



Week 1 | Introduction & Invitation

Day 1 | The “Waze” of Jesus

Command: *Teach them to obey everything I have commanded you.* [Matthew 28:20 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *“When everything is ready, I will come and get you, so that you will always be with me where I am. And you know the way to where I am going.” “No, we don’t know, Lord,” Thomas said. “We have no idea where you are going, so how can we know the way?” Jesus told him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me.* [John 14:3-6 \(NLT\)](#)

Reflect: I grew up in the era of Thomas Guides. Planning a road trip almost always required handwritten directions from a trusted friend, or a Thomas Guide. You could buy a spiral bound guide for every county in California. Or, you could get a huge (40”x28”) foldable county map. It was a chore to map out a trip. You’d first have to look at a tiny print index to find your starting and end points, flip to the page indicated on the index to locate your addresses, and then plot out your trip. If you followed the directions, you’d get to your destination. If you got lost, you still had your map to get you back on track. Unfortunately though, the Thomas Guide couldn’t warn you of unforeseen road hazards.

These days, we have Waze. It already knows your starting point. You just have to tell it where you’re headed. It tells you where to go, helps you avoid hazards, and reroutes you through safer passages. Jesus is kind of like Waze. He knows where I’m at, plots out my journey, and leads me all along the way. All he asks is that I listen and cooperate. And when I do, I actually get to where I want to go.

React: Whose ways are you following? Are you getting to your desired destination?

Pray: Jesus, thank you for showing me the way. Tune my ears to listen and my heart to obey.



Week 1 | Introduction & Invitation

Day 2 | Teach Them the Way They Should Go

Command: *Teach them to obey everything I have commanded you.* [Matthew 28:20 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.* [Deuteronomy 6:6-7 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: Mom's life was far from perfect; she was far from perfect. Yet, she was unashamed to meet with God as she was. My mom started her day by getting up before the crack of dawn to go to morning mass. She rarely missed a day. If she did, it was because she was ill, or the car wouldn't start. She often looked radiant and at peace when she returned from mass. As she got older and was no longer able to drive, she would quietly sneak into the living room while everyone was still asleep. She would read her Bible and pray, taking time to be with Jesus.

In my late teens, and through much of my adult life, I dismissed her acts of piety as ritualistic. But as I look back on it now, I realize that Mom was teaching me what loving Jesus could look like. The very thing that I dismissed in her is the very thing I long for - to be in Jesus's presence and to know his ways. Again, she didn't follow Jesus perfectly, and neither did I. But I hope to pass this faith on to my kids, just as my mom did for me.

React: Who has taught you about faith? With whom can you share your faith?

Pray: Jesus, thank you for my mother's faith, for it is through her that I have come to know and love you.



Week 1 | Introduction & Invitation

Day 3 | Lost in Your Love

Command: *If you love me, keep my commands.* [John 14:15 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *Blessed are those whose ways are blameless, who walk according to the law of the Lord. Blessed are those who keep his statutes and seek him with all their heart— they do no wrong but follow his ways. You have laid down precepts that are to be fully obeyed. Oh, that my ways were steadfast in obeying your decrees! Then I would not be put to shame when I consider all your commands. I will praise you with an upright heart as I learn your righteous laws. I will obey your decrees; do not utterly forsake me.* ([Psalm 119:1-8 NIV](#))

Reflect: For several days now, I've had Brandon Lake's Lost in Your Love on repeat. It resonates with so much love and surrender toward God's will. "I'm going all in, in over my head. I'm not scared to get drenched in your love. Wherever you go, God, I will follow. I'm not scared to get lost in your love."

I don't doubt the sincerity of these words, nor Brandon's desire to surrender and follow God's ways. I feel like I really mean it when I belt out "I'm going all in, in over my head." But in reality, well...I am scared of "going all in!" I can't honestly say that I would follow Jesus wherever he goes. I am set in my ways, and too stubborn to change. And like the Psalmist, I am not confident in my own ability to obey his commands. But at the same time, I have that "want to"... to be close to his heart. As the psalm and song promise, blessing and peace await those who follow his ways. I want that.

React: What is the desire of your heart? Is there a "want to" in you to be close to Jesus?

Pray: Jesus, thank you for your steadfast love toward me. Help me to seek you with all my heart and to respond in obedience to your will.



Week 1 | Introduction & Invitation

Day 4 | Firm Foundation

Command: *If you love me, keep my commands.* [John 14:15 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *Anyone who listens to my teaching and follows it is wise, like a person who builds his house on solid rock.* [Matthew 7:24 \(NLT\)](#)

Reflect: This is usually the time of year when I do a personal “look back and look forward” reflection. How did I do last year, and what can I “work on” this year? Year after year, it’s the same thing - get back in physical shape, spend less and save more, and read my bible every day. Inevitably, I don’t follow through with my resolutions. Instead, I end up reverting back to old habits. As the days, weeks, and months pass, I get derailed from practicing regular disciplines that help me to get physically, financially, and spiritually healthy.

It’s difficult to stay on track when there are so many distractions in life. These distractions dull my ears and heart to Jesus’ invitation to follow his ways in every area of my life. I lose sight of Jesus and his best for me. And yet, his invitation is always there to get back on track, even as I repeatedly stumble along the way. I know that Jesus will meet me where I am. He desires that I build my life on the foundation of his love for me. And since I do love him, he’s already given me all that I need to follow his ways - himself.

React: What are you building your life on? What can you do differently this year to deepen your walk with Jesus?

Pray: Jesus, thank you for inviting us to deepen our love for you. Transform us with your love and help us become more like you.



Week 1 | Introduction & Invitation

Day 5 | Come as You Are

Command: *If you love me, keep my commands.* [John 14:15 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast.* [Ephesians 2:8-9 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: When I came to faith in Jesus, I was a little confused about the requirements of having a “personal relationship” with him. My best friend told me that all I had to do was “believe in your heart and confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord.” “That’s it? No clean up necessary? Too easy!” As welcoming as my friend’s invitation was, I was still on the fence. My faith background involved lots of jumping through hoops and earning merit points by obeying the commandments. That’s how I thought you earned a ticket to heaven.

As a young adult, I walked away from the faith. It was not so much that I didn’t like the rituals and liturgy; it was more because I grew up tiptoeing around rules. I was a rebellious child. Harsh discipline caused me to develop the false narrative that God was watching my every move, waiting for me to mess up. To earn his good graces, I was supposed to be good all the time. I had to aspire to perfection. It was too hard. So, I dropped out.

Then my friend invited me to “come and see.” Her genuine acceptance of me just as I was is what drew me back to Jesus. I came to realize that “getting saved” was not so much perfectly obeying his commands, it was more responding to Jesus’ love through following his ways.

React: Have you developed a false image of God that keeps you from having a personal relationship with Jesus?

Pray: Jesus, thank you for the grace which saves us. Thank you for who you are and for loving us just as we are.



Week 2 | The Way of New Beginnings

Day 1 | Faith in Jesus

Command: *“The time has come,” he said. “The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!”* [Mark 1:15 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, He said to the ruler of the synagogue, “Do not be afraid, only believe.”* [Mark 5:36 \(NKJV\)](#)

Reflect: As I stood on the very edge of the airplane ready to skydive, doubts and fear came in - rapid fire - causing a tsunami-like anxiety wave over my whole being. Fortunately, this was a tandem jump. I was securely hooked in with my seasoned jump partner who has sky dived out of a plane a thousand times. Rather than abort the jump and return back to the plane, I decided to place my trust in my jump partner and override my anxious thoughts as my feet gently lifted away from the plane. As the parachute opened, my doubts and fears were replaced with this sense of security. My partner’s calming words and supportive presence was with me all along as I floated 13,000 feet in the sky.

To have faith is to release trust in oneself and to place that trust in another. Trust is to believe. The Apostle Mark records Jesus’ miracles over disease, nature, the forces of evil and even death. In [Mark 5:21-43 \(NKJV\)](#), two remarkable stories of faith occur. First, a woman who was hemorrhaging blood for twelve years took great risk to seek and find Jesus. She touched his garment and was healed. Jesus said to her, “Your faith has made you well.” In the second story, a synagogue leader named Jairus had a twelve-year-old daughter who died. Despite the naysayers, Jesus said to him, “Do not be afraid, only believe.” Jairus chose to trust Jesus and his daughter was raised back to life.

Faith by itself does not heal. It is on **whom** we place our faith, Jesus, who heals. Faith in Jesus reveals God’s grace through the power of his love and the power of the cross.

React: Place your trust in your relationship with Jesus and watch what happens over the course of this year as you follow his ways.

Pray: Jesus, we place our faith in you as you reveal your love and healing presence **to** us and **in** us. Amen.



Week 2 | The Way of New Beginnings

Day 2 | Habitually Believing

Command: *“The time has come,” he said. “The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!”* [Mark 1:15 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *“Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life.”* [John 5:24 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: I grew up in a church that emphasized believing in tenets of faith, where any mention of experiencing the presence of Christ was dismissed. This resulted in a walk that was both arrogant and anemic. Later Christ mercifully showed me that, beyond academically believing basic doctrines, believing is an ongoing state of mind. *“He who habitually hears my word and is believing the One who sent me has life eternal”* (John 5:24 WUEST). *“He who is habitually believing has an eternal way of living.”* Eternal life is life as Christ is living it here and now. By habitually noticing his presence and frequently focusing on the good traits of his character, Christ provides guidance for whatever is next in my day.

Believing is attuning my mind to the way Christ thinks and learning to see who and whatever is in front of me through his filter of goodness. This can be the essence of being rooted in Christ. Believing extends the roots of my attention into the rich presence of Christ’s inexhaustible goodness, while Christ extends his roots, carrying the energy of his goodness, deep into my soul.

This kind of habitual believing aims for a constant awareness and reliance on his presence. Doing so consistently proves to be among the greatest challenges of my life. My thoughts are driven by routines, silliness, and dysfunctional reactions to stressors. The work, then, is to frequently reset the mind to Christ, to habitually believe in the One who is the eternal way of living.

React: So, I can ask myself in any moment, “Am I believing? Am I enjoying the company of Christ? Am I attuned to his goodness?”

Pray: I direct my mind to the eternal, intangible Christ, who is very near, right now. I see the glory of your loving kindness and the wisdom of your ways. I bow, I follow.



Week 2 | The Way of New Beginnings

Day 3 | Game Changer

Command: *“The time has come,” he said. “The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!”* [Mark 1:15 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved.* [Romans 10:9-10 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: I recall a time when I was homeschooling my young children. We were heading into the Christmas season and my three kids sat around our round wooden table for their history lesson. I read the story of a man named Saint Nicholas who dedicated his life to serving God through his generosity to help the needy. He was known as the protector of children because he loved them so dearly. I then ended our story with these words, “He died on December 6th 343 AD. St. Nicholas is commonly known today as Santa Claus.”

Oh, if you could see the look on my children’s faces as I read the last sentence. Their eyes popped out and my middle son said in a shocking manner, “Santa Claus is dead?!” It was at that moment they realized all they believed about Santa was not real. It was a moment of utter shock and disappointment in our home that day.

All hope was not lost for them. My husband and I have pointed their hearts towards a true Lord, Jesus Christ. They heard the good news of Jesus as we shared stories from the Bible of Emmanuel, God with us, who came to live among us and tend to the needy and broken-hearted. He died as Santa did, but on a cross to bear the weight of the world. And here was the game changer, Jesus rose from the dead! We can believe this.

We can declare confidently “Jesus is Lord!” because he lives!!

React: Are there people or circumstances that have disappointed you and lost your trust? What can you discover about Jesus so you can begin a relationship with him and believe in him?

Pray: Jesus, thank you for your truth. You are unchanging. Reveal to me who you are as I discover more about you each day.



Week 2 | The Way of New Beginnings

Day 4 | Repentance - A 180° and More

Command: *“The time has come,” he said. “The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!”* [Mark 1:15 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *Now I am happy. I’m not happy because you were made sad. I’m happy because your sadness led you to turn away from your sins. You became sad just as God wanted you to. So, you were not hurt in any way by us. Godly sadness causes us to turn away from our sins and be saved. And we are certainly not sorry about that! But worldly sadness brings death.* [2 Corinthians 7:9-10 \(NIRV\)](#)

Reflect: I crawled under my desk. I was overwhelmed. I’d been happily working away on a tee shirt for a Bible camp. I was killing it. The theme was great — “Metamorphosis: Molt, Morph, Multiply” — a perfect metaphor for inspiring the faith of the teenage campers. My design had a glow-in-the-dark giant transforming robot straight out of Japanese anime. I felt like a kid riding a bike with no hands on the handlebars. Then I heard God speak into my imagination, “If you want your students to be transformed, then you need to be transformed.” It wasn’t audible, but the voice came with authority. I was convicted and the air rushed out of me. I needed metamorphosis as much as the kids coming to camp. The tears and the snot came, and I didn’t care. I crouched on my knees under the desk in my office. I told God he was right and that I wasn’t and that I need him to make me right. An emotional moment.

React: What role do you think emotions play in repentance? Is it a problem to be too emotional in repentance? Can a person repent without having lots of feelings?

Pray: Jesus, thanks for the gift of repentance — that we get to respond to Holy Spirit’s convictions and agree with you. Help me today to live a lifestyle of repentance that turns away from my ego-ey selfishness.



Week 2 | The Way of New Beginnings

Day 5 | Repent and Believe

Command: *“The time has come,” he said. “The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!”* [Mark 1:15 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. “The time has come,” he said. “The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!”* [Mark 1:14-15 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: I grew up in a family where on Sundays we would go to church and prayers were recited out of memory. I admit that for a majority of my life I attended church out of family tradition and obligation. I used to think that following my Sunday rituals would help me stay in good standing not only with my parents but also with God. As I got older, I carried my merit-based mentality into most things I did in life. But the more I continue to walk with God, the more I realize he is not after my merits. Instead, he is after my heart. And while some days I fall short in most areas of my life, every day God gives me an opportunity to repent, believe and start again. And that is good news because that means no matter the messiness and brokenness I bring to the table, God is ready to love, accept and embrace me just as I am. That means I no longer repent to earn God’s love. I repent because I am greatly loved.

React: What would happen if you dare to believe that your past, present, and future sins have been paid by the one who gave up his life for you?

Pray: Father God, I repent of my sins. Clean my heart. I am ready to receive all the love you have for me.



Week 3 | The Way of the Apprentice

Day 1 | A Faithful Love for All

Command: *If you love me, keep my commands.* [John 14:15 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *But the love of the Lord remains forever with those who fear him. His salvation extends to the children's children of those who are faithful to his covenant, of those who obey his commandments!*
[Psalm 103:17-18 \(NLT\)](#)

Reflect: When the world was shut down, a song rose to meet the ears of the nations.

*"May His favor be upon you
 And a thousand generations
 ... May His presence go before you
 And behind you, and beside you
 All around you, and within you
 He is with you, He is with you"*

The song still lifts my soul to remind me of the one thing that will satisfy all my longings: to want his presence before me, behind me, beside me and all around me.

As a new year is set before us, I wonder how different the next 12 months would be if I sought that presence and expected him to show up. To ask him where he'd have me go and what he'd have me do and then - obeying. The type of obedience that isn't reluctant and begrudging, but understands that the benefits it will reap go far beyond a brief moment in time. My heart, aligned with his and my soul, aware of his presence in and around me.

As Psalm 103 tells us, that faithful love isn't just for me. It's for my kids. It's for the stranger eating alone at the restaurant. Or the person that cut me off on the freeway.

In a world that begs us to cast off restraint and do what makes us happy, Jesus calls us to something deeper, more meaningful, and more lasting - a life lived in his presence.

React: What is a small, practical way I can seek God's presence in my daily life? How can I lean into his commands and trust that his ways are better than mine?

Pray: Lord let our eyes be opened to your presence. Help us seek you first this year - obeying the commands you set before us with confidence knowing that you love us.



Week 3 | The Way of the Apprentice

Day 2 | A Not So Burdensome Command

Command: *If you love me, keep my commands.* [John 14:15 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *If you love me, keep my commands.* [John 14:15 \(NIV\)](#) *And this is love: that we walk in obedience to his commands... his command is that you walk in love.* [2 John 1:6 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: In my early days of learning to follow Christ, “If you love me, keep my commands” was not a favorite verse. Not only did I not like being told what to do, I seriously doubted that I could adequately keep whatever the commandments were. Then I thought, “Well, what are the commands of Christ?”

As I discovered the commands were traits of goodness such as kindness, service, generosity, forgiveness, and other such graces that all add up to love, I thought, “That makes sense.” I discovered that love really sums up Christ and learning to live love is what he wants for us. And this is love: that we walk in obedience to his commands... his command is that you walk in love. [2 John 6 \(NIV\)](#)

Christ modeled his love by giving up himself in the service of meeting my need. For the joy set before him he endured the cross. [Hebrews 12:2 \(NIV\)](#) I am the joy set before Christ, and I walk in Christ’s love when I give up selfish preferences and conveniences and focus on the joy of meeting the needs of another. Christ regularly sets before me opportunities to joyfully pour his love onto another. Such a delightful peace rests on us when we follow his gracious command to love. In fact, this is love for God: to keep his commands. And his commands are not burdensome, for everyone born of God overcomes the world. [1 John 5:3 \(NIV\)](#)

React: This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. [1 John 3:16 \(NIV\)](#) In what ways can you show others your love this week?

Pray: Open my eyes to see the joy of loving the ones you set before me today. May I love them like you love me.



Week 3 | The Way of the Apprentice

Day 3 | Passing on Light and Love

Command: *If you love me, obey my commands.* [John 14:15 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *Jesus spoke to the people once more and said, “I am the light of the world. If you follow me, you won’t have to walk in darkness, because you will have the light that leads to life.”* [John 8:12 \(NLT\)](#)

Reflect: I was reminded of how light can extinguish darkness at the Christmas Eve service. It started with one candle and the light was passed from one person to the next. By the time everyone’s candle was lit, the room was full of light. There was no more darkness. Similarly, we can feel like we are surrounded by darkness and see no hope or future. Jesus is that hope and light in the darkness.

There have been times in my life that I felt overwhelmed by sadness and despair. Several years ago, I lost several family members within a short amount of time, one of those being my father. It felt like I was alone in my despair, even though I was surrounded by family. I didn’t even feel like I could reach out to God.

Two fellow coworkers provided my family with a meal. Nothing fancy, a bag salad, lasagna, and rolls. Our growth group dropped by a beautiful bouquet of white roses, with a touching note. The thoughtfulness behind their actions, brought encouragement, which led to a hope, that over time, I would feel less grief in my heart.

When we are obedient to God’s word and follow Jesus’ example, we can make a difference in the world. People will see that we are different, because we are children of God.

React: Can you reach out to someone that is hurting and offer them encouragement? If you are hurting, can you share with someone your situation so that you can be cared for.

Pray: Lord, thank you that you sent your son to be the light of the world. Help me to be a light to others and to open to accepting kindness.



Week 3 | The Way of the Apprentice

Day 4 | Fishing Without Nets

Command: Follow Me. [Matthew 4:19 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: “Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will send you out to fish for people.” At once they left their nets and followed him. [Matthew 4:19-20 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: Peter, Andrew, James and John were fishermen who worked very hard to live a modest life. They would be considered small businessmen in today’s world. When Jesus said to them, “Come, follow me”, they immediately left their boat and nets and followed him. They left the very things that gave them security and control, so they could follow the Master. They hungered for something beyond the life they had lived.

Later Jesus encountered a young ruler who had wealth and power, and he too hungered for something more. This young ruler wanted eternal life. It may have been the last item on his control checklist. He wanted eternal life in his own terms, so he was not willing to surrender his wealth in order to follow Jesus. Wealth in itself is not a bad thing when it is surrendered to God, but his desire to control things and people through his wealth kept him from following Jesus.

Following Jesus requires me to choose his way instead of mine, to trust him and leave my nets of control behind in obedience to him. Following Jesus means to deny myself and love others and to forgive because I have been forgiven. Like Peter, Andrew, James and John, I want to go fishing for people, dispensing healing and hope in the name of Jesus, but I must first leave my nets behind.

React: Do you hunger for something more in your life? Are you hanging on to any “nets” of control in your life? What is Jesus asking you to surrender so you can follow him in complete obedience?

Pray: Jesus, thank you for inviting me to follow you. I have decided to obey you without reservations. Today I surrender _____.



Week 3 | The Way of the Apprentice

Day 5 | Can You Recognize His Voice?

Command: *Come, follow me.* [Matthew 4:19 \(NLT\)](#)

Read: *After he has gathered his own flock, he walks ahead of them, and they follow him because they know his voice.* [John 10:4 \(NLT\)](#)

Reflection: I was finishing up the last leg of my run this morning when I saw two runners coming toward me. I noticed how close to each other they were. The path was broad enough for four people to run side by side, yet these two were running shoulder to shoulder. One is speaking to the other. His mouth is moving but I can't hear him. His partner had her gaze fixed ahead, matching his gait, his cadence, his breath, not saying a word. Breathing...just breathing. I imagine trying to keep up with her partner.

As I got closer, the man gave me a nod, but the woman still had her eyes frozen ahead. This was when I noticed why they were shoulder to shoulder with one another. They were tethered to one another by a short length of colorful cloth. I saw the cloth looped around his waist and the other around hers. I looked at her again. Her eyes were fixed straight ahead, silent, intent. She's blind.

While the path was broad, the pair decided to be tethered together, as if they were running on a narrow path. They were so close together he didn't need to speak louder than a whisper. She followed his voice, matched her cadence with his, and trusted that though she was blind, she had someone she can trust to lead the way for her. All she needed to do was listen to his voice, his footsteps, and allow him to gently lead her.

Our ability to recognize Jesus' voice depends on our relational proximity to him. We are, more often than not, spiritually blind. But much like the blind runner, we can tether ourselves to Jesus.

React: Are you relationally close enough to Jesus that you can recognize his voice?

Pray: Jesus, tether me to you so that all I can hear is your voice, just above a gentle whisper. Give me the desire to be in lockstep with you, running in cadence with you down the narrow paths you take me through.



Week 4 | The Way of Celebration & Remembrance

Day 1 | Did You Eat Yet?

Command: *Remember me.* [Luke 22:19 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *They were devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.* [Acts 2:42 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: “Did you eat yet?” was our oft repeated welcome to college students who gathered at our home every Tuesday night. My husband and I loved opening our home to this disparate group of twenty-somethings, even if it meant we would be sleeping way past our bedtime on a weeknight, and, not to mention, stretching our budget to feed them. One night it would be spaghetti and meatballs; on another, it would be chili and cornbread. Of course, more often than not, it was pizza - boxes and boxes of pizza. Some of them were there just for the food - college kids, remember? But most of them were there to cultivate friendships in a diverse community of friends who were on some sort of faith journey. They'd come not only hungry for pizza, but also hungry to learn more about Jesus, to ask questions about faith, and to boldly challenge what they'd been taught or grew up with. I always marveled that these young adults had nothing better to do on a Tuesday night than to talk about Jesus.

