

THE
JOURNEY

BECOMING
MORE LIKE
JESUS

PARTICIPANT'S
GUIDE
UNIT TWO
TO LOVE HIM



THE JOURNEY



DEAR FELLOW TRAVELER,

Welcome to The Journey. We are so glad you are here. We believe that discipleship is a journey of becoming more like Jesus, and we want to come alongside you on this adventure. Perhaps you are new to following Jesus. Or maybe you've been following Him for many years. Regardless of your place on the path, we believe The Journey is for you.

The Journey is a versatile resource designed with the church and home in mind. The content will contain foundational, biblical teaching presented in an interactive format. It's intended for use in community with other believers. We also have built At-Home Exercises into the content for you to engage in at home throughout the week. We hope that these exercises help to strengthen your understanding of Jesus and hold you accountable for meeting with Jesus daily.

Our lives are radically changed by the transforming work of the Holy Spirit through salvation, but our journey with the Lord shouldn't stop at our salvation experience. We must then embark on a journey of growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. By digging deeper into this relationship, The Journey will help you extend discipleship beyond Sundays. By immersing yourself into God's Word, prayer, and worship, you will fall more in love with the One who loves you most. Remember, there is always more to learn, still room to grow, and always support available for you on the journey.

We have been praying for you. We have had you in mind as we have been preparing this study. Our prayer is that the Holy Spirit would work mightily in your life as you commit to this personal and communal discipleship journey with the Lord.

With you on The Journey,

YOUR DISCIPLESHIP MINISTRIES FAMILY

THE JOURNEY

TABLE OF CONTENTS

UNIT TWO: TO LOVE HIM

LOVING GOD & LOVING OTHERS

1. The Greatest Commandment

LOVING GOD

2. Loving God: Bible Study

3. Loving God: Worship

4. Loving God: Submission and Holiness

5. Loving God: Prayer

LOVING OTHERS

6. Loving Others: Generosity

7. Loving Others: Community

8. Loving Others: Service



THE JOURNEY

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

WHAT BIBLE TRANSLATION ARE YOU USING?

All scriptures used in The Journey will be the New King James Version unless otherwise noted.

HOW IS THE JOURNEY DIFFERENT FROM OTHER BIBLE STUDIES?

The Journey is an invitation to say yes to Jesus in every part of your life. Centered around weekly class experiences, the focus of The Journey is on the 6 days you aren't with your group. We want you to grow in knowledge, as all Bible studies do, but we also want you to be transformed by the power of God and become more like Jesus. By connecting, growing in knowledge, daily intimacy with Jesus, and participation in community, we hope that you will experience transformation.

WHY IS THERE SO MUCH DISCUSSION?

We believe that discussion with one another is a vital part of learning. It teaches us to think critically about what we are hearing, to be dependent on one another (someone else may have an insight that we need to hear), and to build trust and relationships in the group.

DOES THIS WORK FOR SMALL AND LARGE GROUPS?

Yes! We believe that the flexibility of this resource allows it to function in both settings. It can be easily adapted to fit the needs of any sized group!

THE JOURNEY

LESSON ONE | THE GREATEST COMMANDMENT

Eight weeks ago, we began our Journey of becoming more like Jesus. We are so thankful you said "Yes" and have joined us as we walk together with Him through this process.

Previously we focused on "Knowing Him," and we hope that you sense His presence as we learn more about Him. We believe that as we know more about Jesus and His love for us, we will love Him more and more. We trust you are experiencing a growing love toward Him already.

I. LOVE IS EXPERIENCED

Read: 1 Samuel 18:1-5

TALK ABOUT IT

Jonathan was the heir apparent to his father's kingdom. What could make Jonathan love David so much that he would want David to be king in his place?

THINK ABOUT IT

The depth of love that Jonathan has for David points us to what Jesus would say is the "Greatest Commandment." As Jonathan came to know David, he began to love him.

The more we observe and come to know Jesus, the more we will become like Him. And, we will not only be more like Him, but our love for Him will grow.

David's battle with Goliath foreshadows what Jesus accomplished on the cross to save all

His people from the greatest enemy - death.

Jesus is greater than David, and so is His victory. Thanks be to our Lord Jesus, who defeated our enemy when He cried, "It is finished."

When I realize that Jesus' death and resurrection provide forgiveness for my sins and an eternal home in heaven with Him, I can say, "Oh, how I love Him."

