

In Pursuit of Jesus

Exploring and Expressing Faith

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Introduction

Week 1

This week in summaryIntroductionWEEK 1

About this Study		
The Life of Jesus	<i>Mark 1-3</i>	<i>Day 1</i>
Reading the Bible	<i>Mark 4-6</i>	<i>Day 2</i>
Perspectives	<i>Mark 7-9</i>	<i>Day 3</i>
Influence	<i>Mark 10-12</i>	<i>Day 4</i>
Service	<i>Mark 13-16</i>	<i>Day 5</i>

About this study

The goal of this study is to point you to Jesus. Who is He? What did He do? What did He say? What does it mean to follow Him and why would I want to do that? To learn about Jesus we will be reading his biography from eye witnesses, discussing His life with the people closest to you and talking directly to Him.

This program is designed to develop five areas of your life. As a foundation we will be spending a lot of time **reading** about Jesus. We will ponder **topics** that reveal and explore the often surprising qualities of Jesus and His teaching.

Perspective includes articles that help to understand Jesus' way of living. Influence and Service will shape the way we interact with the people around us. **Influence** is a series of tasks focused on meeting the needs of the people around us. The **Service** series examines the way God has made you unique and how to develop a role based on what you do best.

Throughout this study you can expect to read daily, engage in weekly discussions with others, become more involved in the lives of the people around you and to have plenty of questions. This study begins and ends with Jesus and ultimately all those things will point to him.

Day 1

The Life of Jesus

A summary of Mark's Biography

The book of Mark is the account of the life of Jesus we could call, "the gospel on the go." Unlike the other biographers, Mark rushes from one story to another, keeping each one short, pointed, and easy to read. We might even get the impression he meant to pen for a wide audience that could include the youngest hearers possible.

Written probably sometime shortly before AD 70, Mark presents Jesus as "Christ, the son of God." There are a lot of terms here that need some definition and discussion to wrap our minds around them: what is "Christ"? What does this phrase "son of God" mean, exactly? Everything Mark writes is written to address those questions precisely. As you read along, think about how each incident in the life of Jesus demonstrates Him to be "Christ" and "son of God."

Reading Today: Mark 1-3

20-30 minutes

Day 2

Reading the Bible

An entire college semester could be spent on the particulars of how to read the Bible. One might initially even remark, "I'm an educated person. I know how to read." However, when reading the Bible, just like any work of antiquity, we need to learn to read not simply at face value. For example, how would what is being said be received in that culture? What themes is the author pointing to? How does where this is happening influence what it means? This is what makes the difference between a high context work of literature and low context. Generally speaking, even when we've correctly understood the words, we might still read and have our understanding fall into one of three categories: 1) we read it and get it 2) we read it and some extra piece of information that wasn't available to us simply by reading the text sheds light and we get it or 3) we read it and no matter how much light is shed we won't get it because we simply didn't live in that context.

This study is founded on the Bible. The Bible was compiled over hundreds of years by different authors who had encounters with God and wrote about their experiences. It is a record of the interaction of God with parts of humanity. The first part of the Bible includes a reoccurring message that things are not ultimately what they should be and that someone is coming who will put things right. The second part of the Bible identifies that Jesus has come and He is putting things right. This process is still going on today and you will be a part of God putting things right in the world.

It's natural at this point to ask questions like "How do you know God exists?" or "Why do you believe the Bible is reliable?" These are very valid and important questions and there are both academic and anecdotal answers for them. As we pursue getting to know Jesus

Day 2

Reading the Bible *continued*

through this study, you will likely encounter some of those answers for yourself. To get to know Jesus, this study focuses on the Bible because it is historically the most reliable source of information about Jesus. In the interests of understanding Jesus, we presume the existence of God because Jesus himself lives in that belief.

The reading for the first part of the study will be the biography of Jesus written by a man named Mark. In the Bible, the table of contents at the beginning will tell you which page to turn for the section written by Mark. Look for it shortly after “The New Testament.” Mark is divided into 16 chapters. Each chapter is further divided into verses roughly one or two sentences in length. To reference a specific line we use a notation such as “Mark 5:1” which means chapter five, the first verse. “Mark 2:3-7” means chapter two verse three through seven. For this first week, we will read all 16 chapters of Mark. I recommend reading three chapters per day which should take between 20-40 minutes.

Reading Today: Mark 4-6

20-30 minutes

Day 3

Perspective

I recently went to see a chiropractor about a back pain I've been having. Apparently my spine was out of alignment and causing pain. Before going I tried fixing the problem myself. My technique just wasn't as effective as the chiropractor.

God designed me and knows me inside and out. He knows the deep issues that I'm not even aware of and He wants to see me healthy.

Life will change as you spend time in God's presence. You will fall in love. You will be amazed to see things the way God does. Sometimes it will hurt like an addict becoming sober.

Welcome to the life you are meant to live.

This section is called perspective because most of that change comes as a result of seeing things from God's perspective. When we understand what He does it and what he values, it changes the way we approach life. Many of the things we value are realized to be quite trivial compared to God's values. Part of gaining wisdom and living differently is aligning what we value to what God values.

Day 3

In the life of the believer, God has even higher callings and standards. This isn't an "earn salvation" type of deal, but rather the response of a grateful, devoted heart to Him who loved her and gave Himself up for her. He did what He did for us, and so because He loved us, we love one another and have to work on being transformed daily more and more into His image.

Reading Today: Mark 7-9

20-30 minutes

Day 4

Influence

The message of Jesus is often described as “good news.” Part of the process of believing the message is passing it on (who doesn’t want to pass on good news?). When one person believes the message of Jesus it is good. But when more people believe that good becomes great for each of them. It multiplies exponentially. Why keep something good for yourself when giving it to others takes your good to a whole new level?

The section on **Influence** will take you step by step as you become someone who can meet real needs and brings good news into the lives of people around you.

Our interaction with people is based on this one truth: God loves the people of this world. This is remarkable because He loves some of the most unlovable scoundrels imaginable. He loves the ones that I can’t love. But as I spend time with God, my capacity for love grows to include people who were once beyond me. As our love expands God also expands our influence.

Reading Today: Mark 10-12

20-30 minutes

Day 5

Service

Screwdrivers make very poor hammers. A keyboard is not a good substitute for a paintbrush. We are designed uniquely by God to do wonderful things, just not all the same things. I am not like you and you shouldn't try to be like me. In the service sections you will learn how you work, your strengths, weaknesses and God given talents so that you can be effective and satisfied as you work towards your life purpose.

In a company, there are many departments. They aren't all the same and don't all do the same thing, but each is essential to the functioning of the corporation (except, arguably, human resources. Don't believe me? Google "human resources is " and see what the top suggested completions are). God assigns us different tasks according to His desire. Nothing says we can't pursue or ask for certain tasks, but nothing promises we'll receive those requests if He has a plan that goes better with what He is trying to accomplish. No one can improve on perfection.

Remember that we're not the star of the show. God has the right to make us into whatever He wants when He wants. Ours is only to do the next good thing He sets before us. It can be difficult sometimes to simply do so, but we must never let ambition get in the way of accomplishing the small things He wants to do. And there's nothing bigger than the small things.

Reading Today: Mark 13-16

20-30 minutes

Foundation

Week 2

This week in summary

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The King, Jesus the Servant King	<i>Matt 1-2</i>	<i>Day 1</i>
God with Us	<i>Matt 3-4</i>	<i>Day 2</i>
The Constitution	<i>Matt 5</i>	<i>Day 3</i>
God Loves the World	<i>Matt 6</i>	<i>Day 4</i>
My Personality	<i>Matt 7</i>	<i>Day 5</i>

Day 1

The King**A summary of Matt 1-4**

Matthew wants you to know that Jesus is King. Not just any King, He's the Christ or "Heaven sent King". Jesus is the King that all other kings will bow down to. Obviously this is a huge claim so Matthew begins by proving that Jesus is the Heaven-Sent King.

By Birthright, Jesus is the descendant of Kings. God brings Jesus into this world through a miraculous virgin birth. Jesus is sent from heaven.

By Prophecy, The prophets predicted the coming of a Heaven-Sent King known as "the Christ" which is Jesus. Matthew says over and over "this was to fulfill the words of the prophets." The prophets witnessed God work in the history of Matthew's people. These prophets lived between 400-1000 years before Matthew's time yet all of the predictions were proven true.

By Foreign Recognition Magi came from distant countries to recognize Jesus as King.

By Comparison Jesus is a better King than Herod. Herod was the king of the country where Jesus was born. He acquired power using strong and ruthless techniques typical of powerful people. His path is marked by destroying others. While Herod brings death, Jesus brings life. He is the kind of King that gives power to his people. Jesus is the King sent from Heaven.

Jesus the Servant King

Jesus had every right to the most extreme imaginations of what we might think it means to be king of the universe yet he chose to empty himself of all of it. He became obedient to God—even to the point of being put to death wrongfully and in a most painful and humiliating way. That is why when he reigns as king of kings he really has every right to do so since he himself has been where we are. And as we learn to take the humble attitude of a servant, we find a power unknown to those who simply demand to be waited on hand and foot.

Like the King of kings, we discover that it's in losing our lives that we truly find them.

Reading Today: Matthew 1-2

10-15 minutes

Day 2

God with Us

Have you met God? Let’s take a moment to get to know each other. Start by introducing yourself to God. Write down some of the ways you’d describe yourself to God

Now read your list out loud to God. Yeah, right now.

Here is a list of some of the ways God describes himself

God is like...

light, a loving father, a mother bird protecting her young, a lion, a fire, a king, a quiet whisper, a lamb, healer, my shepherd, my source of strength, provider, bringer of hope and peace, my comforter, a stronghold, a shield, a rock, a refuge,

“I AM”

“God is the living one who sees me”

“the God who makes things right”

The Ancient of Days, Faithful, True, Trustworthy, Knowing, Most high, Eternal, Invisible, Mighty, Holy, Unique, Noble, of Immense worth, Powerful, Patient, Understanding, Awesome, Gracious, Generous, Compassionate, Merciful, Jealous, Passionate, Love

Response:

God is calling you to follow Him into a new way of life. What you do think about that?

Reading Today: Matthew 3-4

10-15 minutes

Day 3

The Constitution

A summary of Matt 5-7

Jesus is bringing the Kingdom of Heaven to earth. What is this kingdom like? What does the King expect from his citizen?

Jesus begins telling us that his values are different than the world. The world says love your friends; hate your enemies. Jesus says love your enemies. He demands forgiveness, honesty, humility, generosity, modesty and faithfulness. That's the kind of Kingdom Jesus offers.

King Jesus introduces a deeper ethic based on attitude not actions. To Him hatred and murder are the same thing and equally unacceptable. Judgment is based on what's inside the heart of a person. Jesus knows that fixation on evil thoughts leads to evil deeds. Jesus' requirements are impossibly high but every time we fail He demands that we forgive ourselves and those around us. We must also accept forgiveness when it is given.

Jesus introduces a new system of internal governance. With God's help from within, I take control of myself instead of an external government controlling me from the outside.

The people were surprised because Jesus didn't speak like a teacher. He spoke like He has authority. He speaks like a King.

Reading Today: Matthew 5

10-15 minutes

Day 4

God Loves the World

God loves all the people of this world and that makes all the difference.

In the past I would look for great accomplishments of fame or beauty. I would look for people who think like me or have toys that I like.

But now there is no accomplishment greater than being loved by God. And everyone I see is loved by God. Now I have to look at them differently.

I have a different way of seeing the significance of people because. How could a gold medal compare to the Love of God? By His love, all people are significant. I see my boss whom God loves, my friend whom God loves, the cashier whom God loves. Every person I see is loved by God, even the one in the mirror. I am loved by God, I am significant.

Love is a word that gets thrown around quite a bit. It has several definitions in English, and which one we mean depends on context. We don't, for example, love our spouses the way we love pizza. This makes room, of course, for those who wish to dally around play word games with the word love to guilt others into one thing or another (i.e., "If you truly loved me, you'd...").

When we say that God loves the whole world we don't mean the kind of love where He approves of everything the world does. Rather, we mean that seemingly psychologically dysfunctional love that a mother and father would have for their child—even if she's a convicted offender. The parents of such a person might agree that what she did was deplorable. They wouldn't blame the justice system for sending their

daughter to prison for a long time. But they would still continue to love her. That's because God's love isn't an object-oriented love that depends on the one being loved, but the one doing the loving. Of course, some might reject that love. Continued on unto death, what more can our Maker do? If we reject Him unto death, then what hope can we have?