Jesus' ministry involved lots of eating and drinking. He was a master at bringing diverse peoples together over a meal. I can imagine Jesus asking of anyone who walked through the door, “Did you eat yet?” All were welcome at his table - from the tax collector to the teacher of the law; from the prostitute to the pharisee. During his final meal with his disciples, Jesus instructed them to remember him whenever they gathered together through the breaking of bread and drinking of wine. These would come to symbolize Jesus' broken body and blood shed **for all**. Perhaps this is also what Jesus wants us to remember. By and through his sacrifice, all are invited to his table.

React: Is there someone Jesus wants you to invite and make room for at your table in remembrance of him?

Pray: Jesus, thank you for the open invite to come and dine with you.



Week 4 | The Way of Celebration & Remembrance

Day 2 | Remembered Love

Command: *Remember me.* [Luke 22:19 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *“For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, “Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me. In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me. For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death till He comes.”* [1 Corinthians 11: 23-26 \(NKJV\)](#)

Reflect: When my two children were very little, their fondest memories were spending time with their uncle at his favorite Italian restaurant. At every visit, my brother would ask the waitress for some raw pizza dough. He and my children would share funny, imaginative stories behind their pizza dough creations. When I lost my beloved brother ten years ago, my children served as my brother’s living historians sharing loving memories and their silly pizza dough stories. These memories helped me work through my anguished grief and depression and eventually to a place of peace and comfort. Remembering my brother’s loving spirit deeply blessed us and brought solace in knowing that his spirit is now a permanent part of us.

In communion, we remember Jesus’s everlasting love for us. It is the memory of Jesus’ love which helps us find strength to live through life’s troubles and gives us guidance, hope, and confidence in the midst of an imperfect, sinful dark world. It is the memory of Jesus’ love which gives us the promised blueprint for our future.

React: Through communion, we remember Jesus’ love. How has his love changed your life?

Pray: Lord Christ, you are our remembered love. Thank you for loving us. Amen.



Week 4 | The Way of Celebration & Remembrance

Day 3 | Finding Jesus

Command: *Baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.* [Matthew 28:19 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.* [Ephesians 4:4-6 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: I was baptized as an infant, unaware of the love of Jesus and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Not knowing Jesus, I went through my childhood and early adult years missing out on the opportunity to appreciate what Jesus had to offer. I always felt like something was missing in my life. I attended church regularly and tried to be a good person. But still I felt empty inside.

As a young spouse and parent, I took a closer look at Jesus. I went on a voyage of discovery. I started going to a different church, attended a Bible study and asked a lot of questions. I read accounts of Jesus' death on the cross. I really got to know who Jesus was. On this journey, I discovered that Jesus wanted to have a personal relationship with me.

My next right step was simply saying yes to water baptism. It was a decision that I didn't take lightly, since I had already been baptized. I took the plunge and truly felt the Holy Spirit's presence, as I was lifted out of the water. There are times when his presence feels distant, but I know he is always waiting for me.

React: As the scripture above states, Jesus is with us always and everywhere. We just have to say "yes" to a relationship with him. Declare your intentions publicly through baptism. Let the world know that Jesus Christ is Lord of all.

Pray: I want to know you better and feel connected to you. Guide me and lead me toward your promises.



Week 4 | The Way of Celebration & Remembrance

Day 4 | The Table is Set

Command: *Remember me.* [Luke 22:19 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body." Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you."*

[Matthew 26:26-27 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: Meals with friends are always special because they help me appreciate them more and receive strength from their presence.

Jesus often shared meals with people to introduce the good news of his kingdom, and this time he greatly anticipated the Passover meal with his disciples. They would gather to remember how God had delivered his people from a life of slavery in Egypt, using unleavened bread and wine. During this meal there was also an element of the expectation of salvation by the Messiah. The disciples expected Jesus, as the Rabbi in the group, to recite the prescribed words at different parts of the meal. But Jesus departed from the script to reveal what *Passover* had foreshadowed: He would be the Passover Lamb to be sacrificed for their sins. In doing so, Jesus came to fulfill all the hopes of Israel and all of humanity.

React: Even though Jesus has never been physically present in the bread and the wine, his spiritual presence in this act is available for us today in a way that is not anywhere else. He has set the table. Will you accept his invitation to his table?

Pray: Jesus, I accept your sacrifice for the forgiveness of my sins and a new life. I look forward to enjoying a feast with you in your new kingdom. Until then, I accept your invitation to remember you at your table as you prescribed. I love you.



Week 4 | The Way of Celebration & Remembrance

Day 5 | Always

Command: *Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. [Matthew 28:19 \(NLT\)](#)*

Read: *Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age. [Matthew 28:19-20 \(NLT\)](#)*

Reflect: The Great Commandment (love God) tells us HOW to live our lives. But the Great Commission in Matthew 28, tells us WHAT to do with our lives.

I think most of us might feel like going and making disciples of all nations is a really big ask. It seems like the kind of calling for missionaries or people who run non-profits. But the nations aren't just the people in remote villages across the world. The nations also include our neighbors, our co-workers, and our children.

In the midst of telling us what we're being called to do with our lives, Jesus assures us that he will be with us ALWAYS. He knows we'll doubt, be afraid, think we're not qualified, or feel like we just can't do it. We'll wonder if he really meant what he said, and if he really is still with us. I'm sure that's what the disciples felt. They actually got to walk with the living, breathing Jesus on Earth, but then had to finish their work without him being physically present.

When Jesus says something, his word is true. We can trust it. When we realize and walk in this truth, it can give us the confidence we need as we walk through life -- doing the mundane, extraordinary and everything in between.

Knowing Jesus is ALWAYS with us can give us the courage and confidence to share his love with our kids, co-workers, neighbors and family - the nations. He is with us.

React: What are small steps you can take towards sharing the love of Jesus with those around you?

Pray: Jesus, thank you for being with us always. We need your presence desperately.



Week 5 | The Way of Empowerment

Day 1 | Pay Attention

Command: *Receive the Holy Spirit.* [John 20:22 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *The one who keeps God's commands lives in him, and he in them. And this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us.* [1 John 3:24 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: Ever been on the outside looking in? Even in a crowd I can feel isolated and alone. Sometimes, at night by myself on the street it seems I'm facing the world on my own. It's cold. But when I take Christ's last words seriously, "Pay attention, I am always by your side and on your side" (Matthew 28:20 paraphrased), I find I can shift my attention to his nearby presence. Isolation evaporates and a warm solitude with Christ arises. The iron clad commitment of Christ is to breathe his powerful presence around and in us every moment. Remember, this is solid, every moment of every day.

The space around you is not empty. It is dense and lush with the presence of Christ. The space inside our bodies is also filled with the presence of Christ. We live in Christ and Christ lives in us. Not a metaphor. Practice this.

In Christ is all goodness and wisdom. When we take note of his presence in and around us, we can focus on his good traits and the wisdom to put them into practice. We can access the wisdom to follow his guidance and act out his goodness onto whoever is set before us. Doing so puts us in sync with the Holy Spirit and we feel congruent with Christ and the love his Spirit pours into us (Rom 5:5) as we pour his love onto a love starved human. The Spirit resonates within us when we live in his guidance. *"And this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us."*

React: So, attend to Christ, who is always attending to you.

Pray: Jesus, I gaze intently into your glorious goodness holding me tight. I run with you.



Week 5 | The Way of Empowerment

Day 2 | The Breath of God

Command: *Receive the Holy Spirit.* [John 20:22 \(NLT\)](#)

Read: *Then he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit.”* [John 20:22 \(NLT\)](#)

Reflect: When I think of our almighty God of the Universe, a God who knows all, sees all, understands all...I often forget to think about how he tenderly cares for his flock - how tenderly he cares for us.

When I read this verse, I usually focus on the giving of the Holy Spirit - this incredible gift that we're given when we place our hope and trust in Jesus. But as I was preparing to write this devotional, I found myself drawn to the phrase "he breathed on them." I was struck by the tenderness of it. The idea that there was nothing forceful or pretentious when he gave us the life changing gift of the Holy Spirit - it was his breath that gave us life and a helper to do life with, so we are not alone.

The Bible mentions God's breath in a few other places. [Job 26:13 \(NASB\)](#) says, "by his breath the heavens are cleared." [Job 33:4 \(NASB\)](#) says, "the breath of the Almighty gives me life." [Job 32:8 \(NIV\)](#) says, "the breath of the Almighty gives them understanding," and [Psalm 33:6 \(ESV\)](#) says, "by the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and by the breath of his mouth all their host."

God's breath is life. His breath gives life to our lungs and whispers in the wind that he's with us, he loves us, and we are never without his help.

React: How can we tune ourselves into the Holy Spirit? In what ways can we acknowledge the tender ways God reveals himself to us?

Pray: Father, thank you for giving us the gift of the Holy Spirit. Thank you that you have given us a helper, a tender reminder that you never leave us and want what's best for us.



Week 5 | The Way of Empowerment

Day 3 | Quench Your Thirst

Command: *Receive the Holy Spirit.* [John 20:22 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *On the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, “Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them.”* [John 7:37-38 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: One of my favorite seasons of the year is summer. The days are long and many of us have more time to enjoy outdoors. Whether I am playing outside, going for a walk, enjoying a beautiful sunset after a sun-filled day, there’s something so delicious about a glass of water. Nothing cools me down faster and tastes quite as fresh as ice cold water on a hot summer day.

During the last day of The Festival of the Tabernacles Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, “Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink.” [John 7:37 \(NIV\)](#) The “thirst” that Jesus is referring to goes beyond ice cold water. No matter how refreshing it may feel after I drink it, it only provides me with temporary satisfaction. Instead, what Jesus offers us all is that no matter what we thirst for, he is the one that could truly satisfy through a personal relationship with him.

React: We all thirst for something. Whether it’s love, achievement, significance, belonging, or comfort, we long for something to quench our thirst. Jesus is the only one that satisfies. Would you believe in the one who is willing to quench your thirst?

Pray: Jesus, thank you that no matter my thirst, you are the one who truly satisfies it.



Week 5 | The Way of Empowerment

Day 4 | That Gut Feeling

Command: *Receive the Holy Spirit.* [John 20:22 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *If you love me, keep my commands. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever - the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. ... Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me.* [John 14:15-17, 21a \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: I was 20 years old. My friend and I thought it was a great idea to help ourselves out with a 5-finger discount at the department store he worked at. It was a clever idea. I would grab things I liked in the store and take it over to his register and he would ring them as a return, bag them up and I would be on my merry way.

I recall while grabbing items around the store feeling this pit in my stomach alerting me this was not a good idea. I knew this was wrong, but I had already committed to the plan. As I scanned the store for any other items I could snag, I met eyes with a dark-haired lady for a split second as she quickly moved on. My intuition, as I labeled it at the time, told me to: Turn back! It's not too late. Don't do this. I brushed it off. My desire outweighed that voice and I ignored it.

I proceeded to my friend's register as planned, grabbed my stuffed shopping bag and walked out the door. I'm two steps out the door when the dark-haired lady I encountered inside suddenly appears. She identified herself as a loss prevention officer and I was being detained for stealing. Our plan was not so clever after all. I labeled that small voice as a "gut feeling" or "intuition" as a young adult. Now I recognize this voice, this feeling deep in my gut as the Holy Spirit working in me, convicting me, guiding me to turn from my sinful nature and follow Jesus' ways.

React: Have you ever had a gut feeling about something? Or a gnawing thought that just won't go away? It is likely the Holy Spirit nudging and guiding you. Take time to listen.

Pray: Heavenly Father, thank you for leaving me with an advocate to guide and lead me in your ways.



Week 5 | The Way of Empowerment

Day 5 | Go & Tell

Command: *Receive the Holy Spirit.* [John 20:22 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.* [Acts 1:8 \(NLT\)](#)

Reflect: When I first heard that I had been accepted to my dream college for graduate school, I couldn't wait to share the good news with my friends and family. I didn't wait five seconds to call my parents and e-mail all my college professors who helped me along the way. The news was so exciting and so good, I could not keep it to myself. Now, what if I had that same approach towards sharing the good news of Jesus Christ? Why am I not so quick to talking about my relationship with him as I was that moment many years ago?

Through the years, I've learned the power of openly sharing my faith with others so that they may draw closer to God. That power comes from no one else but the Holy Spirit. As Christ-followers empowered by the spirit of Jesus within us, we are enabled to share the good news. Courage and boldness well up in us to share our faith with the people around us at any opportunity that may arise. When we experience life change through Jesus, we are called to go and tell someone else so they can experience the very thing we just experienced. It's not always easy, but once I committed to go and tell the message of Jesus, I began to see miracles happen, relationships restored, and people saying yes to him. You never know whose life can be forever changed because you chose listen to the prompting of the Holy Spirit within you to be a witness.

React: Who has been in your heart to open up to about your relationship with Jesus? How can you lovingly share his good news with them?

Pray: God, thank you for your Spirit in me that allows me to share your good news so that others may believe in you.



Week 1 | The Way of Love

Day 1 | The Way of Love

Command: *Love one another.* [John 15:17 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”* [John 13:34-35 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: Shortly after college I worked in a drug rehab ministry. Some of the residents were more lovable than others. The director was a former gangster and a wild man who loved Jesus with all his heart but could be particularly difficult to love. He was harsh, impulsive, and unpredictable. It was during this difficult season of my life that I was introduced to the idea of agape.

The traditional definition of agape as unconditional love never made much sense to me; seemed a bit squishy. As the years went by, I began to realize that loving one another as Christ loved us means giving ourselves up for each other as Christ gave himself up for us. Agape means putting another’s needs before our own. I began to define agape as, “An assessment of another’s needs, the willingness to meet that need, even when it is inconvenient or unfair.” This is the prime indicator that we are following Christ and few things are more challenging. Seeing another through the filter of agape and following the Holy Spirit by loving them as Jesus would is truly walking in sync with him.

React: People are often difficult because of an unmet need. Ask yourself, “What can I do to meet that need even if it is inconvenient or unfair.”

Pray: Jesus, may I love the one in front of me as you are loving them in this moment.



Week 1 | The Way of Love

Day 2 | Who He Is

Command: *Love one another.* [John 15:17 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.* [1 John 4:12 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: My six-year-old daughter, Brighton, likes to ask me big questions. And there is really nothing like a child asking you questions to realize how much you don't know.

She has a deep desire to really understand things. As adults we can't even begin to fathom truly understanding Jesus. But in my daughter, I understand why Jesus tells us to have faith like a child - it's curious, it's selfless, it's open, it's unaffected by the cynicism that plagues each of us as life's hurts and troubles get in our way.

One day last year while driving home from school, Brighton said, "I wish we could see Jesus. Like really **see** Jesus. Why can't we see him?"

As a mother, I'm getting comfortable with not always having the answers. But I remembered this verse. So, we got curious together. "Gosh Brighton, I wish I could really see him too, but guess what? The Bible tells us that when we love each other, that is one of the best ways for people to see Jesus because they can see him in us. Loving people is one of the best ways to see Jesus and to show other people Jesus."

I don't know if her little mind fully grasped that concept. Sometimes it's difficult for me to truly grasp it too. God is love. And when *we* love, we tap into something eternal - we take place in a holy communion with our Heavenly Father, showing people just a glimpse of who he is. If we love like we do, as imperfect humans, how much more perfectly does he love? Beyond comprehension.

React: What is a practical way you can love the people around you? Making dinner? Babysitting a single mom's baby? Getting coffee with someone who needs an ear to listen?

Pray: God thank you for loving us. It's beyond our comprehension just how much you do. But we ask for a deeper understanding of how you love us so we can share that love with the people around us.



Week 1 | The Way of Love

Day 3 | Love Your Brother

Command: *Love one another.* [John 15:17 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."* [Romans 12:19-21 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: My brother-in-law wronged me in a big way. He stole an expensive financial asset and stopped talking to our family. His actions hurt my young children, and most painfully, my husband. This was my husband's big brother that was causing the pain. Someone he looked up to and respected. We trusted him financially and emotionally. He hurt us with his attitude of "I don't care about you!"

We were left with the dilemma of what to do. We were angry and looking for retribution. We considered bringing the matter to court and let a judge get involved with the matter. With tensions high, we took a deep breath and prayed. Spending some time in the word, receiving godly counsel from Christian friends, and reflecting on Jesus's example, we decided to do nothing. Yes, that's right, nothing. No repayment of lost funds, and no consequences.

It was a painful period in our life with the financial and relational loss. Many years went by before we started speaking to my brother-in-law. No apologies were offered, but love brought us through to a new relationship with my brother-in-law. This is in God's hands now. We are loving this family member that needs our compassion, as he has suffered many health issues recently. Without Jesus' example, this would be impossible for us with our earthly perspective.

React: Our loved ones disappoint us sometimes. There are many ways to react. Choose the high road, love the best you can, and let God do the rest.

Pray: Sometimes my ways are not your ways. Loving and forgiving someone that has wronged me is so hard. I'm looking to you to guide me when I don't know what to do.



Week 1 | The Way of Love

Day 4 | “Won’t You Be My Neighbor?”

Command: *Love one another.* [John 15:17 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God, and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God for God is love.* [1 John 4:7-8 \(ESV\)](#)

Reflect: When I would come home from elementary school, I always looked forward to watching Mr. Rogers before I did my homework. In the opening of his show, I would always sing along with him to his “*Won’t you be my neighbor?*” As a child, his kind, gentle and loving words sincerely made me feel important as it felt like he was talking directly to me through that television screen. I honestly felt that my feelings really mattered to him.

As an adult, I saw Mr. Rogers treating every person he came into contact with as an image bearer of God. He was ahead of his time in caring for the mental health needs of children in the 1960’s. Although he was an ordained Presbyterian minister, he never had to open scripture and tell kids God loves them. He did not need to. He exuded God’s love which made it real and visible for so many generations of children and their parents watching his show as we were his “neighbors.”

Love is rooted in God. God is love. We love because God first loved us. When we love one another, we present God to the world.

Mr. Rogers said it best from his 2001 commencement speech at Marquette University, “I believe that appreciation is a holy thing that when we look for what’s best in a person we happen to be with at the moment we’re doing what God does all the time. So loving and appreciating our neighbor, we’re participating in something sacred.”

React: Love for other people is very important as this love for God shows that God lives in us. How can we make God’s love visible in your life and in the lives of others?

Pray: Father, you call us your “Beloved.” Let us make your love visible and central in our lives and the lives we connect with in our everyday moments. Amen.



Week 1 | The Way of Love

Day 5 | In the World, But not of the World.

Command: *Love one another.* [John 15:17 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *Sometime later, Jesus went up to Jerusalem for one of the Jewish festivals. Now there is in Jerusalem near the Sheep Gate a pool, which in Aramaic is called Bethesda and which is surrounded by five covered colonnades. Here a great number of disabled people used to lie—the blind, the lame, the paralyzed. One who was there had been an invalid for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there and learned that he had been in this condition for a long time, he asked him, “Do you want to get well?” “Sir,” the invalid replied, “I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred. While I am trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me. Then Jesus said to him, “Get up! Pick up your mat and walk.” At once the man was cured; he picked up his mat and walked.* [John 5:1-8 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: The pool of Bethesda reminds me of my life before Christ. I survived eight divorces growing up (most before the age of 18) and was looking for anything to fill the God-shaped void in my life and be healed. When I came to Christ and he healed my broken heart, I did what the invalid man did after he was healed. I picked up my mat and walked away from those that still needed the healing and restoration that only Jesus can give. It was far more comfortable to stay in my youth group “Holy Huddle” than reach out to the world around me, looking for those that needed to hear the Good News.

Years later, I’ve come to realize that being in the world, but not of the world does not mean we just look upon others with sympathy because they don’t believe in Jesus. Rather, disciples of Jesus, we are called to look upon the others with empathy. Sympathy says I feel sorry for your circumstances. Empathy says “I hurt with you and will do whatever it takes to help you through the process of healing. I will be there for you.” This is how Jesus related to the man at the pool.

You may be the only Christ-follower that people in your circle may encounter. In a world that could care less, we are called to care more.

React: What are some practical ways I can practice the ways of Jesus with empathy rather than sympathy?

Pray: Jesus, please help my life reflect your agape love in deed rather than words.



Week 2 | The Way of Marriage

Day 1 | Honor Your Marriage with Healthy Community

Command: *Honor marriage.* [Matthew 19:1-12 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.* [Proverbs 27:17 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: My husband and I entered marriage with idealistic and romantic notions about our marriage expectations. Soon daily life, differing personalities, and the reality that our life was not a “Lifetime” movie started to set in.

One of the best things we did for our marriage was to stop looking for the other person to change and to start cooperating with Jesus to change us individually. When we started to walk more closely with Jesus we went on individual journeys. Growth groups, Bible studies, and healthy Christian friendships helped us strengthen our relationship with Jesus and each other. We learned we were flawed and sinful people who needed to be better versions of ourselves, and that only Jesus could make that happen. Jesus gave us the loving nudges to change over time.

We met frequently with like-minded, Christ-loving people who also wanted to grow and transform. Virtually all the finger-pointing and blaming stopped. Through this Christ community, our accepting of personal responsibility and self-reflection brought transformation to our marriage. Our Savior has helped us to love each other so much better. We are becoming more loving, more forgiving, more patient, and more joyous because of Jesus and the community he has provided. Our marriage, parenting, and friendship sharpened because we were being advised, encouraged, and prayed for in positive community.

React: Will you consider being the change your marriage needs? Are you open to Jesus transforming you in a healthy, vibrant church community?

Prayer: Lord, I want to be a better spouse and person. Help me to seek you out and your people to help me in my transformation



Week 2 | The Way of Marriage

Day 2 | Impossible Love

Command: *Honor marriage.* [Matthew 19:1-12 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.* [1 Corinthians 13:4-7 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: Today's passage may be familiar to you. It is read at many weddings, ours included. It's an appropriate declaration of the love between a man and wife and has often been interpreted as a reminder of what the *idealistic* marriage should look like.

Twenty-two years down the road from our wedding day, I'd have to say my husband and I have not done the best job at being patient and kind towards each other. Having this passage read at our wedding actually set us up for unrealistic expectations within our marriage. That's because we misinterpreted the love spoken in this passage to be referring to *our* love, but in fact the love that is described in this passage is referring to God himself. He is the love that is written and described in this passage. It's the type of love that guides us in any relationship, especially our marriages.

Our human love alone is faulty, but the love that is brought when we invite God in the middle of our marriage is the kind of love that is not envious, self-seeking or easily angered. When God is in the center of our marriage his love "*always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres*" even between two imperfect people.

React: Have you invited the type of love only God can give into your marriage?

Pray: Father-God, only you can make this impossible love described in today's passage be a part of our marriage. We welcome you to be in the center of it all.



Week 2 | The Way of Marriage

Day 3 | Role Reversal?

Command: Honor marriage. [Matthew 19:1-12 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: Follow God's example in everything you do just as a much loved child imitates his father. Be full of love for others, following the example of Christ who loved you and gave himself to God as a sacrifice to take away your sins. And God was pleased, for Christ's love for you was like sweet perfume to him... Honor Christ by submitting to each other. [Ephesians 5:1-2; 21 \(TLB\)](#)

Reflect: My husband was in the Navy, spending more than half of his service away at sea. I raised our boys pretty much on my own playing the role of both dad and mom. It's so strange to even say that there was a "role" more suited to my husband as a father that I had to "play" in his absence. As if to say that having taught my sons how to ride a bike, or how to drive a stick-shift was more his responsibility than mine because he's "the man." Or that the fact that I, their mother, taught them these is incongruent with societal norms. But such is the reality of living in a world that assigns males and females to their respective functions.

