Zerubbabel: Rebuilds the house of God (the temple)

Ezra: Restores worship (eighty years later)

Nehemiah: Rebuilds the walls (thirteen years later)

As the book of Nehemiah begins, Nehemiah is serving as the cupbearer to the king. He is about to learn God's vision for his life!

SIX STEPS IN THE BIRTH OF VISION³

God designed us to be people of purpose—to pursue causes for which we would exchange our lives. When you find God's vision for your life, you will not take hold of it; it will take hold of you. It will begin quietly as you...



SEE THE NEED

The words of Nehemiah son of Hakaliah: In the month of Kislev in the twentieth year, while I was in the citadel of Susa, Hanani, one of my brothers, came from Judah with some other men, and I questioned them about the Jewish remnant that had survived the exile, and also about Jerusalem. — Nehemiah 1:1-2

It is said that a true Jew is always concerned about two things: the Jewish people and the city of Jerusalem. These were Nehemiah's two questions.

They said to me, "Those who survived the exile and are back in the province are in great trouble and disgrace. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates have been burned with fire." — Nehemiah 1:3

When you catch the sight of a human plight that stirs you, a spiritual nerve within you is touched. Quietly you experience the first step. This is the seeding process in the birth of a vision. Verse three is the answer to the question on Nehemiah's heart. As he hears the words, he can see the situation in Jerusalem. He has never actually been to Jerusalem, but he can "see" the city in his mind. He can see the people living in fear and uncertainty. He can see the broken walls. His emotions are touched.

VISION IS...

Birthered in human experience

Based upon a human need



FEEL THE NEED

When I heard these things, I sat down and wept. —Nehemiah 1:4a

First, you see the need, and then you begin feeling the need. You begin to purposefully open your heart and place the need inside you. Their need becomes your need. The

seeds of vision begin to grow inside of you, and these seeds are the genuine needs of others.

Everyone sees many needs, but sometimes seeds give birth to something deep in your heart that has staying power. The need seems to have leapt onto you, and now it goes wherever you go. This is almost a chemical reaction between a certain need and the way God made you.

The news deeply impacted Nehemiah. It was exactly the opposite of what he had hoped to hear. It affected him emotionally, and he sat down and wept. His heart broke for Jerusalem and the situation the people were facing.

VISIONARY LEADERS ARE WILLING TO...

Intentionally put the need in their heart
Feel the pain personally.

STEP 3 BOND TO THE NEED

For some days I mourned...—Nehemiah 1:4b

The awareness of the need grows strong inside of you. The feelings don't leave; in fact, the feelings increase. At this point the need is almost like a burning pain in you. Yet, your response is a paradox. Instead of running away from the pain of the need, you are actually attracted to it. The Holy Spirit is bonding you to the need. This often takes place over a period of time. Bonding to the need is like God applying glue between the need and your heart.

GOD BONDS...

Chosen servants to needs to bring the Kingdom of God on earth.

STEP 4 FEEL A BURDEN FOR THE NEED

... and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven. — Nehemiah 1:4.c

At some point, you cross the line from objective observation to a soulful yearning that something must be done. You mourn for what you have seen. The burden weighs heavily, and you cannot escape it. In the back of your mind, there is the thought that something must be done. Over and over again you see the snapshot of human need engraved in your mind, until you begin to glimpse your own face in the picture. You think about being the one to act.

BURDENS...

Birth great visions
Provide passion for the vision



WORKSHOP

Do you have a clear sense of the primary need that God desires for you to fulfill?

Describe this need in a short paragraph below, then share your experience with another participant.



BELIEVE THAT YOU COULD MEET THE NEED

You could step out to meet the need, but will you? You are at a critical point. If this is a true vision struggling to be born, you will have an internal accountability for the need. You feel a sense of responsibility and urgency to do something. Softly wrapped around the burden is the quiet and persistent confidence that you are being called by God to take action.

THIS STEP...

Requires obedience

Requires acting in faith

Acknowledges the power of God

Validates your accountability to God and people



TAKE AN INITIAL ACTION TO MEET THE NEED

It may be only a minor act on your part, but what matters most is that you take some action. You cross over an invisible line from belief to action. It is now clear that you are the person, this is the vision, and now is the time. This is the reason you are put here on earth.

WHEN THIS STEP OF ACTION IS TAKEN, A LEADER...

- Launches the vision
- Takes a step of faith involving risk
- Moves from the private arena to the public arena
- Moves toward fulfilling his or her greater life purpose

CONCLUSION

Every leader must answer the two questions below:

What is my purpose?

What is my vision?

If you can answer these questions, then... Your life is about to change forever.



EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING ACTIVITY

COMMUNICATING VISION

NEEDED RESOURCES

- Pen and paper (two sheets for every participant)

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Pair participants in groups of two. One is the visionary, the other is the follower.
2. Sit both partners back to back so they can't see each other's piece of paper.
3. The visionary will draw a picture on a sheet of paper consistent of any combination of simple geometric shapes of different sizes, placement, and connections (for example circles, squares, triangles, heart, rectangle, etc.).
4. Do not allow followers to see the pictures, and do not give any more instructions until after this step is complete.
5. On a new sheet of paper, have the follower reproduce the same drawing without seeing the original, based only on verbal instructions given by the visionary.
6. Switch roles and repeat the process.

DISCUSSION

Ask a few or all of the questions below

- Did anyone get a close or exact match?
- What methods did you use to communicate "the vision"?
- Which communication strategies worked and which ones failed to communicate?
- How long did it take? How could you have made it easier to communicate "the vision"?
- Who is ultimately responsible for the success of the drawing?
- What does this activity inform you about vision?

DEBRIEFING

Communicating your vision effectively is as important as having a vision. When you can easily share your vision it gets executed. Simplicity also helps. Sometimes we believe our vision needs to be complex to be valuable, but complexity leads to confusion, and confusion does not result in action. The pictures you created are representative of your vision, something only you can see. The pictures that were simple got the best results. The persons who were able to successfully share that vision so their partner could see it were able to duplicate their vision. Simplicity and effective communication is the key to positive impact, which is seeing your vision become reality.