Reading Today: Matthew 6

10-15 minutes

Day 5

My Personality

Did you know God had a purpose in mind when He designed you? Do you want to discover your purpose in life?

This section is the first in a series of assessments designed to better understand who you are. Later in this study you will use this information to develop your life purpose statement based on the way God has made you. Your purpose is different than anyone else.

Let's begin with your personality. Take this personality profile assessment online at www.16personalities.com

Read the description of your personality type in the links. Circle your personality type on the chart below

ARTISAN	GUARDIAN	RATIONAL	IDEALIST
<u>Promoter</u> (ESTP)	<u>Supervisor</u> (ESTJ)	<u>Fieldmarshal</u> (ENTJ)	<u>Teacher</u> (ENFJ)
<u>Crafter</u> (ISTP)	<u>Inspector</u> (ISTJ)	<u>Mastermind</u> (INTJ)	<u>Counselor</u> (INFJ)
<u>Performer</u> (ESFP)	<u>Provider</u> (ESFJ)	<u>Inventor</u> (ENTP)	<u>Champion</u> (ENFP)
<u>Composer</u> (ISFP)	<u>Protector</u> (ISFJ)	<u>Architect</u> (INTP)	<u>Healer</u> (INFP)

Reflections:

After reading the description of your personality type, does it seem accurate? Is it surprising? How could this information help you to make wise choices in life?

Reading Today: Matthew 7

10-15 minutes

Growth

Week 3

This week in summary

<u>Growth</u>		<u>WEEK 3</u>
Power, Ambassadors	<i>Matt 8</i>	<i>Day 1</i>
Jesus the Powerful	<i>Matt 9</i>	<i>Day 2</i>
Grace	<i>Matt 10</i>	<i>Day 3</i>
My Work Team	<i>Matt 8-9</i>	<i>Day 4</i>
My Values	<i>Matt 10</i>	<i>Day 5</i>

Day 1

Power**A summary of Matt 8&9**

These chapters are a snapshot of the kind of power Jesus has. Power to heal disease, power over the natural world, power over the spiritual world, power over death; Jesus has the power to forgive sins against God.

How does Jesus use his power?

Jesus only uses his power to do the will of the God.

He gives power to his disciples.

He never uses his power for himself.

Reflection:

What kind of abilities do you have? (Skills, talents, finances, respect.) Do you use your 'powers' like Jesus does? – to do the will of God, giving to others and never for your own advancement? Do you know people that use their abilities the way Jesus uses his power?

Ambassadors

A summary of Matt 10

Now that Jesus has demonstrated what kind of power his kingdom wields he sends out messengers to invite to his fellow countrymen to join his Kingdom. Consider this an invitation to you as well.

“The Kingdom of Heaven is here, will you join?”

Jesus gave his messengers the same power he just demonstrated in chapters 8&9. They were given power to heal, power over nature and power over the supernatural. The messengers weren't just sent out to talk about the Kingdom, they were demonstrating what the kingdom is all about.

Reading Today: Matthew 8

10-15 minutes

Day 2

Jesus the Powerful

Consider some of Jesus' power recorded by history:

- Turned over 150 gallons of water to wine at a wedding
- Healed a Nobleman's son
- Helped fishermen make the catch of their lives.
- Healed a man with leprosy
- Healed a soldier's servant
- Raised to life a widow's son *
- Healed a man possessed by a daemon
- Healed Peter's mother-in-law
- Healed a paralyzed man
- Healed a crippled man
- Healed a man with withered hand
- Healed a Blind man possessed by a demon
- Calmed a fierce storm while at sea
- Healed two men possessed by daemons
- Raised to life Jairus' daughter
- Healed a woman with an Issue of blood*
- Restored sight to Two blind men
- Healed a man possessed by a demon, unable to speak
- Fed Five thousand people using the a boy's lunch
- Walked on the sea
- Healed a foreign woman's daughter
- Healed a man deaf and unable to speak
- Fed 4,000 people with seven loaves and a few small fish
- Restored sight to a blind men
- Healed a boy possessed by a suicidal daemon
- Miraculously provided tax money
- Healed the eyes of one born blind
- Healed a woman sick for 18 years and unable to stand

- Healed a man with Dropsy
- Healed ten lepers
- Raised to life Lazarus after three days
- Restored sight to two blind beggars
- Restored the ear of a soldier attempting to arrest him
- Ended the tyranny of death by returning to life three days after his public execution

I'd like to bring special attention to two of his healings that go beyond the physical.

Jesus raised a widow's son to life, certainly this was a gift for the son, but even more so for the widow. She lived in a male dominated society where she didn't even have the right to represent herself in court. With the death of her son this widow was steps away from begging by the side of the road. Jesus returned her son to life. He was this widow's last living male relative to care for her in her twilight years and carry on her family's honor after she passed away. With just a touch, Jesus gave the widow her son, her provision and her legacy.

Secondly there was a woman who'd been bleeding constantly for twelve years. Because of the nature of her disease she would have been despised by her society. Secretly she was able to touch the corner of Jesus' sleeve and be healed. Jesus immediately stopped everything and the crowd that was with him. He looked squarely at the woman and announced to the crowd that she is now healed. He restored her socially, because it's not enough to just heal the body.

Reading Today: Matthew 9

10-15 minutes

Day 3

Grace

As an adult the world's economy is based on buying, selling and trading. Growing up as a kid my economy was: ask dad and he gives.

This is God's economy. Not an exchange - He doesn't make deals. He gives gifts. We can't work harder for more. He gives to us freely and simply. The gifts shape us. The word for God's economy is *grace*.

Grace – God does for us what we can't do, as a gift that empowers us to overcome.

As a definition grace has four parts:

- Happy. To be delighted.
- a common greeting in the ancient world: "**Grace to you**" was a way of saying "May you be **happy**" or "I'm **delighted** to be with you."
- Grace is a **gift**. Not earned. You can't work for it. You can't be entitled to it. It is given freely.
- **Empowerment**. Increase in power, energy or ability. You are now stronger and more capable.

All together grace could be understood as:

God meets us with a gift that strengthens and delights.

Welcome to God's economy.

Reading Today: Matthew 10

10-15 minutes

Day 4

Fellow Laborers

Jesus has a way of opening our eyes to the people around us. He reverses our years of learning to judge someone's value and dismiss the people that don't seem to be worth our time. Consider the people at work; some you get along with, some not so well, some you barely know and some you wouldn't consider part of your work team. Maybe they cook and you teach, or you clean and they make big important decisions. Whatever the separation, they are all serving the same company mission no matter if it's leading, building, researching or cleaning we're all on the same team. God has a plan for your work team.

Prayers for my work team:

God help me to see my co-workers the way you do.
Help me respect my co-workers beyond what is expected.
God, Help me make choices that honor you, my team and myself.
Feel free to pray for your family in your own words. As always pray honestly about what's in your heart.

Reading Today: Matthew 8-9

10-15 minutes

Day 5

My Values

Look over the **Values** listed on the following pages. This list represents the values that many people hold in life. As you look over this list you should indicate by each 'value', how you see this personally applying to you by number:

- 4 Always value
- 3 Usually value
- 2 Sometimes value
- 1 Rarely value
- 0 Never value

Look over the thing you have indicated with a '3' or '4' and list the top 6, your **most** important values.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

Reading Today: Matthew 10

10-15 minutes

Values List

_____	Aesthetics	Studying and appreciating the beauty of things, ideas etc
_____	Affiliation	Being part of a company, organization or work team that accepts me as a team member
_____	Artistic	Produce work with aesthetic value; engage in creative work in any of several art forms
_____	Challenging Problems	Opportunity to stretch myself with new, unique or difficult issues to resolve
_____	Change and Variety	Work responsibilities and activities which frequently change in their content or setting
_____	Competition	Engage in activities which pit my abilities against others where there are clear win and lose outcomes.
_____	Creative Expressions	Opportunity to express in writing or verbally my ideas, reactions and observations
_____	Decision Making	Power to decide courses of action, policies, etc
_____	Excitement	Experience frequent or a high degree of excitement in the course of my work
_____	Exercise Competence	The opportunity to work in those areas in which I feel I have talents and can excel
_____	Fast Pace	Work must be done rapidly and there is constantly a lot of activity
_____	Friendship	Develop close personal relationships with people as a result of my work activities
_____	Help Society	Contribute to the betterment of the world or community I live in

_____	Helping Others	Providing services or assistance to other people in a direct way, either individually or in a small group
_____	High Earning	Anticipated financial rewards that will allow me to purchase those things I consider essential and the luxuries of life I wish
_____	Independence	Determining the nature of my work without significant direction from others; setting my own direction
_____	Influencing People	Change attitudes or modify opinions in others to do or purchase something
_____	Job Tranquility	Avoid work related pressures and the "Rat Race"
_____	Knowledge	Spend time in pursuit of knowledge, truth and understanding
_____	Leadership	Opportunity to lead others through direction, influence and motivation
_____	Leisure	Having enough time for leisure pursuits; no significant overtime required
_____	Location	Live in a town or geographical area which suits my lifestyle
_____	Mental Stimulation	Work which requires that I constantly use my mind and continue to develop my intellect
_____	Moral Fulfillment	Feel that my work is contributing to a set of moral standards which I feel are very important
_____	Physical Challenge	A job that makes physical demands which I find rewarding
_____	Power and Authority	Ability to control the work activities and rewards for others

_____	Precision Work	Work in situations which there is little tolerance for error
_____	Pressure	Situations where time pressure is prevalent or the quality of my work is judged critically by supervisors, customers or others.
_____	Public Contact	Have a lot of day-to-day interaction with people
_____	Recognition	Rewards or public acknowledgment for the quality of my work
_____	Responsibility	Opportunity for decision making and control over my work domain; chance to oversee projects or personnel
_____	Security	Assurance of keeping my job and a reasonable financial reward
_____	Stability	Have a work routine and job duties that are largely predictable and not likely to change over a long period of time.
_____	Status	A position of respect which my friends, family and community values
_____	Time Freedom	Have work responsibilities which I can pursue according to my own schedule; no specific work hours required
_____	Work Alone	Do projects by myself, without and significant amount of contact with others
_____	Work on the Frontier of Knowledge	Work in one of the physical sciences or human research; work in a company that is technically excellent and striving for product advances
_____	Working with Others	Have close working relationships with a group; work as a team toward common goals

Wonder

Week 4

This week in summary

<u>Wonder</u>		<u>WEEK 4</u>
Wonder of the Kingdom	<i>Matt 11</i>	<i>Day 1</i>
Jesus is Subversive	<i>Matt 12</i>	<i>Day 2</i>
Citizen of God's Kingdom	<i>Matt 12</i>	<i>Day 3</i>
My Family	<i>Matt 11-12</i>	<i>Day 4</i>
My Strengths	<i>Matt 13</i>	<i>Day 5</i>

Day 1

The Wonder of the Kingdom Matt 11-13

Jesus sent out invitations to the Kingdom, delivered by his students (ch10) but the response wasn't all positive. The Kingdom of Heaven is here but it's not from this world and it certainly isn't what people expected. Jesus is the long awaited King sent from Heaven but he doesn't fit their idea.

Some people just didn't get it.

It seems that some people came to Jesus with high expectations of what the Kingdom should be. They already have it all figured out and Jesus is not what they were expecting. They went away disappointed.

In chapters 11 and 12 Jesus encounters opposition. This isn't just pushback from the initial campaign in chapter 10; this is a story about who is ready to enter the Kingdom of Heaven and who isn't. In one of many ironic twists of the Kingdom the people you most expect to be ready for Jesus; (ie. smart religious leaders) are not ready to accept Jesus.

They can't get beyond their expectations of what a Savior from God and a Kingdom from God should be. They aren't ready to follow God's plan because they are too hung up on themselves.

You may be surprised by some of the things you learn about Jesus and His kingdom as well. Take a cue from Jesus' good friend John the Baptist. John humbly sent his questions to Jesus and simply trusted what Jesus said.

Those who simply accept that the Kingdom of Heaven is what Jesus says it is, marvel at its wonder. They are the most satisfied. Will you allow yourself to be delighted in the wonder of the Kingdom?