II. LOVE IS EXPRESSED

Read: 1 Samuel 18:3-4

TALK ABOUT IT

In what specific ways can I express my love for God?

THINK ABOUT IT

Jonathan's love for David was not only experienced but also expressed.

When we love someone, we express genuine love by more than what we say. Our love is also demonstrated by what we give.

Jesus desires that we love Him to the degree that we will confess Him before men.

We should want to love Jesus so much that He could say of us that our love for Him was wonderful.

Jonathan loved David "with all his heart, with all his soul, and with all of his mind."



Do I love Jesus in the way Jonathan loved David as Jesus instructs us in the "Greatest Commandment"?

Jonathan expressed his love for David most powerfully and prophetically by entering into a special covenant relationship with him.

- Robe - symbolizing his person and his position
- Armor - speaks of the surrender of all his possessions

Have you given our King all that you are and all that you have?

PRAYER: Dear Heavenly Father, thank You for loving us before the world began and before we were born. You loved us so much that you gave your only son. Jesus, we thank You that you became the expression of the Father's great love toward us. Even while we were sinners, you died for us. Holy Spirit, thank You for making us aware of that great love and stirring our hearts until we said Yes to our Lord Jesus. Please help us to not only love you in words but also in deed. Help us today and every day to love you more and more. Amen.

CONVERSATION STARTERS:

- 1) In our previous unit, we studied the concept of knowing who Jesus is. Now that you know more about who He is, how does this knowledge impact your love for Jesus?
- 2) In what ways do you struggle or perhaps fall short in your expression of love to Jesus?
- 3) Do you have a hard time grasping Jesus' love for you? If so, why?
- 4) In what practical ways can you demonstrate your love to Jesus? In what ways does knowing He loves you impact your

everyday life?

AT-HOME SCRIPTURES:

Luke 10:25-37; 1 John 4:7-16

AT-HOME EXERCISES:

- 1) Take a few moments this week to ask yourself: In what ways am I expressing my love for Jesus? Take notes this week of the time and opportunities that you could have demonstrated your love in a greater way.
- 2) This week, take 30 minutes and stop doing things (this will be harder than you think). Sit with Jesus, the One who (much to our amazement) just wants to be with us. Christ wants to speak to us in the silence, but we're so busy talking and doing that we can never hear Him. This might feel strange to sit in silence with no plan. Try not to force yourself into a "spiritual" activity. Simply think about Jesus, His love, and His grace. As you learn to recognize His presence in these quiet moments, you'll begin to notice Him in the hurried and distracted moments.
- 3) In your private devotion time, read Psalm 95 and Psalm 100 out loud. Take note of the appeals to praise and worship the Lord in a variety of ways. Consider how you can live out these passages differently in individual vs. corporate worship settings.



THE JOURNEY

LESSON TWO | BIBLE STUDY

The Bible is not just any book. It is a library of sixty-six books, penned by forty human authors, written over almost sixteen centuries. It is a diverse collection of literary styles.

The Bible is a miraculous book with one epic story running like a scarlet thread from beginning to end. It is one testimony to one glorious truth: salvation comes through Jesus Christ.

I. PURPOSE — KNOWING JESUS AS THE WORD

Read: John 8:31-32

TALK ABOUT IT

What does it mean “to abide” in God’s Word? What correlation do you see between abiding and obeying?

THINK ABOUT IT

As the “Word,” Jesus speaks for God because He IS God. The Bible (the Word) is a book about Christ (The WORD).

If the Bible is a book about Jesus, then it only makes sense that one of the best ways to know Him is by studying and abiding in God’s Word.

We nourish our relationship with Jesus through prayer and the Word.

Abiding in the Word is necessary to our spiritual health. We read and study scripture to live.

II. PROGRESSION OF UNDERSTANDING — THE LIGHT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Read: Isaiah 50:4-5

TALK ABOUT IT

What does Isaiah mean by an “instructed tongue”? What is the responsibility of the one being instructed? What does this passage say God does in this process?

THINK ABOUT IT

As we abide in God’s Word, we find that prayer and Bible study are not separate endeavors. Prayer enriches our Bible study; Bible study enriches our prayer.

One of the great privileges of the disciple is to hear God’s voice as He speaks to us through His Word; but we must be willing to listen.

Hearing God does not come by striving and straining. We place our total trust in the knowledge that He is very good at speaking.

