

THE LIFE OF A JESUS FOLLOWER

Jesus Follower



HOPE
CHURCH



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Jesus Follower

THIS DEVOTIONAL BELONGS TO:

THE LIFE OF A JESUS FOLLOWER DEVOTIONAL

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	6
BEFORE YOU BEGIN	8
HOW TO USE THIS DEVOTIONAL	10
SECTION 1: ABIDE	14
SECTION 2: CONNECT	59
SECTION 3: SHARE	99
APPENDICES	142

INTRODUCTION

I began attending Hope Church when I was 20 years old. I had become a Christian a few years before that but had never truly understood what it meant to live the life of a Jesus follower. Soon after I began attending Hope, our Founding Pastor, Vance Pitman, began the sermon series, The Life of a Jesus Follower.

In that series, I discovered from God's word that Jesus' life on earth revolved around three relationships. First, He walked in intimate fellowship with the Father. Everything He did, He did out of the overflow of intimacy with the Father. Second, He lived His life in community with His disciples. Living life with His disciples was a byproduct of His relationship with the Father. And third, He lived His life engaging and cultivating relationships with people who didn't know God at all. The kingdom expanded on the rails of relationships.

This reality of Jesus' relationships while on earth was realized by our founding pastors in the early years of Hope Church. They took time to study the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John), and discovered that every story in them could be dropped into one of three file drawers – (1) Jesus and His relationship with the Father, (2) Jesus and His relationship with the disciples, or (3) Jesus and His relationship with unbelievers. That led to a very important question. If that's what His life looked like then on earth, what will it look like now as He lives his life through you and me as followers of Jesus? The answer? The same! It will look like (1) A daily, intimate fellowship relationship with the Father, (2) A relationship of connecting in community with other believers, and (3) A cultivation of relationships with others who don't know Jesus to share Christ with them.

Every believer should be able to lay this paradigm of following Jesus over their lives and examine to see if they are truly allowing His life to be lived in them or if they have settled for the cheap counterfeit of religion. Hear this clearly! Jesus doesn't want you and I to try our best to live for Him; He desires to live His life through me and you.

As a church, we have spent over 20 years refining this process of simple discipleship we now call The Life of a Jesus Follower. Following Jesus revolves around three words: ABIDE, CONNECT and SHARE. Abiding in Christ personally and daily, connecting in community in large groups and small groups, and sharing in the mission locally and globally, characterizes the life of a Jesus follower.

What fires me up as a pastor is to think of a church family who truly believes this and begins to live this. What if we truly became the kind of people, by the grace of God, who abide in Christ, connect in community, and share in the mission? I believe that's what God desires to do as we trust in His Spirit in us.

As you begin this journey of walking through this devotional, my prayer is that you, "Beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from Lord who is the Spirit." (2 Corinthians 3:18) May you experience the power of who you are in Christ, becoming Christ in you, as you learn to simply abide, connect and share!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Scott Worthington', with a stylized, flowing script.

Scott Worthington

Senior Pastor, Hope Church

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Here are a few truths to help you so that this journey will not be a short-lived, fruitless exercise, but rather a life-changing encounter with God. Keep the following truths in mind as you embark upon this journey.

1. The Promise

God promises us that no energy spent in seeking Him is a waste.

Jeremiah 33:3 says,

"Call to me and I will answer you, and will tell you great and hidden things that you have not known."

James 4:8 says,

"Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you."

In Matthew 7:7, Jesus says, *"...seek and you will find."*

Each of these Scriptures states that God desires to reveal Himself to us so that we can know, love, and enjoy Him. He promises that if we seek Him, we will not be disappointed.

2. The Power

You may be saying to yourself, "I will never have the energy, self-discipline, or commitment necessary to make it for one week, much less for seven weeks." Guess what? You are right...Being a Jesus follower is not difficult; it is impossible! This journey is not about personal fortitude, determination, or even your commitment. The strength and power to carry out this journey will not come from looking to oneself, but rather from surrendering to Him.

The Bible says this very thing in Philippians 2:13: "...for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure." Likewise, Colossians 1:29 says, "For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me." When we are humble enough to say to God, "I can't, but

You can,” He floods our lives with His grace—the power and energy to obey and please Him.

3. Other People

You need others. The Christian life was never intended to be lived out in isolation. A key aspect of this journey is connection in a small group with other believers. There are some areas of your life that can only be developed in fellowship with others. If you are not yet connected in a small group, visit HopeChurchLV.com to sign-up.

Anything of significant, eternal value that happens in your life is the result of God’s activity. This Devotional Guide will not change you; only God can. Hopefully, this guide will serve as a catalyst for you to hear from and be impacted by God. Below are some of the practical suggestions to help you get the most out of this devotional.

4. Preparation

A. Set a daily time - We schedule things that are important to us. What does not get scheduled does not happen. Begin by setting a period of 15-30 minutes each day to spend with God using this guide. Pick the time of day when your mind is most alert. The goal is to give God your undivided attention.

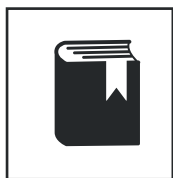
B. Set a place - Find a spot where you can be alone without the distraction of others, phones, social media, etc.

C. Gather your tools - Keep your Bible and a pen close to record your thoughts and prayers. For more resources, visit JesusFollower.com.

HOW TO USE THIS DEVOTIONAL

This devotional is designed to serve as a tool in your hands to help you grow as a Jesus follower.

DAILY PAGES



Read

Each day will include a passage of Scripture for you to look up in your Bible and read. Read the passage as many times as necessary for you to get a handle on the overall meaning. The time that you spend in the Word is the most important time of all. DO NOT RUSH! Take time to hear what God is saying.



Interact

Following the passage that you read, there will be an opportunity for you to dig deeper into a particular verse or phrase. Here is a simple three-step plan to follow, which will allow you to discover for yourself the treasures of God's Word.

Step 1

Prayerfully read the verses from your Bible listed in the "Read" section. Ask the Lord to speak.

Step 2

Identify at least one verse that speaks to your heart. Try the S.O.A.P. method of interacting with the Scripture:

S (Scripture) Write out the key verse.

O (Observation) Write out what God shows you in that verse.

A (Application) Write out how your life will be different today as a result of what you have read.

P (Prayer) Turn this into a prayer to God and record that on the page.

Here is an example of the S.O.A.P. study method:

Step 3

Daily Page Sample Entry

S See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God; and such we are. (1 John 3:1)

O The love of God is a gift. He has showered His love on us and allowed me to be part of His family. Nothing will ever change that. The love of God is a constant!

A My thoughts, actions, and attitudes today should reflect who I am. I am loved with an everlasting, endless, unchanging love. Therefore, I have the capacity to love others as I am loved.

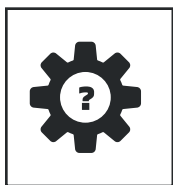
P Lord, thank You. Thank You for first loving me. Let me walk in that love today and be willing to share that love with others.

Remember, this Devotional Guide is designed to help you grow in your relationship with Jesus. You can be flexible in how you use it. The goal is to know Jesus more as you spend time with Him in His Word. Frequently asked questions and other resources are available for you at JesusFollower.com.



Reflect

This section will provide you with a few devotional thoughts to consider as you reflect on what God has shown you. There will also be questions to consider in your personal time with the Lord as well as questions to be used in your small group discussion.



Apply

As you study through this devotional, we have supplied questions and thoughts to help you process the passages you are studying. These are designed to help you spend intentional time processing what God's word is saying, not just for the original audience, but also for you.



Going Deeper

The last section is optional. It is designed for those who want to explore further with other parallel Scripture.

ENJOY **THE JOURNEY!**

DAILY PAGES

ABIDE

Following Jesus is all about relationships. The single most important aspect of your life is your relationship with God Himself. Everything in life is dependent upon that relationship. The life of a Jesus follower is first and foremost characterized by an intimate, growing, love relationship with God.

"The Christian life is nothing less than the life which He lived then... lived now by Him in you." – Major Ian Thomas

"This is real Christianity – A spontaneous overflow of the life of Christ through us." – Clyde Cranford

DAY 1

*A Jesus follower
is loved by God*



Read

1 John 3:1 1 John 4:8-10
Ephesians 3:19 John 15:9-11



Interact (S.O.A.P)

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



Reflect

The Bible says much about the love of God toward His children. His love for us is great, never-ending, unchanging, beyond knowledge, and understanding. John 13:1 tells us that He loves us to the end. In other words, He cannot love us more than He does at this very moment. After we have been in heaven for 1,000 years, God will not love us more than He does today because His love for us is not rooted in our performance for Him, but in our position in Christ as His children. John 15:9 says that Jesus loves us with the same love that the Father has for Him. Think about it! Perfect, eternal, unchanging love has existed between the Father and Son for eternity. We now share in that love. Here is the reality: **You are a loved and accepted child of the Father, and there is not one thing that you have to do today to earn that love.**

This implies God's love is also undeserved. Jesus Christ perfectly demonstrated His love for us while we were sinners—not while we were trying to be good, but while we were sinners (Romans 5:8). The cross of Christ is a public demonstration of His immense love for you and me.



Based on this understanding of God's love for you, what should be your response?

Jesus says to "Abide in His love." In other words, ENJOY IT! Stop and simply enjoy the reality that the God of the universe has set His perfect love on you. No matter what happens to you or what you do today, the love of God towards you will not change.



Going Deeper

Romans 8:31-39 Zephaniah 3:17

DAY 2

*A Jesus follower
has been changed by God*



Read

Ephesians 1:3-14



Interact (S.O.A.P)

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



Reflect

The moment a person becomes aware of God's love for them and surrenders by turning from their sin and placing their faith in Christ (becomes a Jesus follower), that person is changed forever. There are spiritual blessings lavishly poured out upon us from God. In the space below, write down some of the blessings given to a Christian based on Ephesians 1:3-14.

The Bible speaks of many things that become true of a person at the moment they place their faith in Christ. The trouble is many of these things are "spiritual" truths, which cannot be seen. The Christian life is learning to "live out" here on earth what is already true about us before God. God says believers are:

1. Blessed with every spiritual blessing
2. Chosen by Him
3. Holy and blameless
4. Adopted as sons and daughters
5. Redeemed
6. Forgiven
7. Guaranteed an inheritance
8. Given the Holy Spirit
9. Made alive (spiritually)
10. Seated with Christ
11. Saved by grace
12. Created for good works
13. Blessed with access to the Father

Nothing that we do can add to or take away from these blessings. They are finished works in the Father's eyes. It is all a work of God through His wonderful grace.



In what ways do you need to see yourself the way
He sees you?

Paul says in Ephesians 4:1 to live like who you are in Christ. In other words, we are forgiven...*Live like it*. We are holy and blameless... *Live like it*. We are sons and daughters of the King...*Live like it*. We have confident access to the Father...*Take advantage of it*. The way that we see ourselves will determine how we live. See yourself as God sees you, and it will change your life. Do not live to gain His acceptance. Enjoy the acceptance that you already have.



Going Deeper

2 Peter 1:3

Romans 12:1

Ephesians 2:18



Before going any further, what is your answer to the question, "Am I a Jesus follower?" If you cannot answer that question with a resounding "yes", please turn to Appendix 1 on page 146, and read how you can become a follower of Jesus.

DAY 3

*A Jesus follower
has been changed by God*



Read

Hebrews 12:5-11



Interact (S.O.A.P)

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines, typical of notebook paper. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.



Reflect

Based on Hebrews 12:5-11, what does God use to change us?

Write down anything you observe that describes God's discipline of His children.

On Day 2, we learned that God has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies. We are complete in Christ positionally. However, practically speaking, on a behavioral, day-to-day basis, Christ-like character and conduct must be developed. It is true that God has changed us, and it is equally true that He is ever-changing us. God loves us the way we are. But, He loves us too much to leave us the way we are. He is changing us to be like His Son. One tool God uses to change His children is loving discipline.

1. God disciplines all believers. (V. 5-6)
2. God disciplines us because He loves us. (v. 6)
3. If there is no discipline, there is no relationship. (v. 8)
4. We can trust God to discipline us rightly. (v. 9)
5. God disciplines us for our good. (v. 10)
6. At the time, discipline is not fun. (v. 11)
7. God disciplines us so that we might bear fruit. (v. 10-11)

When you hear the word discipline, do not think punishment. Discipline is God's gracious, yet definite, process of conforming us to the image of Jesus. It is always motivated by love and is great evidence of our abiding relationship to the Father. He loves us so much that He will not leave us like we are. God desires that we partake of His very nature on a day-to-day basis. He is at work to make this a reality.



Can you recall a time when God was disciplining you?

How did you respond to God's discipline?

Based on Hebrews 12, a Jesus follower will:
Recognize discipline as an expression of love.
Embrace discipline as a means to Christ-likeness.



Going Deeper

Appendix 2 on page 149 contains an excerpt on God's Discipline from a book entitled *Because We Love Him* by Clyde Cranford.

DAY 4

*A Jesus follower
pursues God*



Read

Exodus 33:13-18 Psalm 63:1-3
Philippians 3:7-14



Interact (S.O.A.P)

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



Reflect

What do Moses, David, and Paul all have in common in these verses?

A person comes to know God personally the moment he or she by faith surrenders to Him and receives Jesus as the Lord and Savior of their life. However, salvation is only the beginning. The God of the universe is infinite— that means we will never exhaust the riches of who He is. A Jesus follower longs to pursue intimate knowledge of God for the rest of his or her life. Deep in the soul of a Jesus follower is a hunger to know God more.



Do I hunger and desire to know God like that? Why or why not?

What distracts me from Him?

Was there a time in my life when I hungered for God more than I do now?

If so, what changed, and what steps do I need to take today to begin to pursue God like that again?

The more we come to know God, the greater the desire to know Him more. He invites us to know Him. He desires us to know Him. There is no higher pursuit in life.