In the space below make a list: "How would you describe the Kingdom of Heaven to a friend?"

Consider this a starting point. Let's revise the list as we learn more from Jesus.

Reading Today: Matthew 11

10-15 minutes

Day 2

Jesus is Subversive

The world has a certain way of doing things. Jesus has a way of doing things that is different than this world.

Change can be scary. Some just prefer their familiar evils. Taking a stand against evil makes enemies of people who embrace those destructive patterns. Doing so will create conflict, opposition, and at the very least make you unpopular. Opposing debt, for example, brings the wrath of the financial industry but also that of those who enjoy the fruits of their debt.

Jesus stood opposed to oppressive systems and people (debt, addiction, ignorance, corrupt justice, and religious control, just to name a few). These systems made people who could otherwise be citizens of Heaven into slaves of someone else.

Jesus was a friend of the sinners and other social outcast but he was hated by those in power.

Jesus spent his days in the company of people society throws away like garbage.

He personally educated women in a culture that stood opposed to it.

At one time, Jesus was asked if citizens of his Kingdom should pay taxes to another Kingdom like Rome - which stood opposed to the Kingdom of Heaven.

His instructions were brilliant: “Caesar’s face is on the money so give it all back to him.” By devaluing Rome’s currency, Jesus’s followers would have led to a financial collapse of the Roman Empire, making Rome financially dependent on Jesus’s Kingdom - all while paying their taxes to Rome.

Jesus didn’t set out to make friends but to undermine the destructive patterns of this world as he established a Kingdom of heaven here on earth. Welcome to a new Kingdom.

Reading Today: Matthew 12

10-15 minutes

Day 3

I am a citizen of the Kingdom of Heaven

“My Kingdom is not from this world” -Jesus

Jesus didn't establish a new religion. He started the revolution of a new nation, a kingdom. His kingdom is not like the nations of the world. It has been called upside-down and backwards because our patterns are so different. Let me give you a couple examples.

His kingdom and its resources are used for the benefit of those outside the kingdom.

This kingdom has no borders or geography. Wherever you find people who trust God, the Kingdom of Heaven is there. Every citizen is also an ambassador to the nations of the earth. We could all have diplomatic immunity except that God wants us to live accountable to the laws of the nations of earth as well.

All nations of this earth have a type of police to administer laws and justice. This is a type of external control originating outside of the individual citizen. There is a force outside the citizens that keeps them in line. Jesus' Kingdom is different. It relies on an internal system of self-control. God's Spirit lives in us telling us right from wrong. There is no external system in place, only the spirit keeps us inline. We either trust his wisdom or we don't.

God is King. This nation is a theocracy, ruled by God. Other nations have been ruled by religious orders and called themselves theocracies but this is different. We are governed by God directly and internally; there is no religious order standing between us and God.

Our Government is fueled by trust. It's a new kind of government where citizens are accountable directly to God. And He teaches us self-control a type of self-governing based on the spirit of God. The new standard of right and wrong is based on my heart, attitude and intentions not my external actions. We trust our king and learn to trust him with more parts of our lives. The more we trust Him the more good we can do as a nation.

This kingdom has a new kind of social services where every citizen gives generously and gladly to those in need even though it puts them in a difficult position.

Jesus established a new nation and personally invites you to be a citizen of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Reading Today: Matthew 13

10-15 minutes

Day 4

Jesus' Family - Influence

Everyone has family issues, even Jesus. At one point his mother and half-brothers showed up to have him taken away believing he was insane. It's not so hard to imagine from the perspective of Jesus' family. They grew up together. How many times did Mary change his diapers? What kind of childish mischief did Jesus' brothers see? Now he's going around claiming to be sent from God to inaugurate God's Kingdom of Heaven on earth. Did he really think he would build a kingdom that would outlast the mighty Roman Empire? Jesus said no prophet has honor in his home town. He literally couldn't do any miracles in Nazareth. They were so stuck on the boy growing up that they couldn't believe Jesus the Messiah.

It's difficult to break through to family. We are set in our patterns and everyone involved is enforcing that awkward balance that is our family dynamic. Growth requires change and that is good. Jesus can make family better. Family might your parents and siblings, your spouse and children or all of the above - God has a good plan for your family. There will be resistance to change but be hopeful.

It probably didn't happen during Jesus' life time on earth but his half-brother James became an apostle of Jesus and leader of the church in Jerusalem. James became a foundational figure in the Kingdom of God.

Prayers for family:

God, how can I see my family the way you see them? How can better serve my family's needs?

How can I help them to see you?

Feel free to pray for your family in your own words. As always pray honestly about what's in your heart.

Reading Today: Matthew 11-12

10-15 minutes

Day 5

My Strengths

Look over the **Strengths** listed on the following pages. This list represents strengths that people demonstrate in life. As you look over this list you should indicate by each 'Strength', how you see this personally applying to you by number:

- 4 Always value
- 3 Usually value
- 2 Sometimes value
- 1 Rarely value
- 0 Never value

Look over the thing you have indicated with a '3' or '4' and list the top 5, your most consistent strengths.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Reading Today: Matthew 13

10-15 minutes

After reading Matthew 11-13 this week how would you change your description of the Kingdom of Heaven?

Strengths List

Achiever

People strong in the Achiever theme have a great deal of stamina and work hard. They take great satisfaction from being busy and productive.

Activator

People strong in the Activator theme can make things happen by turning thoughts into action. They are often impatient.

Adaptability

People strong in the Adaptability theme prefer to "go with the flow." They tend to be "now" people who take things as they come and discover the future one day at a time.

Analytical

People strong in the Analytical theme search for reasons and causes. They have the ability to think about all the factors that might affect a situation.

Arranger

People strong in the Arranger theme can organize, but they also have a flexibility that complements this ability. They like to figure out how all of the pieces and resources can be arranged for maximum productivity.

Belief

People strong in the Belief theme have certain core values that are unchanging. Out of these values emerges a defined purpose for their life.

Command

People strong in the Command theme have presence. They can take control of a situation and make decisions.

Communication

People strong in the Communication theme generally find it easy to put their thoughts into words. They are good conversationalists and presenters.

Competition

People strong in the Competition theme measure their progress against the performance of others. They strive to win first place and revel in contests.

Connectedness

People strong in the Connectedness theme have faith in the links between all things. They believe there are few coincidences and that almost every event has a reason.

Context

People strong in the Context theme enjoy thinking about the past. They understand the present by researching its history.

Deliberative

People strong in the Deliberative theme are best described by the serious care they take in making decisions or choices. They anticipate the obstacles.

Developer

People strong in the Developer theme recognize and cultivate the potential in others. They spot the signs of each small improvement and derive satisfaction from these improvements.

Discipline

People strong in the Discipline theme enjoy routine and structure. Their world is best described by the order they create.

Empathy

People strong in the Empathy theme can sense the feelings of other people by imagining themselves in others' lives or others' situations.

Consistency

People strong in the Consistency theme are keenly aware of the need to treat people the same. They try to treat everyone in the world with consistency by setting up clear rules and adhering to them.

Focus

People strong in the Focus theme can take a direction, follow through, and make the corrections necessary to stay on track. They prioritize, then act.

Futuristic

People strong in the Futuristic theme are inspired by the future and what could be. They inspire others with their visions of the future.

Harmony

People strong in the Harmony theme look for consensus. They don't enjoy conflict; rather, they seek areas of agreement.

Ideation

People strong in the Ideation theme are fascinated by ideas. They are able to find connections between seemingly disparate phenomena.

Includer

People strong in the Includer theme are accepting of others. They show awareness of those who feel left out, and make an effort to include them.

Individualization

People strong in the Individualization theme are intrigued with the unique qualities of each person. They have a gift for figuring out how people who are different can work together productively.

Input

People strong in the Input theme have a craving to know more. Often they like to collect and archive all kinds of information.

Intellection

People strong in the Intellection theme are characterized by their intellectual activity. They are introspective and appreciate intellectual discussions.

Learner

People strong in the Learner theme have a great desire to learn and want to continuously improve. In particular, the process of learning, rather than the outcome, excites them.

Maximizer

People strong in the Maximizer theme focus on strengths as a way to stimulate personal and group excellence. They seek to transform something strong into something superb.

Positivity

People strong in the Positivity theme have an enthusiasm that is contagious. They are upbeat and can get others excited about what they are going to do.

Relator

People who are strong in the Relator theme enjoy close relationships with others. They find deep satisfaction in working hard with friends to achieve a goal.

Responsibility

People strong in the Responsibility theme take psychological ownership of what they say they will do. They are committed to stable values such as honesty and loyalty.

Restorative

People strong in the Restorative theme are adept at dealing with problems. They are good at figuring out what is wrong and resolving it.

Self-Assurance

People strong in the Self-assurance theme feel confident in their ability to manage their own lives. They possess an inner compass that gives them confidence that their decisions are right.

Significance

People strong in the Significance theme want to be very important in the eyes of others. They are independent and want to be recognized.

Strategic

People strong in the Strategic theme create alternative ways to proceed. Faced with any given scenario, they can quickly spot the relevant patterns and issues.

WOO - *Win Others Over*

People strong in the Woo theme love the challenge of meeting new people and winning them over. They derive satisfaction from breaking the ice and making a connection with another person.

Training

Week 5

This week in summary

<u>Training</u>		<u>WEEK 5</u>
Following Jesus	<i>Matt 14</i>	<i>Day 1</i>
Jesus the Healer	<i>Matt 15</i>	<i>Day 2</i>
Freedom	<i>Matt 16</i>	<i>Day 3</i>
My Encounters	<i>Matt 17</i>	<i>Day 4</i>
My Skills	<i>Matt 18</i>	<i>Day 5</i>

Day 1

Following Jesus**A summary of Matt 14-18**

Jesus' cousin John the Baptist is executed and Jesus knows that his death is coming soon. But before that he wants to make sure his disciples are ready to take over after he goes. In this week's section Jesus gives his students opportunities to take their training to the next level. In the past they've been learning from Jesus and following his directions, now they will start to imitate Jesus. It was the custom in those days that students imitate every aspect of their teacher's life. Peter specifically steps up to be like Jesus. He succeeds gloriously and fails just as miserably but he keeps trying. Living in a way that imitates Jesus doesn't come naturally it take practice.

Jesus helps his disciples to see beyond the surface and the physical. He helps them to get beyond food and rituals and start living life by things that are intangible like personal motives and influence.

Several times Jesus tells his students that He is going to be killed which naturally sounds like this revolution of the Kingdom of Heaven is going to fail. Certainly this is distressing to Jesus' disciples. Then he challenges his beloved students to follow him through a failure's death (*take up your cross*). Following Jesus is a difficult road indeed. Even though Peter failed over and over he kept trying. With God's help Peter lived and died following Jesus. With God's help, will you follow Jesus all the way?

Jesus wraps up this training by highlighting his expectation of his students as they learn to imitate him. Even though they are stepping into leadership positions he wants them to be humble. He is a king that acts like a servant. He turns leadership around. In his culture, kings lead by fear and oppression. Jesus did the opposite, leading by serving and compassion. And he told his students that when you serve the weak you'll receive a king's reward. He concludes with a story of forgiveness which showing the importance of being affected and changed by the gifts God gives.

Reading Today: Matthew 14

10-15 minutes

Day 2

Jesus the Healer

Look again at the list of Jesus' miracles in week 4. Notice healing seems to dominate the list. Not only did Jesus have power over all kinds of disease by he gave that ability to his disciples.

But healing was at best a secondary objective. His true calling was to repair the relationship between humanity and God. This relationship is founded on trust which is built up by the Kingdom of God. God paints a picture of his character and trustworthiness in the lives of his citizens. As they trust Him with more and more parts of their lives his faithfulness in more readily displayed.

What about this gift of healing? Would it surprise you to know that we can already heal others. Just imagine the kind of medical advancements we've made in the past 2000 years. Even more significant to public health is basic sanitation and clean drinking water. It's not as flashy as being able to snap your fingers and heal but in terms of raw numbers no medical advancement has done more for public health than clean drinking water.