VISION AND MISSION WORKSHOP 1

First Steps on Your Visionary Journey



CORE VALUE

God looks for men and women who are biblically committed to cast vision, set goals, mobilize the Body of Christ, and overcome obstacles in order to reach the nations for Christ.

TEACHING OBJECTIVES

To clarify and write God's vision and mission for your life so you can faithfully fulfill God's greater purposes.

INTRODUCTION

After five months, Nehemiah's vision was completely internalized. It began as a seed. It grew to a burden. Then it became a passion. Nehemiah was completely infected with a vision to see the walls rebuilt and Jerusalem made secure.

Every Christian leader needs to clearly see and understand God's vision for his or her life. Knowing God's vision can then lead to a clear mission or purpose to follow. Vision is a clear mental picture of a preferable future that leads people to reach out to the future. Mission is the specific course of action that you will take to accomplish the vision.

Nothing is more powerful than when God's people who are led by a Spirit-filled leader come together with passion that makes their visions and dreams become a miraculous reality.



BIBLICAL FOUNDATION

The biblical foundations for all God-given visions and missions are rooted in the Great Commandment and the Great Commission:

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength... Love your neighbor as yourself.”—Mark 12:30–31

“Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.”
—Matthew 28:19–20

Developing your vision and mission is a process best accomplished through prayer and reflection in the presence of God. This workshop will help you clarify, sharpen, and focus God’s vision and mission for your life.

This workshop will consist of an extended time for you to work by yourself, followed by a short time to share the progress you have made with one more participant.

Vision is an image. It is a picture of the end result God wants to accomplish.

HOW TO WRITE A VISION STATEMENT

God spoke to the prophet Habakkuk and said,

“Record the vision and inscribe it on tablets, that the one who reads it may run.”—Habakkuk 2:2 NASB

Writing your vision and mission is essential to clarifying God’s purposes and plans for your life. Based on George Barna’s definition of vision in the box below, and on the need you identified during the “Power of Vision” session, write the first draft of your vision statement on a blank sheet of paper or notebook.

Vision is a clear mental image of a preferable future imparted by God to His chosen servants, and is based on an accurate understanding of God, self and circumstances.¹

GEORGE BARNA

- ▶ Your vision statement should be written in the presence of God; your vision is God-given.
- ▶ Your vision statement is a picture of something God wants to accomplish. It is what you see of the preferable future that God desires. It is often the answer to the question of why a certain work needs to take place. Why did Nehemiah rebuild a wall? To see a fully restored Jerusalem.
- ▶ If vision is a mental image, your statement should describe that picture. The description of an image does not have action verbs in it. For example, instead of “to plant a church in my city,” a vision statement should read “to see a new church established in my city.”
- ▶ Begin with the needs that you see, feel, and for which you have a special burden. Your vision should be related to specific human needs. If necessary, refer back to the session on “The Power of Vision.”
- ▶ Vision can be revealed in a moment or it can take months or even years to fully take shape. Write down what you know, and continue seeking God until the full vision is revealed.
- ▶ Reflect on the Great Commandment and the Great Commission. Who is God specifically calling upon you to love and reach with the Gospel?
- ▶ Write your vision statement with descriptive language in the fewest possible words. Make it memorable, clear, and compelling. Your vision statement should inspire yourself and others to action.

HOW TO WRITE A MISSION STATEMENT

In order to fulfill the vision God has given you, there is a task you will have to accomplish. In other words, God has given you a mission that will ultimately bring your vision into reality. The next step after stating your vision is to write a mission statement expressing what you sense is God’s purpose for your life. That purpose will lead you to accomplish your God-given vision.

On a separate sheet of paper, write the first draft of your mission statement.

- ▶ Your mission flows from God’s vision for your life.
- ▶ **WHAT:** Your mission statement describes what you will do to accomplish the vision. For Nehemiah, the mission was to go to Jerusalem and rebuild the walls.
- ▶ **HOW:** Your statement should express in general terms how you plan to fulfill your vision. This is not a detailed list of what you do, but a generic overview of the process. Your mission will help you focus your time, energy, and gifts to reach your maximum potential to accomplish the vision.
- ▶ Write your mission statement with descriptive language in the fewest possible words. Make it memorable, clear, and compelling. Your mission statement should inspire you and others to action.



WORKSHOP FIRST DRAFT

This workshop will consist of four activities.

1. Spend a few minutes reflecting and re-writing the statement of the need God has called you to meet, according to the question you answered during the Power of Vision session (page 49).
2. Write the first draft of your vision statement. Based on the need God called you to meet, write the mental picture of a preferable future that God is showing you to the best of your ability. Facilitators will be available during the whole workshop to answer questions and help you clarify your vision. Use the guidelines on page 59.
3. Write the first draft of your mission statement, addressing how God wants you to fulfill the vision He is showing you. Use the guidelines on page 59.
4. During the last 15 minutes of the session, share your progress with one other participant, and give feedback. Finish by praying together that God will make your visions a reality.

RECORD YOUR VISION AND MISSION

Based on feedback from your colleagues, revise your vision and mission statements. Then write the first draft of your vision and mission statements on the next page.

CONCLUSION

This workshop will conclude with a time of prayer. The statements you wrote today are rough drafts. We will ask God to continue speaking to you about his purposes for your life and leadership.

NOTE: There will be a second Vision and Mission workshop in the Module 2 training. Please be sure to bring this book with you to the Module 2 training event. It will be an opportunity for you to refine and improve your vision and mission statements and get further feedback from facilitators and your peers.



EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING ACTIVITY

LETTER TO SELF

Although this workshop relates to one of the first core values, it's important this exercise is placed toward the end of the week so as to maximize impact. It can be done as a separate exercise or as part of the Multiplication Workshop.

NEEDED RESOURCES

- ▶ Blank paper and mailing envelopes.
- ▶ Approximately 20 minutes to complete the exercise.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Ask each participant to write a letter to themselves. The content should include, but is not limited to:

What specific things has God spoken to you this week?

What is your sense of what God is saying to you about His vision for your life?

What action points will you apply to your life immediately following this training?