Going Deeper

Psalm 42:1-4 Matthew 5:6
Isaiah 55:1 John 4:13-14

DAY 5

*A Jesus follower
spends time with God*



Read

John 15:1-5

Mark 3:13-14

Luke 10:38-42



Interact (S.O.A.P)

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



Reflect

Based on these three passages, is God more interested in what we can do for Him or in the time that we spend with Him?

Jesus said in John 15:4-5 that there is only one way to bear fruit in our lives. What is it?

For what purpose did Jesus call the disciples based on Mark 3:13-14?

Look at the different ways that Mary and Martha approach Jesus in Luke 10. What did Jesus tell Mary and Martha was the most important thing in Luke 10:42?

The Christian life is not about what we can do for God. It is not about how many church services we attend, how much we give, or how many people in need we help. It is about an intimate, growing relationship that involves spending time alone with God. Jesus said, "Abide in Me." The invitation of Jesus is not to do something for Him; the invitation of Jesus is to be with Him. He called His disciples to, first, come be with Him before they went to serve. Therefore, everything God desires to do through my life, He will do out of the overflow of what He is doing in my life. All of the action must come from the relationship, or it is empty. Jesus commended Mary for wanting to simply sit at His feet and spend time with Him.

The God of the universe wants to spend time with you. It is a daily invitation to be with Him. There is no more important

aspect of the Christian life than regular time set apart to simply be with Him. Everything in your life will flow out of this. Remember, God has called you to a intimate, love relationship before anything else.



Are you more like Mary or Martha?

Jesus did not scold Martha for her labor. There are times to "do." He simply reminded her of what must come first.

Is your Christian life characterized by activity or intimacy?

Do you take time regularly to sit at His feet and listen to His Word?

There is no substitute in the life of a believer for time spent alone with God in His Word and prayer. Daily time alone with God is not "a" priority for the Jesus follower; it is "the" priority. If this is not right, nothing else will be right.



Going Deeper

Exodus 33:9-11

If you have questions about how to spend time alone with God, Appendix 3 on page 143 contains a simple overview entitled, *How Do I Spend Time with God?*

DAY 6

*A Jesus follower talks
with God (Part 1)*



Read

John 14:13-14 John 15:7
Luke 18:1-8



Interact (S.O.A.P)

[illegible]



Reflect

Take some time and read these verses again slowly. There is incredible truth here about prayer. Beside each word or phrase listed below, write down what is being taught about prayer. The first two are done as an example.

John 14:13-14

Whatever - *Talk to God about anything*

You ask - *Approach Him with a question*

In My name -

This I will do -

That -

The Father may be glorified -

If you ask Me - In the Son -

Anything - In My name -

I will do it -

John 15:7

If you abide in Me -

My words abide in you -

Ask whatever you wish -

It will be done for you -

It is impossible to follow Jesus and not talk with Him. Prayer is a relationship, not a religious activity. It is a two-way conversation. The ear of God is attentive to the prayers of His children. He listens and He also speaks to us in prayer. In fact, what God says in prayer is much more important than what we say. To pray in Jesus' name means to pray consistently with His character and according to His will. We know His character and His will through the Bible. In John 15:7, Jesus says, ***"If... my Words abide in you...ask."*** The Bible and prayer go hand in hand.



Is your prayer life communion with God or merely a religious exercise?

Do you spend more time listening or talking in prayer?

Are your prayers a demonstration of following Jesus or of wanting Him to follow you?

The greatest help to your prayer life will be the Word of God. The Bible is God talking to you, but it can also serve as your guide in what to say to Him. When we pray the words of Scripture, we know we are praying according to His will. The Psalms are a great place to start. Many of the 150 Psalms are prayers offered to God by David and others, which can be used to revitalize your communion with the Father. There is not a single emotion which is not expressed in the Psalms.



Going Deeper

The following Psalms are a starting point as you begin to incorporate Scripture into your prayer life:

Psalm 5
Psalm 42
Psalm 116:1-2

Psalm 8
Psalm 51

DAY 7

*A Jesus follower talks
with God (Part 2)*



Read

Colossians 4:2

Psalm 5:3

John 5:19

Ephesians 3:20



Interact (S.O.A.P)

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Reflect

On Day 6, we saw the promise of God that He will respond to our prayers (John 14:13-14). Thus, a major aspect of our prayer life is what happens after we pray. According to the verse in Colossians, what is to be our attitude after we have prayed?

What did Jesus do based on John 5:19?

After we pray, the greatest thing that we can begin to do is to “wait and watch.” God promises that He will respond. Our waiting and watching after praying reveals whether or not we really believe Him to keep His promise to respond to our prayers. Psalm 5:3 is a picture of ordering your day in prayer and then waiting and watching in faith for the activity of God. According to Ephesians 3:20, God not only answers our prayers, but He also wishes to do much more than we even ask. Remember, God may not always answer in the way we expect. He is God. He leads...we follow. One aspect of our watching in prayer is our willingness to alter our plans and expectations in order to line up with Him. Jesus teaches this in John 5:19. He only did what He “saw” the Father doing. Christ, Himself, was watchful in prayer.



Does your prayer life end when you say “Amen”?

Are you watchful throughout your day for God’s activity?

Are you willing to alter your plans and expectations?
Do you really believe that God is going to answer?

One way to practically live out Psalm 5:3 is to keep a prayer journal. Write down your prayers, and be ready to watch and record what God does. Watching for God to respond is an act of faith. Hebrews 11:6 says without faith it is impossible to please God. God may not work on our timetable, but we know that His timing is always best, and His direction is always the right way to follow.



James 1:5-8
Psalm 27:14

Psalm 25:5
Psalm 106:13

"God doesn't answer prayer; He answers you. No amount of education, mastering a formula, or learning a certain skill set determines spiritual power in a prayer meeting; rather, God moves based on the hearts of the people praying."—John Franklin

DAY 8

*A Jesus follower
knows God*



Read

Exodus 3:1-6; 13-15



Interact (S.O.A.P)

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



Reflect

To know God more intimately is the greatest pursuit in life. The amazing truth is that God wants us to know Him more. We know this because the Bible is full of accounts where God reveals Himself in specific ways to individuals. God revealed Himself to Moses in a powerful way (Exodus 3). God reveals Himself to us, as well, and the result is that we know Him more. He desires that you not merely know about Him intellectually. He wants you to know Him experientially. God desires that we have intimate encounters with Him in our daily lives so that we not only know about Him, but we know Him personally. He reveals Himself most clearly in the pages of Scripture. He also allows us to know Him through life events and circumstances.

Below is a list of verses in which God reveals Himself. Beside each verse, write the **name, title, or description** of God that is revealed in each verse. Before you do this exercise, stop and prayerfully ask God to allow you to know Him intimately as He reveals Himself to you. The first one is done for you.

Genesis 17:1 **GOD ALMIGHTY**

Isaiah 47:4

Genesis 22:14

Genesis 16:13

Jeremiah 10:12

Psalms 48:14

Lamentations 3:25

Psalms 33:20

Hosea 13:4

Isaiah 9:6

Habakkuk 3:18-19

1 Chronicles 29:11-12

Psalms 32:7

John 10:11

Isaiah 40:28-31

Colossians 3:4

Isaiah 41:10

Revelation 19:11, 16



Has God revealed Himself to you in any of the above ways?

Spend a few minutes praising God for allowing you to know Him intimately.

DAY 9

*A Jesus follower
loves God*



Read

1 John 4:19 Deuteronomy 6:5
Mark 12:30 Matthew 22:37



Interact (S.O.A.P)

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



Reflect

Based on these verses, what does God desire of us?

Based on the verses in Mark, Deuteronomy and Matthew, what specifically does He desire for us to love?

We are only able to love God because He first loved us. In response to His great love, He desires that we love Him. This is the heart of being a Jesus Follower – a love relationship with God. Everything in our life is dependent upon the quality of our love relationship with Him. If this is not right, nothing else will be right. Jesus said this is the greatest commandment of all.

Most of our difficulties in the Christian life can be traced back to a love problem. Love for God, like faith in God, does not come naturally. It is only possible as God reveals Himself to us, and we choose to lovingly respond to Him.

Mark 12:30 is not a suggestion; it is a command that expresses God's desire for us. He desires that we love Him to the very core of our being (heart). He desires that we love Him with all of our emotions (soul). He desires that we love Him with all of our energy (strength). He desires that we willfully choose to love Him (mind). The God of all creation lacks nothing, yet He chooses to love us, and He wants our love in return. As human beings created in His image, we are the only created beings that have the capacity to love Him like that. We can love God in an intelligent, emotional, willing, and active way.



Is your relationship with God characterized by deep sincerity or by superficial religious activity?

Is your relationship with God characterized by passion or complacency?

Do you willingly choose to love God in response to His great love, or is it dependent upon circumstances?

God desires that we love Him sincerely, passionately, willingly and actively. Love for Him does not come naturally. It deepens and develops as we know Him more. The more we know Him, the more we love Him.

Ask God to give you a hunger to know Him more that will result in a growing love relationship, which is what being a Jesus follower is all about.



Going Deeper

Joshua 23:11 Psalm 31:23

John 14:15

DAY 10

*A Jesus follower
obeys God*



Read

John 4:34

John 14:15, 23-24

John 14:31

1 John 2:3-5



Interact (S.O.A.P)

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



Reflect

What do these verses say about Jesus' relationship to the Father?

Write in the space below how God feels about obedience based on the previous verses.

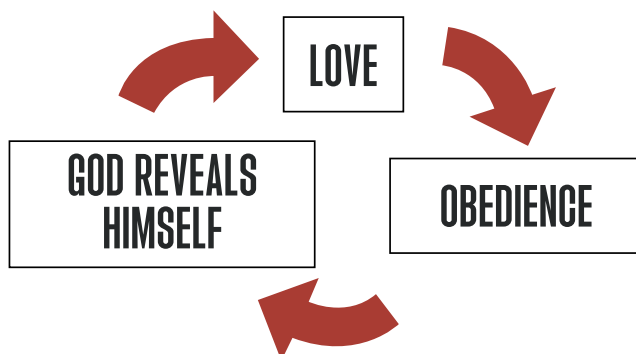
What does God do in response to obedience (John 14:23)?

What does a lack of obedience reveal (John 14:15)?

Following Jesus is impossible without obedience. At its core, obedience is simply the life of Jesus in me being lived through me. According to Jesus, obedience to Him is an outward expression of love (John 14:15, 24a). Therefore, an obedience problem is a love problem. We will never obey Christ perfectly this side of heaven, but a characteristic of a true Jesus follower is a desire to obey God (1 John 2:3-5). The life of Jesus was a life of obedience. As Jesus lives through us, it will look the same.

Jesus promised that He would reveal Himself to those who obey Him (John 14:21, 23). Thus, obedience to God and His Word is a demonstration of love as well as the pathway to deeper intimacy with Him. When He reveals Himself in response to obedience, the result will always be deeper love for Him.

The following diagram demonstrates this pattern of following Jesus:



Do you yearn to obey God?

Do you see obedience as an expression of love or duty?

Is there a point of disobedience in your walk with God that is hindering your growth?

Read 1 Samuel 15:1-22. In 1 Samuel 15:22, Saul chose to partially obey what God had told him. Partial obedience is disobedience. Not only did Saul disobey, he also tried to cover up his disobedience with religious activity (1 Samuel 15:15). God made it clear to Saul that obedience born out of a heart of love was far more important than vain, religious duty.

Is there any partial obedience that you need to confess and correct in order to walk in deeper intimacy with God?



Going Deeper

Jeremiah 7:23

Deuteronomy 28:1-2

DAY 11

*A Jesus follower
trusts God*



Read

Deuteronomy 6:23-25 Titus 1:2
Hebrews 11:1-28



Interact (S.O.A.P)

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



Reflect

We will not follow someone we do not trust. Trust or faith is essential in the daily life of a Jesus follower. It brings great pleasure to God when we trust Him (Hebrews 11:6).

Hebrews 11 is full of men and women who trusted God. Their walk with God was characterized by obedience, even when it did not make sense or was not easy. Noah trusted God and built an ark for a flood; when he had never seen rain, much less a flood. But he trusted God to keep His promise, and he obeyed God. Sarah was given the ability to conceive at a very old age. She trusted God for this because He said that it would happen. Trusting God on a daily basis is only possible if we know His character and His Word. We will trust Him because we know that He is faithful and that He always has our best interest in mind (Deuteronomy 6:24). We will trust and obey His Word because we believe He always keeps His promises (Titus 1:2).



Is your life characterized by fear or faith?

Is your faith evident through your actions?

Do you really trust God to keep His promises in your life and in the lives of your loved ones?

We do not generate faith on our own. Faith is only possible as we know God and know His Word. That's why Romans 10:17 says, "Faith comes from hearing and hearing through the word of Christ." Worry and fear result from focusing on the circumstances instead of claiming God's promises.

What is one worry or fear that you are presently carrying?

Now that you have acknowledged it, acknowledge who God is and claim what He has said pertaining to that area of your life. That is faith.



Going Deeper

Psalm 56:4

Jeremiah 17:7

Psalm 62:8

Luke 8:22-5

DAY 12

A Jesus follower is dependent upon God



Read

John 15:5 1 Corinthians 15:10
Luke 18:9-14



Interact (S.O.A.P)

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



Reflect

According to the verses:

What can we do on our own apart from God?

Which statement in these verses is most difficult for you?

These verses allow no room for pride. A Jesus follower recognizes his or her total dependence upon God to accomplish anything of eternal value in or through them. Jesus says that we can do nothing apart from Him. Paul says that we are crucified with Christ. A dead man can accomplish nothing; unless someone lives through Him.