Today, one in ten people on earth do not have access to clean drinking water. A small group of 6-8 people have the financial ability to heal a large village. You may not feel rich but financially you have the ability to heal more people than Jesus did. It was after all His desire that we exceed his work. But that requires that we use our gifts for God's will and not our lifestyle. Why would God give us supernatural talent if we don't use our natural talents? Debt and lack of trust are hindering our ability to heal. Jesus regularly indicated that healing relates to trusting him.

Are we likely to see supernatural healing? It may depend on trusting God with your life, not just an immediate situation. Are you following Jesus' example? Using your abilities to do God's will? Giving yourself to others and not spending your life on yourself? Maybe by following Jesus you can receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Reading Today: Matthew 15

10-15 minutes

Day 3

Freedom

If you grew up in the mid-western part of the U.S., there is a good chance that you spent some time as a child catching fireflies on warm summer evenings. Those slow-flying glowing bugs were easy to catch, and it was fun to watch them crawl and glow inside the jar or bug cage you put them in. They would often make their way to the top of the jar or the door of the bug cage, but a slight tap on the top would send the clumsy bugs to the bottom so that the lid could be opened and more could be added. At times the bugs would seem somewhat confused – seeing the outside world, yet banging into an invisible shield every time they flew towards it. The bugs were trapped, life-threateningly trapped.

There are a lot of things in life that can make us feel trapped as well. Perhaps you feel trapped by a wound from your past, an inability to forgive someone, an addiction, a perpetual need to please others, fear, anger, depression, or worry about the future. There is an endless list of things that can make us feel trapped. We are on the inside of the jar --- longing to fly free only to find ourselves hitting a wall. We may feel confused—not realizing that we are in a jar and trying to fly in different directions or worse we've given up flying altogether convinced that there is no hope. The good news is that Jesus came that we might experience freedom --- a freedom that only comes when we choose to follow Him.

First, you must understand how you got into the jar. The answer to that is **sin**. The Bible tells us that all of us have “sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). Sin traps us, making us its slave and ultimately leads to eternal death. Romans 6:23 says, “For the wages of sin is death.” All of us have sinned, all of us have been trapped, and all of us are in need of being saved from death! If all of us have sinned, and all are in the jar, who can get us out? Who can save us? It has to be someone without sin---someone not in the jar—Jesus.

The Bible says that “God so loved the world that he sent his one and only Son.” Jesus freely came to earth. He did not sin, yet he paid the penalty for our sins. He died so that we would have a way out of the jar. Not only that, he also came alive again – demonstrating his power over death for all time. Jesus took the lid off the jar and he stands at the entrance to freedom. There is only one way out, and that’s through Jesus. First, we must realize that we are in the jar. We must confess our sin, acknowledge our need for him, and choose to follow Him. When we do this, he forgives our sins, welcomes us into his family, and begins to transform our lives.

Being free does not mean that I am now in control over my circumstances or that I now carry everything out with perfection. On the contrary, I have given control of my past, present, and future circumstances to God, trusting that he is powerful, he is good, he has forgiven me, and his love for me is greater than my own understanding. The freedom comes in yielding to Him. While living on earth, I know that I will have trials. I will not always do things perfectly. I will not always please others. I will experience injustice. I will sometimes be sad. However, there is freedom in knowing that Christ will never fail. He will never leave me. He is my helper. He will always love me. He holds the future. I have the hope of heaven. I also have a purpose in praising Him, following Him, and telling others about the freedom I’ve found in Him.

Reading Today: Matthew 16

10-15 minutes

Day 4

My Encounters

Just a reminder: God loves the world. No matter how big or small your world this means He loves everyone in your world. Your day to day life the people you encounter every one of them – God loves them.

Let's take a look at the fringes of your life the people you encounter briefly if nothing more than a quick "hi" or an exchange of money with a cashier. Let's look at them because God loves them too.

List five places in your area that you like to go?

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____
- 4 _____
- 5 _____

List five places you most often spend money?

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____
- 4 _____
- 5 _____

Everyone you exchange money is loved by God but may not know it. God is trustworthy but they may not know that he can be counted on. They might be missing out on the best thing in life and it's absolutely free, someone just needs to tell them. That's why God put these places near you. Let's start by getting God's perspective. Take the action step.

Action step:

Ask God for his perspective on these encounters.

“God, how do you see these people around me? I want to know how you feel about the people who work at these 10 places. Will you show me these people through your eyes next time I go?”

Reading Today: Matthew 17

10-15 minutes

Day 5

My Skills

Look over the **Skills** listed on the following pages. This list represents strengths that people demonstrate in life. As you look over this list you should indicate by each 'Skill', how you see this personally applying to you by number:

- 4 Always value
- 3 Usually value
- 2 Sometimes value
- 1 Rarely value
- 0 Never value

Look over the thing you have indicated with a '3' or '4' and list the top 5, your most consistent Skills.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Reading Today: Matthew 18

10-15 minutes

Skill List

Interpersonal Skills:

- _____ works well with others,
- _____ sensitive,
- _____ supportive,
- _____ motivates others,
- _____ shares credit,
- _____ counsels,
- _____ cooperates,
- _____ delegates effectively,
- _____ represents others,
- _____ understands feelings,
- _____ self-confident,
- _____ accepts responsibility

Research and Planning:

- _____ forecasts/predicts,
- _____ creates ideas,
- _____ identifies problems,
- _____ meets goals,
- _____ identifies resources,
- _____ gathers information,
- _____ solves problems,
- _____ defines needs,
- _____ analyzes issues,
- _____ develops strategies,
- _____ assesses situations

Communication:

- _____ writes clearly and concisely,
- _____ speaks effectively,
- _____ listens attentively,
- _____ openly expresses ideas,
- _____ negotiates/resolves differences,
- _____ leads group discussions,
- _____ provides feedback,
- _____ persuades others,
- _____ provides well-thought out solutions,
- _____ gathers appropriate information,
- _____ confidently speaks in public

Organizational Skills:

- _____ handles details,
- _____ coordinates tasks,
- _____ punctual,
- _____ manages projects effectively,
- _____ meets deadlines,
- _____ sets goals,
- _____ keeps control over budget,
- _____ plans and arranges activities,
- _____ multi-tasks

Management Skills:

- _____ leads groups,
- _____ teaches/trains/instructs,
- _____ counsels/coaches,
- _____ manages conflict,
- _____ delegates responsibility,
- _____ makes decisions,
- _____ directs others,
- _____ implements decisions,
- _____ enforces policies,
- _____ takes charge

Mission

Week 6

This week in summary

<u>Mission</u>		<u>WEEK 6</u>
Reversing values	<i>Matt 19-20</i>	<i>Day 1</i>
The Image of God	<i>Matt 21-22</i>	<i>Day 2</i>
Knowing my neighbors	<i>Matt 23</i>	<i>Day 3</i>
While Jesus is away	<i>Matt 24</i>	<i>Day 4</i>
My Gifts	<i>Matt 25</i>	<i>Day 5</i>

Day 1

Reversing the World's Values**A summary of Matthew 19-23**

Jesus turns everything upside down. Values, Wealth, Right, Advancement, Success, Power, all the things we strive for in life, all of it upside down. The First will be last and the Last will be first. Jesus turns attention from the powerful people to the powerless people. Jesus looks at the ones that we overlook.

He turned money upside down and said it is hard to enter the Kingdom of heaven if you are wealthy.

He turned religion upside down declaring that prostitutes and traitors will enter the kingdom before the religious leaders.

In his day every leader understood the privilege of their position was to be served. Jesus said he came to serve, not to be served.

Jesus stood against those who use power to oppress people. Perhaps when Jesus looked into the faces of the oppressed he recognized the image of the God who made them and loves them.

Jesus takes action that he knew would lead to his death. He throws out the powerful and gives to the destitute.

The temple was built to be a place where people could come to be close to God. Unfortunately the administrators of the temple saw an opportunity for profiteering and had long ago turned it into an extortion racket. Jesus threw them out, enough is enough! How dare they use God as a way to extort people. This move quickly leads to his assassination. But it seems that Jesus intended to provoke their deadly response. If I'm going to get killed might as well go out lifting up the people that God loves so much.

Reading Today: Matthew 19-20

10-15 minutes

Day 2

The Image of God

The Stradivarius Violins are 300 year old Italian violins and considered the greatest violins ever created. No one since the days of Antonio Stradivari has been able to reproduce the craftsmanship and sound quality of these violins. They have sold at auctions for 1-3 million dollars. They can only be found in museums, private collections of the wealthy and in the hands of the greatest musicians of our day. What a tragedy it would be to find a Stradivarius Violin being used to prop up the leg of a kitchen table!

There is a dignity and respect that goes with being human. We are creatures of immense worth and value far beyond any masterpiece violin. It is tragic to find humanity treated below our value. Worse is to find a human being embrace the lie and behave as though they have so little value.

You are the object of desire in the eyes of the High King of Creation. God loves you. This is the source of your worth, not accomplishment or entitlement. It isn't the quality of being human that makes you worthy. Your value comes from God's estimation of your worth. Your worth is beyond measure. His desire for you is uncontainable. Unbelief does not see this value because it comes from God.

Behavior follows belief. When we believe we must accomplish to be valuable then we will measure ourselves and others by that destructive scale. But if our worth comes from God and there is nothing we can do to diminish his love for us. Not just me but everyone I see family, friends, neighbors, co-workers, acquaintances, store clerks, and laborers. Even the smallest least substantial or most crippled life is a person of immense worth.

Seeing God’s love for us compels us to live as a child of the King. Seeing God’s love for others compels us to treat others with the same immense dignity.

Through Christ we claim our value, recognizing that all of humanity is created in his image. We become adopted children of God through Jesus the “firstborn” child of God.

We bear his image and his love.

List three examples of humanity behaving below its God ascribed value:

Reading Today: Matthew 21-22

10-15 minutes

Day 3

Knowing my Neighbors

There's a story Jesus tells about a son who rejects his family and leaves home. The father neglects his other duties and social obligations because nothing is more important to him than reconciling with his son. As with most of his stories Jesus is making a point to help us better understand God. In his story the father who represents God spends his days personally watching the road, anticipating the moment his child returns.

This week get to know your neighbors. Remember God loves them as his children. As children of the King of the universe they are VIPs, but then again so are you.

You can be a bridge between your neighbor and God. They may be indifferent to God, hostile towards Him or they may be living in step with God. No matter where they are on life's journey, there is room for growth and greater trust in God. There is a reason God put them in your life and they may be a source of growth for your faith.

Action step:

Time to get better acquainted. At a minimum get to know their name. Try learning about their family history. If you need some ice breaker suggestions try the following:

- Prepare an interesting story
- Tell a joke or two
- Ask a mix of casual and interested questions
- Remember It's ok to be a little odd
- Don't bet the farm on a single meeting
- Use your best judgment as you get to know your neighbor.

Reading Today: Matthew 23

10-15 minutes

Day 4

What to do while I'm away...

A summary of Matthew 24-25

This section is one of the most confusing sections in the Bible. On the surface Jesus is talking about a coming cataclysm and some all-around scary stuff.

Before this section Jesus prepared his disciples to take over leadership after he leaves (Matt 14-18). In the events leading up to this speech Jesus demonstrated what they are to do while he is away (Matt 19-23). Now it's time to talk about his absence. I'm going away and while I'm gone take care of the powerless.

His disciples ask three questions about future events. Jesus answered their questions, but his answers are very complicated. But he quickly turns the discussion from *when* this will happen to *what* they should do in the meantime. Be ready! Use your resources to continue the mission. The last story of sheep and goats; righteous and unrighteous summarizes this speech and gives a beautiful answer to this confusion.

Humbly, I'd like to offer this two line summary of Matt 24-25

Disciples: When will we see you again?

Jesus: When you look in the face of the struggling you will see me again.

This leaves a question in your hands, dear reader. Jesus looked in the face of the destitute and saw worth, value and dignity - the image of God. He loved them and gave all he had. When you look in the face of the poor, hungry, thirsty, naked, homeless or sick - what will *you* do?

Reading Today: Matthew 24

10-15 minutes

Day 5

My Life Map

See the Lifemap activity in the appendix

Come to study group this week for your Life map.