III. PROCESS OF THE STUDENT — THE GIFT OF COMMUNITY

Read: Matthew 22:35-37

TALK ABOUT IT

Until today, had you thought of Bible study as more of a duty or an act of love? Explain. Why do you think Jesus designates this command (v. 37) as the “Greatest Commandment”?



THINK ABOUT IT

The Spirit engages our hearts, giving us ears to hear God's voice, but He also awakens our minds to understanding.

Fortunately, we are not on this journey alone. God speaks to us individually and corporately.

The Church was established in part to protect and guard the truths of God's Word. So, as we do our reading and studying, we check our understanding with our community of faith, our pastors, and theologians.

IV. SHARING THE WORD — THE PRIVILEGE OF IMPACTING OTHERS

Read: Colossians 3:16-17

TALK ABOUT IT

What difference do you see between abiding in God's word (John 8:31-32), and "letting the word of Christ richly dwell within you"?

THINK ABOUT IT

Abiding in God's Word results in the word "richly dwelling" in us.

Abiding in the Word becomes the Word abiding in us.

The abundant indwelling of the Word amplifies our testimony as others see evidence of God at work in us.

Bible study empowers us for ministry and authorizes us to go and tell others the Good News.

CONVERSATION STARTERS:

1) What has your experience been with Bible study?

2) What do you find most challenging about Bible study?

3) Does studying the Bible in community excite you or intimidate you? Why?

4) After this lesson, how do you see Bible study as a means of showing love to God?

AT-HOME SCRIPTURES:

Colossians 3:12-17; Psalm 119:89-104;
2 Timothy 3:10-17

AT-HOME EXERCISES:

1) "Abiding in God's Word results in the Word 'richly dwelling' in us." Try to think of three ways that you can practice "abiding" in God's Word. Remember, when we read scripture, it is not about how quickly we can get through the text (the amount we read), it is about how the text can get through us (how it changes our lives). As you read the Bible this week, try to slow down and use your "abiding" methods.

2) An essential part of our life with God is sharing that life with others. One of the ways you can do this is by sharing what the Holy Spirit is teaching you in scripture. This week, whatever you learn from your time in Bible study, share that with someone else. It could be a family member or a friend, and they don't have to be a follower of Jesus either. Don't be afraid; you can do it!

3) "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you." The Holy Spirit is our teacher. When we read scripture, and when we pray, He is teaching and guiding us into truth. Our challenge is to listen. Every time you are ready to begin a spiritual exercise, stop and pray this prayer: "Holy Spirit, in this moment, I submit myself to You and Your truth. Lead me as I _____ (insert activity). I want to hear from You and obey. Help me to slow down, so that You can speak. I am listening. Amen."



THE JOURNEY

LESSON THREE | WORSHIP

The Bible can be described as a “Book of Worship.” From Genesis to Revelation, the reader is introduced to the Creator, Deliverer, Redeemer, Eternal King, the only One Who is truly worthy of our devotion and worship. Indeed, as we read scripture with focused eyes, we will see biblical principles of worship on every page.

Consider Jesus' words from the New Testament: “with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind...” Ask yourself: Are these words descriptive of the way I love God through my worship? Let's think about these things as we unpack this idea of loving God through worship.

I. DEFINITIONS OF BIBLICAL WORSHIP

Read: Exodus 20:1-6

TALK ABOUT IT

We often equate worship with praise and worship music. While we hope all church music is worshipful, there is much more to worship than those few minutes of music in services. How would you define “biblical worship”?

THINK ABOUT IT

“Worship” refers to the supreme honor we give in thought, word, or deed to a person or thing. The Bible teaches that God alone is worthy of worship.

Worship is a response. It is something we

offer back to God in light of our understanding of who God is and what He does.

Worship changes us.

II. EXPRESSIONS OF WORSHIP

Read: Psalm 95:1-6

TALK ABOUT IT

What expressions of worship characterize your life? Are there forms of worship that make you uncomfortable? Why?

THINK ABOUT IT

Worship involves the whole person: intellect, emotion, and will. As a result, there will be many expressions of worship. Yet, regardless of how we worship, it is to come from the heart in humility and awe, bringing glory to God (Col 3:17).

Biblical worship can be joyful and celebratory and immersed in an atmosphere of singing, musical instruments, shouts of praise, raised hands or even dancing.