Jesus is our life. He tells us in John 15:5 that our relationship to Him is like a vine and a branch. We (the branch) are totally dependent upon Him (the vine) for strength, energy, and nourishment in order to bear fruit in our lives. Fruit is simply the life of Jesus in me being lived through me. The Christian life is not about me living for Jesus; the Christian life is about Jesus living His life in and through me out of the overflow of my abiding in Him. The Christian life is not about endless effort or what we can do for God. It is about being so intimately connected to Him that He lives His life out through us and accomplishes His purposes through us. The Christian life is not about becoming a better version of ourselves. It is about dying to ourselves so that Christ may live through us. The key is a relationship with a Person—Jesus Christ Himself.



Do you live your life independent of Jesus or dependent upon Him?

Independence is pride, while dependence is humility. In Luke 18, the Pharisee was prideful, and the tax collector was humble. James 4:6 says that God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.

The humble Jesus follower spends time with Jesus. The humble Jesus follower seeks His direction and power. The common prayer of a humble Jesus follower is "Lord, apart from You I can do nothing...I NEED YOU!"



Going Deeper

Jeremiah 17:5-8 Isaiah 41:10
Psalm 33:16-22

DAY 13

*A Jesus follower
confesses sin to God*



Read

Hebrews 4:12

1 John 1:8-10

Psalm 32:1-7

Proverbs 28:13



Interact (S.O.A.P)

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



Reflect

Is a Jesus follower perfect?

Whose responsibility is it to point out sin in our lives?

What tool is used to reveal sin?

What happens when we hide our sin?

How does God respond when we confess sin?

There is no person who does not sin. A Jesus follower is loved, forgiven, and redeemed by God yet still sins. But God will not allow His children to remain in sin. He will expose sin through the Holy Spirit using the Word of God (Hebrews 4:12). All Jesus followers sin, yet many times we fail to quickly confess that sin to God. Instead, we try to cover it up or ignore it. King David graphically depicts what happens in the heart of a child of God who tries to ignore or hide sin (Psalm 32). Yet David also tells us how God responds when we come clean and confess our sin to Him.

Both Christians and non-Christians sin. The difference is that true Christians will grieve over their sin before God. Another difference is that true Christians have placed their faith in Jesus Christ. As a result, Jesus forever stands as the perfect and righteous Advocate before the Father (1 John 2:1). Positionally, God the Father, never sees our sin. He sees only the righteousness of Jesus when He sees us. In a practical sense, our sin still grieves God and greatly hinders our daily fellowship with Him. Therefore, a Jesus follower is moved to quickly confess sin so they can be cleansed from all unrighteousness, and daily fellowship with God can be restored.



How do you respond when God exposes sin in your life?

Do you see all sin as being against God (Psalm 51:4)?

Do you believe God is able and willing to abundantly forgive sin the moment that we “come clean” and confess our sin to Him?

It is God’s responsibility to expose and to convict us of sin in our life. Sin is never to be our focus. Trying to root out our sins places the emphasis on the sin and not the Savior. We do not avoid sin by focusing on sin. We focus on Christ and our love relationship with Him. When we do sin, He will faithfully point it out. It is our responsibility to quickly agree with Him (confess) and turn from that sin (repent).

King David said that in these times of confession and repentance, we can experience the sweet presence of God in a unique way. We come to see Him as our one and only “hiding place” (Psalm 32:6-7). We embrace the reality that God has hidden our sin in Christ and enjoy forgiveness through confession.



Going Deeper

2 Samuel 11:1-27 2 Samuel 12:1-15

DAY 14

*A Jesus follower is
given the Spirit of God*



Read

John 14:16-18

John 16:5-7, 12-14

Romans 8:1-27



Interact (S.O.A.P)

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



Reflect

What did Jesus promise His disciples in John 14:16?

According to Jesus in John 16:7, was it better when He walked the earth or after He left and went to heaven?

Who has the Spirit according to Romans 8:9?

What is a characteristic of a Jesus follower in Romans 8:14?

When Jesus walked on the earth, His disciples followed Him everywhere He went. He talked with them. He counseled them. He directed them. He comforted them. In John 14, He tells them He is going away! They become troubled and afraid. He then gives them an incredible promise. He would be with them. He would not leave them as orphans. But how? How could He leave and yet be with them? Answer...by the Holy Spirit.

He promised the Father would send the Spirit, and the Spirit would never leave them. In fact, Jesus said it would be to their advantage for Him to leave so that the Spirit would come and dwell within them. Thus, He would continue to talk with them, direct them, and comfort them through His Spirit living inside them.

As Jesus followers, we are blessed with the same promise. At the moment of salvation, the very Spirit of Christ comes to dwell within us (Ephesians 1:13, 1 Corinthians 6:19). Because of this, every moment of every day, it is as though we are sitting in the very presence of Jesus Himself. By His Spirit, He talks with us, leads us, comforts us, and is with us forever.

But how does He communicate with us by the Spirit? He may speak to our hearts through prayer. He may give us a sense of peace by His presence. He may direct our decisions through circumstances or others. But most often and most clearly, the Spirit speaks to us through the Bible. The Spirit may communicate with you in other ways, but He will always speak in harmony with the Word of God.

But how does He communicate with us by the Spirit? He may speak to our hearts through prayer. He may give us a sense of peace by His presence. He may direct our decisions through circumstances of others. But most often and most clearly, the Spirit speaks to us through the Bible. The Spirit may impress or communicate with you in other ways, but He will always speak in harmony with the Word of God.



Is your life led more by the Spirit or by the flesh?

Does the Word of God fill your heart and mind?

There is no way to be sure you are hearing from God's Spirit apart from God's Word. When we fill our minds and hearts with His Word, He takes that Word and leads and directs our lives. Thus, to daily follow Jesus is to follow the Spirit of Christ by obeying His Word.



Going Deeper

Galatians 5:16, 22-23

Zechariah 4:6

Acts 13:1-4

DAY 15

*A Jesus follower
enjoys God*



Read

Psalm 11
Philippians 4:4

2 Samuel 6:14
Acts 16:23-25



Interact (S.O.A.P)

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



Reflect

Should there be joy and gladness in the life of a Jesus follower?

What specifically are we to rejoice in based on Philippians 4:4?

What was the source of joy for Paul and Silas in Acts 16?

Why was David so joyful in 2 Samuel 6?

The life of a Jesus follower is to be filled with joy. God desires us to enjoy Him (Philippians 4:4). God, alone, is the source of deep abiding joy—not the happiness of circumstances, but joy that is found only in His presence and in communion with Him (Psalm 16:11). Paul and Silas enjoyed God even in a cold, musty Philippian jail. Their joy was not determined by circumstance, but by a relationship.

True abiding joy is only found in an intimate, love relationship with Jesus. In John 15:11, Jesus tells us that abiding in Him allows us to experience the joy that He has in us. This joy is independent of external circumstances. Following Jesus is not a journey of drudgery, but the pathway to full abiding joy.



Do you enjoy Jesus?

Is your life characterized by joy?

This type of joy will be revealed in authentic praise, an attitude of thanksgiving, and in contentment in Christ that will be obvious to all. What hinders our joy?

Read John 15:7-11. Our joy is dependent upon intimacy with Jesus and obedience to His Word. Lack of joy is a love problem. Lack of joy is an obedience problem. But when our lives are demonstrating obedience born out of a love relationship with God, our lives will be filled with joy.



Going Deeper

Nehemiah 8:10

Psalms 32:11

Psalms 51:12

Psalms 42:5

A Jesus follower is first and foremost characterized by a growing love relationship with God Himself. If you are asking how to begin a love relationship with God, read Appendix 1 on page 146. It contains a simple overview of how to begin a relationship with God.

CONNECT

Following Jesus is all about relationships. First and foremost, we enjoy an abiding relationship with Him. But He never designed us to live out our relationship with Him apart from fellowship with His family. The New Testament knows nothing of a Christianity without community. Jesus followers who are in a love relationship with God will also have a genuine love for one another.

"We should not think of our fellowship with other Christians as a spiritual luxury, an optional addition to the exercises of private devotion. We should recognize rather that such fellowship is a spiritual necessity; for God has made us in such a way that our fellowship with Him is fed by our fellowship with fellow Christians, and requires to be so fed constantly for its own deepening and enrichment."

—J.I. Packer

DAY 16

*Jesus followers are
connected to one another*



Read

John 17:17; 20-23

John 1:12

Romans 8:16-17

Luke 8:19-21



Interact (S.O.A.P)

This image shows a single page of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page, leaving small margins at the top and bottom. There are no vertical margin lines, and the page is completely blank except for the lines themselves.



Reflect

What is the unique connection that binds believers together?

Who did Jesus call His family?

Why?

Jesus followers share a connection that is unique to the rest of the world. Jesus gives insight regarding the depth of that connection in John 17. There is a oneness or unity that exists between believers. In John 17, the comparison for this supernatural connection is the unity shared between the Father and the Son.

The Father and the Son share an eternal, intimate and vibrant relationship that cannot be fully grasped by our human minds. Likewise, because of our relationship to God, we also are connected to one another by an equally eternal and intimate relationship. That is why Jesus said in Luke 8 that those who believe in Him were His true family.



What value do you place on your spiritual family?

Are you as connected as God has called you to be?

Take a few minutes and thank God for your spiritual family members.



Going Deeper

Over 40 times in the New Testament, we see the phrase “one another” used to describe relationships within God’s Family. For more on how to relate to others within God’s Family, see Appendix 4 on page 152.

DAY 17

*A Jesus follower
is loved by God*



Read

John 13:34-35 John 15:1-17
1 John 4:7-12



Interact (S.O.A.P)

[illegible]



Reflect

What are the two primary commandments in the previous verses?

To what degree are Jesus followers to love one another?

According to 1 John 4:8, anyone who does not love their Christian brothers and sisters does not _____ God.

Jesus followers are in a relationship with God Himself. As a result of this, all Jesus followers share an intimate connection with one another. Based on John 15, the greatest indicator of the state of our relationship with Jesus is our love for one another. The two primary commands in John 15 are "ABIDE IN ME" and "LOVE ONE ANOTHER." It is impossible to truly love God and not love one another (1 John 4). The two go hand in hand. The fruit of intimacy with Jesus is not isolation from others, but rather genuine love for one another.

Love for one another is commanded by Jesus. Therefore, it is much more than an emotion. Emotions may accompany our love for others, but genuine love for one another is characterized by positive action (John 15:13). Genuine love always moves a Jesus follower to act, not merely "feel" love toward one another. Christ demonstrated this as His love for us moved Him to the cross.



Is your relationship with other Jesus followers as important to you as your relationship with Christ?

What in your life takes priority over the relationships God has given you?

How do you demonstrate love for other Jesus followers?

Can you recall a recent outward demonstration of love that you have performed?

Can you recall someone demonstrating his or her love for you?

Jesus said that there is no greater love than to lay down your life for your friends. Laying down one's life for another may not necessarily require dying for them, but it absolutely requires living for them. The principle is that you put others first. We live for others. But how? Over the next few days, you will see how the Bible says Jesus followers are to love one another.

Ask God to reveal your lack of love for other Jesus followers. Ask Him to show you how to biblically love others and to give you the strength to love "like He loves you".

DAY 18



Read

1 John 1:1-7

*Jesus followers have
genuine fellowship with one
another (Part 1)*



Interact (S.O.A.P)

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



Reflect

How would you describe John's relationship to God?

Why was John telling about and writing about Jesus?

Read the verses again and notice the number of times John uses the word "fellowship." What is necessary before true fellowship can take place?

The word "fellowship" is greatly misunderstood in the church today. Prayerfully, over the next two days, God will give us a greater understanding of true biblical fellowship. The Greek word most often translated fellowship is "koinonia." This word literally means "to share in the life of another." Koinonia is the fullest possible partnership and fellowship with God and with other believers. Koinonia with God only comes from a real, personal encounter with the living Christ and surrender to Him as absolute Lord of one's life. It is an intimate love relationship with God that grows sweeter each day as we follow Jesus. However, this type of fellowship relationship does not stop with God. Jesus followers have this type of relationship with one another as well.

John writes in 1 John about koinonia, or fellowship. He is describing his fellowship with God. John had an experiential knowledge of Jesus. This is the way that a Jesus follower knows God – in a real, intimate, and experiential way. This relationship deepens each day we follow Jesus.

John proclaimed Jesus, so others would believe and come to know Him the way He did. The result would be fellowship with God and other believers. In verses 3-4, John says when we see

others come into fellowship with God, our joy is made complete by seeing the cleansing work of Jesus in the life of someone else.



How would you describe your fellowship relationship with God?

How would you describe your fellowship relationship with other Jesus followers?

Do you value your fellowship with other believers as highly as you value your fellowship with God?

Think about that last question...

It is impossible to be in fellowship with God and NOT walk in godly fellowship with one another. The two are interdependent.

Ask God to give you a better understanding of this and the grace to live it out.

1Major portions of this lesson were taken from Experiencing God by Henry Blackaby, Lifeway Press, Nashville, TN, 1990, pp. 193-194.

DAY 19

Jesus followers have genuine fellowship with one another (Part 2)



Read

1 John 1:7

1 John 2:9-11

1 John 3:10, 14-17

1 John 4:7-21



Interact (S.O.A.P)

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



Reflect

Read the previous verses again and notice the words “brother(s)” and “love.” In the space below, write in your own words the interdependence between our fellowship relationship with God and our fellowship relationship with one another.

You cannot be in fellowship with God and not walk in godly fellowship with one another. The two are interdependent. John teaches in these verses that your relationships with other believers are an expression of your relationship with God. John even says that those who claim fellowship with God and do not love their brothers and sisters in Christ are liars. In other words, it is easy to profess with your mouth a relationship with God. How we relate to one another will prove or disprove the validity of that claim. It is impossible to love and have fellowship with a God that we cannot see and not love other believers who we can see.

True fellowship with others means that we will love one another as Christ loves us. 1 John 3:16 says we are to love one another by laying down our lives for our brothers and sisters in Christ. Our example is Jesus. That means we love sacrificially by denying ourselves for the good of one another. We love with a submissive kind of love by placing the needs of others above our own. We love with a sanctifying love by being as committed to the spiritual growth of others as we are to our own growth.