Reading Today: Matthew 25

10-15 minutes

Passion

Week 7

This week in summary

Passion		WEEK 7
Sacrifice and Glory	<i>Matt 26</i>	<i>Day 1</i>
Abundant Life	<i>Matt 27</i>	<i>Day 2</i>
Eternal Life	<i>Matt 28</i>	<i>Day 3</i>
Knowing my Work Team	<i>Matt 26-28</i>	<i>Day 4</i>
My Gifts part 1	<i>1 Cor 15</i>	<i>Day 5</i>

Day 1

Sacrifice and Glory of Jesus

A summary of Matthew 26-28

Jesus provoked the powerful in his society. Jesus orchestrated the political climate that would murder him. During his trials he was silent about his defense. He only spoke when it would propel him towards his execution. He wanted this death to occur. Why?

Why do you think Jesus wanted to be crucified?

How is Jesus' death different than John the Baptist, Julius Caesar, Abraham Lincoln or anyone else that died for their cause?

There are at least 12 different appearances of Christ in the resurrection accounts, beginning with Mary and ending with Paul. They were physically tangible experiences with Christ eating, speaking and allowing himself to be touched. Jesus' resurrected body was different from his physical body. It was no longer subject to the same laws of nature. He could transcend locked doors, and yet he could still be touched and he could eat. The stone was not rolled away from the tomb so Jesus could get out. He was able to walk through walls in his resurrected body. The stone was rolled away so that everyone could see that he had risen.

How does Jesus' resurrection affect you?

Reading Today: Matthew 26

10-15 minutes

Day 2

Abundant life

Why do so many people who acquire great wealth say their life is empty? Why do people surrounded by fame turn to drugs to escape their life? We spend so much time chasing bigger and better because we so quickly bore of the same.

There's a common phenomenon that happens to people who have a near death experience. The priorities of life change. Some describe it as having a new lease on life. They become more interested in the things that really matter and they spend less time chasing trivial activities that don't matter to them. They have changed their idea of what better life means to them.

Exposure to Jesus causes a similar phenomenon. People who spend time with Jesus have a ***near-life-experience***. Life becomes better but more importantly we change what we want in life. Our idea of a better life changes in the presence of Jesus. Jesus offers a life more significant, satisfying, purposeful, fitting, full of struggles that strengthen and work that fills. Life with Jesus is better.

Jesus is a master of living life and giving life. He teaches us how to truly live. We rearrange our priorities choose people over things and genuine expressions of love over social pleasantries or obligations. Jesus offers us a life of significance, a life that satisfies. Life becomes richer, deeper and truer as we step more in line with the God who designed us.

"I've come so that you may have life, and abundant life"

-Jesus

Reading Today: Matthew 27

10-15 minutes

Day 3

Eternal Life

Jesus offers eternal life. The life he offers isn't just better but there's more of it. Even after we die, life continues it just changes into life after death. It goes on and on forever. That's hard to imagine because there is literally nothing in human experience that is infinite. So Jesus' offer of eternal life is so big there is nothing we can compare with it.

Even looking out into the vastness of space the most powerful telescopes can see all the way to "the observable edge of the universe" where there is nothing but background radiation from the beginning of time. But that still isn't eternal.

To imagine eternity picture all the days of your life from birth until now, and from now until death. Imagine all those days maybe 70+ years are the thickness of a hair. Not length, thickness of a hair. That is your entire life all the days you have had and will have on earth. Now image 5 hairs laying side by side no gaps between them, all together not even a 1/8 of an inch. That's roughly 350 years taking you back to the time before electricity, before America to a time of colonial exploration.

Now picture ten hairs laying side by side: a total length of 1/2 mm. That's roughly 700 years or before the Europe had the printing press.

How many life time-hairs would be needed to cross your desk? Go ahead and look at your desk and a hair right now. How many life time hairs would to cover the distance from you to the door of the room you are in. Or from you to exit the building you are in? We are well beyond the scale of years we can imagine but we are nowhere near eternity. So

take your chain of life-time-hairs and imagine traveling south by land all the way to the ocean, one lifetime hair at a time. Now continue across the ocean floating on the surface until you reach the next continent. Continue across land and sea one life time hair at a time traveling south until there is no more south to go. You have reached the southern pole. Take a moment to look out a window facing south and imagine all the life times it would take to reach the south end of the world?

But we're still not to eternity. Now to get to eternity, just turn to your right. Instead of going south go west and continue traveling around the earth forever. One lifetime-hair at a time. That is the length of eternity.

Like anything God offers to humanity, the significance of what he gives is so far beyond what it costs us to acquire, that nothing short of lunacy would reject such a gainful offer. Only a fool would ask for a discount when the profit is unimaginably beyond the asking price?

"Whoever believes in me, will have eternal life." -Jesus

Reading Today: Matthew 28

10-15 minutes

Day 4

Knowing my Co-Workers

This week get to know your co-workers. Remember God loves them as his children. As children of the King of the universe they are VIPs, but then again so are you.

You can be a bridge between your co-workers and God. They may be indifferent to God, hostile towards Him or they may be living in step with God. No matter where they are on life's journey, there is room for growth and greater trust in God. There is a reason God put them in your life and they may be a source of growth for your faith.

Action step:

Remember your co-workers include people from other teams and other departments that may work near you. Time to get better acquainted. Try learning about their family or interests. If you need some ice breaker suggestions try the following:

- Prepare an interesting story
- Tell a joke or two
- Ask a mix of casual and interested questions
- Remember It's ok to be a little odd
- Don't bet the farm on a single meeting
- Use your best judgment as you get to know your co-workers.

Reading Today: Matthew 26-28

10-15 minutes

Day 5

My Gifts 1

And he[God] gave **apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers**, ¹² to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ,

¹³ until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, ¹⁴ so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. ¹⁵ Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, ¹⁶ from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

Ephesians 4

What is the purpose and the mission of these gifts?

Purpose (verse 12):

Mission (verse 13):

Apostles step out take risks to get things done. They are self-starter entrepreneurs or commissioned officers with authority and a mission.

Prophets have insightful perspective that comes from God

Evangelists tell it like it is. God offers something good and you've got to believe it. Similar to sales and marketing, evangelists get the message out and invite people to buy in.

Pastors dedicate themselves to meeting the needs of the people around them. Often characterized by tender hearts and a compulsion toward peace and harmony.

Teachers build people up. They help people grow and develop. Teachers have an ability to make difficult concepts easily accessible.

Do you recognize yourself in the description of any of the 5 gifts?

If so which one(s)?

Reading Today: 1 Corinthians 15

10-15 minutes

Predictions

Week 8

This week in summary

Predictions		WEEK 8
Prophecy	<i>Jeremiah 31</i>	<i>Day 1</i>
Jesus is Unique	<i>Psalms 22</i>	<i>Day 2</i>
Transforming	<i>Zachariah 9</i>	<i>Day 3</i>
Knowing my Encounters	<i>Psalms 110</i>	<i>Day 4</i>
My Gifts part 2	<i>Isaiah 53</i>	<i>Day 5</i>

Day 1

Prophecy**Trusting God in the present, Trusting God in the future**

Before Jesus' life on earth, God spent over 1000 years investing in the Jewish people. Apart from God they should have died as slaves building pyramids for the Pharaohs of Egypt. But God wanted to display his love for mankind using these slaves as a tapestry. He rescued them and built them into a mighty nation - Israel.

The history of God interacting with Israel is peppered with promises and expectation that someday God would give them a King sent from Heaven. They referred to this promise as the "Messiah" or "Son of God." This King was said to establish the Kingdom of Heaven on earth and turn the hearts of all people toward God not just Jews.

Jesus arrived at a point when Israel was declining and soon after his departure the nation would be completely dissolved. But for those who accepted his invitation to join the Kingdom of Heaven God would reveal that he kept his promise to the descendants of Abraham all along.

These promises from God were known to the people as prophecies and there are over 300 promises about the Messiah and his Kingdom. Jesus was adamant about keeping God's promises. He fulfilled all 300+ promises in his time on earth proving that he is the Messiah from God. Tomorrow we'll look at 20 specific promises to see how Jesus fulfilled them.

A prophetic message was often given for two situations: it would address a present issue and future issue yet to be revealed. The same message would address both present and future events. The most practical application of prophecy was answering the present question, "God what should we do now?" Sometimes the same message also foreshadowed a future event that would follow a similar pattern. At its core prophecy is simply a message from God, but God has an ability to teach the same lesson for two different circumstances. A small crisis in the present will demonstrate God's faithfulness as a setup to us trusting Him later when the stakes are higher.

And that is the point, building trust with God. It builds trust in God when we see the event unfold as He described. For example: You may be facing crushing financial ruin. God might say I'll save you from this debt, you and your children's children. There is an imitated situation and God proves himself. Later your grand-children may face a larger financial crisis as they lead a major company. Should they declare bankruptcy? They can remember the time when God saved you from debt and trust that God will save them as he saved you so many years before.

Often a prophecy will be implied though demonstration instead of spoken explicitly. This type of prophecy is similar to profiling – recognizing someone by aspects of who they are. This is how people recognized the association between Jesus and God because they both use similar methods. When Jesus provided food for 5000 people using practically nothing, it was similar to a time the nation of Israel was starving in the desert and God provided food. In his culture the people would have seen the connection and recognized the association between Jesus's miraculous provision and God's miraculous provision.

Reading Today: Jeremiah 31

10-15 minutes

Day 2

Jesus is Unique

Adapted from How did people know Jesus was coming? by Mark Driscoll

Let's take a look at some of the specific promises God gave about the coming Messiah and how only Jesus fulfilled these promises.

1) Species: Human, Male born of a woman

Genesis 3:15 says the Messiah would be a man and there would be triumph over the Devil.

The Messiah is human. Not animal, Angel, element, force of nature or period of time.

2) Ethnicity/Family descent: Abraham – Isaac – Jacob – Judah

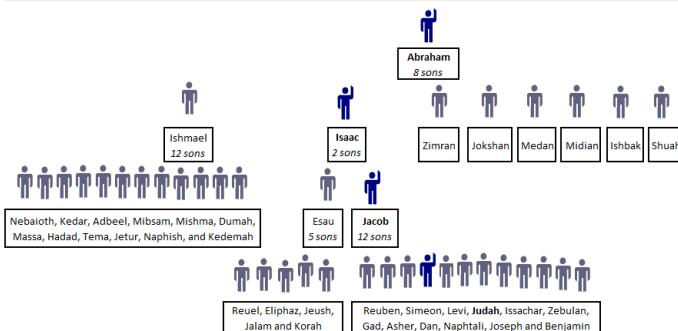
Genesis 12:3 the messiah will be a descendant of **Abraham**, he will bless all nations.

Genesis 17:19 God's promise will be established through **Isaac**

Numbers 24:17 "a star out of **Jacob**, a scepter out of Israel." Scepter was symbolic of a king.

Gen 49:10 "the scepter with **Judah**"

The Messiah will come as a male, born from a female. He will come from the family of Abraham but he will come from Isaac, not Ishmael. He'll come from Jacob not Esau. And he'll come from Judah, not of any of his other 11 brothers. So now we're really narrowing down the coming of Jesus and we're getting a clear picture of the family he will come from and descend from.



3) Born of a Virgin

Isaiah 7:14 “God will give you a sign, the Virgin will give birth to a son, you’re to call him ‘Immanuel’ meaning God with us”

4) Location of Birth: Bethlehem

Micah 5:2 “ out of Bethlehem one to rule, king of kings whose origins are from ancient times.”

The Messiah is coming from Bethlehem.

5) Moral status: Perfect

Isaiah 53:9 did nothing wrong, sinless

So, we’re waiting for a man born of a woman, from the family of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Judah, whose mother would be a virgin who would be born in Bethlehem and would never commit any sin. Right, I mean – we’re getting the pieces of the jigsaw puzzle as it were, and as we put them together we’re coming into a clear and clearer picture of the coming of Jesus long before he actually arrived.

6) Time spent in Egypt

Hosea 11:1 “out of Egypt I will call my son” As a boy, Jesus spent time as a refugee in Egypt

7) Timing: Heralded by another prophet & arriving at the temple.

Isaiah 40:3 “a voice coming before him from the wilderness, prepare the way for God” John the Baptist, cousin of Jesus spent a lot of time Prophesying in the wilderness.

Malachi 3:1 “I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then the Lord will come to his temple.”