Thankfully, my husband and I didn't expect each other to align with "the norm." We respected and honored one another as we quite naturally fell into our roles. We just figured out who was better at doing what, or what a particular situation called for, and went with that. When he was unemployed for nearly a year after leaving the Navy, I became the sole "bread-winner" and he, the "stay-at-home" parent. Some may see this as a reversal of roles. But we chose to look at our situation through the eyes of Jesus. As brother and sister in Christ, we submit to Jesus and his rule over our lives. As husband and wife, we mutually submit to one another, honoring our individual giftedness, and operating as equal partners in our household. In this way, we hope that we serve as powerful witnesses to God's original intent for humanity – to serve him as equal coworkers in his kingdom work.

Reflect: Re-read the passage above. In what ways this week can you honor Christ in the context of your relationships?

Pray: Jesus, may we walk in love, just as you walked in love; and may we be willing to submit to one another in reverence of you.



Week 2 | The Way of Marriage

Day 4 | Love Does

Command: *Honor marriage.* [Matthew 19:1-12 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *Wives, submit yourselves to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them.* [Colossians 3:18-19 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: My husband and I were raised with competitive spirits. He played sports, while I was involved in dance competitions. While our extracurricular activities brought a lot of fun into our young lives, when we got married our competitiveness often created conflict in our marriage.

Three years into our marriage we felt desperate for hope, so we decided to seek professional help and attend a local church. During one of the services, we heard one of the pastors explain how the Bible gives husbands and wives specific instructions for living in a Christian home.

In [Colossians 3:18-19](#) Paul encourages husbands and wives to not just “*get by*” with the bare minimum of what we are meant to do. Rather we are encouraged to love, serve, and submit to each other, knowing that Christ is our ultimate judge. In knowing this, my husband and I choose to submit to one another out of reverence and love for God. Rather than outperforming each other, we look for ways to love and serve one another.

React: Husbands and wives, what is one action you could take this week to love and serve each other?

Pray: Jesus, help me see my spouse the way you do. I want to love and serve in a way that honors you.



Week 2 | The Way of Marriage

Day 5 | Mistaken Identity

Command: *Honor marriage.* [Matthew 19:1-12 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *Wives, be subject to your husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. As the church is subject to Christ, so let wives also be subject in everything to their husbands.* [Ephesians 5:22 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: For years I thought staying quiet and compliant meant being submissive to my now ex-husband. Culture dictated that I looked prettier that way. But being subject to him didn't mean that at all. Allowing myself to be loved and cared for by Jesus revealed my true identity. I matter to God and my obedience to him stems from the principle of love, not a harsh demand.

In my new marriage, mutual obedience towards God and one another has allowed me to team up with the one I love. Not just my husband, but with Jesus himself. Mutual submission brings honor to God, freedom in him, and true joy. And those are the things that make me beautiful.

React: Where are you feeling unloved, unwanted, or subjected to harsh demands? That is not the way of Jesus. Finding your identity in Christ and resting in the truth of his love for you leads to gratitude, which in turn leads to surrender which in turn leads to abundant freedom.

Pray: Lord, thank you for being my savior. Thank you for your love towards me. When I understand who I am in you and how much you care about me, it makes it easier to submit to your will. Amen.



Week 3 | The Way of Purity

Day 1 | Pure Hearts See God

Command: *Do not commit adultery [do not lust].* [Matthew 5:27-30 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.* [Matthew 5:8 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: Maintaining a pure heart can be very challenging. Our environment is polluted with worldly passions that promise the ultimate satisfaction. I find that it is easy to trust the ways of the world rather than trust God to fill my needs. However, when I turn my attention away from impurities so common in the culture, and focus on the light of Christ's cleansing goodness, I am most blessed.

Christ is always wrapped around me and breathing through my interior. When I turn to him, I am cleansed. And when I am pure in heart, I can see God lavishly in the space around and in me. After all, *"Who may ascend the mountain of the Lord? Who may stand in his holy place? The one who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not trust in an idol."* [Psalm 24:3-4 \(NIV\)](#)

It is long past time to cleanse my heart by his relentless grace and trust only the source of all goodness to provide me *"... all things pertaining to life and godliness..."* [2 Peter 1:3 \(DLNT\)](#). The experience of knowing him brings me all I need. When I turn and bow, he purifies my heart, and I can see God.

React: The breath of the Holy Spirit is always swirling around you. Try this: As you inhale think "Pure heart." As you exhale think "See God." Repeat many times. Enjoy!

Pray: Oh God, forgive my rude inattention. Create in me a clean heart and open my eyes to see you.



Week 3 | The Way of Purity

Day 2 | Pause and Surrender

Command: *You shall not commit adultery.* [Exodus 20:14 \(NLT\)](#)

Read: *As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.* [Isaiah 55:9 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: During many years of singleness, following my 18-year marriage, the world around me supported not only my desire to date but also for me to have an intimate relationship outside of marriage. God invented sex to be an amazing and wonderful connection in the context of marriage, and yet, I made the decision to go my own way, taking a step away from God's beautiful design. I not only undermined God's design, but also made an action statement that my way is better than God's way. I allowed my wants and needs to come before Jesus' ways.

Unfortunately, we sometimes choose our own way and go down difficult roads of pain and consequences of our own design. When we pause and intentionally surrender our will, wants and needs to the Lord, he is faithful to show us his way. God's love is beyond what we can imagine and that love extends to forgiveness and redemption when we ask.

React: What is an area where you can pause and surrender, knowing Jesus' way is better than the way you desire?

Pray: Lord Jesus, thank you for your redeeming grace when I have chosen my way over yours. Your way is better. Please strengthen me through the Holy Spirit and help me walk in your ways.



Week 3 | The Way of Purity

Day 3 | Run for Your Life!

Command: *Do not commit adultery [do not lust].* [Matthew 5:27-30 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *Flee from sexual immorality.* [1 Corinthians 6:18 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: I don't know about you but exercising self-restraint has always been a challenge for me, particularly in areas of natural appetites. Bad habits can be hard to break, especially compulsive ones like gambling and substance abuse. But physical desires such as eating and sex can be especially challenging because they are natural survival instincts. Imagine trying to quit smoking but you must smoke a little every day.

The enemy of our soul takes advantage of this and if you underestimate him you will lose. But since “*the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world*” [1 John 4:4 \(NIV\)](#), and “*the reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work*” [1 John 3:8 \(NIV\)](#), take courage! Go big in your fight with excessive survival instincts! In today's verse “Flee from sexual immorality,” the verb flee means “run for your life!” It is also used in [2 Timothy 2:22 \(NIV\)](#) “Flee the evil desires of youth and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.” The word pursue means “chase after with all your might!”

I have found that chasing after what is right, with faith, love and peace supported by a community of other Jesus followers, is the most effective way to regulate natural desires within the boundaries of Christ.

React: Flee excessive physical desires and chase the goodness of God with your whole heart.

Pray: Lord, help me run hard away from excessive appetites and chase hard after you.



Week 3 | The Way of Purity

Day 4 | Wholeness

Command: *Do not commit adultery [do not lust].* [Matthew 5:27-30 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body and knit them together in my mother's womb. Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex! It is amazing to think about. Your workmanship is marvelous—and how well I know it.* [Psalm 139:13-14 \(TLB\)](#)

Reflect: My parents never taught me about “the birds and the bees.” Well...actually their version of it went something like this... “Don’t have sex before your get married.” Full stop. There was no “why” behind it. It was just, “Don’t do it.” I never really felt comfortable asking my parents anything related to sexual intimacy because they were clearly not wanting to have that conversation. I got my sex “education” from my friends who had boyfriends. Oh, and yes, the nuns at school. Needless to say, I didn’t really have the benefit of cultivating a healthy understanding of sexual intimacy.

I wish I had known then what I know now - that God created me as a wonderfully complex being, with both a body and a soul to be honored, cherished, protected, and loved. Would I have saved myself years of trauma had I known? Maybe To be honest, I feel distant from God when I allow lingering guilt and regret about engaging in premarital sex take over. And yet at the same time, I know that even in that space, God continues to meet me and heal me, in order that I may be made whole again. God is redeeming those broken parts of my life as a testament to his faithfulness and love for me.

React: Do you feel estranged from God because of lingering guilt over sexual sin? Scripture tells us that God is as close as your breath. Would you allow him to heal you?

Pray: Father, thank you that your grace abounds and your love covers all our sins. Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex, and for making me whole again.



Week 3 | The Way of Purity

Day 5 | Whole Body Worship

Command: *Do not commit adultery [do not lust].* [Matthew 5:27-30 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.* [Romans 12:1 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: We live in a culture that is extremely focused on the body. How it looks and how it feels. The world around us worships bodies as the symbol of worth and beauty; constantly trying to make this temporal matter eternal. But what Paul is telling us in this passage is that life isn't about worshipping our bodies, it's about using our bodies to worship.

Offering our bodies as a living sacrifice isn't about atoning for our sins. Jesus already handled that for us on the cross. Offering our bodies as living sacrifice reminds us that our body matters, but not in the way the world thinks. John Piper says, "You belong to God soul and body, or you don't belong to him at all. Your body matters."

Every act of our bodies should be an act of worship. Not just when we sing worship songs on Sundays or on our way to work. Every act of our bodies should be proof that God is our treasure. The way we eat, the way we work, the way we serve our community, the way we take care of our bodies' health, the way we cook meals for our family...all of these things are an act of worship that tell the world who we serve and what we're about.

"God wants visible, lived-out, bodily evidence that our lives are built on his mercy." - John Piper

React: Spend some time thinking about how you might be worshipping the body rather than using your body for worship. How can you practice taking care of your body as a gift from God while remaining focused on the true gift of God's grace and mercy?

Pray: Lord, thank you for the bodies you've given us. Help us to remember that the only thing that is Eternal is your word. Help us to use our temporal bodies to serve and glorify you.



Week 4 | The Way of Reconciliation

Day 1 | Love Keeps No Record of Wrongs

Command: *Be reconciled.* [Matthew 5:23-24 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *“Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs.”*
[1 Corinthians 13:4-5 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: A few years ago I had an argument with a family member and we stopped talking to each other for a while. For almost two years I felt hurt and resentful. As I began to pray for the healing of this relationship, I asked God to help me see the person the way he did. I also confessed my struggles to my growth group and they began to pray for me. Although things didn’t change overnight, God began to soften my heart.

A couple of years ago I felt a nudge from the Holy Spirit to apologize to my family member and reconcile. I asked to meet and I asked for forgiveness. We hugged, cried, and the healing of our relationship began.

As a Christ follower I am encouraged to love others by being patient, kind, and keeping no record of wrongs. Even though I may not always agree with others, or have control over their actions, my invitation is to love them the way God does.

React: Is there someone in your life that is hard for you to love right now? What would it look like if you were to see them the way God does?

Pray: Father God, help me see others the way you do. Help me remember that your great love has been freely given to me, therefore I must freely give to others.



Week 4 | The Way of Reconciliation

Day 2 | Character Refinement

Command: *Be reconciled.* [Matthew 5:23-24 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.* [Colossians 3:12-14 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: I've had friendships come and go in my life. Some ended with seasons of change and others ended with a complete fallout that required necessary boundaries. However, there are some friendships worth the tender dance. I have a specific friendship that has gone through some peaks and valleys over the years. There was even a 4-year drought where we made no contact with each other due to unresolved hurt and misunderstanding. God's patience and refining process to shape us both into his character full of compassion, kindness, patience, and love filled this time apart.

In his perfect timing, God called us forward when a cancer diagnosis brought us both to our knees and back together. It was here he met us with grace, humility and forgiveness to reconcile with one another and ultimately heal our friendship and our broken hearts.

React: Do you have a broken relationship that needs resolving? Have you asked God to clothe yourself with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience which will ultimately lead to forgiveness and reconciliation?

Pray: Father-God, refine me with your character so I may keep my heart soft towards the difficult relationships in my life.



Week 4 | The Way of Reconciliation

Day 3 | A Different Kind of Love

Command: *Be reconciled.* [Matthew 5:23-24 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *And regardless of what else you put on, wear love. It's your basic, all-purpose garment. Never be without it.* [Colossians 3:14 \(MSG\)](#)

Reflect: I was sitting with my counselor sobbing about the harm done to me by my mother over many decades. The counselor shared this story: St. Francis of Assisi lived in a village where a wolf was eating small children. The parents were in anguish and joined St. Francis on an expedition to kill the wolf. St. Francis was alone when he found the wolf, and before drawing his knife, paused to ask why the children were being eaten. The wolf replied, “Because I’m hungry.” Finding compassion, St. Francis brought the wolf back to the village and told the people that they would care for the wolf by feeding him food so he wouldn’t eat the children. I interrupted the counselor, deeply upset. “What if I don’t want to feed the wolf?” She smiled gently at me and said, “Ahh, and that is the beauty of community. The parents who experienced harm would never be expected to feed the wolf. Their work is to heal. There are plenty of other villagers who can care for the wolf.”

This story has been pivotal in how I’ve learned to ‘wear love’ with my mom. It has supported an understanding that I don’t need to be in a close relationship with her; there are others in the community who can do that. The distance allows me to be in a more compassionate stance with her and care for my own soul. It’s a different kind of love.

React: The cornerstone of our faith is love. Sometimes the most loving act is to create distance from those who have harmed us, allow ourselves the spaciousness to heal, and trust that God and his people are holding us all.

Pray: God, as we steep ourselves in your immense love, open our eyes to the multiple ways we can wear love.



Week 4 | The Way of Reconciliation

Day 4 | Live in Peace

Command: *Be reconciled.* [Matthew 5:23-24 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord.* [Hebrews 12:14 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: I was at work when I got the call from my brother that he was on his way to emergency, following the ambulance transporting my mom. She had a cardiac arrest at home, and dad had tried to save her. I had a guttural reaction - screaming at the top of my lungs into the phone “No! No!” About ten or so minutes later, on my way home with my husband, my brother called to say that mom had passed. I was inconsolable, beating on the dashboard of the car, flailing around, screaming.

As I was packing to go be with my family, I was cursing God, asking him “Why now? Why her?” During the six-hour drive to Vegas, I sat immovable, staring out the window, babbling nonsense about how unfair God was for taking my mom so suddenly. She was healthy, a month shy of her 80th birthday. She was a godly woman, loved Jesus, how could he take her just like that?

Grieving her sudden passing over these past few years has been especially hard. For most of my adult life, I didn’t have a great relationship with mom. I blamed her for a lot of my childhood trauma. Two years before she died, I resolved to reconcile with her, to rebuild our relationship. Even as I kept retreating back to old habits of disconnecting, we were on the mend, hoping to start fresh. So, when she suddenly died, I felt cheated. How could God take her away just when things were mending between us?

Grieving mom has taught me that today is fleeting. That tomorrow may not wait. That forgiveness is for today. I regret that I can’t put a bow around my relationship with my mom this side of heaven. But I am grateful that God meets me, even in my grief.

React: Is there someone with whom God is inviting you to reconcile? What steps can you take today towards that?

Pray: God, thank you for meeting where I am, and for already forgiving me for things left undone.



Week 4 | The Way of Reconciliation

Day 5 | Jesus' Love Abounds

Command: *Be reconciled.* [Matthew 5:23-24 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs.* [1 Corinthians 13:4-5 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: My former sister-in-law lashed out viciously towards my parents, blaming them for raising a son she couldn't love anymore. She harassed family members with slander and hate-filled words. Most of the family wanted nothing more to do with her. My sister-in-law was angry and hateful towards peaceful, loving parents. It was very hard to watch this harmful behavior.

My parents saw things differently than the rest of the family. They wanted to help care for their young granddaughter and support my brother. They didn't retaliate, respond, or engage in arguments.

My parents understood that my brother and his child needed love and support. They managed to stay neutral while watching my brother's marriage unravel. After the divorce was final, the healing began. No forgiveness was extended from my sister-in-law, but they forgave her. This has allowed them to grow in relationship with their granddaughter. Watching my parent's example, has taught me how to love and forgive with the ways of Jesus.

We have all been wronged in some way throughout our lives. In big ways and small ways. Jesus was ridiculed, beaten, and mocked. Yet he took this abuse silently. He knew his pain and suffering would lead to everlasting life for us. He was the ultimate sacrifice for our sins. He accepts us just as we are, if we ask. Love is patient, love is kind. Remembering Jesus's ultimate sacrifice on the cross, we can strive to love and forgive, as he did for us.

React: Do you put up your defenses, fight until the bitter end, and then gloat in your victories? Or do you forgive and offer love even when it's difficult?

Pray: Help me to be more like you. Forgiving, patient, loving, and not keeping score when everything seems out of balance. I want to remember all you have done for me on the cross, through your sacrifice. Guide me away from an earthly perspective, looking heavenward for your ways.



Week 1 | The Way of Priorities

Day 1 | Nike!

Command: *Seek the kingdom first.* [Matthew 6:33 \(NLT\)](#)

Read: *Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.* [Romans 12:21 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: I often find myself bombarded by the ideas of a culture that are counter to the ways of Christ. This troubles me. It seems the ways of the world are trending toward chaos and disintegration. The ways of the prevailing culture can be very distressing with a constant barrage of dysfunctional ways of thinking and behaving that are not only promoted but imposed. I'm sometimes overwhelmed and anxious about the future. This is disheartening, and it erodes my sense of security.

Then, I discovered that the Greek word translated "overcome" in the New Testament is *nike* (that's right, as in the shoe) meaning to win. Now, when I see the Nike logo, I think of scriptures where *nike* is used such as, "*Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.*" [Romans 12:21 \(NIV\)](#), and "*You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.*" [1 John 4:4 \(NIV\)](#)

When I pause and notice the presence of Christ and consider the wisdom of his ways, I can hear him say, "*I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world*" [John 16:33 \(NIV\)](#). Let that sink in, "In this world you will have trouble." But, "In me you may have peace." When I give too much attention to the angry and divisive noise of the world I succumb to anger and anxiety. But giving acute attention to the words of the one who overcomes the world, moves me into the realm of his peace and gives me the energy to overcome.

React: When we feel overwhelmed by the world, let us declare, "*No, in all these things we are more than conquerors (nike) through him who loved us.*" [Romans 8:37 \(NIV\)](#)

Pray: Today I will overcome because you Lord are in me, and you have already overcome.



Week 1 | The Way of Priorities

Day 2 | Bigger Faith or Bigger Fear?

Command: *Seek the kingdom first.* [Matthew 6:33 \(NLT\)](#)

Read: *Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.* [Philippians 4:6-7 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: I grew up as an anxious kid. I recall having knots in my stomach or having trouble breathing before a major event would happen. High School and College years were filled with bouts of uncontrollable crying and exasperated breathing which seemed to come out of nowhere. I didn't have a label for it at the time but I recognized it as anxiety later in life.

A wise friend once said "anxiety is a fancy name for fear." I am not downplaying the seriousness of anxiety and that there are individuals who require medication to help manage it. These few words shared by my friend got me thinking of the struggles I faced as a kid and young adult. I was very fearful. I feared the future and allowed those fears to play over and over in my head. These fears led to worry which led to a sense of lack of control. I worried too much over the things I could not control instead of giving them over to the Lord. I didn't know how to. I also wasn't aware that he cared so much about my worries and fears.

As an adult, I use today's verse as a constant check on where my heart is when it comes to worry and fear. Am I praying even small prayers throughout the day when my mind starts to wander? Is my faith bigger than my fear or is my fear bigger than my faith?

React: Use today's verse as a constant reminder to stop and pray throughout the day. Give your worries to him and receive his peace. Is my faith bigger than my fear or is my fear bigger than my faith?

Pray: Heavenly Father. Thank you for always being here, I give you my worries in exchange for your peace.



Week 1 | The Way of Priorities

Day 3 | God's Care

Command: *Seek the kingdom first.* [Matthew 6:33 \(NLT\)](#)

Read: *Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.* [1 Peter 5:7 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: My family emigrated from the Philippines to the United States nearly fifty years ago. Like most families immigrating to America, my parents dreamed of providing a better future for their three young children. They were optimistic - trusting that God's fingerprints were all over this new adventure. Soon after arriving, Dad found out that the promise of a job transfer from the bank he worked at in the Philippines to a branch here would not materialize. This was devastating. Mom had accepted a post to the Philippine embassy, which is what brought us to America in the first place. It was irreversible. They sold their home, packed and shipped all our belongings, both looking forward to a bright future. Dad returned to the Philippines as he had no legal basis for staying here without the appropriate credentials. For five years, my parents lived apart – Mom raising three young children in a foreign country with no immediate family to call on for help. Dad visited us only twice yearly.

There was so much to be anxious about in this season. The time apart took a toll on all of us. We deeply longed to reunite as a family. The sacrifices Mom and Dad made in order for us to have opportunities not available “back home” were enormous. Even so, through it all, they continued to have faith that God was never far from us; praying unceasingly, trusting that God cared for us, casting all their cares on him. I am in awe of my parents' love of and faith in God, and their deep-seeded joy even through the toughest of circumstances. Such faith is the legacy my parents leave with us. For that I am profoundly grateful.

React: What challenges has God seen you through? Can you share that story with someone who needs encouragement this week?

Pray: God, thank you for surrounding us with people who live for the eternal benefit of others. May we be a people who joyfully serve you in serving others, even in the toughest of circumstances.



Week 1 | The Way of Priorities

Day 4 | Trusting God's Cannonball Call

Command: *Seek the kingdom first.* [Matthew 6:33 \(NLT\)](#)

Read: *In you, Lord my God, I put my trust.* [Psalm 25:1 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: Our family has attended Eastlake Church since 2009. At the end of 2016 our family entered a time of financial insecurity. My husband retired from the military and 28 years of a predictable income ended. In early 2017, Eastlake challenged its membership with a massive two-year giving initiative called Cannonball. Everyone was asked to stretch financially to forward fund the Jesus mission with church plants, building improvements, and community outreach. We prayed, and separately came up with the same number. God was calling us to almost double our tithe. Now hearing God and obeying God are two different things. Should we follow the security of money, or the security of obedience? We were not sure where that money was going to come from. Financial security was a major priority in our home, but the call from God was clear. We obeyed.

God immediately showed up. We received a check from an old friend dated the day we made the commitment. Ten years before we helped her out of a financial bind. Suddenly, she felt compelled to gift it back. We used the money to begin to fund our cannonball gift. It was just the beginning of God's overwhelming provision in that season. God taught us that we can trust Him even over our finances. Our security is in Him.

React: Where does your security lie? Relationships? Money? Safety? How might He be calling you to trust your security in Him?

Prayer: Father, help me to be as reckless in my obedience as you are in your faithfulness. Overwhelm me with the certainty that my security rests in you. Help me to expect and rejoice in your provision of all good things.