What is the one thing you are determined, by God's grace, will be different about your life and leadership further to this training?

2. Before the participants take time to write this letter, assure them:

This letter is purely between you and God, so we encourage you to write with vulnerability and make it personal.

No-one else will read this letter. It is strictly confidential.

3. When participants have finished writing their letters, ask them to:

Fold and seal within the envelope.

Clearly write your full name and postal address on the front of the envelope.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE FACILITATOR

Collect up the sealed envelopes and store carefully. After six months, stamp each letter (build this cost into your initial budget if necessary), and post.

GOALSETTING

Leading With Focus

CORE VALUE

God looks for men and women who are biblically committed to cast vision, set goals, mobilize the Body of Christ, and overcome obstacles in order to reach the nations for Christ.

TEACHING OBJECTIVES

- ▶ To understand the importance of setting goals for effective leadership.
- ▶ To learn the practice of SMART goalsetting.
- ▶ To challenge each participant to live a goal-oriented lifestyle.

INTRODUCTION

Someone once said, “If you don’t know where you are going, every road leads to your destination.” If we observe the lives of successful leaders, we will often notice that they have a clear vision and have set specific, measurable, actionable, realistic, and time-targeted goals that guide how they live each day. They know where they are going and have planned a route to arrive at their destination.

BENEFITS OF SETTING GOALS

Leaders who practice disciplined goalsetting experience greater effectiveness and satisfaction in their work. Here are a few benefits of setting goals:

- ▶ Goals give purpose and direction to life. They focus your activity and maximize your efforts.
- ▶ Goals simplify the decision-making process. Decisions become based on whether a new idea or opportunity fits in with one or more of your set goals.
- ▶ Goals exercise faith. For the biblical leader, goals are practical steps of faith in God.
- ▶ Goals give a sense of achievement and satisfaction. They provide a measurement of accomplishment.



BIBLICAL FOUNDATION

Goalsetting is a common practice in business and the corporate world. The biblical leader must answer the question: Does the Bible give us a foundation for making detailed plans and setting goals, particularly when dealing with “spiritual” matters?

Setting Goals in Scripture

Here are two examples from the life of Jesus and the Apostle Paul that help answer this question.

“For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost. —Luke 19:10

This is Jesus’ vision and mission statement. The Master states clearly a specific vision (to see the lost saved) and a clear mission (to seek the lost). Because of Christ’s vision and mission, a day comes when Jesus speaks to His disciples and clearly outlines His specific goal to go to Jerusalem in order to be arrested, tortured, and killed for the sins of the world. Jesus Christ lived a goal-oriented life.

From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that He must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that He must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.
—Matthew 16:21

Paul also lived a goal-oriented life as reflected in his ministry of church planting and his three missionary journeys. At one point, Paul responded to God’s vision and mission for his life, and he set a goal to go to Jerusalem. He speaks passionately to the Church in Ephesus about his goal, given by the Holy Spirit. Even warnings from the Holy Spirit about the hardships that Paul would face did not deter him. It is important to note that the Holy Spirit never told Paul not to go to Jerusalem.

And now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there. I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me. However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the good news of God’s grace. —Acts 20:22–24

GOALSETTING BEGINS WITH VISION

Vision is the foundation of all leadership. Proverbs 29:18 says, “Where there is no revelation [vision], people cast off restraint.” If a leader can articulate God’s vision clearly, then the process of setting goals will be easier and more focused.

Vision is the
foundation of all
leadership.



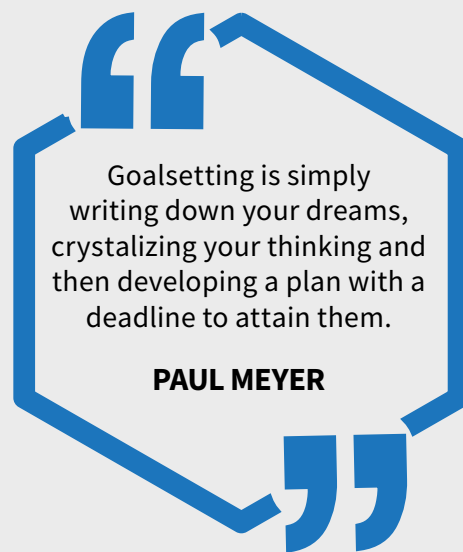
WORKSHOP

During this History Makers training, you are working on your vision and mission statements. They are one or more specific needs God impresses you to meet based on an accurate understanding of yourself, your circumstances, and His calling upon your life.

Your statements may still be in a rough draft stage, and that is fine. Go back to your notes and read them once again. Share the drafts of your vision and mission statements with one other participant. Then discuss the following question:

What are potential actions that I can take in the next twelve months that would move me towards completing my mission and seeing my vision become a reality (list 5-10 action steps)?

NOTES:



VISION AND GOALSETTING

Vision is accomplished through specific goals. Goals narrow down the vision into smaller, manageable units. They provide focus and practical steps to achieve God's vision for your life.

SMART GOALS

What does a goal look like? SMART is an acronym that helps us focus on five important characteristics of effective goals. The methodology was developed by Paul J. Meyer and has been widely used in every area of leadership.¹

SPECIFIC

“Fuzzy goals will get fuzzy results at best” (Paul J. Meyer). Make your goals as specific as possible. Write your goals as if someone else would read them.

MEASURABLE

If your goals are measurable, you can monitor your progress as you pursue them. A measurable goal doesn't necessarily mean having a number to achieve.

ACTIONABLE²

Every goal should start with an action verb (e.g. “quit,” “Run,” “finish,” “eliminate,” etc.) rather than a to-be verb (e.g., “am,” “be,” “have,” etc.)

REALISTIC

Your goals should involve faith, but also they must be realistic. It is unwise to set goals so large that they are out of touch with the reality you are working with.

TIME TARGETED

Every goal should have a deadline; a time when it should be completed and evaluated.

A POSSIBLE EXAMPLE

To illustrate the process of writing a SMART goal, let's imagine you are a church planter who has a vision for a thriving Christian congregation in a particular town or community. You could start the goalsetting process by identifying the most crucial action: to preach the Gospel in the community. That is a worthy goal, but it isn't SMART yet. So let's start working on it.