There has not been a temple of almost 2000 years. The temple was destroyed in 70ad. The messiah had to come before this. But there had not been a prophet for 400 years prior. This is very specific timing: Must be before the Temple is destroyed and during the time of another prophet. Only the life time of John the Baptist qualifies. Before 400BC prophets were still saying, the messiah is yet to come. After 70AD the temple was destroyed. 400BC-70AD, There was no other prophet until John came. The only time the Messiah could come was during the life time of John the Baptist.

8) Miraculous Healer

Isaiah 35:5-6 - heals the blind, ears, deaf, lame, mute

9) Riding a donkey into Jerusalem

Zechariah 9:9 “your King will come with salvation, gentle riding on a donkey”

Kings who rode horses established their authority through war and conquest. Kings who rode donkeys were established by peace. This is symbolic of a mission of peace and that his authority came from God, not military strength.

10) Betrayed by a close friend ...

Psalms 41:9 betrayed by a close friend

11) ... for 30 pieces of silver, the money would be used to by potter's field

Zachariah 11:12-13 they paid 30 pieces of silver

Again the details are astonishing; that the women would give birth to a son who came from the line Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Judah, that the mother would be a virgin and she would give birth to the son in Bethlehem. That as a boy he would be taken to Egypt that he would grow up without committing any sin. That he would go to the temple before 70 AD. Those later in life, a friend of his, who say him perform the miracles that were prophesied and had broken bread with him on many occasions, would betray him for 30 pieces of silver, which would be thrown in to disgust into the temple and used to buy potter's field.

12) Silent in his defense

Isaiah 53:7 oppressed and afflicted did not open his mouth

13) Striped of his clothes

Psalms 22:18 divided garments, cast lots

14) Beaten

Isaiah 50:6, Offered my back to those who beat me.

15) No bones broken

Exodus 12:4-6 not a bone will be broken (Passover sacrifice)

Psalms 34:20 not a bone will be broken (Messiah)

16) Specific wounds

Psalms 22:16 pierced my hands and feet

Zachariah 12:10 pierced my side

17) Forsaken by God

Psalms 22:1 Forsaken by God, - taking our sin upon himself

False accusations would be made and he would not defend himself. He would maintain his dignity, and he would continue forth with his mission. His back would be bloodied that his reputation would be attached. That he would be crucified through his hands and his feet between two thieves. The garments that he wore would be stripped off, would be taken from him and be distributed. One piece of which would be won by someone in a dice game. And that none of his bones would be broken but on the cross he would be forsaken by God the Father.

18) Executed beside sinners

Isaiah 53:12 murdered and placed with sinners

19) Died

Isaiah 53:9 cut off from the land of the living, assigned a grave with wicked, although he had done no violence, nor deceit, rich man's tomb

Was Jesus put to death with sinners? -One on his right, one on his left, in fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah. That not only would he be put to death, look at the details leading up to death of Jesus, betrayed by a close friend who ate meals with him, for 30 pieces of silver that was used to buy a field. Falsely accused, despised hated, people saying atrocious things about him, mocked, pierced through the hands and the feet and side, and crucified with thieves who were guilty and deserved to die.

20) Resurrected

Psalms 16:10 "You will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your holy one see decay"

Psalms 49:15

Isaiah 53:10 Guilt offering Sacrifice, see his offspring, prolong his days. the Will of God will prosper in his hand after the suffering of his soul. He will see the light of life and be satisfied.

Did Jesus rise from death? Yes. He did. And it was seen by multitudes of people, upward of 500 at a time. His mothers, his brothers, saw it. His friends his enemies saw it. Crowds saw it. Men and women saw it. Young and old saw it. It was a fact. And he maintained his witness of being alive for 40 days. Even with the doubters like Thomas, "Touch my scars, I was dead and now I'm alive." That happened on a Sunday, that's why we worship on Sunday.

Did Jesus set up his life so that all the things met the prophecy? You don't pick your mom, your place of birth. And after you die you don't have a big say in where they put you. I mean, these are things before he was born and after he died that were promised in Scripture showing that not only is it all true but it is beyond a shadow of a doubt, factual that these were not situations manufactured by Jesus, to fool us. You have to confess, we really whittled down the list. You got to find a guy whose mom was a virgin that was born in Bethlehem before 70 AD died and is still alive. It is a very short list. Even if you went to public school, you go, "That's a short list right there." I went to public school and I think – I mean, it's a short list. I've heard other people say, "Well, maybe it was somebody else." Who? Give me one other dude with this resume. You know, there is no one else. Jesus is the fulfillment of all these prophecies. And not only that but it tells us, "That he will ascend into heaven and sit at the right hand of God." So it completes the whole full circle ministry of Jesus from; in heaven to the earth, death, burial, resurrection, ascension, back into heaven at the right hand of the Father.

21) Ascended

Psalms 68:18, when you ascended on high you lead captives in your train

22) Lord of All

Psalms 110:1 "The Lord says to my Lord, sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies a footstool at your feet."

Given authority

Reading Today: Psalms 22

10-15 minutes

Day 3

New creation

How could a small group of uneducated fishermen start a movement that turned the world upside down? In the presence of Jesus they became brilliant. Following Jesus causes us to become brilliant too.

Following Jesus changes us.

He changes our **minds**: Our beliefs and priorities. We see the world differently. Our view that the world revolves around us doesn't work. Jesus teaches us to see from God's perspective.

Old way: the world is my only supply. Work for what's mine, fight to keep it.

New way: God is my supply, and he is limitless. He's given me so much, What can I give to others?

Jesus changes our **behavior**: our life style and life choices follow our belief. We see how living Jesus' way is better. We are able to live by faith and not limited to what is tangible.

Jesus changes our **hearts**: our desires. We can't look at people for what we can get out of them. We start to see the people through God's loving perspective. We look for ways to give instead of ways to take.

This leaves us with an internal conflict. We continue following the old familiar patterns that we've learned to depend on but we also stepping out in faith slowly replacing those patterns. We are learning a new way to live. Like Jesus.

Reading Today: Zachariah 9

10-15 minutes

Day 4

Knowing my Encounters

This week get to know some of the people you encounter regularly. Remember God loves them as his children. As children of the King of the universe they are VIPs, but then again so are you.

You can be a bridge between your encounters and God. They may be indifferent to God, hostile towards Him or they may be living in step with God. No matter where they are on life's journey, there is room for growth and greater trust in God. There is a reason God put them in your life and they may be a source of growth for your faith.

Action step:

Time to get better acquainted. Try learning about their family or interests. If you need some ice breaker suggestions try the following:

- Prepare an interesting story
- Tell a joke or two
- Ask a mix of casual and interested questions
- Remember It's ok to be a little odd
- Don't bet the farm on a single meeting
- Use your best judgment as you get to know them.

Reading Today: Psalms 110

10-15 minutes

Day 5

My Gifts 2

For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, ⁵ so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. ⁶ Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if **prophecy**, in proportion to our **faith**; ⁷ if **service**, in our serving; the one who **teaches**, in his teaching; ⁸ the one who **exhorts**, in his exhortation; the one who **gives**, in generosity; the one who **leads**, diligently; the one who acts with **mercy**, cheerfully.

- Romans 12

What advantage is there to having people with *different* strengths working together?

Faith Trusting God with all aspects of life not just spiritual matters

Service (helper) willingness to serve time and energy in any task that needs to be done.

Service (skilled crafter) willingness use your skills to accomplish the task

Exhort motivational, persuasive

Giving financial or material generosity

Leadership influencing people

Administration drives a group to accomplish a goal, keeping focused on the vision, making peace

Mercy special compassion, love for the overlooked

Do you recognize yourself in the description of any of these gifts?

If so which one(s)?

How have you seen these gifts in your life?

Reading Today: Isaiah 53

10-15 minutes

The Son of Man

Week 9

This week in summary

The Son of Man		WEEK 9
Summary of Luke	<i>Luke 1</i>	<i>Day 1</i>
Jesus the Friend	<i>Luke 2-3</i>	<i>Day 2</i>
Faith	<i>Luke 4-5</i>	<i>Day 3</i>
Serving My Friends and Family	<i>Luke 6-7</i>	<i>Day 4</i>
My Gifts part 3	<i>Luke 8-9</i>	<i>Day 5</i>

Day 1

Summary of Luke

We've called Mark's account of the life of Jesus "the gospel on-the-go." It's for the person who has little time for extensive details. She wants the bottom line: "Can I get, like, the Cliff's Notes version of this and if I want details, I'll ask?"

By contrast, Luke is a scholar's delight—a detailed, two-volume, full scroll-length document that goes into filling in details that Mark was too busy running around to mention. The language that's used is that of a learned man who is laying down good foundations. He's done his research carefully. He's methodical. He's even well-funded by an apparent single source named Theophilus (who could have, in turn, been the spearhead fund raiser in Luke's behalf). In fact, Luke himself was a physician (Colossians 4:14) and this document, for the intellectuals and the detail-oriented, is just what the doctor ordered.

Luke presents us with this Messiah who just doesn't fit the bill with anyone

Even the forerunner to the Messiah is named, "John"-- something out of sync with standardized naming protocol ("There is no one among your relatives who has that name" = "That's not normal. That's weird. Pick. Something. Normal").

The forerunner, John, is also of unusual birth—born to an older, barren woman. John was still regarded as a prophet of God—but not by the religious elite

10 Themes to look for in Luke's Gospel

1. God's big picture plan for all humanity God's plan unfolds steadily calm and measured. Jesus is in control of each scene. He is the fulfillment of prophecies and He is the perfect answer at just the right time, and we anticipate his return.
2. Jesus: "The Son of Man"
3. Salvation for all people
4. Radical inclusiveness Jesus seemed to have a deep love for people from the "wrong demographic"
5. Table fellowship In Luke, Jesus is either at a meal, going to a meal or coming from a meal. Meals are places where Jesus demonstrates his program of inclusiveness crossing social boundaries.
6. The Holy Spirit, Good news, Joy and Praises to God! These appear frequently and there may be a connection.
7. Prayers of Jesus and others. Even his prayers were unconventional.
8. Parables Jesus told stories to teach eternal lessons.
9. Wealth and Poverty (In Mark, Jesus is hard on the disciples and religious leaders. In Luke, Jesus opposes the rich and powerful)
10. Jesus' treatment of marginalized people:
 - Foreigners:** Gentiles, Romans, Samaritans
 - Sinners:** prostitutes, tax collectors
 - Women:** Jesus taught women. Treated them as disciples; reversing the cultural prohibition against allowing women to learn.
 - The **Poor**
 - The **Sick**

Reading Today: Luke 1

10-15 minutes

Day 2

Jesus the Friend

It's not surprising that Jesus loved sinners. Jesus was a great guy and didn't get caught on the same issues that make religious people furrow their brow. By contrast religious teachers prided themselves on who they didn't associate with.

Some religious teachers bragged about throwing rocks at "undesirable" people. One traditional prayer that is still common today is: "I thank you God, that you have not made me a gentile, a slave or a woman." There's a story about someone taking this prayer even further to demonstrate their disdain of the immoral sinners.

The Pharisee standing by himself prayed thus: "God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortionists, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector."

Luke 18:11

Jesus is not like religious types who are known for the people they oppose. He loved sinners.

What's surprising is that sinners love Jesus. Jesus' moral teachings are the greatest the world has ever known, but it's the 'immoral' that flock to him and love to hear him speak. Jesus embraced them with open arms at great risk to himself. Jesus knew that those who are forgiven much appreciate much. He loves the gentiles, the slave and the women. He loves the sinners, foreigners, poor and the unclean. He lifted up the oppressed.

Jesus stood as the champion of the outcasts. He taught women though his culture prohibited education for women.

He looked for the people that society wanted to throw away because he saw a value in them that no one else did. He picked up society's garbage and with the inspiration of an artist he said, "Now, watch what I can do with them."

Jesus believed in them.

As you read through the life of Jesus pay attention to whom Jesus eats with. In his culture meals were used as a way of demonstrating who they are willing to socialize with.

Reading Today: Luke 2-3

10-15 minutes

Day 3

Faith: Trusting Jesus

In Jesus' language Faith, Trust and Belief are the same word. He used them interchangeably but not the way you'd think.

It is only quality that impresses Jesus.

Our Faith.

He asked people to trust him. He was deeply impressed by people did trust him and he was hindered by people that would not believe him. He regularly healed people and then told them that it was their faith that saved them.