Are you beginning to see the interdependence between our relationship with God and our relationship with one another?



What does your love for other believers reveal about your relationship with God?

Are you willing to lay down your life for your brothers and sisters in Christ?

It is impossible to be in fellowship with God and not walk in godly fellowship with one another. The two are interdependent. This is not a burdensome truth, but one that John says will make our joy complete!

Ask God to continue to give you a better understanding of this truth and of specific ways to live it out this week.



Going Deeper

If you would like to study more about relationships within God's Family, read Appendix 5 on page 154.

DAY 20

*Jesus followers
serve one another*



Read

John 13:1-17 Philippians 2:1-11



Interact (S.O.A.P)

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



Reflect

What was the washing of the disciples' feet an expression of based on John 13?

Why do you think the disciples failed to carry out this task before Jesus did?

Why did Jesus do this (v. 14-15)?

What promise does He make in verse 17?

What principal does Jesus teach in verse 16?

Jesus was a servant. As Jesus lives His life in me, I will serve others also. John 13 provides us with a vivid and touching picture of true servanthood. In the Jewish culture, the task of washing feet was such a demeaning task that Jewish servants were not required to carry it out. Only non-Jewish servants were expected to stoop to this level of humiliation. The disciples likely considered the task someone else's responsibility and, thus, the task went undone. They were too busy arguing about who was the greatest (Luke 22:24).

As an expression of His infinite love, the God of the universe took a towel and the basin and washed the filth of the world from the feet of His disciples. In verse 14, He said, "I, the Lord, have washed your feet...now you go and do the same."



What areas of service do you shy away from because it is someone else's responsibility?

Are there areas of service that you consider beneath you?

Whose feet may God be calling you to wash by performing a timely act of service?

Jesus taught a principle found throughout the Gospels in verse 16. "A slave or servant is not greater than his master..." In other words, nothing you see Me (the Master) doing is beneath you (as the servant) to do as well. No act of service you could ever perform could surpass the humiliating act of the Lord God Almighty Himself stooping down to carry out the task that no self-respecting Jewish servant would ever do. We are not greater than our Master. We are blessed if we allow Him to do through us what we have seen Him do for us.



Going Deeper

Isaiah 53:10-11 Matthew 10:24

Luke 6:40 Mark 10:45

DAY 21

*Jesus followers
forgive one another*



Read

Matthew 18:21-35 Ephesians 4:31-32
Colossians 3:13 Luke 23:34



Interact (S.O.A.P)

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



Reflect

What prompted Jesus to teach the parable in Matthew 18?

How often are we to forgive those who wrong us?

As Jesus followers, what is to be our motivation to forgive, according to Matthew 18 and Colossians 3?

What was the consequence of not forgiving for the wicked slave?

People offend and hurt one another. This often happens even with those we love the most – our family. It sometimes happens intentionally, but most of the time, unintentionally. Although we cannot control what others do to us, we can control how we respond. Jesus taught a parable in response to Peter's question about forgiveness. The first slave had been forgiven an infinite debt, one he could never repay. Later, he found one who owed him a meager debt that he refused to forgive. He acted as though he himself had never been forgiven. The result for him was bondage.

A child of God has been forgiven an infinite debt. Our sin exacted a cost that we could never pay. Jesus paid our debt on the cross and declared our account canceled (Colossians 2:14). Therefore, we are to respond to the minor offenses of others as one who has been forgiven an infinite debt.



Are you acting as one who has been forgiven?

Are you holding bitterness in your heart toward someone?

Have you forgotten the immeasurable mercy shown to you by Jesus?

What picture of God's forgiveness does the world see by watching your life?

Failure to forgive dishonors the forgiveness of God and distorts our testimony as one who has been forgiven. The offender and the watching world can see a glimpse of the forgiveness offered in Christ by the forgiveness we extend.

Failure to forgive also results in bondage. When we hold onto an offense, we are enslaved with bitterness and anger. Thus, we are not following the example of Jesus on the cross. Bitterness hinders our fellowship with Christ and His people. On the other hand, when we choose to forgive, the God of all forgiveness floods our lives with grace, and we experience sweet fellowship with Him and with one another.

Is there someone that you need to forgive "from the heart"?

Ask God to show you who it is and how to do it...then obey.



Going Deeper

Isaiah 1:18 Hebrews 12:15

Luke 17:4

"In Christ, the thing that we least deserve is that which we have been most freely given: forgiveness. How then do we dare not forgive those who have wronged us? The person who has sinned against us is no worse a sinner than we. Therefore, we must forgive. This is not to deny or minimize the hurt caused by another's sin, nor is it to excuse that sin. The sin was wrong. Being wronged causes bewilderment and sorrow, especially when the one who hurt us is someone we love. Our natural instinct is to question their love for us. But the ultimate question for the Christian is, 'Do I truly love them with a self-forgetful, God-kind of love?' Our love must be magnanimous—big-hearted, lion-hearted—like the love of Jesus Christ. We must rise deliberately above resentment, bitterness, and pettiness. This is the kind of love that led Jesus to the cross. If we love with this kind of love, remembering all that we have been forgiven, we will forgive others."—Clyde Cranford (Because We Love Him, p.41)

DAY 22

*Jesus followers
pray for one another*



Read

John 17:9-26

1 Samuel 12:23

Ephesians 6:18

1 Thessalonians 5:25



Interact (S.O.A.P)

[illegible]



Reflect

What is going on in John 17?

Who specifically is Jesus praying for in John 17:20?

What did Samuel say it would be if he failed to pray for Israel?

Who are we to pray for, according to Ephesians 6?

What did Paul ask the church at Thessalonica to do?

John 17 is a prayer of Jesus. He prayed not only for His disciples there with Him but also for those who would believe in Him in the generations to come. He was praying for you and for me, and He has not stopped. Hebrews 7:25 tells us that He never ceases to go to the Father on our behalf.

Jesus prays for us. Jesus followers pray for one another. Samuel said that he would not sin by failing to pray for the people of Israel. Paul prayed for almost every church to whom he wrote in the New Testament. If Jesus followers are to be rightly related to one another, we must pray for one another. Perhaps the greatest ministry you will ever have in the life of another person is to consistently and scripturally pray for them. Paul begged the churches in the New Testament to pray for him. There are some things God will do in the lives of others only if we pray. He has chosen to work that way. We need each other, and we desperately need to pray for one another.



Do you take it seriously when someone asks you to pray for them?

Do you believe that God will change someone's life through your prayers?

Who is in your life that God may be asking you to pray for on a regular basis?

It is a great honor and privilege to lift the name of another up to God in prayer. To fail to do so in some cases, may be sin. You may ask, how do I pray for others? In the "GOING DEEPER" section below is a list of several specific prayers offered by one believer on behalf of other believers. The greatest guides to prayer are the prayers found in the Bible. Ask God to show you who to begin praying for and what He desires you to pray for them.



Going Deeper

Ephesians 1:18-19 Colossians 1:9-12 Ephesians 6:18-20
Jeremiah 29:7 Hebrews 13:18

Turn one of these verses into a prayer for a specific person who Christ has placed on your heart.

DAY 23

*Jesus followers
encourage one another*



Read

Matthew 14:22-27 Acts 4:36
Hebrews 10:24-25 Acts 9:26-27



Interact (S.O.A.P)

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



Reflect

How were the disciples given courage (encouraged) in Matthew 14?

What did the name Barnabas mean? (Acts 4:36)

What is one reason that believers are to gather together, according to Hebrews 10?

Everyone needs encouragement. God has designed it so that Jesus followers provide encouragement for one another. He desires that our walk with Him be personal, but never private. We need encouragement from one another in order to continue in the Christian life. Jesus encouraged His fearful, weary disciples in Matthew 14 simply by His presence. He continues to do that through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. In Acts 9, we see Barnabas ministering to Paul through encouragement. Barnabas gave him the necessary recommendation and support to earn the trust of those in Jerusalem.

Later in Acts 11, Barnabas traveled to Tarsus to look for Saul, later named Paul, who had evidently become discouraged in the ministry and gone home. The encouragement of Barnabas made an eternal difference in Paul's life.



1 Thessalonians 5:11 tells us to encourage one another and build one another up. Do you build others up or tear them down?

God has given each of us the honor of impacting lives by the ministry of encouragement. How can we encourage? 2 Timothy 1:2-8 is a model of encouragement as Paul ministers to his weary son in the faith – Timothy. Notice what he says:

v. 2 "my beloved child"	I love you...
v. 3 "I thank God"	I thank God for you...
v. 3 "remember you in my prayers"	I pray for you...
v. 4 "longing to see you"	I miss you...
v. 5 "mindful of the sincere faith within you"	I believe in you...
v. 6 "fan into flame the gift of God"	God has gifted you...
v. 8 "do not be ashamed"	I challenge you...
v. 8 "share in suffering"	I am honored to serve with you...

There is a myriad of ways to encourage one another. Ask God to bring to mind or to put in your path, today, someone that you can build up and encourage.



Going Deeper

Hebrews 3:12-13

DAY 24

*Jesus followers meet the needs
of one another*



Read

Acts 2:42-47

Acts 4:32-37

James 2:14-17

Matthew 25:34-46



Interact (S.O.A.P)

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



Reflect

What was one way that Jesus followers in the early church expressed love for one another?

How did the watching world respond (Acts 2:47)?

What does James say about a person's faith that will not help a brother or sister in need?

Jesus taught in Matthew 25 that the way a person serves others reveals what?

Who are we ultimately serving if we meet one another's needs?

Jesus followers love one another. Acts 2 tells us how love was expressed in the early church. Members of the church would sell their own possessions to meet the needs of others. Acts 4:34 says there was not a needy person among them. Imagine that. There was such a unity that no one claimed anything as their own. Instead, everything was viewed as the Lord's and was willingly given up to meet one another's needs. By this, the watching world saw an incredible testimony of the love of Christ. In fact, Acts 2 says God was adding to their number day by day, those who were being saved. The Gospel went forth as the people of God met the needs of one another.

Jesus tells a tough parable in Matthew 25. He goes so far as to say that the way we treat and serve His brethren (fellow believers) reveals the authenticity of our faith. The sheep (believers) can be distinguished from the goats (fake believers) by their love for one another.



How do you respond when you see a fellow believer in need?

Have you ever sacrificed to meet the needs of a fellow Christian?

What does your attitude toward other believers reveal about your own faith?

Any opportunity to meet the needs of a brother or sister in Christ is an opportunity to demonstrate love to the watching world as well as demonstrate your love for Jesus. It is also an opportunity to walk by faith and trust God to meet your needs. When we give to one of God's children, we have given to Him.

How do we know if professed needs are legitimate? Ask God for discernment, exercise discretion, and then obey as He shows you. Ask God to give you an opportunity to meet the need of someone today. Watch and be ready to obey.



Going Deeper

Romans 12:13

2 Corinthians 9:6-12

Titus 3:14

1 Timothy 6:17-19

DAY 25

*Jesus followers speak truth
to one another*



Read

Galatians 2:11-14

Colossians 3:16

Ephesians 4:25

Galatians 6:1-2



Interact (S.O.A.P)

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



Reflect

Why did Paul confront Cephas (Peter) in Galatians 2?

How does Ephesians say we are always to speak to one another?

According to Colossians, what should precede admonishing a brother or sister in Christ?

What is a believer to do if he or she sees another believer in sin?

Sometimes love has to be tough. Sometimes expressing love appears as hate. Just as iron is necessary to sharpen iron (Proverbs 27:17), believers need one another to be sharpened. Just as iron against iron produces sparks, being sharpened by someone can hurt. In Galatians 2, Paul sharpens Peter by speaking the truth about his error. Ephesians 4 says we are to speak truth to one another because we are members of one another. In other words, what one does impacts the entire Body. Paul saw that what was going on was jeopardizing the health of the church. There were divisions arising, and the truth had to be spoken.

Often, love is expressed toward another by sharing the truth concerning an area of his or her life. It is not our job to go looking for one another's sin. God will reveal it. Then, He may choose to use us to point out sin in another's life. The purpose is to restore that brother or sister for their good and the good of the entire Body. The purpose is not to inflict some kind of consequence or retribution. The word "restore" literally means "to reset what is out of place" or "to mend what is broken."

There are a few necessary prerequisites before going to anyone.

1. Look at your own life. (Matthew 7:3-5; Galatians 6:1)
2. Let the Word of Christ dwell in you. (Colossians 3:16; 2 Timothy 3:16)
3. Listen to God in prayer before you act.



How do you respond to correction from another?

Proverbs helps us know how to respond when corrected:

Proverbs 27:6 - Faithful are the wounds of a friend.

Proverbs 9:8 - Reprove a wise man and he will love you.

Proverbs 19:25 - Reprove one who has understanding and he will gain knowledge.

Do you hastily confront another about their sin?

Do you grieve when God reveals sin in another's life?



Going Deeper

James 5:19-20 Jeremiah 17:23
Romans 15:14

"If a fellow believer hurts you, go and tell him – work it out between the two of you. If he listens, you've made a friend. If he won't listen, take one or two others along so that the presence of witnesses will keep things honest, and try again. If he still won't listen, tell the church. If he won't listen to the church, you'll have to start over from scratch, confront him with the need for repentance, and offer again God's forgiving love." Matthew 18:15-17 (The Message Paraphrase)

DAY 26

*Jesus followers are members
of one another (Part 1)*



Read

Romans 12:1-5 Ephesians 1:22-23
Ephesians 4:14-16 Ephesians 5:30



Interact (S.O.A.P)

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



Reflect

What are we to offer to God?

Based on what follows in Romans 12:3-5, what is the first area of life in which we can offer ourselves?

What does it mean that we are members of one another?