MAKE IT SPECIFIC

TO SHARE THE GOSPEL DOOR-TO-DOOR IN THE COMMUNITY.

Now you have specified exactly what you will be doing: door-to-door visitation.

MAKE IT MEASURABLE

TO SHARE THE GOSPEL DOOR-TO-DOOR WITH 100 FAMILIES IN THE COMMUNITY.

You can now measure the progress towards your goal.

MAKE IT ACTIONABLE

TO VISIT 100 HOMES IN THE COMMUNITY AND SHARE THE GOSPEL WITH THEM.

Now there are two precise action verbs in your goal: "visit" and "share the Gospel."

MAKE IT REALISTIC

TO VISIT 100 HOMES IN THE COMMUNITY IN TEAMS OF TWO AND SHARE THE GOSPEL WITH THEM.

We added a few more elements to ground our goal in the current reality. Ten teams of two means each team will visit ten homes.

MAKE IT TIME TARGETED

TO VISIT THE COMMUNITY DOOR-TO-DOOR WITH TEN TEAMS OF TWO PEOPLE AND SHARE THE GOSPEL WITH 100 FAMILIES IN THE COMMUNITY DURING THE NEXT SIX MONTHS.

There is now a deadline for our goal.

IMPORTANT GUIDELINES

Your goals must be written. "You don't know what you think until you read what you wrote" (John Haggai). Our mind forgets easily. Make sure your goals are written in detail.

Organize your goals. It will give you more focus. Here are some criteria for organizing goals.

- ▶ Short-term to long-term. Some goals have shorter deadlines, while others are for a more distant future.
- ▶ High to low priority. Separate more important goals from lesser ones.
- ▶ Different areas of life. Goals can be related to your spiritual life, ministry, personal, family, physical goals, and more.

GOALSETTING IN SIX PRACTICAL STEPS

Goalsetting is a discipline that will transform your life if you make it a priority. It requires significant thinking, but in the process, you will obtain a greater focus and also greatly improve your effectiveness. Follow the steps below in your goalsetting discipline.

STEP Write down your vision.

1

STEP Pray James 1:5. We need God's wisdom in our entire goalsetting process. This step should be a continuous discipline in the leader's life.

2

STEP Write a list of tasks you need to do in order to accomplish the vision. Do a little personal brainstorming. Do not worry about SMART goals at this time; just write as much as you can. (This is the exercise we did in the beginning of this session.)

3

STEP Focus and Prioritize. Let some time go by, even a day or two. Then review your vision statement and your list of tasks (step 3). Consider the Pareto principle when setting goals.

4

THE PARETO PRINCIPLE

Also known as the 80-20 rule, it is based on the observations of Italian economist Vilfredo Pareto that 80% of all government income came from 20% of the taxpayers. The same ratio can be observed in many other areas of life. For example, in any organization, 80% of the work is done by 20% of the people. The application to our study of vision is that 80% of your results will come from 20% of your efforts.

Applying the Pareto principle to personal goalsetting can help us focus on the most important goals. It means being able to identify and concentrate on the 20% of our effort that will yield 80% of our results.



Looking at your list with fresh eyes and the lenses of the Pareto Principle, you will:
Eliminate some ideas, combine others, restate others, and even have new ones.

Organize your list by priority and focus area.

STEP Write SMART goals. Make the most important items on your list specific, measurable, actionable, realistic, and time-targeted goals.

5

STEP Develop a list of action steps to accomplish each of the goals. Break each goal down into smaller tasks with shorter deadlines by answering the following questions:

6

What tasks must I do in the first year of my goal period? (This applies if your goal period is for more than one year. If not, go to the next question.)

What must I do in the next month in order to accomplish the tasks I listed for the first year?

What must I do in the next week in order to accomplish the tasks I listed on the previous question (next month)?

What must I do tomorrow in order to accomplish the tasks I listed on the previous question (next week)?

By the end of this six-step process, you will have dreamed God's dream for you and planned your future in a focused, disciplined manner. You will have the following:

- A clear vision statement.
- A set of SMART goals to help you accomplish the vision God gave you.
- A detailed action plan to reach each of your goals.
- The most important thing: A to-do list for tomorrow.

As long as you keep repeating the last step of the process, and revising the other steps, you will be on an intentional and systematic path to fulfilling your goals and seeing the vision God gave you become a reality.



WORKSHOP

This workshop is a follow-up to the workshop found on page 65. It is about prioritizing the "Pareto" from that list. Review the "To-Do" list you created during that activity, and discuss the following question for a few minutes with two other participants.

Which of those tasks on my list would get me the closest to completing my mission and achieving my vision?

CONCLUSION

Goalsetting can be a life-changing resource; however, setting goals is not enough. Once your vision, mission, goals, and action plans are written down, they must be pursued. If you trust they are God-given, then it will be a joy to lay your life as clay in the hands of the Potter and marvel at God's Spirit working through your life.

OVERCOMING OBSTACLES

Becoming “More Than Conquerors”



CORE VALUE

God looks for men and women who are biblically committed to cast vision, set goals, mobilize the Body of Christ, and overcome obstacles in order to reach the nations for Christ.

TEACHING OBJECTIVES

This session identifies common obstacles to leadership and develops personal strategies to overcome internal issues, external struggles, and spiritual warfare.

INTRODUCTION

Personal transformation is one of the marks of the Christian life; however, it is a myth that problems and obstacles disappear because you are a Christian. The difference is that followers of Christ have the Spirit of God at work in their lives as various challenges arise. Christian leaders who are about God’s business will experience obstacles. It was true for Jesus, and it is true for everyone who steps up to embrace a God-given vision and work towards its fulfillment. After casting vision, setting goals, and mobilizing others, the job is not over. There will be obstacles to overcome. Jesus understood this reality and said,

“I have told you these things, so that in Me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”—John 16:33

DEFINITION OF “OBSTACLE”

An obstacle is anything that stands in the way of accomplishing God’s purposes for us and through us. Obstacles can come from three sources: Personal obstacles originate within leaders themselves, external obstacles come from outside the leader—either from within the leader’s own team or from the world—and finally, Satan and his cohorts present spiritual obstacles by opposing the work of God’s Kingdom done by visionary, biblical leaders.