Week 1 | The Way of Priorities

Day 5 | Light in the Darkness

Command: *Seek the kingdom first.* [Matthew 6:33 \(NLT\)](#)

Read: *Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.* [Philippians 4:6-7 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: At the end of 2020, our growth group made containers labeled “2021 Gratitude” to reflect our hope that the new year would hold fewer challenges. In January, I began filling my gratitude jar. Within the first month my jar was almost full, but by March our family had entered a season of major battles on every front. I stopped adding to my jar. My prayers were often merely “Help!” as so many of our difficulties were out of our control. It was a dark lonely season for me.

Then one morning, I felt led in a new direction. In prayer, I told God who I knew him to be and thanked him for the times he had answered my prayers in the past. I started doing this every morning. I would pray, “*God, you are faithful. You love me. Lord, you are generous and you provide in ways I don’t expect.*”

Obviously, God knows who he is, but when I began affirming who I know he is, praising him and thanking him, his light began restoring the light in me. He restored my peace in the midst of a difficult season.

React: What hard road are you walking? Ask God for help to recognize who he is, praise and thank him. Jesus tells us to bring our requests, honor, praise and thanks to God in order to change our hearts. Then, in ways we don’t understand, he bring us peace.

Pray: Holy Spirit, please help me through the challenges I am facing. You are faithful. Your power and grace are unlimited. Thank you for the many times that you have walked with me and given me strength. Thank you for loving me be



Week 2 | The Way of Rest

Day 1 | How is it with your soul?

Command: *Take my yoke upon you and learn from me.* [Matthew 11:29 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *Jesus said to them, “Come away with me. Let us go alone to a quiet place and rest for a while.”*
[Mark 6:31 \(WE\)](#)

Reflect: John Wesley, founder of the Methodist movement, often posed this question to fellow sojourners in the ways of Jesus: “How is it with your soul?” The question is meant to draw out more than just the cursory “It’s all good” response. It is an invitation to deep reflection on how things *really* are with us - the health of our soul, our inner being. For me, the soul is that part of me that existed before God formed my body; it is the present animating force of my life; and it is that which will exist with God through eternity. So, when I attend to this question, “How is it with your soul?” I take it as an invitation to pause - check to see if, how, and why the most important part of me, my soul, is disconnected from Jesus. The (un)health of my soul affects me, my relationship with Jesus, and everyone/thing else around me.

Recently, I had to be honest both with myself and a group of women that I had been journeying with in my faith walk. We had taken a long break from our weekly gatherings. Everyone was eager to get back together when small group season began this year at church. While I was mentally prepared for facilitating our small group, my soul was tired, my heart was not in it. Things were not well with my soul. I frankly couldn’t give any attention to anything else other than what I felt God calling my attention to. As much as I wanted to reestablish and nurture deep community with my friends, I felt God calling me to come away with him, to step away from the crowd and be alone with him to rest for a while. I don’t know how long “for a while” is, but I’m sure my soul will get a clue. Things are beginning to shift, to refocus. While all is not quite well yet, I know that as I continue to listen for and lean into that invitation to go away with Jesus, he will make all things, including my soul, well again.

React: How is it with your soul? Would you listen for and lean into that invitation to go away with Jesus?

Pray: Holy Spirit, help me to be continually attuned to your voice, and come and rest in you.



Week 2 | The Way of Rest

Day 2 | Come to Me

Command: *Take my yoke upon you and learn from me.* [Matthew 11:29 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly.* [Matthew 11:28-30 \(MSG\)](#)

Reflect: If you favor personality tests, you are likely aware of Enneagrams. I'm a 3; aka the Achiever. For as long as I've known, once I put my mind to accomplishing something, I'm 100% devoted to it. For most of life, I focused on achieving the next big thing. I prided myself on being self-determined. Once I decided I was going to commit to something, I ran the race to make sure it happened.

A few years ago, I was hit by a personal crisis which landed me in my therapist's office each week. I knew God was calling me to slow down. Although I was exhausted and tired, I did not want to acknowledge or face what was really happening in my life.

It was through this year-long pause when I learned to pace with God for my own personal awareness and healing. I would not have recognized that I needed this had I not listened to God's prompting. He called out to me through Matthew 11 saying, "Come to me. Get away with me and I'll recover your life." My obedience to his call has allowed me to rest my tired soul upon his grace. This year of pause has given me discernment to recognize when I am trying to outrun where he truly wants me to be.

React: Do you occupy yourself with achievement or "work" to avoid acknowledging what is happening in your life? Are you tired or exhausted from it all? God says, "Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life." Will you answer his call to you?

Pray: Lord, thank you for your extended hand for this weary soul.



Week 2 | The Way of Rest

Day 3 | Refreshed Rest

Command: *Take my yoke upon you and learn from me.* [Matthew 11:29 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.*

[Genesis 2:2-3 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: Oftentimes we find ourselves so burnt out and at the brink of a breakdown that we are forced into rest. We go day in and day out without taking a break, and find ourselves sick and unable to carry on with our responsibilities. Our society thrives off the hustle. We get paid for 40 hours, work for 80, and lose our health (and sometimes sanity) along the way.

In the Bible we're told God blessed the seventh day and made it holy. The God who made the universe, and made us, rested. And he says we should too. So why do we fight it?

A few months ago, our family committed to keeping the Sabbath. From sundown Friday to sundown Saturday, we silence our phones. We start with a candle lit dinner, pray over our kids, and then we rest. It is the most life-giving day of our week. And now our kids look forward to it. It's not just sitting around and doing nothing. It's worship. It's fun. It's resting from the to-do lists and house projects and emails. It's saying, let's be here. Now.

For one day a week, we refocus on what matters and still the noise around us. We are reminded that the Sabbath was made *for* us. To refresh us.

React: *Why is it so difficult for us to rest? What can we surrender for just one day a week so we can give ourselves space to stop the hustle, rest, worship, and delight in God?*

Pray: *Father, thank you for giving us the Sabbath. Thank you for giving us time and space to be reminded that you're in control, not us.*



Week 2 | The Way of Rest

Day 4 | Be Still

Command: *Take my yoke upon you and learn from me.* [Matthew 11:29 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *He says, “Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.”* [Psalms 46:10 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: It’s so easy for me to get wrapped up in the hustle and the busyness of life. Most days are long and my schedule is maximized with family, work, and other commitments. And while I enjoy every single activity, I can’t help but feel tired and worn out at the end of my day.

In the Bible I am reminded how Jesus modeled the important practice of solitude—to be still before God. In moments of stillness, I am able to separate myself from distractions of the world, and find true joy, fulfillment, and rest in him.

Sometimes the most holy thing I can do each week is to create margins to be still before God. It’s amazing to see what happens when I make time for him to speak into my heart.

React: God is pleased when we make time to be with him. Take a moment to take a deep breath. God is ready to meet you and help you find rest in him.

Pray: Father God, I surrender my schedule and my plans. Help me be still before you. I am ready to find true rest in you.



Week 2 | The Way of Rest

Day 5 | Rest and Refuel

Command: *Take my yoke upon you and learn from me.* [Matthew 11:29 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore, the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.* [Exodus 20:8-11 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: I was driving down 5 South on my way home to San Diego from Orange County. Right when I approached San Onofre, the gas light in my car appeared. If you're familiar with this stretch of the highway, you know that there isn't a gas station for another 15-20 miles. I couldn't believe that I had allowed myself to be in this situation. Even with the buffer of 30 extra miles after the gas light turns on, I spent the next 20 miles in complete panic mode.

This is how many of us live our lives. We do as much as we can during the week; crazy work deadlines, over-scheduled activities, and long to-do lists, leaving zero room for margin. We fill our calendar, and what we don't get done Monday through Friday, we reserve for the weekend – including the Sabbath Day. It's no wonder we're in a constant state of feeling hurried and worried.

The gas light in our car is a warning sign that we're close to empty. This lifestyle of running on reserves leaves us stressed and burnt out. God gives us the gift of Sabbath and promises to refresh us if we are weary, worn out, or overworked. Don't wait for the gas light to come on in your life to refuel. Dedicate one day out of the week to take a break and spend time with Jesus. Let his presence refill and refresh you.

React: What are the warning signs in your life that tell you you're almost on empty? Where could you use a little (or a lot) of God's rest in your life?

Pray: Jesus, thank you for the gift of the rest. Help me to honor the Sabbath and create margin in my life so that I can live freely and lightly.



Week 3 | The Way of Unity

Day 1 | Oneness of Purpose

Command: *Be one.* [John 17:20-23 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *Finally, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble.* [1 Peter 3:8 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: I belong to an amazing growth group that I hope my friends are not qualified to join. Our Women's Cancer Warriors Group is a group of women joined together by a shared life battle. However, the journey each of us has taken includes different emotions, diagnosis and treatment options. Our group includes women of various ages, backgrounds, occupations, ethnicities, and family dynamics. Some of the women are currently in treatment while others battled years ago.

A quote from Dr. Tony Evans resonates with me when I think about this group: "Unity is oneness of purpose, not sameness of persons."

What unites our group is connection and a desire to encourage others who are traveling the difficult road of cancer. When we get together, we both listen and share stories. We encourage each other and show compassion. It's a privilege to be a part of the group and witness how these women love each other as Jesus followers. It is inspiring to see the light of Jesus shine from such dark journeys.

I am reminded today that this is the way of Jesus. Jesus wants the beauty of unity that includes love, compassion, encouragement, sympathy and humility for his church. Imagine what a light we can shine to the world when we are united in this kind of love!

React: How can you make personal connections with other believers? Asking another believer to share a meal or joining a growth group are great starts to connection.

Pray: Lord, thank you for the variety of people in your church. Show me ways to connect and love others with compassion and humility. Help me to focus on following you as a united church, that together we might be a light to the world.



Week 3 | The Way of Unity

Day 2 | Open the Doors to your Heart

Command: *Be one.* [John 17:20-23 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can you make it salty again? Have salt among yourselves, and be at peace with each other.* [Mark 9:50 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: I recently saw the movie, “Jesus Revolution.” This movie is about the Christian revival that took place in the late sixties. It was led by hippies and people that were disillusioned by the events of the time. They were seen as radicals and unwanted by the mainstream.

Well, the hippies wanted to know more about God and what he had to offer them, so they went to church. Guess what! The traditional church - this is the way it has always been done church - did not want to open their doors to these strange people. The church members were used to things being done and said a certain way. They did not welcome change.

But their pastor said “yes” to these flower children and opened the doors of his church. A few of these strange people started coming to church and then more and more, until they had to find a new location for their services. The church members that decided to stay had some saltiness added to their congregation. They experienced joyful, loud music with Jesus people sitting on the floor praising God. The flavor of the church was changed forever.

Just think what would have happened if every church said no. The Jesus Revival may not have happened and thousands of people would not have been baptized and found a relationship with Jesus. The new believers were reborn and the church congregation was renewed with a “YES”!

React: Have you been in a situation with people that are different than you and made a snap judgement to not make yourself available to them? Do you need to add some saltiness to your faith walk? Our world is full of people that need to know that they are loved and valued, just as Jesus taught.

Pray: Jesus, I want to be open and available to people that are different than me. Help me see the potential in every person I meet. Guide me with your Holy Spirit.



Week 3 | The Way of Unity

Day 3 | Pursue Peace

Command: *Be one.* [John 17:20-23 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.*

[Romans 12:18 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: In 2020, I struggled as I started to view some of my Christian friends and family members differently. I began to see them through the lens of their emotionally charged social media posts. I saw them as angry, difficult and hard to love rather than seeing them as the loving, generous, kind people of faith that I had known them to be. My first instinct as I read an angry or hateful post would often be to add my comment, but fortunately, as I read the thread of comments, I realized that was not the way to bring light to the conversation.

In [Psalms 34:14](#) David says to seek peace and pursue it. Jesus calls us to love one another as he loved us ([John 13:34](#)). So, I decided the best way for me to personally pursue peace and love others was to try to connect personally with individuals rather than through social media. When possible, I found meeting in person was the best way to connect and restore relationships. It wasn't instant, but closing my social media account did eventually bring a change within me. I started seeing beauty in others again. It restored peace within my relationships but also within my own heart. Over and over, I find that when I follow Jesus' ways, thinking the action is on my part, he actually does the healing in my heart.

React: Do you have a relationship that needs to be restored? Jesus' way is for us to live in peace with everyone. What action step can you take this week to pursue peace and love others?

Pray: Father God, forgive me when conflict with others causes me to view them in a negative way. Thank you for designing us each differently. Please help me to see the beauty in our differences and to love others. Show me ways to seek peace and pursue it.



Week 3 | The Way of Unity

Day 4 | Be United in Spirit

Command: *Be one.* [John 17:20-23 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *Therefore I, a prisoner for serving the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of your calling, for you have been called by God. Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love. Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace. For there is one body and one Spirit, just as you have been called to one glorious hope for the future.* [Ephesians 4:1-6 \(NLT\)](#)

Reflect: I have been blessed to participate in God's work by using my gifts. As an added bonus, I get to do ministry with a diverse group of individuals who love Jesus. While we are each uniquely gifted, we are collectively called to a specific purpose - to make Jesus known. We're usually on the same page on the "why" of what we are doing, but sometimes...not so much on the "how." As much as we all are in agreement with our collective mission, there are times when the day-to-day work of ministry can cause some challenges due to varying opinions and personalities.

Jesus, in his infinite love for us, on the night of his arrest, prayed that anyone who would come to believe in him would all be united - be one with him and God, and with one another ([John 17:21](#)). He anticipated that disagreements large and small would cause divisions within the church. While God purposely made each of us with unique particularities and gifting, it is only by the power of his Spirit that we are to work together to announce Jesus to the world. The apostle Paul also encourages Jesus-followers to "make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit." The guiding principle of our discipleship to Jesus is to be united and to love one another so that the world may know that we are his followers, and come to believe in him.

React: Which of your relationships could use a little bit of effort to be united in the Spirit of Christ? What steps can you take towards that?

Pray: Jesus, thank you for inviting us to be in unity with you and the Father. May we also then live in unity with others, that the world may know who you are.



Week 3 | The Way of Unity

Day 5 | Unity Where It Matters

Command: *Be one.* [John 17:20-23 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another in what you say and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly united in mind and thought.*

[1 Corinthians 1:10 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: Have you ever had someone in your life that completely disagreed with you in anything and everything? If you're nodding yes, then we have something in common. A couple of years ago, I worked closely with someone like this. In any situation, we were never on the same page about the direction we wanted the team to go in. If I said pink, this person would say blue. If I said up, this person would say down. The longer this dynamic went on between the two of us, the more frustrated I felt and the more I wanted nothing to do with this person.

Today, I can look back and realize how silly the division was since it was always surrounding really small things. At the end of the day, we were truly united in the things that mattered; we loved Jesus and we both wanted the best outcome for everybody in our team.

React: Are there small things that are creating division between you and someone else? What steps can you take today to overcome division?

Pray: Father-God, we thank you for the gift of being able to do life with others. May we continue to strive to make you the center of everything that we do. Give us the strength and the perspective to overcome division with others. Unite us in your love.



PALM SUNDAY

Standalone | The Way of Harvest

Day 1 | Showing Others Jesus

Command: *Ask the Lord of the harvest to send more workers into His harvest field.* [Matthew 9:38](#) [\(Voice\)](#)

Read: *So we are Christ's ambassadors; God is making his appeal through us. We speak for Christ when we plead, "Come back to God!"* [2 Corinthians 5:20 \(NLT\)](#)

Reflect: God is allowing me to be a part of something really special in this season of my life. A year ago, I took a new full-time job at a well-known company. Everyone works remotely, but on occasion our team gets together at the HQ in LA for teambuilding and to connect in person. Very soon after joining this team it was clear to me that I was the “*odd woman out*” and the only one who was an active believer in Jesus - 3 out of the 5 women on my team expressed their disdain for Christianity and after experiencing some deep wounds inflicted by the church in their past.

I knew right away God had placed me there for a reason, but now, more than ever in my life, I needed to commune with the Holy Spirit and pay attention to what God would have me say and do and when. After a year of doing a lot of listening to these women on my team, God set up an opportunity for me to talk to one of them about her pain. I listened to the trauma she experienced at the hands of sinful people. And I got to share about my experience with the church.

As an ambassador of Christ, sometimes the best thing we can do is listen. My team isn't looking for someone to preach at them and condemn their lifestyle. Truthfully, they know scripture too. What they need is someone to SHOW them who Jesus is. They need someone to SHOW them what it looks like to love like Jesus loves. My prayer is that the way I act, and the way I treat them will be the plea they hear to “*come back to God.*”

React: Where are the places in your life where God is calling you to be his ambassador? How can you show people the love of Christ?

Pray: Father, we know that this world, even the church, isn't perfect. But thank you for sending your son so that we could know grace and mercy. Help us show the same grace and mercy to others.



PALM SUNDAY

Standalone | The Way of Harvest

Day 2 | A Faith-led Life Speaks Volumes!

Command: Ask the Lord of the harvest to send more workers into His harvest field. [Matthew 9:38](#) ([Voice](#))

Read: Jesus said, “The food that keeps me going is that I do the will of the One who sent me, finishing the work he started. As you look around right now, wouldn’t you say that in about four months it will be time to harvest? Well, I’m telling you to open your eyes and take a good look at what’s right in front of you. These Samaritan fields are ripe. It’s harvest time!” [John 4:34-35](#) ([Message](#))

Reflect: Jesus wants us to spare no time in sharing the Good News in this passage. People are in need of a Savior. We are the ears and eyes of Jesus. However, Christians can debate exactly how we are to do that. As a baby Christian, I had the coming-to-Christ zeal to convert everyone. Now being imperfect I had this black & white approach to Jesus. You’re either in or out.

I recall a time when I had a heated debate with my then-atheist brother. I wanted the freedom I experienced with Jesus for him. He had so much push back that made me infuriated. He was wrong and I was right. So, what did I do to show him that Jesus is the only way? I screamed, “You’re going to hell if you don’t accept him!” His response, “And this is why I don’t go to church.”

In that moment, I felt the conviction of the Holy Spirit. Yes, we are called to harvest, but not by weeding them to death! Instead, there is an easier way to share the Good News. Live the life of fruitfulness through a faith-led life seeded in Jesus. How we respond, how we serve and treat others, how we give grace when not deserved reflect the image of Christ. This speaks volumes over social media posts, picketing signs or screaming debates.

We can share the Good News in the relationships we build and the intimate conversations that come from them. Truly reaping the harvest.

React: How are you sharing the Good News? Resist the need to debate. It’s as simple as living confidently in your faith-led life.

Pray: Jesus, I answer your call to share the Good News. Make it apparent to others I follow you through my actions, responses and words.



PALM SUNDAY

Standalone | The Way of Harvest

Day 3 | Living on Mission

Command: *Ask the Lord of the harvest to send more workers into His harvest field.* [Matthew 9:38](#) [\(Voice\)](#)

Read: *He told them, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.”* [Luke 10:2 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: One day I was scrolling through social media and I saw a friend’s post where she made it known she was going through a difficult season. I sent her a private message and invited her to join my women’s group. Days later my friend accepted my invitation and shortly after began attending the women’s group. Weeks later my friend attended church. Months later she began serving in the community. A couple of years later she became a growth group leader. My friend’s faith has been so contagious that her and her family are active church members.

I used to believe that living a missional life required me to go on a mission trip. I now know that no matter where I live, work and play—as a Jesus Christ follower—I am invited to be a co-laborer with him to help others find and follow him.

React: God gives us countless opportunities each day to live our life on mission. What would it look like to bring intentionality to your day?

Pray: Father God, I want to live my life on mission. Help me make a difference with those around me.



PALM SUNDAY

Standalone | The Way of Harvest

Day 4 | An Urgent Care Missionary

Command: Ask the Lord of the harvest to send more workers into His harvest field. [Matthew 9:38](#) ([Voice](#))

Read: Jesus sent his twelve harvest hands out with this charge: “Don’t begin by traveling to some far-off place to convert unbelievers. And don’t try to be dramatic by tackling some public enemy. Go to the lost, confused people right here in the neighborhood. Tell them that the kingdom is here. Bring health to the sick. Raise the dead. Touch the untouchables. Kick out the demons. You have been treated generously, so live generously. [Matthew 10:5-8 \(MSG\)](#)

Reflect: As I headed to Urgent Care to get in line an hour before opening, my focus was on getting a throat swab and going home as quickly as possible. I was relieved when I drove up and saw only 2 people in line. As I stood in line, soon several other people joined. Eventually, as a few of us started quietly chatting about why we were waiting, suddenly a man waiting with his sick wife said to all of us, “I was paralyzed from the neck down and in the hospital 2 years ago.” All of us turned to look and stopped talking.

He had our attention as he continued. “The doctors didn’t know what was wrong with me. I was a healthy strong construction worker but I couldn’t move. As I lay in the hospital bed, I prayed and asked God to heal me.” At this point, I noticed other people in line were getting uncomfortable. Then he said, “And God healed me. As you can see, I can walk again. God did that.” As he paused, someone else in the line said, “Yes, I believe in Jesus too.” Pretty soon several people spoke up. Seeing that God was using this time in a mighty way, I added “Yes, I’ve battled cancer twice and I also know how Jesus loves us and walks with us.” Someone then said, “I go to Eastlake Church and I know Jesus.”

As the Urgent Care opened the doors and the line began moving, our conversation died down. But the courage of one man to initiate a conversation about faith to a group of strangers in pain, forever changed me. It’s been two years and I’m still inspired by a stranger’s courage and commitment to share his faith story.

React: Ask God to show you opportunities to share your faith story and to give you courage to do so.

Pray: Thank you Jesus for those who have shared their faith with me and inspired me to walk in your ways. Please give me courage to share my faith with others.



PALM SUNDAY

Standalone | The Way of Harvest

Day 5 | Prepare the Way for the Lord

Command: *Ask the Lord of the harvest to send more workers into His harvest field.* [Matthew 9:38](#) [\(Voice\)](#)

Read: *This is the Good News about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God. It began just as the prophet Isaiah had written: “Look, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, and he will prepare your way. He is a voice shouting in the wilderness, ‘Prepare the way for the Lord’s coming! Clear the road for him!’”* [Mark 1:1-3 \(NLT\)](#)

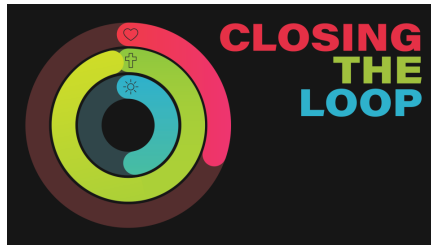
Reflect: I was at the gym minding my own business, earbuds at high volume, trying to get my workout in before heading to work. Someone approached with the weirdest question. “Are you going to ‘eaven?” he asked with a French accent. My first inclination was to just ignore him, but ended up engaging him in conversation. “Yup. I am.” “How do you know?” he asked. “Because I believe Jesus is my savior.” So began a short but life-giving friendship with Mark.

Mark lived with an urgency to make Jesus known to every single person at the gym. Every day, in the wee hours of the morning, I saw him approaching perfect strangers asking the same question. Most of time people just ignored him. Over time though, roadblocks were cleared and many came to faith because of Mark. At his funeral not long after I met him, I recognized more than a dozen fellow gym goers. This was a testament to how much he loved Jesus and how much he wanted others to know him.