Jesus is not impressed by intellectual or athletic ability. Your acts of heroism don't even register. Trust is the only quality that Jesus cares about in us.

What does faith do?

Faith doesn't change the nature of reality. $2+2=4$ no matter what you believe. No matter how physicists debate ideas of gravity, it still affects them all the same. My belief in the resurrection of Jesus doesn't change what happened that day. What does faith actually do?

How does it affect your life?

Does faith change the way God sees us?

Do we trust God? There's a common understanding that *faith in God* amount to a *belief in the existence* of God.

But, there's a world of difference between "I believe that God exists, and I believe God." The former is impersonal. It requires no action and doesn't make a significant impact on the way we live life. We can go on as we see fit. God will do his thing, I will do mine.

My daughter believes that she has a father. That is a fact. But she also believes me when I say I will catcher her as she jumps into my arms.

The faith Jesus requires goes beyond a belief in a historical fact. It is a belief that compels action and puts us in a place of dependence and vulnerability on the object of our faith (himself).

But to say "I trust God" requires action and risk and a level of intimacy. What if you trust God and He doesn't come through for you? What if God does something that you weren't expecting? How can you rely on God? Will he ultimately do his will?

That's why it's important to put your faith in someone worthy of your trust.

Trusting God is not an intellectual exercise but leap of vulnerability. How does vulnerability allow for deeper experiences and gives the moments of our lives greater meaning?

What steps can you take to trust God more?

Reading Today: Luke 4-5

10-15 minutes

Day 4

Influence**Serving my Friends and Family**

Jesus was a King yet he came to serve. His idea of leadership is humbly serving others, not being waited on and pampered by our power. Following in his footsteps we will be serving our friends and family this week. This may require creativity. Here's a few suggestions:

- Give a gift such as baked goods.
- Try the obvious; "what can I do to serve you?"
- Ask, "What are you doing this weekend?"
- Or "What do you need?"
- Let them know you're eager to help them

Look for ways to serve but leave the choice in their hands. As always use your best judgment.

Reading Today: Luke 6-7

10-15 minutes

Day 5

My Gifts

⁸ For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of **wisdom**, and to another the utterance of **knowledge** according to the same Spirit, ⁹ to another **faith** by the same Spirit, to another gifts of **healing** by the one Spirit, ¹⁰ to another the working of **miracles**, to another **prophecy**, to another the ability to **distinguish** between spirits, to another various kinds of **tongues**, to another the **interpretation** of tongues.

- 1 Corinthians 12:8-10

²⁷ Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. ²⁸ And God has appointed in the church first **apostles**, second **prophets**, third **teachers**, then **miracles**, then gifts of **healing, helping, administrating**, and various kinds of **tongues**. ²⁹ Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? ³⁰ Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? ³¹ But earnestly desire the higher gifts.

- 1 Corinthians 12:27-31

*The greatest of these is **love**.*

- 1 Corinthians 13:13

Are some gifts higher than others? Which gifts are more desirable to humans, which gifts are more desirable to God?

Desired by humans/Why?

Preferred by God/Why?

Wisdom God-given insight about living rightly with God.

Discernment the ability to correctly identify if a situation, spirit or message serves God's agenda or someone else.

Knowledge ability to understand truth revealed by God.

Interpretation the ability to take a message and connect with an audience.

Linguistics (tongues) includes supernatural ability to speak a language previously unknown, the ability to effectively a message translate between languages.

Healing ability to restore a person physically, emotionally, spiritually and/or their relationships.

Miracles Extraordinary occurrence that reveals God's love for humanity.

Help willingness to give your time and work beyond your skill set to help others

Love always hopes, trusts and is demonstrated by sacrifice.

Why would apostles and teachers be more useful than administration or miracles?

Which gift is the greatest and why?

Find your Spiritual Gifts by downloading the Spiritual Gifts assessment tool from inPursuitStudy.com

Reading Today: Luke 8-9

10-15 minutes

Lost and Found

Week 10

This week in summary

<u>Lost and Found</u>		<u>WEEK 10</u>
Stories	<i>Luke 10-11</i>	<i>Day 1</i>
Prayers of Jesus	<i>Luke 12-13</i>	<i>Day 2</i>
Trading Places	<i>Luke 14-15</i>	<i>Day 3</i>
Serving My Neighbors	<i>Luke 16-17</i>	<i>Day 4</i>
Life Purpose	<i>Luke 18</i>	<i>Day 5</i>

Day 1

Stories

Jesus knew that going to Jerusalem would mean his death but he also knew that death was why he came. After only 9 chapters, Jesus begins his march to destiny in Jerusalem. Along the way Jesus tells stories so that the people around him can understand what he's about to accomplish.

It was common in his day for people to tell stories called parables. They would tell parables that affirm their culture and lifestyle. It was a way of passing on values to their children. Stories often used characters that were particularly good, noble or virtuous.

In contrast Jesus told stories that centered around common every day themes: farmers, fishermen, shepherds. They were stories that working people could relate to. Jesus told parables that challenged his culture's values and lifestyle.

There are three stories in a row that all center on lost things being found. Each story is meant to tell us about what God is like and what he values. The first parable tells us how God is like a shepherd who looks for a lost sheep. He ignores the rest of the flock leaving them. to search high and low for the lost sheep to bring it back together. God made us to be social creatures and live in healthy communities. God's priority is to rescue the one in danger instead of maintaining the flock.

The next story Jesus tells how God is like a woman who has lost a coin. In her economy the coin is a tenth of her life savings. She searched all over her house until she finds it and when she does find it she throws a party with her friends, celebrating her reunion with the coin. This shows how God values us, and He is overjoyed when we are reunited with him.

The third story is of a Prodigal father and 2 lost sons. The younger son was selfish, hedonistic and unwise in the way he spent money and dishonored his father in a culture where honor is everything. He became the cultural equivalent of a male escort. The son comes back to his father begging for a job as a domestic servant.

The father doesn't listen to his son's request for a servant's position. You can't negotiate with God as you enter his Kingdom. The father insists on restoring the position of his son. He throws a party celebrating the reunion with his son!

But the older son is also lost. The younger son was separated from his father because of foolish selfishness; the other son is still separated from his father out of a sense of righteousness.

The father's priority was reuniting with his younger son. The older son should have joined him in this pursuit. Instead He is busy in the field keeping up the family business. The older son is indignant at the celebration for his brother. What madness would possess his father to reward such foolishness? The older brother is lost because he only knows right and wrong but doesn't understand community and family. Even though the older brother is lost, the father invites his older son to join him

Through this story Jesus tells us how God is like a father who is looking for us and invites us to come celebrate with Him.

Reading Today: Luke 10-11

10-15 minutes

Day 2

Prayers of Jesus

From the beginning to the end of his life Jesus deep in prayer. His mother Mary first found out she was pregnant and God had a special plan for her song. Her heart sang out a song of hope and joy thanking God for this blessing. She wasn't concerned by the disastrous social danger of being an unmarried teenage mother in a very conservative culture. She simply trusted that God's plan was greater than the struggle. She thanked God in prayer for her baby boy. I can't recommend this enough for expecting mothers to pray for their children.

Jesus prayed to God like he was talking to his Dad. He spoke naturally from his heart. He didn't follow the pattern of religious lofty speech he spoke to God honestly and openly. In the Garden before he was assassinated he spoke to God about the struggle of facing the cross. God didn't take away the obstacle but God gave him the strength to go through it and come out victorious. Aligned with God's perspective Jesus was able to see past his own pain on the cross and asked God to forgive the people who killed him. There was no pretense about looking good, just an honest love from God in extraordinary circumstances. That kind of love develops over time spent communicating honestly, openly and naturally with God.

Don't be discouraged if God says no when you ask for something. We are like children to God. Kids ask for many things that just aren't healthy for them. Any good parent will use wisdom and restraint responding to children with a loving no.

If God says no, it's wise to accept it. His wisdom is deep beyond measure. It's ok to ask why? as you accept his refusal, you'd be surprised by the wisdom God wants to share with you. He really wants to train us to grow in wisdom and strength.

Prayer is also a good time to listen to God. God can communicate with us in many different ways. God has communicated with people through prophets, donkeys, rainbows, accumulation of dew on cloth, and on rare occasions an audible voice. One of the most reliable forms today is the Bible. It isn't a direct message from God to you personally, but you do get to eavesdrop on the conversations God has had with people in the past. It's a good way to get to know his character and recognize Him today.

There are obstacles when it comes to hearing from God. We can be too distracted, too self-absorbed, too busy. All the things that make it difficult to communicate with people around you, can affect communication with God.

Prayer empowers in a strange way. We can come to God frustrated, confused, exhausted. God gives us focus, refreshment and strength. We come to Him with joy and He shares in our delight. When we stop and listen to Him, He can give us vision and insight. We surrender to Him and He sets us free. Prayer is where we meet with God.

Reading Today: Luke 12-13

10-15 minutes

Day 3

Trading Places

The Roman Road

One of Jesus' followers wrote a letter to his friends in Rome. In his letter he explains in big picture description what God has done for them through Jesus. Following his outline you can use this "**Roman Road**" as a way to describe your faith.

Everyone is separated from God.

"No one is righteous—not even one. No one is truly wise; no one is seeking God. All have turned away; all have become useless. No one does good, not a single one." ... For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard.

Romans 3:10-12, and 23

The separation from God leads to death.

For the wages of sin is death...

Romans 6:23

Jesus Christ took the death that was meant for us.

But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners.

Romans 5:8

Trusting Jesus saves us from the death.

If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by confessing with your mouth that you are saved ... For "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

Romans 10:9-10, and 13

Trusting Jesus puts us back together with God in a right way.

Therefore, since we have been made right in God's sight by faith, we have peace with God because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us.

Romans 5:1

So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus.

Romans 8:1

And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love. No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 8:38-39

Trusting Jesus, We also inherit eternal life.

...the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 6:23

In summary:

We have all walked away from God in one way or another. We choose to make a life for ourselves instead of following his plan. That separation from God is sin. God is the source of life, separating from him brings death and destruction to ourselves and those around us. Jesus accepted a death that we deserved so that we could have the eternal life that he deserved. It is a free exchange. All we have to do is believe that He accomplished what we couldn't do. Jesus put us back in favor with God.

Reading Today: Luke 14-15

10-15 minutes

Day 4

Influence**Serving my Neighbors**

Jesus was a King yet he came to serve. His idea of leadership is humbly serving others, not being waited on and pampered by our power. Following in his footsteps we will be serving our neighbors this week. This may require creativity. Here's a few suggestions:

- Give a gift such as baked goods.
- Try the obvious; "what can I do to serve you?"
- Ask, "What are you doing this weekend?"
- Or "What do you need?"
- Let them know you're eager to help them

Look for ways to serve but leave the choice in their hands. As always use your best judgment.

Reading Today: Luke 16-17

10-15 minutes

Day 5

My Purpose

Over the next three weeks you will use the results of all those surveys to develop your personal life mission and purpose statement. Many businesses use a mission statement to focus on activities that they can do with excellence. What do I do that is almost effortless from my perspective but seems daunting to others? Imagine the disaster Mac Donald's restaurants would face getting involved in the retail copy paper business because they don't have a statement identifying their mission and purpose is to serve affordable food. The same thing can happen to us when we don't know our purpose.

Read through the guide: "Life Purpose" at inPursuitStudy.com

This week we will follow the guide and begin crafting our life purpose statements.

"to a hammer all problems look like an nail"

Reading Today: Luke 18

10-15 minutes

Savior

Week 11

This week in summary

<u>Savior</u>		<u>WEEK 11</u>
Leader of All	<i>Luke 19-20</i>	<i>Day 1</i>
Jesus the Savior	<i>Luke 21</i>	<i>Day 2</i>
Four Laws	<i>Luke 22</i>	<i>Day 3</i>
Serving My Co-Workers	<i>Luke 23</i>	<i>Day 4</i>
My Life's Purpose	<i>Luke 24</i>	<i>Day 5</i>

Day 1

Leader of All**Leadership requires trust**

Authority from on high is given to men and women that can be trusted to accomplish their task. Any corporate officer that acts unprofessionally should start looking for another job. Without the trust from the decision makers and business owners you won't be able to keep your position.

Jesus knew that his authority came from on high, way up high. This put him at odds with the politics and people of power in the world around him. He refused to compromise the will of God. He would not pander to the movers and shakers of his day. He was incorruptible. The only deal he would offer was 'follow me.' This infuriated the rich and privileged who are used to clients catering to their whim.