BIBLICAL FOUNDATION

The way to overcome any type of obstacle is by looking at it through God's eyes, as expressed in Scripture. The Apostle Paul puts every obstacle in the right perspective for us.

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written, "For Your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, 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. —Romans 8:35–39

This powerful Scripture provides us with reassuring words regarding our struggles. Paul affirms:

- Obstacles are an unavoidable reality. Paul states, "we face death all day."
- No obstacle will ever separate us from the love of God, whether personal (neither life nor death), external (powers, height, nor depth), or spiritual (angels nor demons).
- It is in the midst of the obstacles, not in spite of them, that we are more than conquerors through Christ.

PERSONAL OBSTACLES

Personal obstacles are related to inner struggles and limitations. These may be the most difficult to overcome because they are not always visible. Examples include moral obstacles, educational obstacles, medical obstacles, and emotional obstacles.

EMOTIONAL OBSTACLES

Perhaps the most challenging personal obstacles are emotional issues that come from a sense of low self-worth. Even mature Christian leaders, at times, fail to draw their sense of self-worth from God and require healing to grow into the person God desires.

MY SELF IMAGE

Scripture recognizes and affirms the importance of self-image. At times, we may feel like our greatest enemy is the mirror. That happens because we see ourselves through our own eyes rather than looking through the eyes of God.

"For as he thinks within himself, so he is." —Proverbs 23:7 NASB

An inadequate sense of self-worth can be a significant obstacle to those called to leadership. Here is a comparison between inadequate and adequate self-worth.

People with an inadequate sense of self worth tend to avoid challenges and stimulation, often retreating to the safety of the familiar, while those with a good sense of their self-worth welcome challenges.

An inadequate sense of self-worth can lead us to try to prove ourselves to others. With an adequate sense of self-worth, we will rather have a drive to express ourselves in a healthy way.

Poor sense of self worth leads to muddy, evasive, and inappropriate relationships.

Open, honest, and appropriate relationships are the result of an adequate sense of self worth.

LOOKING AT OURSELVES THROUGH THE EYES OF GOD

God creates each person as valuable. Psalm 139 is a reminder that God knows every detail of your life. He planned you long before the world began, and He knit you together in your mother's womb. The Psalmist recognizes the wonder of God's creation:

“I praise You because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Your works are wonderful, I know that full well.” —Psalm 139:14

At conception, God gave each person the ability to breathe (life), to believe (faith), and to become a part of God's plans (purpose). When God looks at you, this is what He sees and calls you to experience. All biblical leaders must come to the place where they begin to see themselves through God's eyes and not through their own eyes.

INTIMACY WITH GOD AND SELF-WORTH

Believers in Jesus Christ also have to come to that place in their lives where they are able to see themselves not through the eyes of their past, but rather as God sees their future. We are valued by God, and for this reason, God sent His Son into the world to give historical and personal proof of our value. Ken Boa states,

We cannot truly know ourselves unless we know our God. The only secure, stable, significant, and satisfying basis for self-identity is the reality of our new identification with Christ. . . [In Christ we have] been transferred out of the line of Adam and grafted into the line of Christ. And in Christ we also have a new dignity and purpose.¹

As we grow in intimacy with God, we will learn to see ourselves from God's point of view and learn of our worth in Christ.



WORKSHOP

SPEAKING GOD'S WORD TO EACH OTHER

This workshop will be done in groups of three participants. In an attitude of prayer, read all three of the following scriptures to each other, personalizing each text by adding each one's name in the blanks, ahead of the Bible text.

_____, be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid. The Lord your God goes with you. He will not leave you or forsake you. (Deuteronomy 31:6)

_____, God has created your innermost being. He knit you together in your mother's womb. You are fearfully and wonderfully made. (Psalm 139:13-14)

_____, God has loved you with an everlasting love; He has drawn you with unfailing kindness. (Jeremiah 31:3)

EXTERNAL OBSTACLES

External obstacles develop from outside of ourselves. We may not be the cause, but we must respond. External obstacles can originate from your church, workplace, family, local community, or even your nation. Many of these obstacles are associated with the relationships we encounter on a regular basis. When conflict takes place, you need God's wisdom and guidance to heal and restore relationships as much as possible.

OBSTACLES WITHIN THE TEAM

All leaders will face conflicts and even opposition from members of their teams. Obstacles can come from the following sources.

- False brothers (2 Cor. 11:26) can devastate an organization.
- Difficult Christians under our leadership. Sincere Christians may think differently, and can cause conflict.
- Sincere opposition and criticism from other Christians. Not everyone will agree with the leader's vision. Some may oppose it strongly.

As these three kinds of people interact in the context of a leadership team, it is only natural that conflict will appear. Sometimes as a leader, you will have to manage conflict between two or more members of the team. On other occasions, you will be part of the conflict.

HANDLING CONFLICT

Sometimes conflict becomes unavoidable in team situations. Four steps for handling conflict include:



Understand the nature of the conflict. Appreciate differences in opinion.






Pray for wisdom to discern the real issue and the needs of those with whom you are in conflict. It is important to remember that the conflict may be about personalities and needs, rather than the subject matter. Praying together can be an important means of resolving a conflict.



Explore possible solutions together. Wherever possible, attempt a win-win solution.

ONE CONFLICT - THREE POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

 <p>WIN - LOSE</p>	 <p>LOSE - LOSE</p>	 <p>WIN - WIN</p>
<p>When someone wins a battle, someone else loses and is often embarrassed.</p>	<p>When relationships are broken as a result of conflict, everyone loses.</p>	<p>Mutual compromise leads to conflict resolution. All parties win but also give up a little in the process.</p>



Make peace with all people in the conflict whenever possible. A common mistake is to confuse the issues in the conflict with the person, thus turning the conflict into a personal issue.

YOUR INVOLVEMENT IN A CONFLICT

When you are caught within serious conflict, the following questions can help you determine a course of action:

Is the conflict at stake worth the time and energy spent?

Will it make any difference if I win?