Biblical worship can include bowing or kneeling before the Lord in prayer and corporate liturgy.

Biblical worship is also thanksgiving. Biblical worship includes giving. When we offer our time, our talent, our treasure to the Lord, we are acknowledging His sovereignty over all that we have, and all that we are. Biblical worship can be lifted to the Lord individually as well as corporately.



III. REASONS FOR WORSHIP

Read: Psalm 100

TALK ABOUT IT

Do we benefit from our worship? If so, how? How can we guard against worshiping rightly instead of for what we get out of it?

THINK ABOUT IT

God commands our worship (1 Chronicles 16:29; Matthew 4:10).

God deserves our worship. God's divine actions are worthy of our worship.

We worship because we need to glorify God in this way.

Our personal fulfillment will never be found outside of submissive, worshipful obedience to God.

Four effects of biblical worship

- God is glorified.
- Christians are purified
- The Church is edified
- The lost are evangelized

The Father is seeking worshipers (John 4:23). He is seeking you.

CONVERSATION STARTERS:

1) God said, "You shall have no other gods before Me" (Exodus 20:3). Though we may not live in a culture with physical golden idols, what do people worship in our culture?

2) Are there biblical expressions of worship you feel you have neglected that you can incorporate into your life? If so, what is one way you can do that this week?

3) Recall and share a particular time when you sensed the presence of God in worship.

4) What is something you would like to give God thanks for right now? Pray in thanksgiving right now.

AT-HOME SCRIPTURES:

Exodus 20:1-17; Psalm 95:1-11; Psalm 100:1-5

AT-HOME EXERCISES:

1) Think about the various biblical expressions of worship we've discussed. In your own devotional time, incorporate a worship expression you seldom practice.

2) In Matthew 25, Jesus illustrates that when we serve "the least of these," we are serving Him. Help someone new this week. Prayerfully offer that service to the Lord as an act of worship.

3) Psalm 19:1 says, "The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handiwork." All of creation is a testimony of God's glory. Go for a walk and observe God's creation. Allow what you see and hear to inspire your worship of God.

4) Psalm 96:1 says, "Oh, sing to the LORD a new song! Sing to the LORD, all the earth." Learn a worship song or sing one of the Psalms to your own melody.



THE JOURNEY

LESSON FOUR | SUBMISSION AND HOLINESS

Submission and Holiness: what is your first reaction to these words? Unfortunately, for many, the response is negative. Submission has been tainted by poor teaching and worse living. Similarly, holiness has been weaponized against fringe Christians and unbelievers, creating walls of division rather than opening the doors to hope and hospitality.

Our negative experiences do not have to deter us from exploring the beauty of submission and holiness. Discovering their biblical foundations can break down our negative stereotypes and enable us to experience joyous freedom, intimacy with God, and evangelistic salvation. As we learn together, ask God to deepen your group's understanding of the connection between submission, holiness, and love.

I. SUBMISSION — THE BIBLICAL BEGINNING

Read: Genesis 3:1-7

TALK ABOUT IT

What is at the root of Adam and Eve's sin? Is it pride, idolatry, a lack of submission, or something else? How do our culture's views of submission influence our understanding of biblical submission?

THINK ABOUT IT

This passage describes Adam and Eve's movement from dependence to independence.

Our effort to be independent of God led us into sin's slavery. Therein lies the paradox of

submission—true freedom only comes through submission.

George Matheson sang what Adam and Eve learned through suffering. Captivity to God is the only pathway to lasting freedom.

Whether we realize it or not, our culture conditions us against submission by defining it almost exclusively as oppressive behavior, exploitation, and abuse.

II. SUBMISSION — THE BEGINNING OF THE GOSPEL

Read: Mark 8:34

TALK ABOUT IT

What does Christ's life teach us about submission? What role (if any) does submission play in salvation?

THINK ABOUT IT

Submission is foundational to the gospel. We enter into life with Christ through the gate of submission.

Christ initiates our salvation and calls us to "repent and believe the gospel" (Mark 1:15).

Repentance involves a daily commitment of renouncing ourselves and reorienting toward God. Jesus used the term, repent, to describe getting off our agenda and getting onto His.

God does not command us to submit without showing the way of submission.



III. HOLINESS — THE FRUIT OF SUBMISSION

Read: Romans 6:22

TALK ABOUT IT

How would you describe “holiness”? Is there a difference between interior and exterior holiness? If so, what is it? How are submission and holiness connected?