Mark’s mission field was the gym, and he knew that the harvest was plentiful but that workers were few. He answered the call. He was bold, lived with a sense of urgency, and didn’t care much if he was ignored. While he would never say that he was like John the Baptist, preparing the way for the Lord, he was instrumental in tilling the soil for a great harvest.

React: No doubt Mark was a bold evangelist - few can be as bold. Yet we are all invited to work with Jesus for the harvest. What steps can you take this week to prepare the way so that others may know him?

Pray: Jesus, fill us with the Holy Spirit to speak the word of God with boldness. May our conversations be always full of grace, gentleness, respect, and seasoned with salt.



Week 1 | The Way of Life

Day 1 | Open My Eyes

Command: *Enter through the narrow gate.* [Matthew 7:13 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers, but whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on his law day and night. That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither— whatever they do prospers. Not so the wicked! They are like chaff that the wind blows away. Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous. For the Lord watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked leads to destruction.* [Psalm 1 \(NIV\)](#)

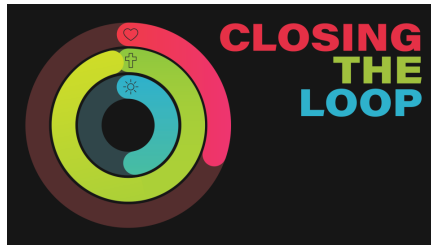
Reflect: I've been thinking a lot recently on how I can distinguish myself as a follower of Jesus in whatever places God situates me. I've been wondering what it looks like to "be in this world, but not of it," as the saying goes.

I asked God to open my eyes and heart to how he is moving, and he did. As a mom of two young girls, I don't usually have the pleasure of waking early and having quiet time to meditate on God's word, but I've come to find that it's in all the "ordinary" moments throughout the day that I get to invite God into the space I'm in and ask that he'd fill me up, open my eyes and my heart. It's in these moments I feel like a tree planted by a river. When I'm struggling with anxiety, the calm place I imagine in my mind is just that - a forest, a babbling brook, me beneath the shade of a giant oak tree or a weeping willow - a place where I'm surrounded by the peace of God and also filled up by his love.

Sometimes I wonder if distinguishing myself as a follower of Jesus is as simple as that - finding the place where I'm surrounded by his peace and filled with his love so that the river can overflow to those around me. Not preaching, not condemning, not proving a point - but overflowing with something supernatural and altogether different.

React: What are some practical ways can you meditate on God's word throughout the day?

Pray: Lord fill us up with your presence and open our eyes to how you're moving around us. Let us be a part of what you're doing!



Week 1 | The Way of Life

Day 2 | Cost of Non-Discipleship

Command: *Enter through the narrow gate.* [Matthew 7:13 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *Enter through the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the road is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who go through it. How narrow is the gate and difficult the road that leads to life, and few find it.* [Matthew 7:13-14 \(HCSB\)](#)

Reflect: As I reflect on these past few months journeying with the church through the Ways of Jesus, I am slightly taken aback by how straightforward Jesus' instructions were to his disciples then and to us now. "Follow me." "Repent." "Forgive others." There is no hint of ambiguity in these words. Yet how do we follow his commands? And what does it cost us if we obey or not? Truthfully, my willful self is not bent towards obedience so these words of Jesus are challenging. Even so, I know that God's desire for me is that through my obedience, I may abide in the love of Jesus, thereby drawing others to come know him. As I continue to cooperate with the work that God's spirit is already doing in me, I begin to align my heart to his, conforming to his will and not my own.

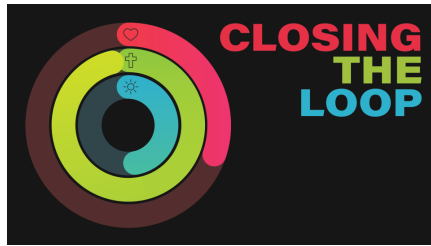
Following Jesus is still not a walk in the park most days. There is a high cost to being a life-long student and practitioner of the ways of Jesus. German pastor and twentieth century Christian martyr, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, famously wrote: "When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die." Yikes! What does that even mean?

For me, following Jesus is a lifetime of faithful obedience in the same direction that ultimately bears much good fruit. If discipleship costs me my ego, my earthly significance, or my worldly possessions, the cost of non-discipleship is even greater. "Non-discipleship," writes Dallas Willard "costs abiding peace, a life penetrated through by love, faith that sees everything in the light of God's overriding governance for good, hopefulness that stands firm in the most discouraging of circumstances, power to do what is right and withstand the forces of evil. In short, it costs exactly that abundance of life Jesus said he came to bring."

Which would I rather choose? Choosing to die to my willful self with its fleeting material success and significance, and to live into the life of Christ that promises eternal peace and joy seems to be a no-brainer.

React: What would it cost you to follow, or not follow Jesus?

Pray: Jesus, every day you give us a choice. May we always choose you.



Week 1 | The Way of Life

Day 3 | The Way is Your Why

Command: Enter through the narrow gate. [Matthew 7:13 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. [John 14:6 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: Like most people, there came a time in my life when I asked a big question. Why am I here? What is my purpose? What is my why? This is a big question because the answer impacts my manner of living. Living by the excessive survival instincts of anxiety, anger, and appetites causes all kinds of problems and ends in despair and shame. I don’t have to learn this way of life. I live this way by default.

Christ is the source of all goodness that include traits of assuredness, agreeableness, and contentment which bring peace and joy. But these are not defaults. They must be acquired by processes of formation into the ways of Christ.

By focusing on Christ’s traits of goodness and intentionally acting out his ways of life I gradually change forms into his likeness. Gradually, Christ forms in me. I have found this process to be so challenging that the words of Paul ring true. *My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you.* [Galatians 4:19 \(NIV\)](#)

Something (good or bad) is always shaping my soul. I’m learning to ask myself, “What is forming in me today, this hour, this moment? Anxiety or assuredness, craving or contentment, anger or agreeableness?” Since the purpose of life is to become as Christ is, the way of Christ forming in me is the “why” of my life.

React: Today I will pause and notice the trait of Christ’s goodness I need in challenging moments. I will act out that expression of Christ until it is formed in me. This way of Christ is the “why” of my life.

Pray: Lord give me the grace to pause and follow your ways of life.



Week 1 | The Way of Life

Day 4 | What's on Your Mind?

Command: *Enter through the narrow gate.* [Matthew 7:13 \(NIV\)](#)

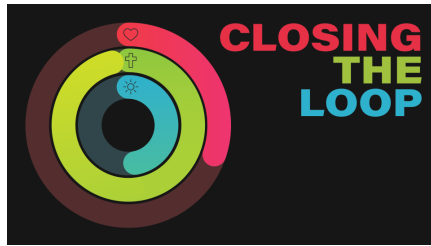
Read: *Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.* [Romans 12:2 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: When I first became a mom, I was constantly playing the comparison game. I could never measure up to the highlights posted on social media or the books I was reading on sleep training a newborn baby. I found myself feeling anxious and depressed because I simply couldn't meet the world's (or my own) expectations of me as a mother. I started to wonder if perhaps I wasn't meant for this role. Then I joined a growth group with other moms and quickly saw that I wasn't alone in my parenting journey. Through prayer, tears, and a whole lot of coffee, these women helped me to transform my core beliefs about myself and who God meant for me to be for my children. I was able to change my mind set about myself by simply changing what my mind was being filled with. This helped me to choose what Jesus wanted for me, rather than what the world said what I should have.

I'm now entering a new season of motherhood. Hello, tween years! But instead of starting my day scrolling through Instagram reels, I begin with prayer and reading scripture. I also continue to intentionally surround myself with people who breathe life into me. I've learned that renewing my mind is like planting a seed in new, nutrient-filled soil. With proper watering and sunlight, a seed can grow into something beautiful. In choosing to set my mind on Christ, I have experienced his good and perfect will.

React: What is occupying the space in your mind right now? Is it fear? Doubt? Envy? Anger? Take time to talk to Jesus so that your mind can be renewed in him.

Pray: God, we pray to you for the renewing of our minds. Help us to follow the narrow road that leads to life.



Week 1 | The Way of Life

Day 5 | This or That?

Command: *Enter through the narrow gate.* [Matthew 7:13 \(NIV\)](#)

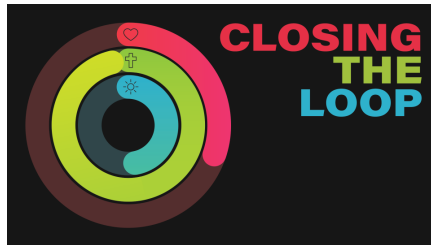
Read: *And I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. I want to do what is right, but I can't. I want to do what is good, but I don't. I don't want to do what is wrong, but I do it anyway... Oh, what a miserable person I am! Who will free me from this life that is dominated by sin and death? Thank God! The answer is in Jesus Christ our Lord.* [Romans 7:18-19](#) and [24-25a \(NLT\)](#)

Reflect: I used to say that being a Christian is harder than not being one. So many rules to follow! Even now, after walking with Jesus for decades, I still resonate with the Apostle Paul's words. As much as I love Jesus and want to follow in his ways, I inevitably fall back into my old habits. I want to be kind, but some guy cuts me off. I want to give generously, but oh, a pair of new shoes sure would look good on my feet. I really would like to spend more time in prayer and reading scripture, but that new Netflix series is calling me.

Sure, these choices aren't going to ruin my life, but they are areas ripe with the opportunity to grow into the character of Jesus. The way of Jesus is a life of daily choosing between the narrow way that leads to abundant life, or the broad way that leads to spiritual death. Author and theologian John Mark Comer puts it this way: "Following Jesus is about those moments where you have that decision to make between the flesh and the Spirit. Following Jesus is a thousand small deaths that lead to one massive life."

React: What choice is in front of you this season? Choosing the way of Jesus is not easy. Yet Jesus promises that his path leads to a life of deep joy and flourishing. Are you willing to take that risk for the sake of a massive life with Jesus?

Pray: Jesus, thank you that I don't have to do life without you. Thank you that you are already showing me the way.



Week 2 | The Way of Mercy

Day 1 | We All Got It Coming Kid

Command: *Do not resist an evil person.* [Matthew 5:39 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *“Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.”* [Matthew 5:7 \(NIV\)](#)

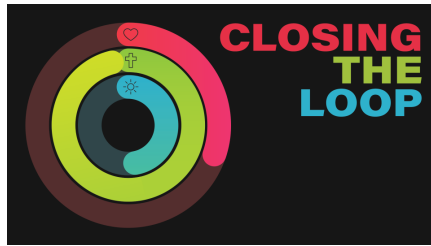
Reflect: There’s a scene in a movie where Clint Eastwood is talking to a young boy who is remorseful because he had just shot and killed someone. The boy remarks, “Well, I guess he had it coming.” To which Clint Eastwood replies, “We all got it coming kid.” When I saw that scene, I thought, man, that’s the truth! We all have it coming and we all are in deep need of mercy.

So much of life is about justice versus mercy. I have found that when other people are in the wrong, I’m very much in favor of justice. But when I am in the wrong, I’m a big fan of mercy. So, I thought it might be a good idea to take Jesus’ words to heart. “Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.” [Matthew 5:7 \(NIV\)](#)

Giving mercy to people who deserve judgement aligns me with the heart of Christ and reminds me of his mercy to me. I do not have to live in fear of judgement. Because God is merciful to me, I can confidently surrender my life to his Lordship. As Paul writes, “Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.” [Romans 12:1 \(NIV\)](#) The logical response to God’s mercy towards me, is to be his conduit of mercy to another who is as guilty and vulnerable as I am. Because, we all got it coming.

React: Resist the inclination for revenge. Be as merciful to the offender as Christ is merciful to you.

Pray: Have mercy upon me, according to your loving kindness. And may I be as merciful as you.



Week 2 | The Way of Mercy

Day 2 | Responding The Jesus Way

Command: *Do not resist an evil person.* [Matthew 5:39 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *Do not repay anyone evil for evil.* [Romans 12:17 \(NIV\)](#)

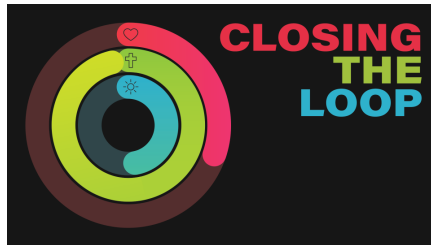
Reflect: More than once, my grandfather told me an account of my dad's life that I have never forgotten. In the 1960's, my dad took a trip on a narrow highway. In front of him a man was driving very slowly, and whenever my dad tried to pass him, the man immediately accelerated or moved to the other lane to block him. He did this many times, and as he did, he made fun of my dad. It seemed funny to him to make my dad waste a lot of time, but he had not anticipated that sooner or later he would have to stop to pump gasoline.

When he arrived at the gas station, my dad parked behind him to pump gas as well. The other man noticed, and was visibly afraid. As he started to fill the tank of his car, my dad approached him to tell him in a very nice way, "It's not good for you to drive like that because you can cause an accident." That was it. He didn't yell at him or call him names. He just shared those words and continued on his way.

My dad's example reminds me that I need to look beyond my personal offense and trust God to set things right. I have more important business to attend to: bringing his kingdom right here on earth as it is in heaven. It's not easy. Many times, I don't want to or I don't feel like I can, but I choose to rely on God's grace. I challenge you to ask God for grace next time you need it, and watch what happens.

React: In our daily lives we have constant opportunities to respond in the way that Jesus did. Ask God to help you recognize them and seize them!

Pray: Lord Jesus, help me recognize the opportunities in my day to respond in your way when I am wronged



Week 2 | The Way of Mercy

Day 3 | My Father's Mercy

Command: *Do not resist an evil person.* [Matthew 5:39 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *Therefore the Lord is waiting to show you mercy, and is rising up to show you compassion, for the Lord is a just God. All who wait patiently for Him are happy.* [Isaiah 30:18 \(HCSB\)](#)

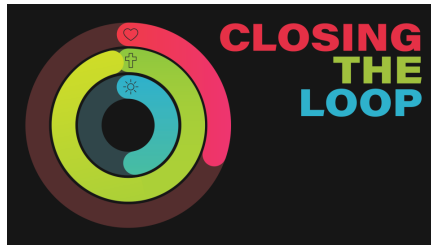
Reflect: I took a significant amount of money from my dad's wallet one morning. It was my turn to treat my third-grade classmates to a snack during recess. In the evening, dad asked my brother and me if we knew anything about the missing money. My brother of course knew nothing. I lied. I suggested maybe the nanny helped herself to it. Well...she didn't take the money. My dad excused me from their room, asked my terrified brother to go fetch his belt.

As I was exiting the room, my dad tells my brother, "Well since you're the eldest, and no one wants to fess up, you'll have to take responsibility." My mind imagined what "take responsibility" meant. Dad was the disciplinarian and though he never laid a hand on us, there were definitely times when I thought he would. This was one of those moments.

I quickly turned back, yelling at my dad, "No! I did it! I took the money!" I braced myself for, at the very least, my dad yelling at me and taking away my privileges, and at the worst, using the belt on me. Neither happened. Instead, my dad drew me close, held me in his arms, and whispered, "All you had to do was tell me the truth." I don't know why I expected any less from my dad. Though I grew up in a very strict household, neither of my parents took to corporal punishment. Asking my brother to grab the belt was really just a ploy – yes, admittedly a bad one at that. He never intended to use it. He already knew that I took the money. Instead of taking my act as a personal affront to him, he took the opportunity to share a lesson with me. Looking back, I see that my dad just wanted me to fess up and to trust that he was merciful.

React: What are some things you're keeping from God for fear of being punished? How about fessing up now that thing he already knows about and see what happens?

Pray: God, thank you that even in our waywardness you've held us in your arms and shown us mercy. Help us to show the same kind of love towards those who've offended us.



Week 2 | The Way of Mercy

Day 4 | Mercy in Motion

Command: *Do not resist an evil person.* [Matthew 5:39 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.* [Micah 6:8 \(NIV\)](#)

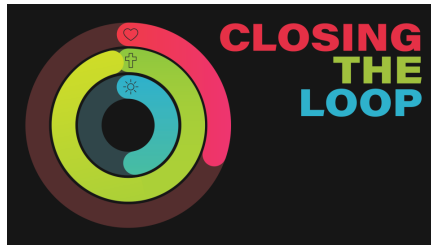
Reflect: I remember a time when my son was in his elementary years, and he asked me, “Why do I have to take a shower if I’m going to get dirty anyway?” I responded simply that since God made everything, including ourselves, whatever God made is important to God and we should respect and take care of it. What we do and don’t do matters. Looking back, I could see his point in asking, “Why do it if it’s just going to get messed up again anyway?”

Many times, we take that stance when extending mercy to others. Mercy is the compassionate treatment toward someone when it’s in your power to punish them. Sometimes our hearts are so calloused or hardened because of being unappreciated, hurt, betrayed, rejected or unloved, that we start to wonder, “What’s the point?” Then we talk ourselves out of acting with mercy by saying, “Things will never change, they will never change, or flat out they don’t deserve it.” To show mercy, we are living out Jesus’ example of the price he paid for us when he showed us mercy while we were still sinners.

I am reminded of what scripture says, “*Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord.*” [Hebrews 12:14 \(NIV\)](#) Are we going to succeed every time with everyone? Probably not. However, we do our part and let God do the rest. As believers of Christ, we are to reflect his light, love, and compassion. We can’t change or control others but we can be a catalyst for change in our family, in our workplace, in our schools, wherever God has strategically placed us. Mercy is not an isolated act but the lifestyle of a believer.

React: What opportunity to show mercy comes to mind? Who is someone that you can show mercy to today?

Pray: Lord, I ask you to heal any areas of my heart that would hinder me from showing mercy and compassion to others. Lord, remind me of all the times you showed me grace and never gave up on me, and help me extend that to others and see others through the eyes of mercy.



Week 2 | The Way of Mercy

Day 5 | Waiting on God

Command: *Do not resist an evil person.* [Matthew 5:39 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.* [2 Peter 3:9 \(NIV\)](#)

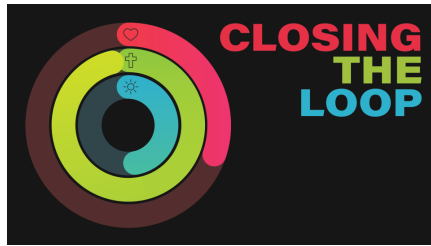
Reflect: In our busy lives, it's easy to fall into the trap of impatience. However, impatience can lead to sin and disobedience to God's will. [2 Peter 3:9](#) reminds us that God's timing is not our own, and we should exercise patience and trust in him as we wait for his promises to be fulfilled.

Impatience can cause us to make hasty decisions that are not in line with God's will. It can also lead to frustration and doubt in God's faithfulness, causing disobedience. When we feel we have been wronged by others, this can make us want to react in kind. God wants us to exercise patience in these moments. If we are slow to react, we can trust that God has a plan, even for those that have wronged us.

As we wait for his promises to be fulfilled, we should pray for guidance and strength. We should examine our hearts and repent of any impatience that may be hindering our relationship with God. By surrendering our will to his divine plan, we can wait patiently and trust that his timing is perfect. In doing so, we can overcome the sin of impatience and grow in our faith.

React: How has impatience affected your relationship with God and others in the past? What steps can you take to practice patience and trust in God's timing in your current situation?

Pray: Dear God, help us to exercise patience and trust in your perfect timing. Forgive us for the times we've been impatient and made hasty decisions that led to disobedience. Give us strength and guidance as we wait for your promises to be fulfilled. Help us to surrender our will to your divine plan and grow in our faith. Thank You for being faithful to your promises. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.



Week 3 | The Way of Grace

Day 1 | Inconvenient Love

Command: *Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.* [Matthew 5:44 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *Love each other as brothers and sisters and honor others more than you do yourself. Never give up. Eagerly follow the Holy Spirit and serve the Lord.* [Romans 12:10-11 \(CEV\)](#)

Reflect: According to Dictionary.com, grace is “the freely given, unmerited favor and love of God.” God loves me and shows me grace in ways far beyond my comprehension, but I often miss opportunities to reflect that grace to others.

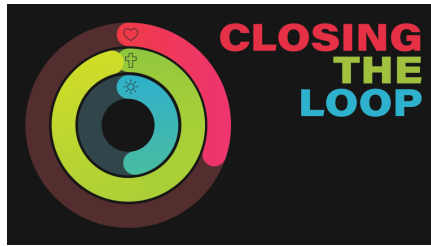
Several years ago, I was hosting our large extended family for a holiday meal. I originally created the menu to reflect our favorite family traditions. Although many family members now had various dietary restrictions, I figured everyone would find something that they would be able to eat. Our family diets included non-dairy, gluten-free, vegan, poultry-free, dedicated carnivores, and those with diabetic restrictions. As you can imagine, coordinating a meal to please everyone would entail a lot of work. No one had asked me to specifically consider their personal diet.

Eventually, I paid attention to the Holy Spirit’s still small voice that told me to intentionally include food for everyone even if it was more work. The menu came together. Later, as each person saw that I’d considered their needs by making special dishes they could enjoy, their eyes lit up. I could see that they felt loved, and my heart was full too.

The way of grace is to listen, obey and love others generously...even when it’s inconvenient.

React: How can you love others more generously? Ask God to show you opportunities to show unmerited grace this week. Listen to the still small voice of the Holy Spirit.

Pray: “Heavenly Father, loosen my grip on the things of this world. Lead me in the dance of spontaneous, cheerful giving, and let that generosity remind me always of your grace toward me, which I in no way deserve. In your Son's name I pray, Amen.” ~ Max Lucado, *Grace: More Than We Deserve, Greater Than We Imagine*



Week 3 | The Way of Grace

Day 2 | Sandpaper People

Command: *Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.* [Matthew 5:44 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *“But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.”* [Luke 6:27-28 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: I was once hired on the spot as a paralegal at a mid-size law firm. Not too long after that, the executive assistant to the principal owner resigned. To my surprise, I was offered her position. There were several staff members who’d worked at the firm longer than I had. Needless to say, my accepting the position caused a bit of a ruckus. The office manager was none-too-happy.

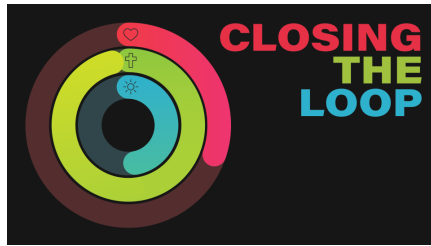
Lines were drawn. People stopped inviting me to lunch, more work was passed on to me, gossip about me was rampant. One day, all hell broke loose. I shared some ideas with someone about how the workflow could be distributed so that deadlines can be met, and staff can be cross trained in other areas. The office manager got word of it and flipped her lid. She called me to her office and began screaming at me, accusing me of gunning for the position ever since I was hired. Untrue.