What is God saying?

Why am I holding on to my position?

Have I contributed to this conflict? Do I need to repent of anything?



WORKSHOP

In groups of two or three, share one experience when you had to handle conflict in your team.

Were you involved in the conflict? How was the conflict resolved (Win-Lose, Lose-Lose, or Win-Win)?

Make sure to avoid disclosing personal information or making any comments that could embarrass or compromise someone who may be known to other training participants. It is best to keep the conflicting parties anonymous.

OBSTACLES FROM THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

In today's world, opposition and criticism can come from the community where our leadership is exercised in varied degrees of intensity. Local leaders and the media can be hostile to Christianity or oppose certain methods.

SOCIOPOLITICAL OBSTACLES

Political issues may affect Christians, especially when the “law of the land” or current practices go against biblical morality and ethics. In some areas of the world, the existence of anti-Christian groups or even a hostile government can put the very safety of Christians in jeopardy.

OVERCOMING EXTERNAL OBSTACLES

God will help us overcome external obstacles in three main ways, as represented in the examples of known biblical characters.

REMOVING THE OBSTACLE FROM OUR PATH—God removed rebellious Saul from the kingship so David, His anointed, could lead (1 Samuel).

FINDING A WAY AROUND THE OBSTACLE—The Magi were warned in a dream (Matt. 2:12) and avoided Herod, thus protecting the newborn Jesus from falling victim to an evil king.

USING THE OBSTACLE AS A STEPPING STONE—God helped Joseph overcome the obstacles imposed on him by his brothers' actions, and used these obstacles to give him a leadership position that eventually saved his entire family (Gen. 45:4ff).

SPIRITUAL OBSTACLES

Though we confront personal and external obstacles in different ways and circumstances, the reality is that Satan is the source of all obstacles. Jesus was very clear that Satan's primary goal is “to steal and kill and destroy” the people of God (John 10:10). In *Run with the Horses*, Eugene H. Peterson writes,

no neutral ground in the universe. Every square foot of space is contested. . . .
No one enters existence as a spectator.”²

The more intimate we become with God, the more intensely we will experience evil attacks. The important fact is that God understands who the enemy is, and He has provided us with everything we need to fight the good fight and be victorious.

CONCLUSION

Obstacles are a normal fact of a leader’s life. Sometimes the leaders themselves create them. Sometimes other people are the obstacles. Even Satan tries to destroy the work of God’s Kingdom by attacking the leader.

James Hudson Taylor founded the China Inland Mission in 1865 and was one of the greatest missionaries in history. He understood God’s vision for his life; nevertheless, he experienced many personal, external, and spiritual obstacles. Commenting on the challenges of missionary life, he stated:

“First, it is impossible, then it is difficult, then it is done.”³

By the power of the Holy Spirit working in your life, you have access to every resource you need to overcome obstacles and be “more than a conqueror” in Christ.

ENDNOTES

THE POWER OF VISION

1. Hovey, E. Paul. *The Treasury of Inspirational Anecdotes, Quotations, and Illustrations*. Revell, 1959.
2. Barna, George. *The Power of Vision: Discover and Apply God's Plan for Your Life and Ministry*. Regal, 2009, 26–27.
3. Outline based on a seminar by Wilkinson, Bruce. *The Vision of the Leader*.

VISION AND MISSION WORKSHOP 1

1. Barna, George. *The Power of Vision: Discover and Apply God's Plan for Your Life and Ministry*. Regal, 2009, 26.

GOALSETTING

1. The SMART goals acronym was developed by Paul J. Meyer and was introduced in his booklet “Attitude Is Everything,” available from www.pauljmeyer.com and www.amazon.com. Many writers and speakers have added their own insights to this widely respected approach.
2. The phrase “actionable” was adopted by ILI from Michael Hyatt from his online course “Five Days to our Best Year Ever.” (<http://michaelhyatt.com/get-clear-in-2014.html>).

OVERCOMING OBSTACLES

1. Boa, Kenneth. *Conformed to His Image: Biblical and Practical Approaches to Spiritual Formation*. Zondervan, 2001, 224–225.
2. Peterson, Eugene H. *Run with the Horses: The Quest for Life at Its Best*. 5th ed., InterVarsity, 2009, 41.
3. Lyall, Leslie T. *A Passion for the Impossible: The Continuing Story of the Mission Hudson Taylor Began*. OMF, 1976, 5.

FAMILY PRIORITY RETREAT

Session 1: Strengths and Areas of Growth in Your Family

Review the six characteristics of strong families from Week 19 below.

From the characteristics in the list, where is your family strongest?

Where do you need to improve the most?

Break up into groups of five and share together. After a time of sharing, spend time praying together over the blessings and the challenges that came up.

Strong Commitment—Strong families believe in the value of the family and consider family a priority in their lives. They are dedicated to one another’s well-being, and they invest time and energy in family activities. They recognize that sacrifices must be made for the sake of family togetherness, and family members make those sacrifices willingly.

Spending Enjoyable Time Together—Strong families spend time together doing meaningful things. One study of 1,500 school children asked, “What do you think makes a happy family?” Few children replied that money, cars, fancy homes, television sets, or trips to Disney World made a happy family. Most children thought of a happy family as one that is active together and that genuinely enjoys time spent with other family members.

Good Communication—Strong families communicate. In addition to commonplace exchanges, family members encourage one another to express their feelings and convictions, knowing that they will be received with respect and understanding.

Appreciation and Affection for Each Other—Strong families express appreciation for each other; they are intentional about encouragement and support. Family members seek to express their love in ways that others will receive as authentic. Families share a rich and genuine emotional life.

Ability to Solve Problems and React in Crisis—Strong families deal well with conflict. They have learned the value of using “win-win” strategies to solve disagreements. They face crisis situations with good communication and a sense of security. Family members are quick to be patient and readily forgive.

Shared Spiritual Life—Strong families have a shared spiritual life where, in the case of Christian families, the Bible, prayer, and worship are central. Such families experience faith as individuals and as a community. The family understands the importance of the spiritual well-being of each family member. This understanding is manifested in love, compassion, accountability, and celebration.