THINK ABOUT IT

Holiness stems from submission. It starts with recognizing and grieving over our sin, which moves us to obedience.

Becoming the holy people of God doesn't start when we learn to check the right boxes. Our naming as “holy” stems from our identity as the “submitted” followers of Jesus. Holiness is not about legalism. It is about love.

Because we love God, we no longer need to submit to sin. We are free to walk in holiness (Rom 6:6).

We pursue holiness with great hope that unbelievers will see our good deeds and glorify God on their day of graceful salvation (1 Pet 2:12). The fruit of our submission is that others will experience salvation (Mt 5:16).

CONVERSATION STARTERS:

- 1) What is challenging for you regarding submission?
- 2) Are there times you've equated holy living to rules you should abide by? Explain.
- 3) In what practical ways can you choose submission to Jesus in your daily life?
- 4) When you reflect on Jesus' entire life being an act of submission - how does that help you view your own submission to Him?

AT-HOME SCRIPTURES:

Mark 8:34-38; Romans 6

AT-HOME EXERCISES:

- 1) What feelings do you have when you hear the word “submit”? Does it bring peace or anxiety? Joy or sadness? Ask yourself how these feelings impact the way you think of submission to God. Has this lesson helped define submission for you in a biblical way? Read this week's scriptures and write down the ways that your understanding of submission has grown.
- 2) Consider your life with God. Do you think of your relationship with Christ as one of submission? Do you live as if your sinful life is dead and that you are alive in Christ? Highlight one specific area you have not yet submitted to Jesus (time, relationships, habits, preferences, etc.). Confess that to Christ and submit that area to Him. Make it a habit to ask the Spirit to give you the desire and strength to change.
- 3) Practice the language of love—holy obedience. When you want to lash out at your co-worker, choose holiness. When you are tired and feel tempted, choose holiness. When you are alone, choose holiness. When you are in public, choose holiness. Be sensitive to the Holy Spirit's leading.
- 4) Richard Foster says, “Submission is the spiritual discipline that frees us from the everlasting burden of always needing to get our way.” Within limits, this week, consciously step back and let things go. Don't get the last word. Don't argue to be right. Begin to learn what it means to live life unnoticed. Submission teaches us that happiness and joy come from losing our life to Jesus' will above our own. Spend some time this weekend prayerfully reflecting on your week of submission. How can you begin to make submission a daily habit?



THE JOURNEY

LESSON FIVE | PRAYER

It is impossible to address our relationship with Jesus, our study of the Bible, and our walk of faith without recognizing the importance of prayer. Prayer is our invitation from God to be in constant communication with Him, and communication requires listening and speaking.

Prayer is one of the ways we show our love for God. As we come to know Him more each day, our desire to spend time with Him should grow. But why do we pray? It is not to change God's will, but to transform us into the image of Christ (see Luke 22:42). As we spend more time with the One we love, He will not leave us the way we are. We will be transformed.

I. JESUS, OUR EXAMPLE, PRAYED

Read: Hebrews 5:7

TALK ABOUT IT

If Jesus is God, why did He pray?

THINK ABOUT IT

While "What would Jesus do?" is a valuable question for our daily lives, we should also ask, "What did Jesus do?"

For Jesus, prayer is a life-giving act. This truth is supported by how He prays for others and in the way He prioritizes prayer. He demonstrates His love for His Father by making prayer the cornerstone of what He does. Do we do the same?

II. JESUS TAUGHT OTHERS TO PRAY

Read: Luke 11:1

TALK ABOUT IT

In our tradition, we are more likely to pray spontaneously than from a pre-written prayer. What is the value of including prayers directly from Scripture into our personal and corporate prayer lives?

THINK ABOUT IT

The followers of Jesus were privileged to witness Him talking with His Father. We all learn immensely from watching those around us.

What do you learn from studying the Lord's Prayer?

III. JESUS CONTINUES TO PRAY

Read: Romans 8:34

TALK ABOUT IT

Romans says that Jesus, our high priest, still prays for you and me. If even Jesus prayed and still prays, can we be so arrogant as to think we don't need to pray ourselves? What is one way you can begin to pray more regularly?

THINK ABOUT IT

The opportunity to pray is one of the highest privileges we can experience.