Everyone could see her demeanor and mine. She was flailing her arms, face red as a beet. I was calmly seated, head tilted, mouth zipped, taking the abuse. I don’t know how I did it, but I refused to respond in kind. All the while, I was praying first for her tirade to be over, and second, that she wouldn’t suffer a heart attack for being so upset!

It was not the last of such demeaning episodes. It was challenging to remain in that environment. I just kept working and engaging the staff with as much grace as I could muster. Slowly but surely, the office manager began to see that I was not in competition with anyone, and that I could actually be a good friend. While we didn’t become besties, I became her confidant, sharing the load with her. All she needed was a little grace.

React: Is there someone in your circle that’s like sandpaper and hard to love? How can you show grace to that person this week?

Pray: Father, I know that it is by your grace alone that I am able to respond in love. Keep me focused on loving with grace.



Week 3 | The Way of Grace

Day 3 | Grace Amidst Tragedy

Command: *Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.* [Matthew 5:44 \(NIV\)](#)

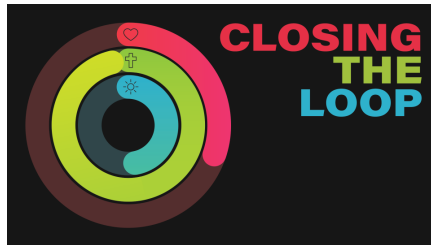
Read: *Then he fell on his knees and cried out, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them.” When he had said this, he fell asleep.* [Acts 7:60 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: The gift of grace comes from God. It is through him we are able to supernaturally give grace to others. A perfect example is the story of American missionary, Elisabeth Elliot, whose husband Jim died a violent death at the hands of the Huaorani Indians in Ecuador in the 1950's. Their call to mission work in the jungle of Ecuador led to the death of her husband. She chose to stay and continue their mission. Over time she came to live amongst the very tribe that savagely murdered her husband. This same group became believers in Christ, which eventually resulted in a huge decrease of violent behaviors amongst the tribe.

Elisabeth believed that “As long as this is what the Lord requires of me, then all else is irrelevant.” She believed the Lord's grace was sufficient for her even within the tragedy of losing her husband. This grace empowered her to continue to do the will of the Lord. The same grace Elisabeth gave to her husband's murderers eventually changed the hearts of this population, who were so far from the Lord, so that she could then welcome them as brothers and sisters in Christ.

React: Do not let tragedy or offense stop you from doing the will of God. To whom do you need to give grace?

Pray: Lord, Thank you for the gift of grace. Help me to soften my heart towards my offenders and offer grace.



Week 3 | The Way of Grace

Day 4 | Juice

Command: *Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.* [Matthew 5:44 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *For from his fullness we have all received grace upon grace.* [John 1:16 \(ESV\)](#)

Reflect: There's a local juice place I visit daily. Same order, every time: wheatgrass. It's super gross. Like licking-the-underside-of-a-lawnmower gross. However, it's the nutritional equivalent of 2.5 pounds of green veggies so I chug it down. Like all their regular customers, I am often given the extra juice from a batch and it's much more than I pay for: 2 oz. for the 1 oz. price.

One day I went in to grab my juice and was not given the extra; the guy poured the exact amount I paid for and discarded the rest. I thanked him and headed out. And then I felt a little irritation rise up. I thought, "How wasteful! I mean, if they were just going to pour it out..." Then I felt entitled: "Who was that new guy? Doesn't he know I come every day?"

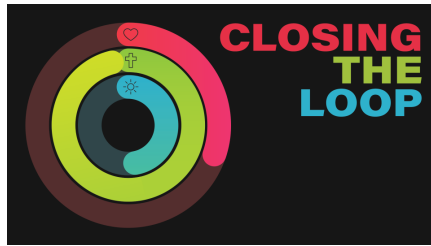
Then God reminded me of the 99 percent of the time that I do get extra, and to flip my gratitude switch back to the "on" position. Sometimes we forget how blessed we are to be children of God. We can be so blissfully ignorant of the potholes we avoid by travelling the sure-road with Jesus.

Our bad days are not as bad as we think, and our blessings are greater than we give God credit. We can tend to taking his grace for granted. We must guard against overflow turning into entitlement — "extra" becoming "expected".

Remember: No one owes us anything. Jesus doesn't owe us anything. He's already given the complete gift, the whole of himself. Everything else is gravy. Or, juice, as it were: 2 oz. of life on a 1 oz. payment we couldn't afford. "...for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him." [Romans 10:12b \(ESV\)](#)

React: Let's chug our spiritual veggies by appreciating the blessings and protection God gives us every day.

Pray: Thank you, God, for how you cover me. Holy Spirit, help me be aware of your grace throughout each day.



Week 3 | The Way of Grace

Day 5 | Love Like Jesus

Command: *Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.* [Matthew 5:44 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.* [Luke 6:27-28 \(NIV\)](#)

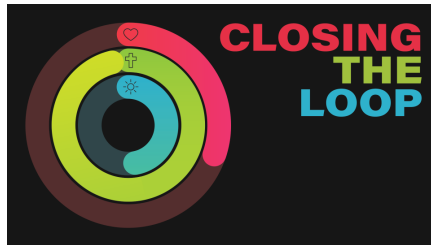
Reflect: As I read [Luke 6:27-28](#), I must admit that it's a hard teaching for me to follow. I grew up in a very broken family, where love and forgiveness were in short supply. As a result, I have been divorced twice and have been away from my children. I have many people in my life that I would consider enemies, and the idea of loving them seems like an impossible task.

But then I was reminded of something truly remarkable. Even though I am an enemy of Jesus, he loved me so much that he willingly laid down his life for me. Despite my flaws and imperfections, he chose to love me unconditionally.

If Jesus can love me like that, then surely, I can learn to love those who have hurt me. It won't be easy, and there may be times when I stumble or fall. With the help of the Holy Spirit, I know that I can overcome my anger and bitterness and learn to love my enemies as Jesus as loved me.

React: How can you practice forgiveness and love towards those who have hurt you or whom you consider to be your enemies? In what ways can you follow Jesus' example of love and compassion when dealing with conflict and difficult people in your life? How can you surrender your anger and bitterness to the Holy Spirit and reflect God's love and grace to those around you?

Pray: Dear God, thank you for the teachings of Jesus. Please help me to love my enemies and do good to those who hate me, even when it's difficult. Please give me the strength to bless those who curse me and pray for those who mistreat me. Help me to respond to conflict with kindness and compassion, and to practice forgiveness and reconciliation in my relationships. Please guide me in following Jesus' example of loving and serving those who are difficult to love. Amen.



Week 4 | The Way of Hope

Day 1 | Expectant Hope

Command: *So stay alert. You have no idea when he might arrive.* [Matthew 25:13 \(Message\)](#)

Read: *We live with hope in the Eternal. We wait for Him,
for He is our Divine Help and Impenetrable Shield.
Our hearts erupt with joy in Him
because we trust His holy name.
O Eternal, drench us with Your endless love,
even now as we wait for You.* [Psalms 33:20-22 \(Voice\)](#)

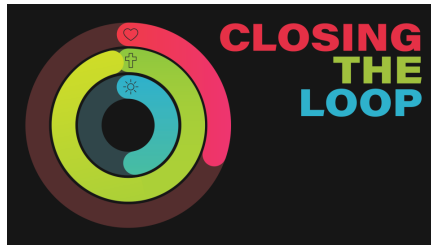
Reflect: I have traveled many dark roads. At times the way through was for me to cling to the hope of heaven, where there will no longer be pain or suffering. Focusing on my destination did bring me hope, but in the end, I still needed to navigate my way through the darkness.

What I learned through those seasons is that my hope in Jesus is here and now. He is not only waiting in heaven. Jesus is the way of hope as he walks with me through the darkness. My waiting is not for his presence nor for the result I want in a difficult situation, but rather for me to see his power and love as he walks with me.

One day, while watching the sunrise light up the night sky, I realized that those first magnificent rays of light shone so brightly because they pierced the dark night sky. Just as we wait to see that first light of day, we can expectantly hope and wait to see evidence of Jesus in the midst of this dark world. He is with us. He is the light. He is the way of hope.

React: Be aware. Be expectant. Look for evidence of the Lord's presence and power.

Pray: You are my hope, Jesus. Your power and love cannot be matched. Open my eyes to your presence. Father, drench us with your endless love, even now as we wait for you.



Week 4 | The Way of Hope

Day 2 | Waiting for the Morning

Command: *Keep watch; be ready.* [Matthew 24:42-44 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *I wait for the Lord, my whole being waits, and in his word I put my hope. I wait for the Lord more than watchmen wait for the morning, more than watchmen wait for the morning.* [Psalm 130:5-6 \(NIV\)](#)

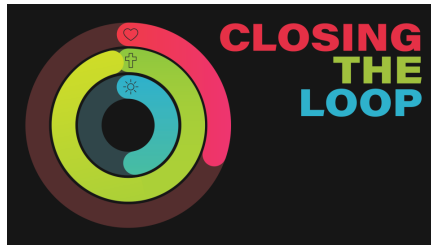
Reflect: Like most parents, I know what it's like to keep watch at night, either to monitor a fever or to wait for teenagers to return home.

But how does a watchman wait for the morning? A watchman stays alert because he does not know when the enemy will strike. Jesus said to his disciples: "Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation" ([Matthew 26:41](#)). In our walk with Jesus, we find ourselves in a spiritual battle. We cannot grow complacent nor fight sin on our own. We need to stay alert with prayer and transform our minds with God's Word.

A watchman also waits with hope and confidence that morning will come. When I come face to face with disease, death, broken relationships, and injustice in this life, I look to the day when God will set everything right. The Bible says that all creation groans for God's glory to be revealed, and I must wait in hope for that morning. As the Bright Morning Star, Jesus will end the night of sin and death forever. The Resurrection is the promise note of this hope. It has transformed how I live and my outlook on life. Let's encourage one another with this beautiful hope until Jesus returns.

React: Are you keeping watch with prayer and hope with the same intensity of a good watchman?

Pray: Jesus, I await your return. Help me to keep watch and be ready.



Week 4 | The Way of Hope

Day 3 | Urgency in Embracing God's Salvation

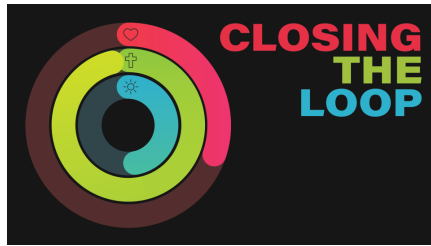
Command: *Keep watch; be ready.* [Matthew 24:42-44 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *And do this, understanding the present time: The hour has already come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed.* [Romans 13:11 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: Romans 13:11 tells us to wake up from our slumber, because our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. This verse reminds me that we should not delay in embracing God's salvation. As disciples of Jesus, we must have a sense of urgency in our walk with Christ, knowing that every day is an opportunity to draw closer to him and to share his love with others. We live in a world that often values temporary pleasures and distractions over eternal matters. It can be easy to get caught up in the busyness of life and forget that we are here for a purpose. However, when we recognize the urgency of embracing God's salvation, we can have a renewed sense of purpose and direction. We can live with the confidence that comes from knowing we have eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ. Let us remember that every moment is an opportunity to draw closer to God, to live with purpose, and to share His love with those around us.

React: Are you delaying in embracing God's salvation and prioritizing temporary pleasures over eternal matters? How can you have a renewed sense of purpose and direction in your walk with Christ? What steps can you take today to draw closer to Jesus and share his love with those around you?

Pray: Dear God, we thank you for reminding us of the urgency of embracing your salvation and living with purpose and direction. We pray that you help us to prioritize eternal matters over temporary pleasures and distractions, and to have a renewed sense of urgency in our walk with you. We pray that you guide us and empower us to draw closer to you and share your love with those around us. May our lives bring honor and glory to your name. In Jesus' name, Amen.



Week 4 | The Way of Hope

Day 4 | Expect Something Good

Command: *Keep watch; be ready.* [Matthew 24:42-44 \(NIV\)](#)

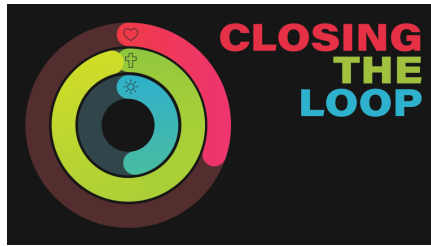
Read: *I remain confident of this: I will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.*
[Psalm 27:13 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: Are you the type of person who sees the glass of water half empty or half full? Personally, I tend to look at the glass of water and expect it to fall and break at any moment. It's difficult to say the truth about me when it comes to this, but I'm the kind of person who normally expects for things and situations to take the wrong turn. But what if instead of constantly expecting the worst, we changed our mentality to always expecting something good? Instead of waiting in despair, what if we waited in hope? Living with excitement and expectancy of God's work in our lives and the lives of others.

The writer of [Psalm 27:13 \(NIV\)](#) reminds us of and challenges us to seek God's goodness all around us because it's already there. It's just a matter of us opening our hearts and minds to be able to see it, hear it, and sense it. So, say this with me today: *I will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.* Say it as many times as you need it and trust and believe that you will see God's goodness everywhere around you.

React: How can you be intentional today about seeking God's goodness around you?

Pray: Father God, help me see your goodness on earth in all things. May I recognize your presence in the beauty of nature and the kindness of people. Thank you for your endless grace and mercy. Amen.



Week 4 | The Way of Hope

Day 5 | Others First

Command: *Keep watch; be ready.* [Matthew 24:42-44 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.* [1 Corinthians 15:58 \(NIV\)](#)

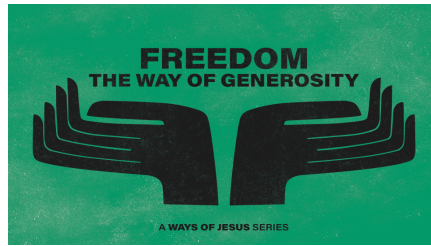
Reflect: Jesus's time here on earth was relatively short, but he taught us everlasting lessons. His mission was to teach his followers how to love one another, with compassion, patience, and kindness. Now this sounds pretty simple, until you go out into the world and try to practice Jesus's ways.

I was taking my Mom to a doctor's appointment in Mission Valley this week. I was zipping down the freeway when I realized I needed to make a quick lane change. I sped up and put on my blinker, but the armored truck next to me was ignoring my request to change lanes. I made the lane change in front of him, while he was aggressively honking his horn. I made the turn off, but I was rattled. I could have slowed down and gone behind him, but our human nature is to be first. Nothing was accomplished except a little road rage.

Being a Christian means, we should treat people the way we want to be treated. I have found that letting people go before me, is a way I can show Jesus' love. I don't always have to be first. This goes against our human nature, I know, but that is what Jesus taught us. You never know if your everyday actions can be planting a seed of hope for those seeking to know Jesus. We can serve God through our daily interactions with others.

React: Are you giving the world hope with your everyday actions? Are there changes that you need to make to be more patient and humble? Slow down, let others be first, and consider that someone may benefit from an act of kindness today.

Pray: Lord, I want to be prepared to meet you any day at any time. I want to live a life that pleases you. Humble me and allow me to be open to your ways.



Week 1 | The Way of Generosity Towards God

Day 1 | Perspective

Command: *Store your treasures in heaven.* [Matthew 6:19-24 \(NCV\)](#)

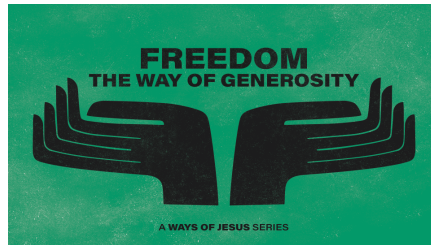
Read: *What I'm trying to do here is get you to relax, not be so preoccupied with getting so you can respond to God's giving. People who don't know God and the way he works fuss over these things, but you know both God and how he works. Steep yourself in God-reality, God-initiative, God-provisions. You'll find all your everyday human concerns will be met. Don't be afraid of missing out. You're my dearest friends! The Father wants to give you the very kingdom itself.* [Luke 12:29-32 \(Message\)](#)

Reflect: My question was, "How much?" when I considered tithing years ago. I knew that 10% was the standard in [Deuteronomy 14:27](#), but I was a single mom living paycheck to paycheck and battling cancer. I was living on disability and child support. How much would God want me to be tithing? Eventually, I thought about how grateful I was to have both of those financial supports. I decided to tithe on both as an act of obedience, thankfulness and trust.

God forever changed my heart with that decision. He opened my eyes to his generosity and blessings in whatever season I am in. When I give, I feel rich and I recognize that God has lavished his presence, power and love in my life. He is good and faithful. He always provides. Everything I have is from him, and giving back to him is my way to recognize and worship him. Having my eyes opened to his generosity has created a generous heart in me.

React: How can you live generously through giving your time and treasure to God?

Pray: Lord Jesus, thank you for surrounding me with your presence that provides all the strength and peace that I need in every circumstance. Please open my eyes to see your blessings and open my heart that I might be generous in giving back to you.



Week 1 | The Way of Generosity Towards God

Day 2 | Radical Generosity

Command: *Store your treasures in heaven.* [Matthew 6:19-24 \(NCV\)](#)

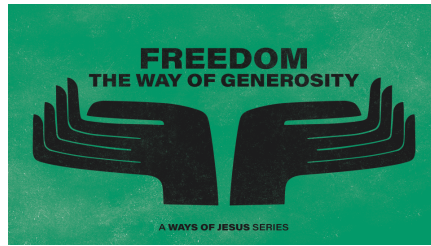
Read: *Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.* [2 Corinthians 9:6-7 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: I remember a mother who was struggling to carry her young children while pushing her groceries in a stroller that was falling apart. She had to hold it up so that all the weight was off the wheel that was broken. I too had two small toddlers at the time. We were struggling and living in a hotel barely able to make ends meet. I remember running inside and grabbing my double stroller without even a second thought and giving it to this struggling mom.

Radical generosity requires us to prioritize the needs of others over our own. As followers of Christ, we are called to live a life of sacrificial giving - not just out of our excess, but even out of what we may consider indispensable. This means giving our time, talent, and treasure towards God's kingdom, and living a life of obedience and surrender to his purposes. Radical generosity towards others looks like serving selflessly and loving unconditionally, even when it may be difficult.

React: Have you ever experienced the blessings that come from giving generously to God and others? How have you seen God's provision and abundance in your life because of your generosity? What steps can you take to cultivate a heart of radical generosity towards God and others? How can you prioritize the needs of others over your own desires and preferences?

Pray: Heavenly Father, we confess that radical generosity is not easy, and we often struggle to prioritize the needs of others above our own. Help us to trust you with our resources and give sacrificially towards your kingdom and towards others. May our giving reflect your character and bring glory to your name. Help us to overcome our fears and barriers to living a life of radical generosity, and may we experience the blessings that come from sowing generously. Amen.



Week 1 | The Way of Generosity Towards God

Day 3 | Freely and Fully

Command: *Store your treasures in heaven.* [Matthew 6:19-24 \(NCV\)](#)

Read: *Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,” says the Lord Almighty, “and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it.* [Malachi 3:10 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: One of my favorite worship songs contain the lyrics “Jesus paid it all, all to him I owe.” This truth helps me understand why I owe God my all. God gave everything to us when he gave his son to die for us. He gives freely and fully. But what does it look like for us to give freely and fully?

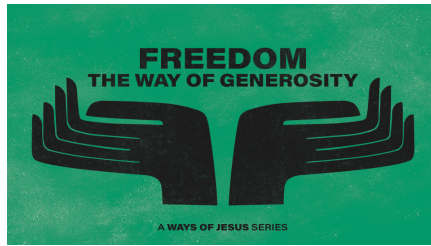
Let’s start with the tithe. The tithe is the first ten percent of our earnings and resources. Giving our first ten percent of our earnings is a principle (first fruits) that establishes our priorities. It’s our way of saying, “God, you are first in my life.”

God loves to receive the first of our resources, but not because he needs it. What he wants is our whole hearts. Matthew 6:21 says, “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” This kind of giving is rooted in the understanding that God already owns it all.

Giving faithfully (through our resources, time, and talents) opens the door to an overflow of blessings. Scripture says that God tells us to test him in this. This is the only place in the bible that encourages us to test God. Testimony after testimony declares God’s blessing on the lives of people who tithe. Some say blessings come in the form of financial stability, while others say they come in the form of a closer and deeper relationship with God and other Christ followers. We simply give back to him (what is already his) and God blesses in return. He invites us with open arms into this adventure with him.

React: Where are you in your giving journey? What changes can you make to show God that he is first in your life?

Pray: Thank you, God, for giving freely and fully. Help me to have an open heart and put your first in my finances.



Week 1 | The Way of Generosity Towards God

Day 4 | Tithing is Choosing God First

Command: *And now I bring the first fruits of the soil that you, Lord, have given me.* [Deuteronomy 26:10 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *Be sure to set aside a tenth of all that your fields produce each year. Eat the tithe of your grain, new wine and olive oil, and the firstborn of your herds and flocks in the presence of the Lord your God at the place he will choose as a dwelling for his Name, so that you may learn to revere the Lord your God always.* [Deuteronomy 14:22-23 \(NIV\)](#)

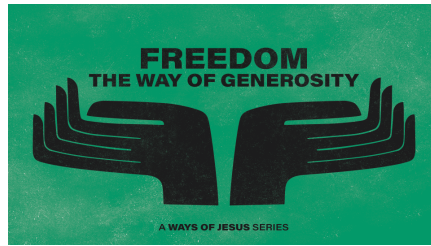
Reflect: Our church had these red velvet bags which were passed between each aisle when it was time to collect our generosity envelopes. It was reminiscent of our childhood watching our parents pull out a few dollars to donate to our church as the wooden pole with the bag at the end of it swept through our row. So when the red bag made its way to us, as newly committed Christ followers, we thought we were big shots dropping in a twenty dollar bill - fifteen more than what we were used to seeing.

We later came to understand what tithing really meant. “Be sure to set aside a tenth of all that your fields produce each year. ([Deut. 14:22](#))” A tenth of a year’s wages was significantly more than the twenty bucks we were giving. This discovery sent us into a temporary shock, and revealed the changes God was asking us to make in regards to our finances. He wanted us to be generous with him.

Tithing is not simply tipping God. He does not need it. He is seeking hearts. Tithing our tenth to him is an act of honoring him. It’s choosing him first over money.

React: Where does your heart stand when it comes to tithing? Is it time to start honoring the Lord with what he is asking of you?

Pray: Lord, I want to honor you. Reveal in me where I am not putting you first. Help me change that through my generosity towards you.



Week 1 | The Way of Generosity Towards God

Day 5 | More Than Enough

Command: *Give to those who ask, and don't turn away from those who want to borrow from you.*
[Matthew 5:42 \(TLB\)](#)

Read: *Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.* [Colossians 3:12 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: My Lolo and Lola raised my Kuya and me from infancy until I was about five. Mom and Dad were young professionals working in Manila, so we were left in the care of Lolo and Lola most of the day. Every morning before the sun rose, my sixty-five-year-old Lola would walk a mile to the market to purchase provisions for our daily meals. Though of little means, she managed to cook up two meals for the entire family of six – eggs and fresh pandesal for breakfast, and a pot of soup with fresh vegetables and some protein for lunch and dinner.