Session 2: Family of Origin

Find a quiet place to be alone and reflect upon your family of origin with the Lord.

Hear the Lord ask you, “Do you understand what I have done for you?” What kinds of experiences are you thankful for? Are there any unresolved issues that the Lord wants to talk with you about?

Gather back together and get with a new group of five and share together. After a time of sharing, pray together.

Here are some questions to get you thinking:

Were you raised in an intact family? A broken family? A blended family?

Who were your parents?

What were they like? Present or absent? Warm and supportive? Hard and demanding? A great blessing in your life? A tough challenge? A little of both?

Brothers and sisters?

How many? What were their names? What were they like? How did you fit in among them? How were each treated by your parents?

Other important people in your life?

Grandparents? Aunts, uncles, cousins? Close family friends?

If your family had a t-shirt, what would the family motto on the t-shirt say?**Other Questions to Think About:**

What was it like growing up in your family?

What memories from your growing up years stick? Which feel good? Which feel bad?

Did you feel safe in your family?

Was it okay to express your emotions in your family? To feel happy, sad, frustrated, angry, content, etc.?

Were there times when you were worried about any of your family members?

Why were you worried? How were these concerns handled?

Closing Communion

Come together for a final gathering. Ask if anyone would like to share what the Lord had might have done for them. End your time together with sharing the Lord's Supper.

FINISHING WELL

The Finish Line

CORE VALUE

God looks for men and women of integrity who live holy lives and who are accountable to God and to the Body of Christ. Integrity glorifies God, protects leaders from stumbling, and encourages growth.

TEACHING OBJECTIVE

The purpose of this session is for each leader to evaluate God's call on his or her life and to commit to finishing well in life and leadership.

INTRODUCTION

John Stephen Akhwari is an Olympic legend. Representing his country, Tanzania, he was a favorite to win the marathon at the 1968 Olympics in Mexico City. In the middle, of the race he suffered a fall, slicing open his knee and dislocating the joint.

He finally entered the stadium to complete the race, one hour after the winner crossed the finish line and the medalists received their awards. The last few spectators who were preparing to leave the stadium were witnesses to the historic event. Bloodied and bandaged, Akhwari hobbled around the stadium track and finished the race. When asked why he continued to race when he had no chance of a medal, his answer was:

“My country did not send me 5,000 miles to start the race;
they sent me 5,000 miles to finish the race.”

GOD'S PLAN AND THE REALITY OF LIFE

There is no question in our minds that God's plan for us is that we finish well. Paul is our example.

STARTED RIGHT
Acts 9:20-22



FINISHED WELL
2 Timothy 4:7

God's purpose for us has never been that we quit or give up. Solomon is the example of a leader who did not finish well.



YET, the FACT IS...

70% of all leaders will not finish well.

-J. Robert Clinton

**DO YOU BELIEVE
THIS IS THE WILL
OF GOD?**

Scholar and writer J. Robert Clinton researched Christian leaders and affirms that seven out of ten leaders will not finish well. Clinton's conclusion was gleaned from leaders' personal assessment, peer and follower evaluation, or the teaching of their professed religion.¹

WHERE DID THEY GO?

DROPPED OUT. 2 Timothy 4:10—"Demas . . . has deserted me."

PLATEAUED. Philippians 3:19b—"Their mind is on earthly things."

DISQUALIFIED. 2 Corinthians 7:10—Worldly sorrow with no repentance.

HOW DID THIS HAPPEN? . . . ASK KING SOLOMON

King Solomon is a tragic, biblical example of someone who started right but did not finish well. He began as a "man of wisdom" who wrote,

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline. -Proverbs 1:7

Later in his life, Solomon became a cynic and a fool who wrote,

"Meaningless! Meaningless!" says the Teacher. "Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless." -Ecclesiastes 1:2

HOW DO WE LOSE INTEGRITY? — ONE STEP AT A TIME

Seldom does just one factor or influence cause one to not finish well; rather, it is often just one step that starts us in a direction that, if not checked, would cause us not to finish well in life.

THE BIG FOUR

MONEY, SEX, POWER, AND PRIDE

These first four factors are the most obvious and common reasons so many Christian leaders do not finish well. They are described in 1 John 2:15–16,

“Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them. For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world.”

MONEY

Money is not inherently evil. It can be a blessing, but it is also a great source of temptation.

1 Timothy 6:10—“For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil.”

2 Timothy 3:2—“Lovers of money, boastful, proud . . .”

GOD’S ANSWER

Seek first the Kingdom of God. (See Matthew 6:33)

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

If possible, do not handle your church, organization, or ministry’s money. If you have to do this, make sure to always have three witnesses present and take every precaution to avoid even the appearance of evil. Even on a personal level, make sure there is transparency in all financial dealings.

SEX

Sex is a precious gift from God to be enjoyed between a man and woman in marriage. Deviation from God’s purpose results in disaster.

Proverbs 2:18—“Surely her house [adulterous woman] leads down to death.”

Ephesians 5:3—“But among you, there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality.”

GOD’S ANSWER

Approach the throne of grace and find help. (See Hebrews 4:14–16)

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

Take proactive steps to prevent risk of temptation. Avoid being alone with persons to whom you might become physically attracted. If you are married, discuss with your spouse what boundaries would be most helpful and appropriate. Install pornography filters in your internet devices.

POWER

Power can be a great temptation for the leader. Leadership is influence and with it comes power. However, the abuse of power has serious consequences for the leader.

Acts 8:9–23— Simon, the Sorcerer, tried to use God’s power for personal benefit.

GOD’S ANSWER

Jesus never used power for His own benefit. (See Matthew 26:53)

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

Be a Christ-centered servant leader who focuses on building God’s Kingdom by helping others achieve their potential in Christ.

PRIDE

Pride can be the result of success. Leaders who enjoy great success in ministry are prone to temptation in this area. However, the warning is clear:

Proverbs 16:18— “Pride goes before a fall.” Never say, what I have done.

GOD’S ANSWER

“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves.” — Philippians 2:3

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

Recognize often and publicly acknowledge the source of your success. At every opportunity, lift up the contribution of others as instrumental to any success. Follow a servant leadership model.