When we find prayer challenging, these truths



can encourage us:

- 1) Christ knows our weakness and forgives us (even our prayerlessness) when we ask.
- 2) He delights in us, our prayers, and our trust.
- 3) He is faithful to respond to us when we pray.
- 4) He has sent His Spirit to help us with our motivation to pray and to know what to pray.
- 5) Jesus is praying for us right now!

"Just like a little child can never draw a bad picture, so a child of God can never utter a bad prayer. God accepts us just the way we are, and he accepts our prayers just the way they are."

As we genuinely become people of prayer, we open our hearts to become the transformed people of God.

CONVERSATION STARTERS:

- 1) Discuss how the tone of your prayers would change if before asking for anything, you prayed that no matter the circumstances, you wanted primarily for God's name to be exalted?
- 2) Based on the Lord's Prayer, what kinds of things should we prioritize in our prayer?
- 3) Based on the Lord's Prayer, what kind of attitude should we have as we pray?"
- 4) Discuss how better descriptions of God as Father can guide us in prayer.

AT-HOME SCRIPTURE:

Matthew 5-7

AT-HOME EXERCISES:

- 1) What Would Jesus Do? Have you ever asked yourself this question? Many of us probably have. But it's important that we understand

the motivations for why Jesus did what He did on earth: it was to bring glory to His Father (you'll notice a connection between this exercise and #3). It's also helpful to personalize this question: What would you do, Jesus? He wants to answer us. Humbly ask this question at the start of your week and let Jesus lead you where He would go. Be open to where He takes you, who He takes you to, or what He leads you to do.

- 2) Written prayers are a valuable, stabilizing tool in our life with God. They connect us to other believers and offer us words to pray when perhaps we don't have them. You can find written prayers for just about any occasion. These could be Psalms, other passages of scripture, or the words of another believer. This week try to incorporate one written prayer into your devotional time. Use the same one throughout the week. Feel free to continue to pray in your normal ways (we need balance between spontaneity and structure) but let the consistency of the written prayer anchor your time. You may find yourself coming back to it more than you think.

- 3) Do you truly long to see God's name glorified? To see His name hallowed? This week try to carry this thought beyond your prayer time. How can you glorify God's name as you buy groceries, cook for your family, drive home from work, attend church, watch the news, etc. We exalt God's name not only with our words but with our actions. This week consciously aim to glorify God with your life. Set a time over the weekend to reflect on your experience.



THE JOURNEY

LESSON SIX | GENEROSITY

Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* reflects the generosity that is the character and activity of God.

This lesson will introduce you to three ways we are called to live generously: faithfulness to tithe, faithfulness in free-will offerings, and the generosity of sharing ourselves with others.

I. TITHING IN RESPONSE TO GOD'S COVENANT BLESSINGS

Read: Malachi 3:10

TALK ABOUT IT

Is tithing an act of obedience or an act of faith?

THINK ABOUT IT

Tithing, in the ancient world, would have referred to 10% of produce or flocks.

In the modern world, tithing usually refers to 10% of money we receive or earn.

Abraham was the first tither mentioned in the Bible. He taught this principle to his family.

Jesus discusses the purposes of tithing.

Tithing is not a guarantee of getting rich, but it is a promise of God's blessing to meet our needs.

II. GOD LOVES A CHEERFUL GIVER

Read: 2 Corinthians 9:7

TALK ABOUT IT

How can we discern when the Holy Spirit is prompting us to give?

THINK ABOUT IT

In addition to tithing, the Bible calls for free-will offerings.

Each of us has ample opportunities to give above our tithes.

We give because our hearts are stirred. The amount is not as significant as the motivation of the heart and the disposition of joyfully giving.

It is important that we realize that free will offerings are anchored in the free gift of Christ.

III. THE GENEROSITY OF SHARING OUR SELVES

Read: Luke 10:42

TALK ABOUT IT

What impact do our smart devices have on our availability to others?

THINK ABOUT IT

Sharing my attention and my time with the people around me is crucial. For most of us, our most valuable asset is not money, but time.

Mary recognized that time sitting at the feet of Jesus, that is, listening to Jesus, giving Him her undivided attention, was more important at that moment than anything else.



CONVERSATION STARTERS:

- 1) Talk about ways you have been impacted by the generosity of others.
- 2) Discuss creative ideas of how we can be generous with ourselves, our time, and our resources.
- 3) Explain how you see generosity to others as an expression of love to God.
- 4) Do you struggle to “be where your feet are”? Share about how we can encourage each other to be more present in our daily life.