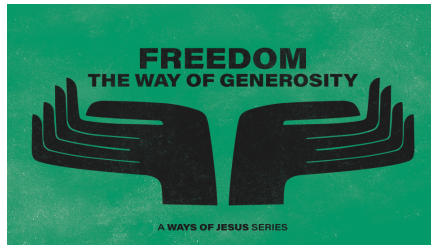
To make ends meet, Lola and Lolo ran a small convenience store where they sold a variety of everyday items – bath soap, detergent, Juicy Fruit gum, matches, rice grains. At home, Lola would freeze flavored water in thin plastic sleeves to sell to the neighborhood kids for ten cents apiece. Lola's entrepreneurial nature helped to keep our family afloat, albeit by a thin margin.

Oftentimes, neighbors would run a tab at the convenience store that they later couldn't afford to pay. Kids almost always didn't have the money to buy a refreshing stick of flavored water. Yet Lola never turned anyone away. Knowing full-well that the young mother down the street would never be able to pay back what she owed, Lola would scoop out a cup or two of rice for her to cook for her family; she'd give away frozen treats to the kids and invite them to watch cartoons at our home – the only one with a TV and a freezer in the barrio.

Lolo and Lola were not only incredibly generous and overflowing with love for our family, they were also extraordinarily compassionate towards their neighbors. Though they didn't have much, paradoxically, they actually had more than enough. Most of their store customers were never able to pay their tab. No matter. They weren't really relying on that to keep us afloat. They relied on God.

React: To whom can you show radical generosity? What would that look like for you?

Pray: God, open my eyes to see the needs around me. Ready my hands to care for those in need.



Week 2 | The Way of Generosity Toward Others

Day 1 | Want to Join Us for Dinner?

Command: *Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back.* [Luke 6:30 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.* [John 3:16 \(NIV\)](#)

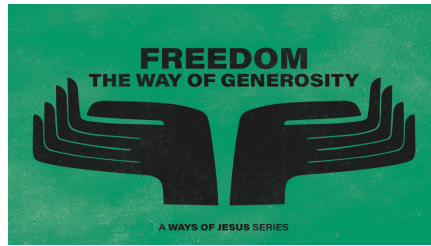
Reflect: Growing up I never understood why my mama would always cook so much food. Although we were a family of six her cooking was always enough to feed at least double our family. I remember asking my mama many times why her cooking has been and continues to be so generous. At one point I thought she didn't know how to properly portion her meals, but as I got older, I have noticed that although our family has continued to grow, so has my mama's delicious cooking.

Throughout the years my mama has continued to do something each evening. She picks up the phone, calls someone, and asks, "Want to join us for dinner? I cooked and have plenty of food." Even now that everyone in our family has families of our own—without fail—we can all expect a call from her asking us the same question.

No matter the season, my mama's table has always been full with family and friends. I now realize that for years my mama's cooking has not only been feeding our bodies but also our souls. She has used her gift of cooking to gather others and listen, encourage, guide, comfort, and love. My mama is selfless and generous with her love. She is willing to give others all that she has and more.

React: What are some practical ways you can be generous with your love this week?

Pray: Heavenly Father, help me use my gifts to show others about your great love.



Week 2 | The Way of Generosity Toward Others

Day 2 | The Gift That Keeps on Giving

Command: *But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.* [Matthew 6:3-4 \(NIV\)](#)

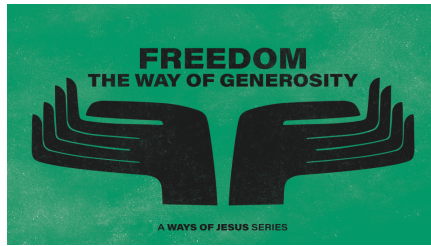
Read: *Even as I try to please everyone in every way. For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many, so that they may be saved.* [1 Corinthians 10:33 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: “The gift that keeps on giving.” That catchy commercial phrase was meant to invoke feelings people get when they receive a present that gives enjoyment over and over versus a gift that provides that feeling once. If we’ve experienced generosity, the act of generosity in itself is the gift that keeps on giving. It’s a memory we will always remember over and over, but also triggers a chain reaction for it to continue. In my experiences with generosity, I’ve found that many times, the generous act was done without any expectation of it being returned by the giver, was done without being asked by the recipient, and was motivated by love. The root of genuine generosity is tied to loving others even if it is someone you don’t even know.

At a very young age, I witnessed firsthand what generosity looks like from both my parents. They grew up poor in the Philippines. They came to America in their early 20’s to work for a better life, not for themselves, but to support their parents and siblings left behind. Shortly after arriving to America, the little they had, they shared so freely with others. Countless times, they provided a safe home for family and friends during difficult times. They comforted the grieving, and chased down every homeless person to feed, provide clothing, and necessities. Being born in America, I didn’t experience extreme poverty like my parents. Yet their model of generosity is something engrained deep in my mind and my heart. I’ll always remember it and continue that legacy of love with my children.

React: What is something that the Holy Spirit has been tugging on your heart to do, to extend generosity to someone today?

Pray: Lord, open my eyes, heart, and mind to the needs of others around me so I can be generous with my time, treasure, and talent. Thank you, Lord, for blessing me more than I can ask, think or imagine, so I can be a blessing to someone else.



Week 2 | The Way of Generosity Toward Others

Day 2 | A Generous Heart

Command: *But when you give to someone in need, don't let your left hand know what your right hand is doing. Give your gifts in private, and your Father, who sees everything, will reward you.* [Matthew 6:3-4 \(NLT\)](#)

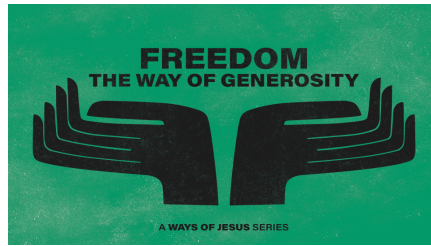
Read: *Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts. But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a few cents. Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, "Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on."* [Mark 12:41-44 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: My mother grew up in a household with few material things. Her family lived in “The Housing Projects” reserved for families that qualified, based on their income. She speaks fondly of those years after World War II, when the world was rebuilding and people were happy that peace had returned. As a result of those early years, my mother understood the value of every penny earned. When she became a wife and mother, her circumstances improved. My mother and father were able to buy a brand-new home on a cul de sac, where they raised 4 children. My parent’s decision for my mother to stay home and be there for the kids meant one income for a family of six. We never went without, but we were limited on what we could afford. A monthly trip to a fast food restaurant was our big night out. A car ride to the Midwest to visit our grandparents was our vacation. No fancy restaurants, no plane rides, just a practical way of living.

As the years went on, and her children moved out, I was surprised to learn that my mother had been giving her older sister, \$100 a month to help supplement her fixed income. My mother, also on a fixed income, found a way to manage her money to allow for this gift. This went on for many years, until her sister’s death. My mother never shared her giving with anyone. She gave from the small amount she had, like the poor widow in Jesus’s example. When I discovered my mother’s act of generosity a few years ago, I consider her example whenever a need arises within my family and community. I am thankful for her example of how to be a good steward of her resources.

React: Is there someone in your life that needs your help with time or money? Can you sacrifice a small amount to make a huge difference in someone’s life?

Pray: Help me to live my life with a generous heart.



Week 2 | The Way of Generosity Toward Others

Day 4 | Contagious Generosity

Command: *Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back.* [Luke 6:30 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *Give freely and spontaneously. Don't have a stingy heart. The way you handle matters like this triggers God, your God's blessing in everything you do, all your work and ventures. There are always going to be poor and needy people among you. So I command you: Always be generous, open purse and hands, give to your neighbors in trouble, your poor and hurting neighbors.* [Deuteronomy 15:10-11 \(Message\)](#)

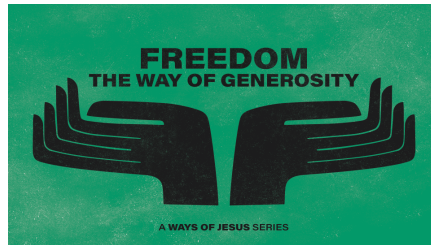
Reflect: Melissa and Ronnie invited me to meet them downtown to serve the homeless. I brought along a friend and brought some packaged food items to contribute. I had no idea what to expect nor how my life would be forever changed by that first of many mornings with Melissa and Ronnie.

They had invited a few friends who invited a few friends. We all brought items that included water, soda, snacks, new socks and underwear, toiletries, gently used shoes and clothes. We loaded everything on a borrowed (with permission) flatbed cart, prayed together and began to walk.

Ronnie knew the neighborhood well. The only agenda was to serve. If someone asked for a pair of shoes, Ronnie would offer them two. There were no qualifications to receive and no limits to give. Pretty quickly, Ronnie's generosity spread throughout the group. Even when we saw a woman selling our shoes around the corner, Ronnie said "That's Okay." We moved past her and continued to give generously with open hands. What I learned is that generosity and open hands are not only contagious but God uses generosity to fill my heart.

React: How can you live generously with open hands? Who are your neighbors in trouble, your poor and hurting neighbors that you can serve?

Pray: Thank you Jesus for showing me your upside-down way of generosity. It is in giving that we receive. Please open my eyes to neighbors in need and show me ways that I can generously give my time, treasure and talents.



Week 2 | The Way of Generosity Toward Others

Day 5 | United in Generosity

Command: Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back. [Luke 6:30 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: All the believers were united in heart and mind. And they felt that what they owned was not their own, so they shared everything they had. The apostles testified powerfully to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and God's great blessing was upon them all. There were no needy people among them, because those who owned land or houses would sell them and bring the money to the apostles to give to those in need. [Acts 4:32–35 \(NLT\)](#)

Reflect: The early Christians in Acts 4:32–35 were one in spirit and purpose and gave generously of all they had. They were aware that their wealth were gifts from God to be used for the good of others, not their own. When we acknowledge that everything we have is his and freely use our time, talent, and resources for his causes, we demonstrate our generosity toward God.

People who selflessly give of themselves to serve others and glorify God are examples of people who are generous towards God. Witnessing such deeds might have a profound effect on us and motivate us to reassess our priorities. Time, talent, and money are all priceless resources that can be applied to the glory of God. Giving up our possessions and actively looking for opportunities to bless others are both necessary steps in developing generosity. Let us adopt a heart of generosity toward God and others as we consider [Acts 4:32–35](#). May we take a lesson from the early Christians and use what we have to help those in need and build the kingdom of God. We can live generously and reflect God's love to the world by nurturing a heart of unselfish generosity. This will bring us joy and contentment.

React: What does generosity toward God look like? What do you value more, and why? Money, talent, or time? How has your charity toward God and others developed?

Pray: Loving God, inspire unity and selflessness. Help us share what we have so that there is no need that goes unmet. Bless us with the opportunity to testify to the resurrection. Guide us in love and compassion. Amen.



Week 1 | The Way of Prayer

Day 1 | Supernatural Connection

Command: *Pray then this way.* [Matthew 6:9 \(ESV\)](#)

Read: *As often as possible Jesus withdrew to out-of-the-way places for prayer.* [Luke 5:16 \(Message\)](#)

Reflect: One Saturday afternoon my husband and I were sitting in our family room having a conversation. I began to share something that I had recently learned about myself, when a package was delivered to our doorstep. My husband got up to get the box and as he began unpacking the box from the other room, he said, “Keep going, I’m listening!” I asked him to come back but he said “It’s OK. I can hear you!” I said, “I know that you can hear me, but I need you to sit with me while I share this.” Even if he could hear me, I needed to see his eyes and connect. What I was sharing was very personal and tender to my heart. He returned and it made a big difference in our connection and conversation.

Prayer is about connection with the Lord himself. It’s not about listing my needs or meeting a requirement of God. Father God is madly in love with me and wants my full attention. When I am still and seek him completely, even for a moment, I am blessed.

When Jesus taught us to pray the Lord’s prayer, he knew that prayer wasn’t about saying the right words for God’s benefit. When I calm my spirit, I connect to him and I am changed. I am made aware of God’s holy presence. He is worthy of praise and is trustworthy. His kingdom is far better than my ways; he is my provider. He forgives me and I am reminded that he wants me to forgive others. His Spirit leads, guides and protects me. Finally, Jesus ends the prayer by having us praise God again, knowing that in praising him we receive joy and hope for the future. I am amazed at how God supernaturally speaks to me and blesses me through a prayer that Jesus gave us thousands of years ago. How many times have I said the words and missed all of that?

React: *Get alone. Be still. Speak the words of the Lord’s prayer from your heart and see what God can do supernaturally in your heart and mind.*

Pray: *Thank you Jesus for giving us the words to pray. Help them to come alive for me today, that I would honor you with this time.*



Week 1 | The Way of Prayer

Day 2 | Embrace Authenticity in Prayer

Command: *Pray then this way.* [Matthew 6:9 \(ESV\)](#)

Read: *And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly. And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words. Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him.* [Matthew 6:5-8 \(NKJV\)](#)

Reflect: Jesus tells me to pray authentically, putting aside my need for recognition or acceptance. In the middle of the chaos of life, I'm invited to build a sacred, distraction-free area where I may be completely open with God. I can sense his transforming work and the depth of his love via openness and sincerity. It entails assessing my motivations, revealing my most intimate ideas, anxieties, and desires, and letting God mold my heart through prayer. Authenticity in prayer allows for a richer encounter with God and a deeper sense of His presence.

React: How can you ensure your prayers are genuinely motivated by a desire to connect with God, not seeking validation from others? Will you set aside distraction-free time for private prayer, solely focused on communing with God? What changes can you make to authentically express your thoughts, feelings, and needs to Him?

Prayer: Help me in prayer, Heavenly Father, to let go of the desire for attention from others. Teach me to approach you with sincerity and vulnerability, cultivating an authentic connection. Help me to make time for uninterrupted connection with you. May my prayers genuinely reflect my love and trust in You. Amen.



Week 1 | The Way of Prayer

Day 3 | God, I Need You.

Command: *Pray then this way.* [Matthew 6:9 \(ESV\)](#)

Read: *Rejoice always, pray continually.* [1 Thessalonians 5:16-17 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: There was a season in my life when prayer was something I recited out of memory and mostly remembered during difficult times. My prayers were more like desperate pleadings: “*God, I need you, please help me, forgive me, heal me, protect me.*” As I continue to grow in faith, I now realize that prayer is meant to be a part of my life - not just in difficult times. Prayer is no different than eating, sleeping, or breathing. Prayer is not only one way I communicate with God, but it is also an opportunity to bring my gratitude, needs and concerns before him. So when I wake up, I give thanks and pray. When I’m stuck in traffic, I pray. When I’m at work, I pray. When I’m out and about, I pray. I find myself praying often and throughout my day. This is not because I want to be super spiritual. Many of my prayers consist of a short sentence or two. But because prayer is an ongoing conversation, an attitude of my heart, and a lifeline with God I can no longer live without.

React: When was the last time you said a prayer? If it’s been a while, would you be willing to stop and pray now? You may be surprised what happens when you stop for a minute or a few seconds, open your heart, and talk to God.

Pray: Father God, help me remember that prayer is an ongoing conversation with you, and you are more interested in the posture of my heart than my words.



Week 1 | The Way of Prayer

Day 4 | Say Less

Command: *Pray then this way.* [Matthew 6:9 \(ESV\)](#)

Read: *In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God.*
[Romans 8:26-27 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: My mom taught me how to pray at a very young age. By the time I was five, I was praying the Catholic Rosary with my mom on a nightly basis, reciting every element by heart. Over time, praying the Rosary became so mechanical, it felt like a task to speed through so that I can check one of the many religious boxes for the week.

Fast forward to my adult years rediscovering Jesus and the Bible. I began meeting with co-workers for lunchtime bible study and prayer. I relished hearing others pray what felt like “spiritual prayers” that resonated deep in my soul. I wanted to pray like them – long prayers full of heartfelt poetry. I had even asked one of the women at work to teach me to pray like she prayed. She simply smiled and said something like, “Just spend time with Jesus and his word. He’ll teach you to pray. And when you don’t know what to pray, his Spirit will pray for you.” In retrospect, I think she was trying to tell me that Jesus is interested in just being with me. He doesn’t need me to pray long-winded formulaic or even poetic prayers. He already knows what I need. Sinking this understanding deep in my bones has taken many years. I talk a lot, so keeping my prayers short is quite a challenge. I sometimes imagine God smiling, saying to the host of angels around him, “Ah, get ready. This one is gonna be a long one.”

I am still in the process of cultivating the practice of saying less and listening more, keeping it brief knowing that Jesus already knows my heart. The less I say (pray), the more space I give his Spirit to speak to my heart.

React: How has your prayer practice developed over time? Have you found yourself once in a while at a loss for what to pray? Take heart. Jesus already knows what your heart holds. He will meet you where you are at.

Pray: Jesus, thank you for hearing my heart without me having to say a word.



Week 1 | The Way of Prayer

Day 5 | Teach Me to Pray

Command: *Pray then this way.* [Matthew 6:9 \(ESV\)](#)

Read: *...commune with God at all times.* [Romans 12:12 \(TPT\)](#)

Reflect: As a young Christ follower the words “*pray without ceasing*” ([1 Thessalonians 5:17](#)) made no sense to me. I mean how was I supposed to do that? I figured it was just a religious cliché and not to be taken seriously. Throughout the years I noticed that this idea pops up in scripture frequently; “*be constant in prayer, be persistent in prayer, pray at all times.*” Perhaps I should give this some thought. What does it mean to pray all the time?

I knew that prayer means to communicate and commune with God. A deeper dive revealed that this means to be aware of his nearness so I can participate in his presence. It began to make sense to me that if I was going to pray a lot, I needed to notice Christ nearby rather than think of him abstractly and far away. Talking with God requires this. Since his presence is constant, I can aspire to be consistently aware of and participate in his presence.

This requires developing a new practice of noticing Christ in the gaps between the many things that constantly demand my attention throughout the day. Between the people, tasks, events and situations that fill my day there are gaps of time. Some are quite brief, and some are expansive. In those gaps I can pause and notice his presence, enjoy his loving attention, and inquire into his vast database of goodness and wisdom. I find that vigilance is required to develop any consistency in this practice. And the payoff is a nice dose of the peace of Christ that surpasses common understanding.

React: Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving. [Colossians 4:2 \(NIV\)](#)

Pray: Master, teach me to pray.



Week 2 | The Way of the Father

Day 1 | The Father's Love for my Father

Command: *Do not worry.* [Matthew 6:31-32 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him; for he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust.* [Psalm 103:13-14 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: My father was a pretty great Dad! He was fun, but strict when he needed to be. He was kind, caring, and always there for our family. When I became a Christian, I was able to connect with my heavenly father, because of my earthly father's example. I felt God's love and care for me, as I did from my own father.

Unfortunately, my father was not a believer and very rarely attended church with us. Time flew by. My siblings and I grew up, married and had families of our own. My Dad was enjoying his golden years, when he received the awful news that he had Stage 4 lung cancer. He waited too long for any treatment that could save his life.

My fear was that he would pass away without knowing Jesus. I prayed for a miracle that he would open his heart and become a believer. He was given 3 short months to live and time was running out. Our extended family gathered near him and waited. Our prayers were answered when my mother's cousin traveled hundreds of miles to be by my Dad's bedside. She asked him if he knew Jesus. My father responded with a quiet "yes". This cousin was able to talk to him in a way that reached his heart. His eyes were opened to a present and future relationship with God.

My heavenly Father loved and cared about my earthly father. He wanted to have a personal relationship with my father, just as God does with each of us. God remembers his children regardless of their age and circumstances. He knows our hearts and wants to be part of our lives.

React: God loves us and cares about our struggles. You can be a "good" person, but that is not enough. We need a personal relationship with God. Is there someone in your life that is struggling with their faith? Can you pray that they would understand how much God loves them?

Pray: I want to open my heart to you. I desire to feel your love and compassion. I pray for your guidance and wisdom in my life.



Week 2 | The Way of the Father

Day 2 | The Divine Model of Prayer

Command: *Do not worry.* [Matthew 6:31-32 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name.* [Matthew 6:9 \(NKJV\)](#)

Reflect: In this verse, Jesus gives his disciples a model prayer—commonly known as the Lord's Prayer—in order to teach them how to pray. This verse's significance goes above and beyond simple recitation, though. Jesus underlines how crucial it is to refer to God as our heavenly Father and to recognize the purity of his name. Jesus effectively demonstrates the tone for a humble and modest attitude to prayer.

Using the phrase “Our Father” to address God helps us to remember how close we are to him. It encourages us to approach God with childlike faith and dependence. As we acknowledge the sanctity of God's name, we are reminded of his greatness and worth. It instructs our hearts to concentrate on his attributes and give him the respect and adoration he merits.

As we pray, we are called to surrender our own agendas and seek God's kingdom and his righteousness above all else. This prayer serves as a reminder that our relationship with God is not about bending his will to ours but aligning our will with his. It invites us to seek his guidance, wisdom, and provision in all aspects of our lives.

React: How can we cultivate a deeper sense of intimacy with God as our heavenly Father in our prayer life? In what ways can we demonstrate reverence for God's name in our thoughts, words, and actions? How does acknowledging God as our heavenly Father and honoring his name impact our perspective on prayer?

Pray: Dear Heavenly Father, I come before you, acknowledging your holiness and greatness. Thank you for the privilege of calling you “Father” and for the intimate relationship I have with you through Jesus Christ. Help me to approach you with childlike trust and dependence, knowing that you are always ready to listen. May your name be hallowed in my life, and may I always honor and exalt you in all I do. In Jesus' name, amen.



Week 2 | The Way of the Father

Day 3 | The Potter's Hands

Command: *Do not worry.* [Matthew 6:31-32 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *O Lord, you are our father. We are the clay, and you are the potter. We all are formed by your hand.* [Isaiah 64:8-9 \(NLT\)](#)

Reflect: It's not how you start; it's how you finish. A lump of clay doesn't look like much in the beginning. It's a pile of moist dirt that doesn't look like it has much of a purpose, until the potter puts his hands to it and gets to work. Without God molding and shaping us into his unique creation, our purpose and divine design is not being lived out yet. There's a process that needs to take place to create a masterpiece in us from forming to fire.

I'm reminded of a fun pottery class I took with a friend, where I noticed parallels of the pottery process and God's hands at work in our lives. I realized quickly I had to use gentle hands to slowly form the clay. I couldn't be heavy handed or I would crush it. Timing was everything and the process couldn't be rushed. If I tried to build it higher right away without setting a good base it would collapse. God's gentle hands mold and shape us for our divine purpose. He is always patient with us and his timing is always perfect. In contrast, we tend to be impatient, trying to accomplish things our way or in our timing. We may even avoid a crucial part of God's refining process that occurs when we undergo trials in life. As with refining clay in the fire of the kiln, God's refining process makes it strong.

We are a constant work in progress. Like the clay, God created us from dust but that's not our ultimate design. We are his masterpiece. God makes everything beautiful in his time. For he has set eternity in the human heart. Ecclesiastes 3:11(NIV) Let's stand on God's promise and trust him that if it's not good, God's not done.