FOUR MORE

The four sins above are fairly obvious, although very dangerous. However, there are “four more.” These additional sins of the leader are like cancer and can be just as dangerous as the first four. These can be slow growing in influence in your life until it is almost too late to change. This condition is described in Mark 4:13–19:

“Still others, like seed sown among thorns, hear the word; but the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful.”

MENTAL STAGNATION

Solomon stopped listening to God and learning from God. Because of Solomon’s sin, he came to the point that he wrote the following words,

“What has been will be again, what has been done will be done again; there is nothing new under the sun.” — Ecclesiastes 1:9

GOD’S ANSWER

Keep learning.

Luke 2:52—Jesus grew in wisdom, stature, and grace.

Matthew 11:29—Jesus said, “Learn from Me”.

Proverbs 1:5 — “Let the wise listen and add to their learning.”

DO YOU HAVE PLANS FOR PERSONAL INTELLECTUAL GROWTH?

“If you stop learning today, you’ll stop growing tomorrow.”²
- Bob Buford

CHARACTER AND CONVICTION WEAKENING

As his kingdom prospered and Solomon made alliances with other nations, he began to put aside his convictions and his character faded. In the end, he was counted with the kings who did wrong in the eyes of the Lord.

As Solomon grew old . . . his heart was not fully devoted to the LORD . . . So Solomon did evil in the eyes of the LORD; he did not follow the LORD completely. -1 Kings 11:4–6

GOD’S ANSWER

Affirm your convictions and examine your character regularly.

Psalm 139:23–24—“Search me, O God, and know my heart.”

Acts 4:20—“We cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.”

Daniel 3:16–18—“We [three Hebrew young men] will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.”

DO YOU INTERACT WITH AT LEAST ONE PERSON WHO WILL CONFRONT YOU ABOUT YOUR LIFE AND WITNESS?

INFLUENCE AND LEGACY NEGLECT

Later in his life, Solomon wrote Ecclesiastes, which is rather pessimistic about human life lived “under the sun.” In that book, Solomon cynically penned the following words:

“No one remembers the former generations, and even those yet to come will not be remembered by those who follow them.” —Ecclesiastes 1:11

Solomon actually neglected his legacy and his negative influence extended to his descendants. After his death, the kingdom was divided. His son and grandson who reigned after him were corrupt.

GOD’S ANSWER

Renew your commitments and realize your influence on future generations.

John 17:19—“For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.”

Make God’s ultimate your ultimate—Transformed people who reliably reproduce the Christian life (2 Tim. 2:1–2).

ARE YOU INVESTING YOUR TIME IN A “TIMOTHY” TO HELP THAT PERSON BECOME A FAITHFUL DISCIPLE CAPABLE OF REPRODUCING HIM OR HERSELF IN OTHERS?

LOSS OF INTIMACY WITH GOD

Although he had powerful personal experiences with God in the beginning of his reign, towards the end of his life, Solomon abandoned Jehovah and followed other gods.

“The LORD became angry with Solomon because his heart had turned away from the LORD, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice.” —1 Kings 11:9

GOD’S ANSWER

Become more intentional about your personal and intimate relationship with God.

Psalms 27:4—“One thing I ask of the LORD, this is what I seek.”

Psalms 51:12—“Restore to me the joy of Your salvation.”

DO YOU HAVE A CONSISTENT DEVOTIONAL AND INTERCESSORY PRAYER TIME?



WORKSHOP

This is to be a time of personal reflection and self-examination. Prayerfully answer the questions below. You may want to set a personal (SMART) goal for your integrity.

Is there an area of the “big four” that you need to deal with before God? Are any of the “four more” a danger in your life and leadership?

YOUR GOAL IS THE FINISH LINE

Paul and many others have crossed it, and we can too. At the end of his life, Paul wrote the following powerful words to Timothy:

I have fought the good fight. I have finished the race. I have kept the faith.
—2 Timothy 4:7

HOW DO WE FINISH WELL? ONE STEP AT A TIME

Like Paul and many others, we shall finish well if we make the following three simple commitments in our lives. They are the same commitments we saw in the Integrity session, but they are worth repeating and reinforcing in our lives.



INTEGRITY

The first step to finishing well is an awareness of the absolute necessity of integrity in our lives and a personal commitment to live it. Integrity is as simple as keeping your promises and being a person who can be trusted. It means to be whole, complete, integrated.

Practical Application: Make a commitment today to live the values of Christianity with consistency in every area of your life, regardless of the circumstances.



ACCOUNTABILITY

To be held accountable means to be responsible for our attitudes, decisions, and actions (1 Tim. 4:16). Accountability is the practical weapon in the integrity war, without which we are unlikely to win.

As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another. —Proverbs 27:17

Practical Application: Watch your life and doctrine closely. Select two or three persons whom you trust and who love and respect you, and share your commitment to integrity with them. Allow them to hold you accountable for your goal of finishing well, and have them help you honor that commitment.



FOCUS

Focus is an intentional act. Those who finish well like Paul have one focus in life, as the writer of Hebrews states,

Let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before Him He endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. —Hebrews 12:1-2

Practical Application: Imagine the end of your life years from now. Set the goal of finishing with more passion for God and His Kingdom than you have today. You may want to write down that goal and post it in a visible place.

CONCLUSION:

THE PRAYER OF THE FINISHER

In Acts 20, the apostle Paul addressed the elders of the Church at Ephesus that being “compelled by the Spirit,” he was on his way to Jerusalem. He confessed he did not know what his future would hold for him, except that “the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me” in every city (verse 23). Paul then makes a profound statement that is also the prayer of every Christian who desires to finish well the race of the Christian life.

“I consider my life worth nothing to me; my only aim is to finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the good news of God’s grace.” —Acts 20:24

ENDNOTES

FINISHING WELL

1. Thrall, Bill, Bruce McNicol, and Ken McElrath. *The Ascent of a Leader: How Ordinary Relationships Develop Extraordinary Character and Influence*. Jossey-Bass, 1999.
2. Buford, Bob. *Finishing Well: What People Who Really Live Do Differently!* Integrity, 2004, 124.