Authority doesn't just come from on high. It also comes from the hearts and minds of the masses. We ultimately choose who we follow. People will suffer the tyranny no longer than they have to. The moment a viable alternative presents itself the people will choose the leader they can trust.

Leadership is built on trust. It may be a director appointing an officer that she can trust to get the job done. Or it may be an average guy choosing to support a leader that cares about him and can provide a better future. Both models require a trustworthy leader.

Jesus is the kind of leader people are willing to die for. Literally. It comes from the simple fact that He is trustworthy.

Making Jesus known

It's human nature to fear the unknown and trust what we know. So it stands that trusting Jesus could simply be an issue of getting to knowing him. How can you get to know more about Jesus? How can you help others to learn more about Jesus? What is the benefit of increasing your trust of Jesus? What kind of risks would you be willing to take to learn about how Jesus is trust worthy? What risks does Jesus ask you to take?

Reading Today: Luke 19-20

15-20 minutes

Day 2

Jesus the Savior

Jesus - the name literally means 'savior.' He said he came to seek and save the lost.

So, Who is lost? and How does Jesus save them?

Who is lost? – Everyone

It's easy to see how *some* unfortunate people could be lost. Caught in difficult life circumstances, following an unhealthy or destructive lifestyle; certainly *they* need to be rescued. But what about the rest of us who have things pretty much under control? We all start off disconnected from God (the source of life) and that puts us on a collision course with death. Everyone from the greatest to the least starts out lost and remains that way unless Jesus rescues them.

God sent us Jesus as a life line to get us connected with Him. Jesus accomplished this when he died on the cross and was resurrected from the dead. Everything that held us back and kept us separated from God was defeated. Jesus took it to the cross with him, buried and left it in the grave.

Jesus rescued us from way that leads to death and welcomes us to follow him on a way that leads to life. He is our savior.

Reading Today: Luke 21

10-15 minutes

Day 3

Four Spiritual Laws

Just as there are laws that govern the physical universe, so are there spiritual laws that govern your relationship with God.

Law 1

God loves you and offers a wonderful plan for your life.

God's Love

"God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

God's Plan

[Christ speaking:] "I came that they might have life, and might have it abundantly" [that it might be full and meaningful] (John 10:10).

Why is it that most people are not experiencing that abundant life? Because...

Law 2

*Humanity is separated from God by sin
Therefore, we cannot know and experience
God's love and plan for his life.*

Humanity is Sinful

"All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).

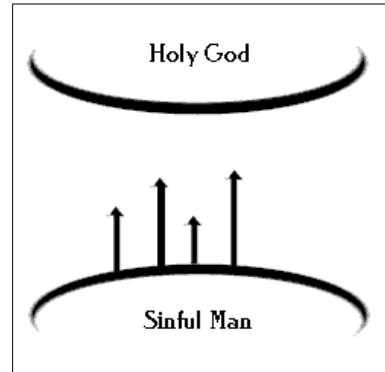
We were created to have fellowship with God; but, because of our own stubborn self-will, we chose to go our own independent way and fellowship with God was broken. This self-will, characterized by an attitude of active rebellion or passive indifference, is an evidence of what the Bible calls sin.

Humanity Is Separated

"The wages of sin is death" [spiritual separation from God]
(Romans 6:23).

This diagram illustrates that God is holy and humanity is sinful. A great gulf separates the two. The arrows illustrate that humanity is continually trying to reach God and the abundant life through our own efforts, such as a good life, philosophy, or religion

-but we inevitably fail.



The third law explains the only way to bridge this gulf...

Law 3

*Jesus Christ is God's only provision for our sin.
Through Him you can know and experience God's love and plan for your life.*

Jesus Died In Our Place

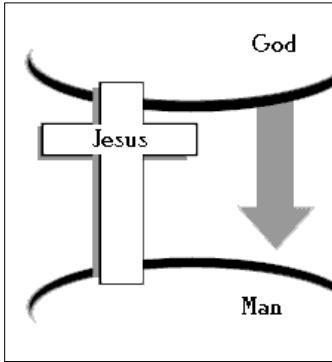
"God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).

He Rose from the Dead

"Christ died for our sins, He was buried, He was raised on the third day, according to the Scriptures. He appeared to Peter, then to the twelve. After that He appeared to more than five hundred." (1 Corinthians 15:3-6).

Jesus Is the Only Way to God

"Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life, no one comes to the Father but through Me'" (John 14:6).



This diagram illustrates that God has bridged the gulf that separates us from Him by sending His Son, Jesus Christ, to die on the cross in our place to pay the penalty for our sins.

It is not enough just to know these three laws...

Law 4

We must individually receive Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord; then we can know and experience God's love and plan for our lives.

We Must Receive Christ

"As many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name" (John 1:12).

We Receive Christ Through Faith

"Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved" (Acts 16:31)

This is a gift from God, not something we can earn

"By grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as result of works that no one should boast" (Ephesians 2:8,9).

All the work of putting us back with God's love and plan was done by Jesus when He died on the cross. This free gift is for all who believe. If you believe tell him right now out loud:
"Jesus, I believe that you saved me!"

Reading Today: Luke 22

10-15 minutes

Day 4

Influence

Serving my Co-Workers

Jesus was a King yet he came to serve. His idea of leadership is humbly serving others, not being waited on and pampered by our power. Following in his footsteps we will be serving our co-workers this week. Remember co-workers could be anyone who works around you not just the people on your team. This may require creativity. Here are a few suggestions:

- Give a gift such as baked goods.
- Try the obvious; “what can I do for you?”
- Ask, “What are you doing this weekend?”
- Or “What do you need?”
- Let them know you’re eager to help them

Look for ways to serve but leave the choice in their hands. As always use your best judgment.

Reading Today: Luke 23

10-15 minutes

Day 5

My Life's Purpose

In this week's group meeting we're going to begin developing our life purpose statements. Be sure to come prepared with your personal results of each of the surveys.

- my personality type
- my values
- my strengths
- my skills
- my life map
- my spiritual gifts
- a copy of the guide: "Life Purpose"

If you have any questions contact your facilitator ahead of time.

Reading Today: Luke 24

10-15 minutes

Vision

Week 12

This week in summary

<u>Vision</u>		<u>WEEK 12</u>
Visionary Portrait of Jesus	<i>Revelation 1</i>	<i>Day 1</i>
Jesus the Victor	<i>Revelation 4-5</i>	<i>Day 2</i>
Victory in Jesus	<i>Revelation 19</i>	<i>Day 3</i>
Severing My Encounters	<i>Daniel 7</i>	<i>Day 4</i>
My Life's Purpose and Vision	<i>Revelation 21-22</i>	<i>Day 5</i>

Day 1

Visionary Portraits of Jesus

An aging John reflects back his years spent continuing the movement that Jesus started 60 years ago. As a young man, John followed Jesus in person. After Jesus rose from the grave and ascended into heaven, John took part in cultivating communities devoted to faith in Jesus as part of the kingdom. He saw the political and social resistance to Jesus intensify.

John studied the sacred scriptures recognizing his best friend and king in prophecies delivered from heaven to his people at an age long ago.

He can see the messages from the past are playing out in his lifetime as the mysteries of the future take form in front of him, swirling into a singular vision.

John can see the spiritual reality as clearly as the physical realities around us.

From this vision a lone figure emerges, his old friend Jesus stands before him in full majesty and titanic stature.

This week we're reading about four visionary pictures of Jesus in full spiritual glory.

The first sighting of Jesus he appears before his friend John. His eyes blaze like fire, his feet glow like molten metal. He is larger than life. With his hand he can touch stars.

By his clothes you can tell that he is a priest: mediator between heaven and earth by his reach there is no doubt he could touch heaven itself. Jesus literally stands as a bridge between heaven and earth.

The second sighting of Jesus takes place in the throne room of God where all the great wonders and marvelous works of God have been assembled. Nothing in all the cosmos is worthy to break the seals on the scroll containing God's proclamation. Finally God's crowning achievement enters the throne room for he alone is worthy to release God's scroll. Jesus enters in the form of bloody sacrificial lamb. He is worthy because of the sacrifice he made: his death on the cross.

The third sighting of Jesus takes place after a violent resistance sweeps the earth and everything in it. All forces political, spiritual, cosmic and mundane are caught up in a resistance to God's authority as the Kingdom that Jesus established expands around the earth. On the field of a final battle all the forces of evil have assembled. Jesus single handedly throws them down. With the last resistance to his Kingdom finally conquered the earth becomes a paradise a true slice of heaven.

Finally Jesus appears in the vision of another man: Daniel, a prophet from a time hundreds of years before Jesus's birth in Bethlehem. Daniel has a glimpse of Jesus in the throne room of "the ancient of days" - a title for God. In the throne room are gathered magnificent specimen from all parts of creation bowing before God in appreciation. Then in human form, Jesus enters the throne room as God bestows upon him all power in heaven and earth.

Reading Today: Revelation 1

10-15 minutes

Day 2

Victory in Jesus

Jesus was executed as a criminal and a traitor. That should have been the end of the story but instead it's the beginning of a revolution.

It appeared that Jesus's movement had failed. He was arrested a traitor and sentenced to death. His followers were hiding for fear of their lives. His enemies physical, spiritual and political were congratulating themselves. They threw everything they had at Jesus and defeated him. Jesus took the failure and upped the ante. He invited death to unleash his full power at him. Defeated, broken and dead, they laid Jesus' body in a tomb covered by a boulder and guarded by Rome's finest.

Three days late Jesus rose from the grave like it was an afternoon nap. His enemies were undone. They had thrown everything they had at him. Jesus is unstoppable. He conquered death itself.

With this victory Jesus offers a promise: there is nothing you face as his follower that Jesus can't defeat. Take comfort in that. And remember be sure you are on his side in all things because in the end no one who opposes Jesus will stand.

Reading Today: Revelation 4-5

15-20 minutes

Day 3

Christ Victorious

Jesus' death and sacrifice turned into victory isn't just a one-time fluke of the natural order. His sacrifice stands as the new model of victory for us to follow.

Jesus called his followers to *"take up your cross."* Everything we do for ourselves will someday be undone. Only what's sacrificed for Jesus will stand eternally. God ensures this victory.

All other organizations stand for the benefit of its own members and causes. Citizens of Jesus' Kingdom are expected to sacrifice what they have for the benefit of those who are not members.

Can you imagine living in a society where everyone lives to see others advance and prosper? Where all citizens look for ways to lift each other up? And every hardship is another opportunity to prove God's faithfulness. With gratitude we say to God, "not mine will but your will be done."

Behind the scenes note: this sacrificial society works based on a principal of water overflowing a cup. We learn to see how God's blessing like water is continuously pouring into us far beyond our needs. We become convinced that he supplies more than we need and the extra we can give generously to others around us. In all situations we can be content with what God gives us and pass the extras on to others.

Reading Today: Revelation 19

10-15 minutes

Day 4

Influence**Serving my Acquaintances**

Jesus was a King yet he came to serve. His idea of leadership is humbly serving others, not being waited on and pampered by our power. Following in his footsteps we will be serving the people on the fringes of our lives this week. Remember acquaintances could be anyone you encounter and a good rule of thumb is anyone within 50 of a place you spend money including the cashier. This may require creativity as many of these people know you only on a first name basis. Time to come up with your own suggestions:

- _____
- _____
- _____

Look for ways to serve but leave the choice in their hands. As always use your best judgment.

Reading Today: Daniel 7

10-15 minutes

Day 5

My Life's Purpose and Vision

Last week we began identifying themes and circles of influence in your life. Just like scriptures, our lives tell a story of how awesome God is. By identifying the themes of God's work so far we can extrapolate to what God is doing with our lives and build a life vision statement for the road ahead. This statement can be a helpful guide as we face choices in life that move us towards fulfilling our life's purpose.

Based on the surveys what trends do you notice God doing in your life?

Theme #1 _____

Theme #2 _____

Theme #3 _____

Theme #4 _____

Describe your circles of influence:

What vision do you have for your circle of influence based on the trends that God has done in your life?

To _____

By _____

If you have any questions contact your facilitator ahead of time.

Reading Today: Revelation 21-22

15-20 minutes