Romans 12 begins by exhorting us to offer ourselves to God as a holy and living sacrifice. In Christ, we are acceptable to God. We daily present ourselves to Him as a living, holy, and acceptable sacrifice to be used as He pleases. From that, Romans 12 goes right into a discussion of Jesus followers relating to one another in the Body of Christ. In other words, the first way that we can offer ourselves to God is by offering ourselves to one another.

It is impossible to be a Jesus follower and not rightly relate to His Body – the Church. Every Jesus follower is connected to every other Jesus follower by virtue of the fact that we all make up one Body – the Body of Christ. This Body has many parts. Every part does not have the same function. Every part is important. The overall health of the entire Body and each individual member is dependent upon each part functioning properly. Again, we are members of one another.

This is most clearly seen in the local New Testament church. The Church is a Body. It has many members. Every member does not have the same function, but every member is important. What one member does impacts every other member. Jesus grows His Body – the Church – but He does so as the parts of the body help each other in the growing process. Thus, the overall health of the Church is directly related to Jesus followers being connected in community with one another.



Is there a specific way that God is calling you to offer yourself as a sacrifice within the Church?

Do you contribute to the overall health of the Church, or do you hinder it?

Do you believe that what you do or do not do affects other members of the Church?

The relationship between Jesus followers in the Body of Christ has no parallel in the world. We are members of one another. Are you willing to ask God to show you how you can specifically offer yourself as a living sacrifice in order to help the church grow? There is no unimportant part. No service is too small.

Tomorrow we will learn more about how we rightly relate to one another in the Body of Christ – the Church.



Going Deeper

Ephesians 4:7-13

See Appendix 6: "The Dearest Place On Earth" pg. 153

DAY 27

Jesus followers are members of one another (Part 2)



Read

1 Corinthians 12:11-27



Interact (S.O.A.P)

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Reflect

In the space below, write the verse number in the blank that teaches the principle after it. You may have to read the passage several times. The first one is done for you.

Verse(s) 11 - The Holy Spirit decides who has what gifts and responsibilities.

Verse(s) _____ - Those members with less prominent roles deserve more honor.

Verse(s) _____ - The Body is not complete without every member functioning properly.

Verse(s) _____ - If every member had the same function, the Body would not be complete.

Verse(s) _____ - We need each other.

Verse(s) _____ - There are many members, but one Body.

Verse(s) _____ - No member is less important than any other member.

Verse(s) _____ - God adds to the Body as He desires.

Verse(s) _____ - If one member suffers, all suffer.

Verse(s) _____ - The less prominent parts are absolutely necessary.

Verse(s) _____ - There is to be no division in the Body.

Jesus is concerned about and active in His church. He is the Head. He is in charge. Our part and responsibility in the church is up to Him. He even adds to the body as He sees fit (v. 18). He has so designed it that no member can work in isolation from any other member. We need each other. The health of His Body is dependent upon us rightly relating to one another.



Reflect

Have you allowed God to determine your role in the Body?

Do you consider your role as too insignificant to matter?

Do you see yourself as needing other believers for overall health?

Do you realize that God has brought you to this church for a specific purpose?

No one is at Hope Church by accident. God has brought you here. We need you, and you need us. God has planned it that way. Ask God to either show you or to re-confirm your role in this church. When He does, tell your small group.



Going Deeper

1 Corinthians 13:1-7

If you would like to study more about serving within God's Family, read Appendix 6 on page 153.

DAY 28

*Jesus followers are gifted to
serve one another*



Read

1 Peter 4:10-11

Romans 12:6

1 Corinthians 12:4-11



Interact (S.O.A.P)

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



Reflect

Why are Jesus followers given spiritual gifts?

Can a person choose his or her gift?

List below the two categories of gifts given in 1 Peter.

Also, list as many gifts as you can from the above passages.

In 1 Peter 4, the word that Peter uses for gift comes from the word that is often translated grace in the New Testament. This means that spiritual gifts are the result of God's grace in our lives. They are undeserved, gracious, divine enablements. At the moment of salvation, every Jesus follower is uniquely gifted by the Holy Spirit to serve one another. Gifts are not a substance; they are a manifestation of a Person – the Spirit. Thus, only when we are in right relation to Him will we use our gifts properly. The Holy Spirit decides who has what gifts. To compare and covet the gifts of others is, therefore, to question the wisdom of God. Peter breaks down the gifts into serving and speaking. Both are to bring glory to God.

Every Jesus follower has at least one gift (1 Corinthians 7:7), and no one has all the gifts (1 Corinthians 12:29). The use of spiritual gifts without love is worthless (1 Corinthians 13:1-3). When I am rightly following Jesus, I see the church not as a place that exists to meet my needs, but as a community where Christ in me can meet the needs of others through the gifts He has given to me.



Do you find yourself comparing or coveting the gifts of others?

Do you believe that God has gifted you in a unique way that will bring Him the most glory?

Are you guilty of neglecting your spiritual gift(s)?

Spiritual gifts are best discovered by being an active part of your local church. Spiritual gift tests may help, but ultimately over time and through involvement, you will discover areas of service where you are most fulfilled and fruitful. You will learn, and others will notice. Those are likely areas of gifting.



Going Deeper

1 Corinthians 13:1-7

SHARE

Following Jesus is all about relationships. A Jesus follower enjoys fellowship with God and with His family. But it does not stop there. Our relationship with God and His family overflows into relationships with people who do not know God at all so that He can make Himself known to them through us. By this, a Jesus follower shares in the mission of God locally and globally.

"Missions is not the ultimate goal of the church. Worship is. Missions exists because worship doesn't." – John Piper

"The Great Commission is not an option to be considered; it is a command to be obeyed." – Hudson Taylor

"Every Christian is either a missionary or an impostor." – Charles Spurgeon

DAY 29

*A Jesus follower knows the God
of all the world*



Read

Psalm 46:10



Interact (S.O.A.P)

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



Reflect

This verse seems to be two separate verses in one: “Be still, and know that I am God” and “I will be exalted among the nations...” Many people quote the first half of the verse without the second half. But the two halves are related. How?

What does “being still” have to do with “knowing God”?

What command does God give in this verse?

What promise does God give?

Do you think that this promise is being fulfilled right now?

One of the joys of being a Jesus follower is having intimate intercession with the Most High God. In fact, what God encourages in the Scriptures, we so often neglect – daily, deep devotion to Him. It is no accident that Psalm 46:10 attributes quiet contemplation about who God is (“know that I am God”) with the remarkable realization of what He is doing (“being exalted among the nations”). As we grow closer to God in communion and devotion each day, we look outward with Him to the harvest in the world. As we gain a heart for Him, He gives us His heart for the world. As we fall in love with the King, we will want others to know Him and love Him, as well. We will begin to develop a love for the things that He loves.



Take a few moments and think about Psalm 46:10, considering how great God is. How well do you know the God whom you serve?

Are you regularly “still” before the Lord?

It is God’s ultimate goal to be glorified among all the nations of the earth. In your quiet times before the Lord, do you ponder these things?

We often think that we must be “busy” about the task of reaching the nations with the Gospel. How does this verse contrast that thought?

Is it better to be busy or to know God?

Does the fact that He wants us to “be still” mean that we should not be active?



Going Deeper

Habakkuk 2:14

Nehemiah 9:6

DAY 30

A Jesus follower understands God's mission in the world



Read

Genesis 12:1-3 Psalm 86:9-10
Galatians 3:14



Interact (S.O.A.P)

[illegible]



Reflect

God blessed Abram in Genesis 12:2 by doing three things. What were they?

Were these blessings for Abram only?

How did God bless the nations through Abraham (Galatians 3:14)?

From the passage in Genesis 12, we see God's intention to fulfill a great mission in the world. What is that mission?

In Psalm 86:9-10, what do we see the nations doing in return for being blessed?

John Piper said, "Missions is not the ultimate goal of the Church; worship is. Missions exists because worship doesn't. Worship is ultimate, not missions, because God is ultimate, not man. When this age is over, and the countless millions of the redeemed fall on their faces before the throne of God, missions will be no more. It is a temporary necessity. But worship abides forever..."¹

Have you ever thought about what the ultimate meaning of life is? With Jesus, we have the ultimate meaning living inside of us! He is the "I AM." He has put us here in this life to worship Him, and that worship is the ultimate meaning of life. He is the only One who has the right to bring glory to Himself, and He chooses to do it through us.

So why doesn't He just whisk us off to heaven the minute we are saved so that we can worship Him before His throne? Because He will not impose His will on any man, and He is using us to bring the nations to worship Him. That's a purpose on top of

¹ *Let the Nations Be Glad*, John T. Piper, Baker Books, 1993, p. 11.

a purpose. His plan is to use us to bring worshippers to Him so that His purpose – worship of Him among all nations – will be fulfilled. But if we do not tell the nations of His matchless glory, they cannot worship Him, and His purpose is incomplete. He really does choose to need us. Isn't that amazing?



Talk with your small group about the ways God has blessed you, personally. How has He blessed our country?

Are these blessings for you only or for someone else?

Can you think of a time when God blessed you so that you could bless someone else?

How does He want to bless the nations through you?



Going Deeper

Malachi 1:11 2 Corinthians 5:19

DAY 31

*A Jesus follower has
a mission in the world*



Read

Acts 1:8 2 Corinthians 5:17-20
John 20:21



Interact (S.O.A.P)

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



Reflect

In Acts 1:8, Jesus is speaking to His followers. What does He tell them that they shall be after receiving the Holy Spirit?

What is a witness?

Where does Jesus tell them that they will be witnessing?

What does it mean to be reconciled to someone?

What does it mean for God to give us a ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:17)?

Who does God choose to use to make His appeal for people to be reconciled to Him?

John 20:21 says that Jesus has sent us in the same way that the Father sent Him. In what ways did the Father send Jesus?

God has brought me into a relationship with Himself because He loves me, but the reality is that He has also brought me into relationship with Himself because He loves the people around me. The way He makes Himself known to those around me is by me being a witness, which means sharing my personal story of knowing Jesus with those around me. Many people refer to

Acts 1:8 by saying something like this: *We have got to reach our own "Jerusalem," then our "Judea and Samaria," and then the "uttermost parts,"* as if we could not be a witness to the nations until our home town was reached. However, the verse actually says that we should do *both/and*. Our mission is both local and global. Every Jesus follower is called to have a mission both locally and globally at the same time. While the particular task each of us plays may be different, the responsibility to be a witness through sharing our story both locally and globally remains.



In 2 Corinthians 5, Paul refers to us as ambassadors. What does an ambassador do? Reflect on the ways God has made you an ambassador for Christ, where you live, where you work, and where you play.

In Acts 1:8, Jesus does not seem to give us the option as to whether or not to be a witness. It is a command. Have you taken this command seriously?

How can you imagine yourself being a witness in 1) your community (your "Jerusalem"), 2) Your state (your "Judea"), 3) the USA (your "Samaria"), 4) the world (your "uttermost parts")?



Going Deeper
Isaiah 43:5-7

DAY 32

*A Jesus follower has
a heart for the world*



Read

Romans 10:12-15

Matthew 28: 18-20



Interact (S.O.A.P)

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



Reflect

In Romans 10:14, who does “they” refer to? (Look in v. 13)

Look at the progression of Romans 10:12-15. Can you identify the five actions in the process of sharing the Gospel with lost people? Beginning from verse 15 and going backward, they are sing, pring, hing, bing and cing.

To whom did Jesus address the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20)?

Which word in Matthew 28:19 is most important to you? Why?

Have all of the people in the world heard the Good News about Jesus? Statistics say about 42% of the world has never heard the good news of Jesus or has very little access to the gospel.¹ That’s almost 3.5 billion people. Why aren’t all of these people able to hear about God so that they may know Him? The Bible makes it clear that someone must go and tell them.

There are roughly 17,250 people groups in the world today. A people group is a distinctive group of people with their own culture, language, and identity. The Biblical word for these groups is *ethne* or “nation.” It is not necessarily defined by a country’s boundary or nationality. Political borders are man-made, but people groups are God-made. Of these 17,250 people groups, over 7,200 of them have not been reached with the Gospel yet. In fact, these Unreached People Groups have very little, if any, Christian witness among them.

We often divide people in the world into two groups—the saved and the lost. But that simply measures the response to the Gospel. Let's think of the world a different way—those who have heard the Gospel and those who have not heard the Gospel. This measures accessibility of the Gospel. When we think of the people of the world this way, we are challenged that nearly 42% of the world still has no access to the Gospel! Jesus commanded us to make disciples of all nations (people groups). God desires to use your job, skill, or passion to engage in His mission of taking the Gospel to every people group on planet earth.



Is it right that some people in the world have had so many chances to hear the Good News when so many have had no chance at all?

What can we do about this?

This does not mean that we all have to become pastors. What other ways can Unreached People Groups hear the Gospel? (Think of major world-wide tools that God has given us in this age.) How can you use your job, skill, or passion to accomplish the mission?

It's clear that the nations who have yet to hear the Gospel are on God's heart. What command in Matthew 28:18-20 does God give you and me to make it personal?



Going Deeper

Revelation 5:9-10

⁴ Global Research: Joshua Project. (2024, July 30). Retrieved from <http://joshuaproject.net>

DAY 33

A Jesus follower joins God's activity in the world



Read

John 5:17 John 3:16
John 4:35 Matthew 9:37-38



Interact (S.O.A.P)

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



Reflect

According to the previous verses, when is God working?

How is He working?

With whom is He working?

Why is He working?

God's work is happening all around us, whether we know it or not. As Henry Blackaby teaches, when we see Him working, that is our invitation to join Him in that work. Jesus saw the Father working, and He only did what the Father told Him to do. How often do we jump ahead of God and do things that we think are "good works," only to find out later that God never really intended for us to do those things? God is definitely working in the world. There is great evidence of His activity throughout history and all around us today. The question is, are we watching for His activity around us?

Take a moment and pray that God will reveal His work around you.