AT-HOME SCRIPTURES:

Philippians 4:4-20; 2 Corinthians 9

AT-HOME EXERCISES:

- 1) Purposefully offer thanksgiving as an act of worship. Mike Coleman, the founder of Integrity Music, encourages believers to take a “30-minute Thanksgiving Break” in which you give thanks to the Lord for a half-hour. Be careful not to request anything, just “count your blessings.” How does this exercise change the way you see generosity?
- 2) Do you ever find yourself with “giving fatigue” with so many needs and opportunities to meet? More importantly, have you learned how to discern when the Holy Spirit is stirring your heart to give? Generosity is not an exercise in meeting everyone’s needs. That’s not our job; it’s God’s. But He does allow us to participate in the meeting of others’ needs. For some of you, this week is about learning to say, “I can’t meet everyone’s needs (physical, emotional, spiritual, etc.)” For others, this week is about learning to answer the Holy Spirit’s promptings to be generous. Which category do you fall in?
- 3) Has your heart been touched by the importance of being where your feet are? The gift of your presence might be one of the most valuable possessions you have. Give it wisely and cheerfully. As you spend time with

family, friends, co-workers, and strangers, set aside distractions. Are the distractions more valuable than the person in front of you?

4) Generosity is not something reserved for those we love. Jesus admonishes us to do good, not only to those who are kind to us, but also to those who are not. This week do something helpful or kind for someone you don’t know, for someone who has not done anything for you.



THE JOURNEY

LESSON SEVEN | COMMUNITY

From the beginning of time, God has been about community. He has always planned for a collective people who would love Him and one another.

The New Testament elaborates on God's design through Christ, who modeled this godly fellowship. Later, the Apostle Paul was careful, in his letters, to spell out what it means to live in Christian community.

Christian community presents its own set of challenges. Getting along with others and helping people we do not really know is not easy, but it is an essential calling of the Church.

I. A CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY LOVES ONE ANOTHER

Read: Ecclesiastes 4:9-10

TALK ABOUT IT

How would your life be different without your community? What needs do they meet for you?

THINK ABOUT IT

Solomon recognized that people are designed to be in relationship with others.

"The person who loves their dream of community will destroy community, but the person who loves those around them will create community."

When we live for others and love them, we will create the kind of community God intends for us.

We best glorify Christ when our focus is on Him and not ourselves.

II. A CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY FORGIVES OTHERS

Read: Ephesians 4:32

TALK ABOUT IT

What do you find most challenging about forgiving others? In what ways have you struggled to forgive yourself?

THINK ABOUT IT

"Everyone thinks forgiveness is a lovely idea until he has something to forgive."

One of the primary characteristics of an authentic Christian community is that its members express a consistent willingness to forgive.

God calls us to repent and put our faith in Him, which implies that we will follow Him or submit.

Paul tells us to forgive because God in Christ forgave us.

God does not wait until we are good enough to deserve His forgiveness.

A significant aspect of forgiveness is learning to forgive ourselves.

III. A CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY REACHES OTHERS

Read: 2 Corinthians 2:14-15



TALK ABOUT IT

Describe something practical you have done to show someone else the love of Christ.

THINK ABOUT IT

When the Church was birthed at Pentecost, it rapidly went from God's people praying in a room together to a Church spilling out into the streets.

The Church is intended to be an outward-facing people that shows the love of Christ and preaches the Gospel to those outside our walls.

A church exhibits a genuine Christian community when it is mobilized beyond its walls, but we do not have to have a large budget to love our neighbors. Simple acts of kindness go a long way.

CONVERSATION STARTERS:

- 1) How has being involved in a supportive community benefited you?
- 2) How do we put aside our own ideas of what community is supposed to look like to build the community God desires?
- 3) Are there times you have struggled to open up in community with others? What contributes to that hesitation?
- 4) Talk about ways we, as the church, can engage the community around us for the gospel.

AT-HOME SCRIPTURE:

Romans 14

AT-HOME EXERCISES:

- 1) Sometimes our vision of what community should look like skews our understanding of God's vision of community. This week set aside time to write down five ways a

community can be healthy and five ways that a community can be unhealthy. Ask yourself, "How do I need to put aside personal dreams of what community is supposed to look like to build the community God desires?"