Then, look for His activity in the lives of people in your family, at work, at school, and in your neighborhood. God wants you to share in His mission where you live, work, and play. Using your job, skill, or passion, God is inviting you to join in His activity around you in your neighborhood and among the nations.



Who is in your circle of influence that you sense God is at work in their life? How might God use you to join in His activity in this person's life?

Where do you see God at work in your city? How might God use your job, skill, or passion to engage in His activity in your city?

As a family of faith, Hope Church is engaged in God's activity in the world. Are you joining in God's activity using your job, skill, or passion? If not, how might you do so?



Going Deeper

Matthew 24:14 Isaiah 6:8-9:3 Luke 5:11

To learn more about using your job, skill or passion to engage in God's Kingdom activity, read Appendix 7 on page 155.

Additionally, if you are interested in further training, please visit hopechurchlv.com/the-sharing-life/.

DAY 34

*A Jesus follower
prays for the world*



Read

James 5:16

Ephesians 2:18

Ephesians 3:11-12

1 Timothy 2:1-8



Interact (S.O.A.P)

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



Reflect

According to James 5:16, what is accomplished through the prayers of the righteous?

One of the ways that we join in God's activity in the world is through the vehicle of prayer. The reality is that God in His sovereignty has chosen to limit His activity to the prayers of His people. There is a lot about that reality that we simply do not understand, but it does not change the fact that it is true, according to God's Word. Read this statement by Andrew Murray,

"God rules the world and His church through the prayers of His people. That God should have made the extension of His kingdom to such a large extent dependent on the faithfulness of His people in prayer is a stupendous mystery and yet an absolute certainty. God calls for intercessors: in His grace He has made His work dependent on them. He waits for them."

To be clear, this is not saying that God needs us; what it is saying is that God has chosen to work through us as we pray. Simply stated, the story of Hope Church is a living testimony of this principle. Our church is now touching the world for the glory and honor of Jesus, but our church began because one lady named Letty asked God to do it. What might God do through us next should we choose to seek Him desperately in prayer?

Read Ephesians 2:18 and 3:11-12. What has been given to us through Jesus Christ? According to Ephesians 3:12, what characteristics should our access to God have?

Think about prayers that you could pray that, when answered, will change entire people groups forever. Think about a prayer that, when answered, will change you forever. Consider having unlimited access to an influential world leader today. What would you ask of that person?



The previous Scripture states that we do have access to the King of the universe. How does that change the way you pray?

Who is in your life that does not know Jesus that you should be praying for consistently?

Knowing God's heart for the world and the access He has given you, do you think it is His desire that you pray regularly for the people of the world?

Are you offering up world-changing prayers?



Going Deeper

2 Samuel 22:50 Colossians 1:9

DAY 35

A Jesus follower invests in God's activity in the world



Read

Philippians 1:3-5 Philippians 4:15-20



Interact (S.O.A.P)

[illegible]



Reflect

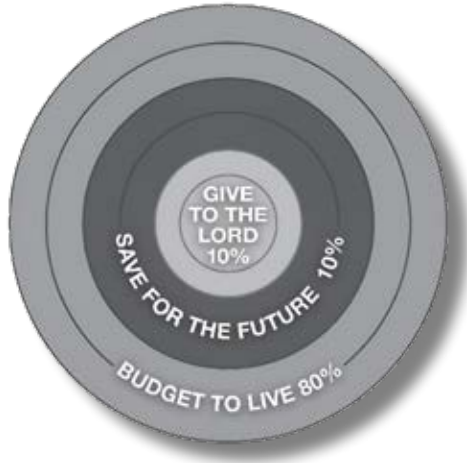
According to Philippians 1:3-5, why was Paul so thankful for this church?

Based on Philippians 4:15-20, what was a primary way they participated in God's activity through Paul?

Since the beginning of the movement that we know as following Jesus, radical generosity has always been a common expression of the Gospel through the church. God's plan has always been to provide for His mission through His people.

What you have just read in Philippians is the example of one church that saw giving as an opportunity to join in God's activity in the world. As we have been learning in this section, God is at work all around us. One of the ways that He invites us to join in what He is doing is through generosity. Jesus followers have always regularly given a portion of what God has given to them as an investment in His mission. And at times as we see here in Philippians, Jesus followers have given in ways that involved extreme sacrifice. We do not give in order to be a good Christian. We give with a heart of joy in response to God's greatness and out of the overflow of the impact of His glorious Gospel in our lives. We do not give to a church, but through a church as an investment in God's activity locally and globally. We are never more like Jesus than when we give. The Gospel, at its core, is a message of generosity. John 3:16 states that God so loved the world that He gave. As Christ begins to live His life through us, one expression of that is radical generosity. Part of living generously as an investment in God's activity is establishing the right target for my life when it comes to stewarding God's resources. The following diagram is a good starting place in understanding a biblical target as it relates to this issue.

*See Appendix 9 for a more detailed explanation of this “target.”



Can I honestly say that I live generously as it pertains to investing in God’s activity in the world?

Do I give regularly, proportionately, and sometimes sacrificially through my church to join in God’s kingdom work?

Pertaining to the target above, am I aiming at the target? If so, how is my aim?

Going Deeper

2 Corinthians 8:1-5

2 Corinthians 9:6-15

DAY 36



Read

Luke 16:1-13

Colossians 4:2-6

*A Jesus follower finds creative ways
to share Jesus in the world*



Interact (S.O.A.P)

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



Reflect

Notice Luke 15 (even though you were not asked to read it today) and 16 are connected. Jesus shares both parables in response to the Pharisees in Luke 15:1-2. The context is having a heart for those who do not know Christ. Describe in your own words what the manager did with his master's money.

Why was the manager praised?

What ultimate principle is Jesus teaching with this parable?

In Luke 15, Jesus teaches a parable to emphasize the heart of the Father toward those who do not know Him. In Luke 16, Jesus, the master teacher, uses another parable to teach a principle concerning how to reach those who do not know Him. He uses a wicked manager to teach a biblical principle.

The shrewd manager used what had been entrusted to him, his master's money, to plan for and improve his future well-being. His master praised him for his shrewdness (creativity) in handling his resources. Jesus says, in effect, if only the people of God would be so creative in dealing with the people of this world. There is only one way to God, and His name is Jesus, but there are a million ways to share Jesus.

Jesus wants us to see three important truths from this parable:

1. We are to be creative in finding ways to share Jesus with those in the world (v. 8).
2. We can use temporal resources, like money, to make an eternal impact (v. 9).
3. If we are faithful in the use of temporal blessings, God will entrust us with a blessing of eternal value – like the souls of men and women (v. 10-11).



Do you seek creative ways to share Jesus with the world?

Are you faithfully investing the resources that God has given you for eternal, Kingdom purposes?

No two Jesus followers are alike. God has wired us all in a unique way. Therefore, we all have unique ways we can share the love of Jesus. Jesus does not suggest this. He commands it:

“Use your worldly resources to benefit others and make friends. In this way your generosity stores up a reward for you in heaven.” Luke 16:9 (New Living Translation)



Going Deeper

For practical tips on creative ways to share the love of Jesus, read Appendix 10 on page 159.

DAY 37

*A Jesus follower lives
sent in the world*



Read

John 17:3-21 John 20:21



Interact (S.O.A.P)

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Reflect

The longest conversation between God the Father and God the Son that is recorded in Scripture is found in John 17. This powerful and yet mysterious chapter provides a glimpse of the intimate relationship between Jesus and the Father and allows us to listen in to an intimate moment just before Jesus is arrested, beaten, and crucified. Martin Luther described this time of prayer by saying...

"This is truly, beyond measure, a warm and hearty prayer. He opens the depths of His heart, both in reference to us and to His Father, and He pours them all out. It sounds so honest, so simple; it is so deep, so rich, so wide, no one can fathom it."

In a very significant and precious moment, Jesus spent time praying for His Church. You'll notice, in praying for His Church, Jesus did not pray for buildings, worship services, an address, or an event. Jesus prayed for people, His people – the Church! The Church that Jesus established was and is a community of people who have been called out and then sent out to share in His mission. Jesus said, "As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them." The word "sent" indicates deployment with a purpose. The reality is that the people of God have been deployed as missionaries into the world! That means as a Jesus follower, YOU HAVE BEEN SENT AS A MISSIONARY!

God passionately loves the peoples of the earth, and He desires for them to be transformed by the Gospel. So, He has sent His people, the Church, into the world as missionaries to leverage their influence for the sake of His Kingdom. God has strategically placed us as His missionaries in workplaces, neighborhoods, schools, and cities in order for our lives to demonstrate His life to the world.



Think about where God has sent you. How can you leverage your influence where you are for the sake of His Kingdom?

As you reflect in your heart, what often hinders you from living sent as a missionary where God has placed you (e.g. fear, busyness, etc.)? Surrender those hindrances to God in prayer.



Going Deeper

Isaiah 6:1-8 Romans 10:14-15

DAY 38

*A Jesus follower makes
disciples all over the world*



Read

2 Timothy 2:2

Mark 3:14

1 Thessalonians 2:1-12

Matthew 28:18-20



Interact (S.O.A.P)

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Reflect

Based on the previous Scriptures, in your own words, answer the following questions:

What is discipleship?

What is the activity of discipleship?

Jesus said to His followers in Matthew 28, “make disciples.” He had modeled it for them for 3 ¹/₂ years. He had poured His life into a group of twelve men and was now calling them to do the same. All Jesus followers can make disciples. All Jesus followers may not go about it in the same way, but all can do it.

Discipleship is investing my life into the life of another so that the life of Jesus may be reproduced in them. It is more than teaching. It is more than a class. It involves your life.

Based on the previous verses, fill in the blanks below concerning the activity and the heart of discipleship.

Making disciples involves truth. (2 Timothy 2:2)

Making disciples involves _____. (Mark 3:14)

Making disciples is like being a _____. (1 Thessalonians 2:7)

Making disciples involves all of my _____. (1 Thessalonians 2:8)

Making disciples demands _____. (1 Thessalonians 2:9)

Making disciples is like being a _____. (1 Thessalonians 2:11)

The ultimate goal is _____. (1 Thessalonians 2:12)

Making disciples involves sharing the truth. Paul told Timothy to teach what he had learned. Thus, making disciples demands that you must be continually growing yourself. Making disciples involves time. Jesus spent great time with His disciples. Making disciples is like being a mother. It involves gently encouraging and nurturing. Making disciples involves all of your life. Paul said that he imparted to the Thessalonians his very life. Making disciples involves work. Paul modeled this. Making disciples is like being a father. Where the mother is more nurturing, the father challenges us to move ahead with encouragement and discipline. The ultimate goal is Christ-likeness. The life of Jesus is lived out in one Jesus follower who then impacts and invests in the lives of other Jesus followers.



Do you believe that it is the responsibility of every Jesus follower to invest in the lives of others?

Do you believe that there are different ways that this can be done?

Are you willing to accept the command and challenge to make disciples?



Going Deeper

John said in 3 John 4 that he had no greater joy than to see his children walking in the truth. He was referring to the great joy of seeing those he had poured his life into living the life of a Jesus follower. Discipleship is a great challenge, but it's worth the effort.

Where do you start? Pray. Ask God to show you who you are to devote time and energy to. He will show you. Do not stop praying until He does. Then ask how. One on one? Through a hobby or a skill that you have? In a small group setting? Every Jesus follower can make other Jesus followers. When we obey, He gives us the grace to do it.

DAY 39

*A Jesus follower will face
opposition in the world*



Read

Matthew 5:10-12

Matthew 5:44

John 15:18-25

Acts 5:41



Interact (S.O.A.P)

[illegible]



Reflect

Will Jesus followers always be accepted by the world? Why not?

What is to be our attitude if we suffer or face difficulty as a follower of Jesus?

How are we to respond to God and to those who oppose us?

Expect opposition. Following Jesus is not consistent with the direction the rest of the world is going. Though we may not face death because we are Christians, there will be opposition if we follow Christ in this fallen world. Jesus said it would happen. The world nailed Him to a cross.

Matthew 5 says we are blessed if we suffer for the sake of righteousness. If you miss out on something or are overlooked by someone because you follow Jesus, you are blessed. Jesus says, "rejoice." Your reward will be great. The early disciples rejoiced when they were considered worthy to suffer for His name (Acts 5:41).

Peter said not to be surprised at difficulty as though something strange was happening. He said the Spirit of glory and God rests on those who suffer. He goes on to say that suffering as an evildoer or as one who does wrong is not pleasing to God. The suffering referred to is due to godly living in a godless world, not for wrongdoing.



What is your response when being a Jesus follower costs you something?

Do you rejoice?

Do you trust His promises?

Do you see yourself as blessed or cursed?

How do you respond to those who hurt you?

When you are hurt, laughed at, left out, or passed over because you are a Jesus follower, you must first respond to God. Trust Him to carry out vengeance and to give you peace. 1 Peter 2:23 says that Jesus did not return evil for evil when persecuted because He trusted His Father, who judges righteously. God will take care of you and the situation. Second, respond to your persecutor. We are to pray for them and do good to them. In that way, you give a powerful testimony to the power of God in your life. This will not come naturally, but only as you are led and empowered by the Spirit of Christ.

Are you facing difficulty because of your faith? If not, you will. Ask God to help you see the situation as an opportunity to trust Him. It is also an opportunity to enjoy an intimacy in your fellowship with God that you may not have any other way (Philippians 3:20).

If you suffer as a Jesus follower, you are blessed.



Going Deeper

2 Timothy 3:12

Acts 14:22

1 Peter 3:13-17

DAY 40



*A Jesus follower understands that
the Kingdom is greater
than this world*

Read

Matthew 24:14 Luke 12:31-32
Revelation 5:9-10



Interact (S.O.A.P)

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What is the Kingdom of God?

When will it be established?

How much attention are we to devote to it?