- 2) Name some things that have happened to you in the last six months that can remind you of your need for others? How does this exercise cause you to feel about your community?
- 3) Forgiveness is an essential building block to the health of a community. This week, ask yourself these questions: Who do I need to forgive? How do I need to forgive myself?
- 4) Having proper checks and balances will help prevent us from developing dangerous beliefs or thoughts about God. Remember to always look for confirming verses of scripture that teach the same thing. If you have questions about a passage, ask a pastor or friend who can help you. This week when you are reading the At-Home Scriptures, keep a list of questions you have. Share this list with a friend or mentor who can help you walk through them.



THE JOURNEY

LESSON EIGHT | SERVICE

When we think about Jesus, different images may come to mind.

If we look deeply into the life of Jesus, we see love at the heart of everything He said and did.

Jesus was never selfish, and he never did anything to draw attention to Himself but only to glorify His Father.

John 13 helps us see that the love of God within us wears a servant's towel.

I. JESUS, THE SERVANT

Read: John 13:13-17

TALK ABOUT IT

What do you think it means to love God with all one's heart, soul, and strength? What does it mean to love our neighbor as ourselves? How did Jesus live out these things? What does service have to do with loving God and people?

THINK ABOUT IT

Jesus describes for us what constitutes greatness in God's Kingdom. "Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be the slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve" (Mark 10:43-45).

Washing a guest's feet was not the responsibility of those who had authority or honor. It was the task of the ones nobody paid attention to, but everyone needed.

The disciples didn't think of Jesus as one of

"those" servants. They thought washing feet was way beneath Him.

Jesus says, "This is how I want you to love others; do whatever needs to be done. No task and no person is beneath you."

II. SERVING HIS CHURCH

Read: John 13:34-35; Romans 12:3-8 (NLT)

TALK ABOUT IT

What gifts and talents has God given you to use to bless others? Give an example of how people with different gifts and talents can work together for a common purpose. When some people develop their talents and become successful, they also turn inward, becoming self-absorbed and arrogant. How do we maintain humility when we experience positive feedback for our abilities?

THINK ABOUT IT

Jesus was motivated by love and moved with compassion.

We can follow His example through the power of the Holy Spirit, who gives us gifts and talents!

In crisis, we may have to find new and creative ways of serving our brothers and sisters.

III. SERVING OUR NEIGHBORS/COMMUNITY

Read: Luke 10:25-37



TALK ABOUT IT

Why did the religious leaders not stop to help the wounded Jew? Why did the Samaritan stop to help, and to what lengths did he go to do so? Recall a time when you were in need, and someone went above and beyond to help you. How did that affect your life?

THINK ABOUT IT

Throughout the gospels, we find Jesus serving individuals, small groups, and thousands of people at once.

We should worship corporately and meet the needs of those in our church family.

But as Jesus modeled, it is just as essential to be connected with our neighbors and have deep roots in our community.

In the "Good Samaritan," Jesus demonstrates that loving God and loving people can be as simple as helping someone in need.

Jesus called us to be the Church and love and serve our neighbor.

You have neighbors all over the world. Love them. Connect with them. Befriend them. Ask how you can help them, and then serve them. Be the Church.

CONVERSATION STARTERS:

- 1) Have you ever washed the feet of another?
- 2) How difficult would it be to wash the feet of someone you knew was going to betray you?
- 3) Who has the most significant role in serving: the pastor, his paid staff, or the volunteers? Why?
- 4) Recall a time when you served a stranger and describe how it affected their lives.

AT-HOME SCRIPTURES:

John 13:1-17; Acts 2:42-47

AT-HOME EXERCISES:

- 1) If you haven't done so, commit to helping in a specific ministry of your church. Talk with a pastor or other leader to find out how you can begin this incredible journey of serving "like Christ" today. If you are already serving, write down three ways that serving impacts your life, as well as three challenges that serving presents.
- 2) Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you in serving someone in your community this week through personal outreach or an outreach ministry of your church.
- 3) Keep your heart connected to the Holy Spirit and ask Him to place people in your path who could use your help. Recognize that He may send you to a stranger or someone you have known your whole life.
- 4) Loving your neighbor keeps your self-love in check. This week make an effort to lighten the burden of those around you, beginning with those with whom you live. The invaluable gift of listening is a great place to start.