There are over 100 references in sixteen books of the New Testament to the Kingdom of God. And yet the Kingdom of God is a concept that is very misunderstood in the church. The Kingdom of God is God's sovereign activity in the world resulting in people being in right relationship with Himself. To say it another way, the Kingdom of God is the big picture of God's activity all over the world. Here are three realities about the Kingdom that will help us understand it practically.

1. The Kingdom is believers (Revelation 5:9-10). The Kingdom is made up of all the followers of Jesus all over the world.
2. The Kingdom is big (Revelation 5:9). It contains believers from every tribe, every tongue, every people, and nation. The Kingdom of God is bigger than any church, denomination, city, or nation.
3. The Kingdom is being built (Matthew 24:14). As you read this, God is alive and at work all over the world, building His Kingdom. We are living in exciting days to be a part of God's global harvest.

The way that God is expanding His Kingdom is through His church. The local church is the gathering place to teach people about the King and to disciple them in Kingdom living. The local church is also the launching pad for the expansion of God's

Kingdom, locally and globally. As followers of Jesus, we have all been invited to join in God's activity. We are not simply members of a church; we are citizens of a Kingdom that is alive and expanding all over the world.



Do you have a big view of God?

Do you see all of history as God's activity? ...as God building His Kingdom?

Do you seek first the Kingdom above all else?

How do we respond to such incredible truth about God's Kingdom?

Tomorrow on Day 41, we will look at what it means to seek first His Kingdom.



Going Deeper

Matthew 6:25-33

Acts 1:3

Acts 28:30-31

DAY 41



Read

Matthew 6:33, 13:44-46

Luke 12:22-32

A Jesus follower seeks first the Kingdom while in the world



Interact (S.O.A.P)

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



Reflect

What priority does Jesus place on the Kingdom?

What value is the Kingdom?

What is to be our prayer concerning the Kingdom?

What is God's promise for those who seek first the Kingdom?

Everyone desires to invest his or her life in something truly significant. A Jesus follower has the opportunity to devote his or her life to something of infinite value that lasts forever. Jesus calls His followers to seek His Kingdom above all other pursuits in this world. This is not an inconvenience, but an invitation to blessing and meaning. Every command in the Bible is an invitation to get in on God's blessing.

With the invitation, comes a promise. God promises His protection and provision when we devote our lives to the expansion of His Kingdom. He will devote Himself to taking care of us if we will devote ourselves to the expansion of His Kingdom. Jesus promises "all these things" will be added to us. He is better at taking care of us than we are at taking care of ourselves.

Incredible as it seems, God gladly chooses to entrust the responsibility of expanding His Kingdom to us. WOW! If anyone should be fearful and reluctant, it is God. Luke 12:32 reveals God's attitude in entrusting the Kingdom to us. He could have chosen to build His Kingdom in any number of ways, but He has chosen to do it through His people.



Do you seek His Kingdom above all other earthly pursuits?

Do you trust Him to take care of everything else?

Seeking first the Kingdom does not necessarily mean that you leave where you are to be involved in Kingdom work in the future. You may. But seeking first the Kingdom definitely means that you see wherever you are as a platform for Kingdom work now. Everything God is doing in your life locally is always connected to the big picture of what God is doing globally. Wherever God has you now is your mission field to expand His Kingdom. The workplace, home, school, the office, the ball field are all opportunities given by God to expand His Kingdom by living out Kingdom principles and introducing others to the King. A Jesus follower seeks first the Kingdom, and God takes care of everything else.



Going Deeper

John 18:36

Acts 19:8, 28:23,31

Colossians 1:13

Philippians 4:15-20

DAY 42



*A Jesus follower continues growing in
relationship with God,
one another, and the world*

Read

1 Thessalonians 4:1-10

Philippians 3:13-14

John 13:34-35



Interact (S.O.A.P)

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Reflect

What was Paul's encouragement to the Thessalonians?

What was his own motto in Philippians 3?

What does the life of a Jesus follower look like?

Excel still more! Press on! Paul penned these words as encouragement to others and as a personal goal for himself. You are coming to the close of a 6-week journey. Prayerfully, you are not the person that you were 42 days ago. Prayerfully, God has done significant and lasting work in your life. But this is just the beginning.

Following Jesus is a life-long journey. It is all about relationships. Do not forget that, and by His grace continue to grow in your...

RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD - Everything in life depends on this. Abide in Him, and let His Word dwell in you richly. Dedicate your life to knowing Him and your days to spending time with Him.

For the last six weeks, you have been spending a few minutes each day reading and reflecting on God's Word. This regular routine of spending time with God in His Word each day is absolutely foundational in the life of a Jesus follower. Now that the six weeks are over, you may be asking, "What do I do now?"

Ask God to give you the desire to spend time in His Word each day. One suggestion is, to begin with a particular book of the Bible such as John and read a portion each day. Many people enjoy reading a few of the Psalms each day. The book of Proverbs has 31 chapters; you may choose to read one each day for a month. There is no wrong way to spend time with God in His Word.

RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER BELIEVERS – Rightly relating to God and one another is interdependent. You cannot have one without the other. Most aspects of your Christian life cannot prosper apart from other believers. Stay connected with others by being involved in a small group. More than you know, you need others, and others need you.

RELATIONSHIP TO THE WORLD – God has given you a mission. He is at work all around you and invites you to join Him. Seek first His Kingdom, and everything you need will be given to you. Enjoy the adventure of being on mission with God.

In the space below, answer the following questions and be prepared to share your answers with your small group.



What was the most significant truth or principle that God taught you over the past few weeks?

How will your life be different as a result of the past six weeks?

What area of your Christian life needs the most prayer support from others?

APPENDICES

Appendix 1

How do I begin a relationship with God?

At the very heart of this study is an intimate, growing relationship with God. Perhaps as you have been reading, you find yourself asking the question, "How do I begin this relationship with God?"

Read the following verses carefully:

"Jesus answered and said to him, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.'"
John 3:3

According to the words of Jesus, there must be a point in time when a transformation takes place. Here, Jesus calls it a new birth. In other words, every person must be spiritually made new on the inside by the power of God.

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

This new birth is necessary because of our sin. All have sinned. Every person ever born has sinned before God.

"The wages of sin is death..."
Romans 6:23a

The consequence of our sin (wage) is separation from God. Our sin makes a relationship impossible because of His holiness.

"But the free gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." **Romans 6:23b**

"God demonstrates His own love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."
Romans 5:8

We were hopelessly separated from God by our sin. BUT, because of His great love, Jesus Christ took our sin debt upon Himself and died in our place.

"He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by his wounds you were healed."

1 Peter 2:24

Jesus took our sins and died for us in order to make it possible to enter into a relationship with God.

"And he (Jesus) summoned the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, 'If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it. For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul?'"

Mark 8:34-36

"But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in his name."

John 1:12

Jesus died and made a relationship with God possible for everyone. But this relationship for each individual begins with a surrendered heart (deny self) and receiving of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

"Whoever will call upon the name of the Lord will be saved."

Romans 10:13

When a person realizes their great need for a Savior and trusts Jesus alone to be that Savior, then the relationship begins by simply calling upon Him. That is done by prayer. Simply crying out to God for forgiveness and receive Jesus as the Lord and Savior of your life.

You can do that right now wherever you are. Simply stop and talk to God. Be honest with Him. Tell Him the desire of your

heart, and trust Him to keep His promise. God knows your heart and is not so concerned with the words as He is the attitude of your heart. The following is a suggested prayer:

Lord Jesus, I need you. I realize I am a sinner and separated from a relationship with You. I believe you died on a cross to pay my sin debt. I believe you rose from the dead after three days. I ask you to forgive me of my sin, and I surrender the control of my life to you. Take control of my life and make me the kind of person you want me to be.

Does this prayer express the desire of your heart? If so, pray to God right now, and trust Him to change your life forever.

If you have made this wonderful decision, tell someone. Tell your small group leader, a Christian friend, or a pastor. They will rejoice with you and help you know the next steps. Now you are truly a Jesus follower.

Appendix 2

God's Discipline

By Clyde Cranford

Being disciplined by a superior is never a very appealing prospect. But the discipline of God towards His children is very precious... God does chasten us as a father would his children. He disciplines us not for retribution, but for correction. The motivation for punishment is wrath, and the purpose of punishment is retribution. The motivation for discipline is love, and the purpose of discipline is correction and instruction. God disciplines with a father's love.

God's discipline also comforts and confirms us. Was there ever comfort greater than being loved by God? God's discipline assures us of that love: "FOR THOSE WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE DISCIPLINES, AND HE SCOURGES EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES" (Hebrews 12:6). The discipline of God confirms that God is our Father and that we are His children... Most pertinent to us is the outcome of God's discipline: holiness. Again, Hebrews 12:10 says, "He disciplines us...that we may share his holiness." God loves us and wants us to partake of His very nature on a practical, day-to-day basis. His part in accomplishing this is discipline.

Now let us consider how God disciplines the believer, the particular instruments that He employs to mold and shape the believer into holiness.

THE DISCIPLINE OF THE SPIRIT

First are the inner workings of the Holy Spirit, those sanctifying influences that He distills deep in our souls. How precise and exacting He is as He wields "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Ephesians 6:17). The Word of God is "sharper than any two-edged sword...and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12). God misses nothing, for "there is no creature hidden from his sight, but all things

are open and laid bare to the eyes of him with whom we have to do" (Hebrews 4:13). God breaks us with conviction and draws us with intimations of love. Then He takes the Word as bread and feeds it to our hungry souls, opening to us a world of precious insights and perceptions. He walks beside us, encouraging, correcting, instructing, guiding; our Helper, and Intercessor... Just as Christ promised, we are not left alone, but rather we have sweet communion with Him (see John 14:16; 15:26-27; 16:7; Romans 8:26-27).

By His indwelling presence, by wooing, encouraging, and reminding, the Holy Spirit reinforces His work of renewal within us (see Titus 3:5), changing our wills a little, bringing them into harmony with the Father's and creating both the desire and the ability to follow that will.

THE DISCIPLINE OF TRIALS

Another way to share in God's holiness is through the discipline of trials. God uses adversity to get our attention, to force us to consider what is really important, and to call us to a more separate life.

CONSEQUENCES OF SIN

Some of the difficulties we face in life result directly from personal sin. God does not punish His children as a vengeful dictator, but disciplines them as a loving father. One way He accomplishes this is through the discipline of consequences. Though He forgives, He does not remove the consequences of our sin. "Whatever a man sows, he will also reap" (Galatians 6:7).*

* Excerpted from *Because We Love Him*, Clyde Cranford, Multnomah Publishers, Sisters, OR, 2002, pp. 33-39.

Appendix 3

How Do I Spend Time With God?

Time alone with God is often referred to as a “Quiet Time.” For the Jesus follower, his or her entire life is to be an intimate walk with God. But that intimacy is developed one day at a time. Each day some increment of time is set apart for communion with God. As a result, the Jesus follower is able to walk with God throughout the day because of focused time at one point in the day. There is no substitute for this time. This is where intimacy must begin.

What goes on in this time set aside with God? The daily goal is simply to spend time with Him. A major part of this time is hearing from God through His Word. The Bible does not become the Word of God...it is the Word of God. When you open the pages and begin to read, God is talking to you. There are many approaches to reading the Bible. Some are on a yearlong reading plan. Others may start with a book of the Bible and stay with that particular book until they are finished. Find what you enjoy most.

Talking to God is a vital aspect, as well. God has given us the gift of prayer by which we can share our deepest concerns, thoughts, and fears with Him. By prayer, we can simply praise Him and recount His greatness. Through prayer, we can confess our sins to Him and enjoy the sweet forgiveness that He offers. The greatest way to learn to pray is to pray.

Your time with God may consist of being silent before Him, singing to Him, writing out your thoughts and prayers in a journal, and at times even weeping in His presence. You may develop a routine but be open to God interrupting your routine. He desires honest and open communion. Jesus Christ gave His life so that you could have a relationship with God. Enjoy the fellowship and presence of your Father.

Appendix 4

I Belong...

By Vance Pitman (Founding Pastor)

Family is a really good thing. One of the greatest blessings of my life is the relationship I enjoy with my amazing wife and my four incredible children. I thank God for the blessing of family. But one of the life-lessons my wife and I have tried to instill in our children is that the blessings of being in the family include responsibilities to the family. There are certain expectations that go with being a responsible member of the family. As a matter of fact, the only people in the family who enjoy all the blessings with none of the responsibilities are babies. As you grow up in the family, the level of responsibility to the family increases.

Maybe you are asking, "What does this have to do with church?" The Bible teaches us that church is not an event we attend; church is a family to which we belong. Just like I consider myself to be tremendously blessed with my physical family, God has blessed me with an amazing spiritual family – the church! My brothers and sisters in Christ with whom I connect with in my city make up my local church and my spiritual family. I belong to Hope Church! But with the blessing of belonging also comes great responsibility. Over 40 times in the New Testament, the Holy Spirit inspired a powerful phrase to describe our responsibility to others in the family of God: "one another." Rick Warren says of these "one another" statements that, "these are your family responsibilities that God expects you to fulfill through a local fellowship."

Examples:

"love one another" (John 15:12)

"serve one another" (1 Peter 4:10)

"encourage one another" (1 Thessalonians 5:11)

"give preference to one another in honor" (Romans 12:10)

As you abide in Christ and His life is lived through you, these "one another" principles and practices will be evident in your

life. These 40 “one another’s” describe what it looks like when Christ lives His life through me in fellowship with His family.

Our team of pastors at Hope Church spent several days studying together these 40 “one another” responsibilities in the New Testament and reduced them to five defining statements. Each of these statements brings clarity to our responsibilities to one another as brothers and sisters in Christ. Take some time reflecting on these statements and the Scriptures connected with them, asking the Holy Spirit to manifest these lifestyle practices in and through you.

LOVE: (*John 13:34-35*)

Because I belong, I am responsible to love others as Christ has loved me.

HONOR: (*Philippians 2:3-4*)

Because I belong, I am responsible to consider others as more important than myself.

DISCIPLE: (*Matthew 28:19-20*)

Because I belong, I am responsible to lead others to follow Jesus and obey His Word.

SERVE: (*1 Peter 4:10*)

Because I belong, I am responsible to meet the needs of others.

RECONCILE: (*Colossians 3:12-13,15 & Romans 12:18*)

Because I belong, I am responsible to do all that I can to pursue right relationships with others.

Appendix 5

Brothers

By Clyde Cranford

In Galatians 6:10, Paul wrote, "So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith." Thus our love for our fellow believers goes even deeper than the general love which we must possess for all mankind (see 1 Thessalonians 4:9–10). Toward fellow believers, we are not to be content with brotherly love alone (Greek: *phileo*), but to go beyond it to a God-kind of love (Greek: *agape*). Peter made a clear distinction when he said that in our brotherly kindness [*phileo*], we should supply love [*agape*] (see 2 Peter 1:7). In other words, love your brother with the same selfless love with which you have been loved by God.

Again, Peter said: "Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren [*phileo*], fervently love [*agape*] one another from the heart" (1 Peter 1:22). Without an understanding that these are two different kinds of love, these verses sound confusing. But with it, one can see that Peter is stressing a deep commitment between fellow believers, a love that goes beyond mere family love.

John had much more to say about this God-kind of love: "If someone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love [*agape*] his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen". (1 John 4:20). And again, "Beloved, let us love [*agape*] one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love" (1 John 4:7-8). Christ told His disciples: "'A new commandment I give to you, that you love [*agape*] one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another'" (John 13:34-35). Love must be action that reflects an investment in our very lives. It requires generosity and sacrifice. It also requires that we be open and transparent,

honest and real. Yet we must love responsibly, with wisdom, discernment, and real knowledge as our guides (see Philippians 1:9-10). We must love enough to give our brother the truth even when the truth hurts, but only while hurting right along with him. Love costs – sometimes our comfort, sometimes our very lives. Is that not what love cost our Lord? Shortly before His crucifixion He said to the disciples, “Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13). “Thus John again wrote in his first epistle: “We know love [agape] by this, that he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoever has the world’s goods, and beholds his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth” (1 John 3:16–18).

These words compel us to love beyond our comfort zones; indeed, to love with the sacrifice of our very lives. And this refers to every brother in Christ, not just those for whom we have a personal affinity. Our human nature rebels against this. Thus is set the tension that can only be relieved as we look to our Savior and rely on the Spirit, who alone produces the fruit of agape love. Laying down our lives for the brethren means more than dying for them physically. How often are we called to do that? It means that each of us will be a servant to them for Christ’s sake, will think of them as more important than “ourselves, will labor in prayer for them, and will put their best interests above our own. Only thus will we fulfill what James called the royal law of love: “YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF” (James 2:8).

** Excerpted from Because We Love Him, Clyde Cranford, Multnomah Publishers, Sisters, OR, 2002, pp. 274-276.*

Appendix 6

The Dearest Place On Earth

By Scott Worthington

The Church. Often misunderstood, frequently underappreciated, and let's be honest, at times blatantly ridiculed. And yet the Church is the most beautiful, powerful, and transformative institution on the planet – all by God's design. No other institution has been commissioned with the life-changing gospel which is the power of God for salvation. No other institution has been birthed for a mission to bring people from every tribe, tongue, and nation from death to life!

We can all agree that confusion and chaos, disrespect and division seem to be the air we breathe all around us, and yet the Church has been designed by God to unify every class and culture of people and birth community despite our differences.

Sure, the Church is not perfect because the church is made up of people. And even though we are not perfect, we are His. As the 19th century Pastor Charles Spurgeon said, "Still, as imperfect as it is, the Church is the dearest place on earth to us." As you read that statement, do you agree? What are your feelings about the Church? We know from the word of God that Jesus loves the Church. Jesus Christ died for the Church. Jesus Christ is the head of the Church, and He calls the Church His bride. Jesus loves His church! The question is, do we?

Every member of our physical body has a purpose and is needed for the body to function in a healthy way. Likewise, the Church, the Body of Christ has many members (1 Corinthians 12) and every member of the Body has a purpose.

Our physical bodies function best when the members work together. Every part has a place and every part matters to each other because they are all connected. They need each other. The health of the whole is dependent on the parts. As followers of Jesus, we are all grace-gifted to meet needs within the body of Christ (1 Peter 4:10-11). Said plainly: God has placed

you in a Church Body and nobody else can meet the need God has gifted you to meet! As you think about the local church in which you are a part, what may they be missing out on because they're missing God's gift through you? I am convinced that local churches are not all that God desires them to be because there are parts of their body that are not functioning the way God desires them to.

The Church is not a place. The Church is a people who have been placed! Church is not an event we attend; it's a family to which we belong! Belonging means you who are part of a local expression of the body of Christ (the Church) have a commitment to one another. A commitment to covenant together for the sake of the glory of God and the expansion of His kingdom.

Why is this such a big deal? Because we live in a world where consumerism reigns and commitment wanes. To be a "member" of something in our world usually asks the question, "What do I get out of it?" Think Costco, Lifetime Fitness, etc. Covenant membership in the Church does not seek privileges but participation in something, together with brothers and sisters in Christ, that is much bigger than just one person, one church, or one city! Covenant Membership with a local church says:

- I identify with this church as a baptized Jesus follower.
- I am united with this church in belief and mission.
- I am submitted to the leaders of this church who are accountable for me.
- I have a responsibility in this church to serve, love, and care for my brothers and sisters in Christ as we grow together in Christ-likeness.

Are you a member of your church? Are you an active participant in the church family that God has called you to or are you an apathetic spectator? The Lord wants to use you in the Body of Christ! You are gifted. You are needed. You were placed together with your local church family for worship, community, and mission. To proclaim to a lost and desperate world that thus family truly is the dearest place on earth.

Appendix 7

Discovering My S.H.A.P.E.

All Jesus followers have been grace-gifted by God with specific gifts to build up the body of Christ. Do you know how God has uniquely shaped you as a Jesus follower to serve others in His body? Read through this appendix, and use it as a tool to discover how God has wired you.

"Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. There are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons. But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good." 1 Corinthians 12:4-7

What is your S.H.A.P.E.?

Read through the questions below and ask God to speak to you. Write down your answers in a journal or on a notepad.

- S** - Spiritual Gifts - What am I gifted to do?
- H** - Heart - What do I love to do? What am I passionate about?
- A** - Abilities - What natural talents and skills do I have?
- P** - Personality - Where does my personality best suit me to serve?
- E** - Experiences - What spiritual experiences have I had? What painful experiences have I had? What educational experiences have I had? What ministry experiences have I had? What job experiences have I had?

Once you believe you have identified your S.H.A.P.E., ask three other people to give you feedback about your assessment. Wisdom always seeks the counsel of others (Proverbs 15:22). Additionally, identify at least one place where you can use your S.H.A.P.E. to serve the body of Christ (i.e. small group, local/global mobilization opportunity, Hope Kids, Hope Students, etc.).

For more information about the Shape identification tool, see The Purpose Driven Life, Rick Warren, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 2002, pp. 236-237.

Appendix 8

Where Has God Placed You?

God is alive and at work all around you. When you identify His Kingdom activity, that is your invitation to join Him in His work (John 5:19). As a Jesus follower, God has placed you where you are for a very specific reason. The places where you live, work, and play are all places to look for God's activity around you in order to share the love of Jesus with those who do not know God.

We all have spheres of influence through which we are able to share with others our personal story of life change. Education, business, and entertainment are all examples of domains where God has placed His people to live on mission. Regardless if you are in the medical field, a stay at home mom, or a government employee, God desires to leverage your life for maximum kingdom impact.

The most immediate application of this appendix is locally. You can begin to impact your workplace, your neighborhood, and additional areas of influence today! However, what if God has uniquely wired you to use your job, skill, and passion globally as a way to engage cross-culturally to see disciples made and new churches birthed? How is He leading you to engage in the nations where He has placed you?

Listed below are some examples of different platforms to engage in God's activity...

JOB – What do you do?

- Education
- Medical
- Economics
- IT & Communication
- Arts & Entertainment
- Agriculture
- Other

SKILL – What can you do?

- Management
- Construction
- Finance
- Special Needs Education
- Audio/Video Production
- Other

PASSION – What do you love doing?

- Photography
- Writing
- Orphan Care
- Athletics
- Website Development
- Other

Appendix 9

The Giving Target

At Hope Church, we believe the Bible is clear with how we should view our finances. Simply put, everything belongs to the Lord (1 Corinthians 10:26). He has entrusted some of what belongs to Him to me. I am to use what He's entrusted to me for Him! This is the principle of stewardship. But how should we steward what the Lord gives us?

We believe there are several guiding principles to honoring God with our resources. Those principles are really simple. We are to give to the Lord generously. We are to save for the future wisely. And we are to budget to live joyfully.

We've taught these principles at Hope in the form of a financial target. This visual includes categories and percentages that reflect our convictions as a church.



Give to the Lord generously

The center of the target should be the starting place of our stewardship. Proverbs 3:9 says, "Honor the Lord from your wealth and from the first of all your produce." The word "produce" means an increase or revenue and the word "first" speaks to the best or the choicest part. Out of every source of income, I am to generously give "first" to the Lord's work to honor Him. This means that I don't first take care of myself and then see what's left over for God. I first obey and honor God

with my resources and then trust Him to care for me with what He has provided!

Save for the future wisely

Art Rainer said in a study of American finances, "In the U.S., most people would not be able to pay for a financial emergency that costs more than \$400." Proverbs 21:20 speaks to this idea as well. "The wise have wealth and luxury, but the fools spend whatever they get" (New Living Translation). Put bluntly, the Bible says if we do not prioritize saving for the future, we are being foolish. Wisdom demands we save for the future! Living within our means doesn't simply mean that we don't spend more than we earn. From a Biblical perspective, it means we save for the future as well.

Budget to live joyfully

Proverbs 21:5 says, "The plans of the diligent lead surely to advantage, but everyone who is hasty comes surely to poverty." The Hebrew word for "plans" means intention or on purpose. The word "advantage" means a favorable position. Wisdom says that we should manage our money with an intentional purpose and when we do, we'll be in a much more favorable financial position. So that begs a question: Do you have an intentional plan for how you manage your money to honor God?

I want to invite you to ask yourself a few questions in response to this financial target.

First, do you have a target? We should all have a plan based on our biblical convictions for stewarding the resources that God has given to us.

Secondly, if you have a target, are you aiming at that target? We should not only have a financial plan; we should carry out that plan by the way we live and make decisions.

Here is one final question: If you have a target, and you are aiming at that target, how is your aim? Remember, everything belongs to the Lord. He has entrusted some of what belongs to Him to me. I am to use what He's entrusted to me for Him!

Appendix 10

Creative ways to share the love of Jesus

The following 17 ideas are ways to engage people around you with practical acts of kindness:

1. Pay for the food of the person behind you in the drive-thru or fast food line.
2. Buy a soft drink for a cashier or customer service person on a busy day.
3. Bring a welcome basket to a new neighbor.
4. Mow the lawn for an elderly person or widow in your neighborhood.
5. Organize a group to pick up trash and clean up graffiti in your neighborhood.
6. Offer to baby sit for a single parent so that they can have a day out.
7. Be a mentor for a troubled young person.
8. Bring an umbrella to a shopping center on a rainy day and offer to escort people to their cars.
9. Offer a cold drink on a hot day to your trash pick-up crew.
10. Fix and do minor repairs around the house for a single mother or elderly neighbor.
11. Fix and do minor repairs on the car for a single mother or elderly neighbor.
12. Take a co-worker out to lunch that you would not normally have lunch with.
13. Write an encouraging note or card to someone you know who needs it.
14. Bring a meal to a new neighbor on moving day.
15. Buy a case of soft drinks to share with your co-workers or classmates.
16. Put extra quarters in a parking meter that's about to expire.
17. Adopt a grandparent at a local nursing home.

Or think of your own ideas and share them with others!

The Do's and Don'ts of engaging people around you

- DO pray before engaging a person in an act of kindness. Ask God to show you who to help and how best you can help them.
- DO get permission before doing anything whenever appropriate (yard work, cleaning neighborhoods, etc.)
- DO your very best work! Good quality work is a powerful witness.
- DO dress appropriately for the situation.
- DO let the joy of the Lord show through!
- DON'T be kind just to be noticed. The love of Jesus should be your only motive.
- DON'T be pushy or preachy. Let your actions prompt the conversation, and God will give you the opportunity to share the Gospel.
- DON'T expect immediate results every time. You may be the one to plant the seed that another will harvest.
- DON'T force the issue. Sometimes a person may feel awkward or uncomfortable accepting unconditional kindness from a stranger. If that happens, politely excuse yourself and respect that person's wish.
- DON'T let the prospect of some hard work be a deterrent to trying something new.



Abide. Connect. Share.

"Follow me!" When Jesus spoke these words, what did He mean? He was not offering an invitation to a destination, rather it was an invitation to a relationship with a Person that would radically change one's way of life.

What was true then is true today. Christianity is not a religion but a relationship with Jesus, which results in radical life change. Following Jesus is the heart of Christianity.

But what is the life of a Jesus follower all about? Answer: relationships.

Those relationships are the following:

1. Your relationship with God - a daily, intimate fellowship relationship with the Father.
2. Your relationship with God's family - a relationship of connecting in community with other believers.
3. Your relationship with the world - a cultivation of relationships with others who do not know Jesus, to share Christ with them.

Through Scripture, practical insights, resources, and questions, this 42-day devotional outlines a biblical paradigm of following Jesus. It challenges believers to examine their lives to see if they are truly allowing His life to be manifest in them, or if they have settled for the cheap counterfeit of religion.

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