React: Are the influences shaping who you are worldly expectations or past hurts? Are you trusting God's timing and process?

Pray: Thank you, Father, your plans for me are good, not to harm me. Thank you for giving me hope that you are not done with me yet. I submit my life to you every day and invite you to do your will in and through me.



Week 2 | The Way of the Father

Day 4 | Ask, Seek, Knock. Repeat.

Command: *Do not worry.* [Matthew 6:31-32 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *"Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. "Which of you, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!"* [Matthew 7:7-11 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: Since they were born, I have persistently prayed over my children: "Jesus, please draw my children so close that their faith and love for you would be even greater than mine." At times, it seemed as though God was answering my prayer. Other times, when as teenagers my children experienced difficulties including promiscuity, addiction, a drug overdose and a suicide attempt, I wondered if God heard me knocking at all. But I kept praying.

This month one of my adult daughters called to tell me that her family had found their new church home. She was excited to share all about it. I see now that it was the hard journey that actually brought my children to what my heart longed for. God knew all along. He heard me.

My 7-year-old Grandson recently told me "I love to talk about Jesus, Grandma!" Then yesterday, my daughter sent me a secret recording of her 4-year-old daughter singing "God of Wonders" at the top of her lungs. God's answer was bigger and better than I imagined as it extended to the next generation. Ask, seek, knock. Repeat. God hears you.

React: Ask God for the deepest yearnings of your heart. Seek him and trust his faithfulness and his plans for you. Keep knocking. He hears you.

Pray: Thank you Abba Father for your good gifts and your perfect timing. Help me to have faith and to trust you when the waiting is hard. I want what you want for me according to your plan. I trust your wisdom and timing.



Week 2 | The Way of the Father

Day 5 | Our Father

Command: *Do not worry.* [Matthew 6:31-32 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *But you are our Father, though Abraham does not know us or Israel acknowledge us; you, Lord, are our Father, our Redeemer from of old is your name.*

[Isaiah 63:16 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: When I think of God as my “father” of course I reflect on my own earthly father... I mean fathers. My biological father left when I was two and randomly popped up in my life when it was convenient to him. My mom remarried when I was 5 to an Army officer who was very strict and uncompromising. He did adopt us, my brother, sister, and I when I was in middle school. Then once he and my mom divorced, I barely heard from him until my late twenties. My mom remarried during my high school years. My step dad was a giving, loving man, but more of my mom’s husband than my “father”. So to say that I was confused about the meaning of “father” is an understatement. Now I look at my husband, a father that absolutely loves our two sons. He is not perfect, he’s an earthly, human father, but he’s there, consistent. My boys never question the love of their father.

As I read Isaiah 63:16, I’m reminded that GOD is our Heavenly Father. He knows us. He understands our struggles. He is always consistent, always there, no matter what.

React: Did you grow up with a loving father? If not, you can still talk to our Heavenly Father and know that he’s always there. Always listening. Always loving.

Pray: Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for loving me. Thank you for being patient, kind, understanding, and available. Help me to open up more to you. Amen.



Week 3 | The Way of the Kingdom

Day 1 | Your Kingdom Come

Command: *But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.* [Matthew 6:33 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *For behold— the kingdom of God is within you.* [Luke 17:21 \(KJ21\)](#)

Reflect: I used to think of the Kingdom of Heaven as being in the future. So, I thought, maybe I can put off those changes I need to make for a while. However, I learned that since the King is timeless, his kingdom exists beyond the boundaries of time and is eternally past, present, and future. Jesus said his Kingdom has come near, right now. It is always close by, all around us, all the time.

When asked what to look for to see the Kingdom's arrival, Jesus said *"For behold, the kingdom of God is within you [in your hearts] and among you [surrounding you].* Luke 17:21 (ABCE) So, while I know I will exist gloriously in heaven without the limits and pain of my biological body after it dies, I can have an eternal peace and hope for a good life right now because the Kingdom of God is always all around and within me.

So, it makes sense that King Jesus' urgent appeal to me is *"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near."* [Matthew 3:2 \(NIV\)](#) Christ's Kingdom is near because Christ is nearby. The space around us appears empty, but it is not. It is dense and lush with the presence of Christ. And with him comes everything we need to live life in the optimal way the creator of life intended.

So, I might want to pause and reconsider how I'm living. Because a divine way of good life flows in the space all around me and I am invited to breathe in the Light of Life and participate in the goodness, peace and joy of the King's ways of life.

React: Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near. [Matthew 3:2 \(NLT\)](#)

Pray: Father, open my eyes to see your near and now loving embrace that will guide me in the way everlasting.



Week 3 | The Way of the Kingdom

Day 2 | Help!

Command: *But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.* [Matthew 6:33 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God.* [Romans 8:26-27 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: 25 years ago, our family was everything I had always dreamed of. Our three children were happy and healthy. We owned a home in a wonderful neighborhood. I was a Children's Church Director and my husband was a Worship Leader and Private School Administrator. We seemed to be at a wonderful point in our family's life.

It all came crashing down the day after Thanksgiving. My husband decided to leave our marriage for a man that he had been having an affair with. In the months that followed he lost his jobs and we lost our house.

I was overwhelmed with pain both for me and for our children. I didn't know what to pray because my mind was spinning. I wanted it all to go away. My only prayer was "Help!"

What I know now, is that the Spirit knew what I needed. He knew my heart and he knew my pain. I only needed to turn to the Lord, surrender it all and allow God to heal our family. Our brokenness was not created by God, but the Lord worked in amazing ways to heal us, redeem the situation and strengthen all of us.

Since then, when faced with difficult circumstances, I know that I can trust God's way - the way of the kingdom. God is faithful and his way is good. He will lead me. I need only to surrender and take one step at a time in the right direction.

React: Are you in a difficult season? Surrender and ask God to lead you where he wants you. That's the way of the kingdom.

Pray: Lord Jesus, I trust you with all things knowing that the Spirit knows my heart. Today I pray, "Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."



Week 3 | The Way of the Kingdom

Day 3 | Your Kingdom, Lord; Not Mine

Command: *But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.* [Matthew 6:33 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory in the heavens...When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them? You have made them a little lower than the angels and crowned them with glory and honor. You made them rulers over the works of your hands; you put everything under their feet...* [Psalm 8:1, 3-6 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: Several years ago, I was blessed to discover the work of theologian Dallas Willard. He wrote a lot about being a student of the ways of Jesus, and becoming an active participant in the work God is already doing in the world around me. One of Willard's upside-down teachings that has profoundly impacted the way I engage the world is the idea that God divinely intended for humanity to co-reign with him here on earth. What an astounding thought that God made us rulers over his creation! When God created humanity, he blessed them saying *"Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth and govern it. Reign over...everything that has life"* ([Genesis 1:28, NLT](#)). While this might have been God's divine intent, my natural inclination is to rule my own little sphere by my own will instead of surrendering to his. That's when God's intent for my life, and the life of others through me, goes haywire! Instead of bringing the goodness of heaven to people around me, I selfishly rule my queendom mostly for my benefit.

Not so with Jesus. He is the ultimate example of faithful obedience to God's will for the world. He instinctively knew that God's plan, though it would lead to an excruciating death, was perfect and good. When Jesus prayed "Not my will be done, but yours" before he was arrested, tortured, and crucified, God's ultimate purpose of reconciling the world back to him was fulfilled. In teaching us to pray "your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven," Jesus invites us to surrender our kingdoms to God. And yet at the same time he invites us to rule with him, by his power, by his will. It is through our obedience to God's perfect will that his kingdom is made manifest in our world.

React: What part of your kingdom do you still need to surrender to God?

Pray: Jesus, thank you for inviting us to join you in the work that you are already doing. May we get a glimpse of heaven here on earth as we follow your will.



Week 3 | The Way of the Kingdom

Day 4 | The Priority of God's Kingdom

Command: *Seek first the kingdom of God.* [Matthew 6:33 \(NKJV\)](#)

Read: *But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.* [Matthew 6:33 \(NKJV\)](#)

Reflect: Jesus encourages his followers to place the kingdom of God and his righteousness above all else in this verse. He promises us that when we make seeking God's kingdom our main priority, he will meet all of our needs and abundantly bless us. This verse calls attention to our tendency to fret about earthly issues and draws our focus to the eternal importance of pursuing God's intentions.

Jesus invites us to connect our minds and actions with God's desire if we are to pursue his kingdom. It entails abiding by his commandments, sharing the gospel with others, and working to strengthen his dominion and reign in every area of our life. In order to live a life that reflects God's character in our words, deeds, and thoughts, we are called to strive for holiness and integrity.

React: What practical steps can you take to prioritize seeking God's kingdom in your daily lives? How can you actively seek God's righteousness and allow it to transform your character and behavior? What are some specific worldly concerns that tend to distract you from seeking God's kingdom first, and how can you overcome them?

Pray: Heavenly Father, I seek to put your kingdom first in whatever I do. Please assist me in coordinating my goals, plans, and objectives with your divine will. Please give me the discernment to recognize and avoid the world's anxieties and distractions. Fill me with your holiness so that I might embody you in everything I say and do. I have faith that as I seek your kingdom, you will meet all of my needs and richly bless me. I ask these things in the name of Christ Jesus. Amen.



Week 3 | The Way of the Kingdom

Day 5 | The Kingdom is Where the Will of the King is Done

Command: *But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.* [Matthew 6:33 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.*
[Matthew 6:10 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: The Kingdom of God used to be an ambiguous concept and I wondered how someone like me could get in. I finally heard Jesus say *the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven will enter the kingdom of heaven.* [Matthew 7:21 \(NIV\)](#) Since children do the will of their father, I decided to learn to be childlike because Jesus said *Let the little children come to me, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these. And ... unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.* [Matthew 18:3, 19:14 \(NIV\)](#)

Jesus teaches his children the secrets of his divine way of living. *Live a cheerful life, without complaining or division among yourselves. For then you will be seen as innocent, faultless, and pure children of God, even though you live in the midst of a brutal and perverse culture. For you will appear among them as shining lights in the universe, holding out the words of eternal life.* Philippians 2:14-15 (TPT)

Much of what Jesus teaches is counter to the ways of our “brutal and perverse culture.” As in, “*However, I say to you, love your enemy, bless the one who curses you, do something wonderful for the one who hates you, and respond to the very ones who persecute you by praying for them. For that will reveal your identity as children of your heavenly Father.*” Matthew 5:44-47 (TPT) As a child of a perfect Father, I set my gaze on his goodness and work to transform over time into his likeness.

React: We worry about basic needs. But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well.

Pray: Lord, give me the knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven.



Week 4 | The Way of Provision

Day 1 | Prayer Warrior

Command: *Ask in faith.* [Matthew 21:18-22 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.* [Philippians 4:6-7 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: I come from a family of worriers. I sometimes joke that worrying is in my bloodline. My late grandmother worried about mouths to feed. My father worries about health. My son worries about school. And me? I worry about ALL OF IT. However, in recent years, I've made a commitment to myself to become a prayer WARRIOR over a daily worrier. So, where do I begin?

I begin with gratitude. There's so much chaos and constant fear in the world that I lose sight of all I have to be thankful for. The truth is God has provided for every single need thus far for me and my family. Philippians 4:6 says, "Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God." If I want to experience God's peace in any circumstance, I must thank him for his goodness and faithfulness in all circumstances.

Next, I present my prayer requests to God, no matter how big, small, or impossible they may seem. And here's what's vital - I actually need to believe he will answer them! God is just as able to do what seems impossible today as he was over 2,000 years ago when he raised Jesus from the grave. How amazing is that? If starting my prayers with gratitude and believing he can do the impossible are what it takes to finally break up with worry, I'm all in!

React: Are you struggling with any worries in your life right now? Present it to God, thank him for all you have, and see how he answers your prayer.

Pray: Thank you, God, for your provisions in my life. Help me to be a prayer warrior and not a daily worrier.



Week 4 | The Way of Provision

Day 2 | Trusting God For Daily Provision

Command: *Ask in faith.* [Matthew 21:18-22 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *Give us today our daily bread.* [Matthew 6:11 \(NKJV\)](#)

Reflect: In this simple yet profound request from the Lord's Prayer, Jesus teaches us to rely on God for our daily provision. The words "our daily bread" encompass not only physical sustenance but also all our needs—both tangible and intangible. We invite him into every aspect of our lives by acknowledging our dependence on God and expressing our trust in his faithfulness. When we pray for our daily bread, we not only acknowledge our physical needs but also recognize our reliance on God for emotional, spiritual, and relational sustenance. Just as our bodies require nourishment, our souls and spirits long for nourishment from God's Word, his presence, and the fellowship of believers. This prayer reminds us that true satisfaction and fulfillment come from God alone.

Moreover, praying for our daily bread fosters a mindset of contentment and gratitude. It shifts our focus from worrying about the future or dwelling on past provisions to living in the present moment, fully relying on God's provision today. This prayer teaches us to embrace a posture of trust, surrendering our anxious thoughts and placing our confidence in God's ability to meet our needs according to his perfect plan.

In a world consumed by the pursuit of wealth, success, and material possessions, praying for our daily bread serves as a powerful reminder of God's provision in our lives. It teaches us to prioritize seeking his kingdom and trusting that he will add all the things we truly need. Through this prayer, we learn to release our worries, anxieties, and self-sufficiency, entrusting them into God's capable hands.

React: How can we develop a posture of dependence and trust in God's provision in our daily lives? Are there areas in our lives where we tend to rely more on our own efforts rather than seeking God's provision? How can we shift our focus and trust in him completely? In what ways can we demonstrate gratitude for God's daily provision and share his blessings with others?

Pray: Gracious Provider, I come before you with a humble heart, acknowledging my dependence on you for my daily needs. Help me to trust in your faithfulness and provision, knowing that you are aware of every detail of my life. Teach me to rely on you completely and not lean on my own understanding. Thank you for your abundant blessings, and may I always respond with gratitude and generosity toward others. In your name, I pray, amen.



Week 4 | The Way of Provision

Day 3 | Perfect Timing

Command: *Ask in faith.* [Matthew 21:18-22 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us.* [1 John 5:14 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: A few weeks ago, as I was praying, a thought came to mind. When it persisted, I wrote it down and this is it: “When I stop looking to circumstances or other people to supply my needs and I surrender and trust the Lord, he supernaturally gives me what I need at the right time.”

Ten minutes after I wrote those words down, my daughter called to say that she didn’t get a job that she had recently applied for. She was in tears. She thought the job opportunity was evidence of the Lord’s provision for her family and now she was disappointed and unsure of her next steps.

After listening for a bit, I read her the words that I had written down a few minutes before her call. We talked about God’s provision and timing being perfect.

It occurred to me that maybe part of God’s provision for her was that she didn’t get that job at this time. Maybe he has another job in her future? What we do know is that when we surrender our needs to Jesus in prayer and trust him, out of his great love, grace, and generosity, he supernaturally gives us what we need at exactly the right time ...and that includes perfectly timed words of encouragement.

React: Have you been praying and asking God for something in your life and it seems like he is not hearing you? Remind yourself that our heavenly Father is loving, powerful and faithful. His timing is perfect. He adores you and wants what is best for you.

Pray: Heavenly Father, I praise your name. Thank you for loving me just as I am. I recognize that you have a purpose in seasons of waiting and that you provide for my needs with impeccable timing. Today I surrender to you. There is no match for your amazing love for me and rock-solid faithfulness.



Week 4 | The Way of Provision

Day 4 | Our God is a God Who Provides

Command: *Ask in faith.* [Matthew 21:18-22 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.*

[John 14:13-14 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: When I was a senior at San Diego State University, I was feeling the pressure of having to find a full-time job after graduation. Around the same time, the church that I was attending was kicking off a generosity initiative that would support creating new spaces for their children's ministry, student's ministry, and so many other awesome things.

I had just quit my part-time job to focus on school. I didn't have a steady income. And I had never committed to giving continually at church. As I prayed about what God was inviting me to do in that season, I felt his gentle nudge to start giving faithfully; even if I thought it wasn't enough. In the process, I felt challenged to trust that God will continue to provide for me.

In all honesty, it wasn't always easy to give. Money was tight and I kept praying and hoping to find a full-time job soon or quickly after graduation. Six months before graduating I was offered a non-paid internship and it was an easy yes for me since I was desperate for experience. Not to mention that I was extremely excited to learn, grow, and simply work. But quickly after agreeing to the internship, I got offered a full-time job instead at the same place where I was going to do the internship. In that moment, I felt completely covered and protected by God. My prayers were heard and answered. He provided more than I had hope for or imagined.

React: What's an area in your life where God is inviting you to trust His provision? How can you lean into that trust this week?

Pray: Father God, thank you for the incredible ways that you provide for me. Thank you for your love, grace, and never-ending forgiveness. I pray for me to trust you more daily. To trust that you are a God who provides. In Jesus' name, amen.



Week 4 | The Way of Provision

Day 5 | In the Nick of Time

Command: *Ask in faith.* [Matthew 21:18-22 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.*

[John 14:13-14 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: My husband spent twelve years in the Navy. Much of that time was spent away from home. There were seasons when he was out to sea for six months, back home for two, and out again for several weeks. Being away from our boys was too much for him to handle. He wanted to quit. He didn't have a job lined up. Nevertheless, he felt an impression in his heart that said it was the right thing to do.

In the meantime, I had been a stay-at-home mom, off and on holding part-time jobs. The kids were still little and being present with them was more important to me than building a career. However, there was no talking my husband out of resigning from the Navy. He stepped into it with faith. I, on the other hand, had no faith – so much so that I asked my mom to pray for me. I didn't have any kind of relationship with Jesus back then. My mom did. She was so devoted to Jesus. She said, "Of course, I will pray for you. But you know, God hears you too." So I threw up a "Would you show up God?" prayer.

On the day of my husband's reenlistment, unbeknownst to me, he decided to sign on the dotted line for another four years. I was up in Los Angeles on a job interview as a paralegal. Though inexperienced in the field, I got the job on the spot. I called my husband to share the news. He said that he literally just signed for another four years!

What to do? He quickly got a hold of the reenlistment officer and rescinded his reenlistment. As God would have it, the officer understood and happily acquiesced. Who does that? Only God! He showed up in unexpected ways, and just in the nick of time! My mom was right, God heard me.

React: What, if anything, are your fretting about this season? Can you trust that God already knows what you need and is more than happy to provide?

Pray: God, thank you for your generous love towards me. And for knowing what I need before I even ask for it. Let me rest in confidence that you hear when I call on your name.



Week 5 | The Way of Forgiveness

Day 1 | My Choice: His Way!

Command: *Forgive offenders.* [Matthew 18:21-22 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.* [Colossians 3:13-14 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: I can easily remember the pain I felt during my divorce over 25 years ago. Even though I have repeatedly forgiven my former spouse, if I choose to dwell on the pain, I soon find it necessary to go back and surrender it all to Jesus again. When Jesus instructs us to forgive seventy-seven times it makes so much sense to me, but I know firsthand, that it's not easy.

"Forgiveness is an act of the will, and the will can function regardless of the temperature of the heart." – Corrie Ten Boom

Rarely do I feel like surrendering. Yet, I realize that when Jesus answered Peter in Matthew 18:21-22, he didn't add the need for any prerequisites or conditions before forgiveness was extended. I chose to forgive often times before I felt like forgiving. I often can only forgive by asking Jesus to help me to do what feels impossible. He knows my heart and hears my prayers.

Each time I surrender the situation to the Lord, he removes the emotions that lead to bitterness. My choice to forgive doesn't mean I wasn't hurt nor does it justify the other person's actions, but rather when I surrender the situation to God, I choose to forgive because that is the way of Jesus.

Rather than allowing my pain to make me bitter, the Lord uses forgiveness to bring growth and beauty in my life. As I become a better forgiver, I grow into the person God designed me to be. Out of pain, the Lord brings beauty.

React: Who do you need to forgive today? Ask Jesus to show you the way of forgiveness. Trust him with your situation. He is faithful.

Pray: Help me today to become a better forgiver and to grow to be more like you. Please show me who I need to forgive and how I can surrender the situation to you. Thank you for forgiving me.



Week 5 | The Way of Forgiveness

Day 2 | Discovering Freedom through Forgiveness

Command: *Forgive offenders.* [Matthew 18:21-22 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven.* [Luke 6:37 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: In a world filled with hurt and brokenness, forgiveness is a transformative force that brings me healing and restoration. The words of Jesus in [Luke 6:37](#) remind me of the profound impact forgiveness can have on my life: “Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven.”

Forgiveness is not merely an act of letting go or forgetting; it is a journey that leads me to freedom. When I choose to release the hurts inflicted upon me, I choose to break free from the chains of resentment, bitterness, and anger. In forgiving others, I invite God’s grace to work within me, mending my wounded heart and bringing peace to my soul.

Forgiveness, however, is not always easy for me. It requires courage, humility, and a deep trust in God’s justice and goodness. When I surrender my pain to God, he empowers me to extend mercy and grace to those who have wronged me.

React: Are there wounds you still carry? Are there people you need to forgive? Seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit to help you release any unforgiveness lingering in your heart.

Pray: Gracious Father, I surrender to you the unforgiveness that weighs heavy on my heart. Grant me strength to forgive others as you have forgiven me. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.



Week 5 | The Way of Forgiveness

Day 3 | Never Ending Forgiveness

Command: *Forgive offenders.* [Matthew 18:21-22 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *If your brother or sister sins against you, rebuke them; and if they repent, forgive them. Even if they sin against you seven times in a day and seven times come back to you saying “I repent,” you must forgive them.* [Luke 17:3-4 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: My relationship with my mom has always been a complicated one and it has changed and shifted multiple times over the years. When I was kid, it was me running to my room angry and shutting the door as loud as I could. As a teenager, it was screaming matches between the two of us. We never seemed to be on the same page. As a young adult, it was me moving out and not talking to my mom for a whole year. Like I said before, complicated.

Looking back, I think my mom always hoped that I would move back home at some point, which is why she was extremely upset when I got engaged and she realized that was never happening. She never shared any of those thoughts or feelings with me, which is why the entire year of my engagement I just thought my mom wanted to be difficult for no reason. We barely spoke to each other that year. She missed my bridal shower, the courthouse wedding, and refused to get involved in the wedding planning. On my wedding day, I wasn't even sure if she was going to show up; but she did and everything that had happened prior to that didn't matter anymore. It was all forgiven.

I've been married for three years and sometimes it still hurts to reflect on my engagement year and wedding season and realize that my mom wasn't present. But every time I think about it, I forgive my mom all over again and I feel grateful to have her in my life. Also, it gives me the opportunity to sit in God's presence and thank Him for forgiving me and loving me regardless of how many times I've fallen short. It's so powerful to think of how much God has stretched my heart to learn how to forgive others. Putting your faith in Jesus raises both the question and an invitation of extending forgiveness to others when they hurt us. Not just one time or two times, but as many times as is needed.

React: Can you forgive others endlessly in the same way that God forgives you?

Pray: Father God, thank you for your incredible capacity to forgive. Your forgiveness knows no bounds, and it's a beautiful reminder of your love for us. As we navigate our own journeys of forgiveness, please grant us the strength and grace to extend that same forgiveness to others, just as you do for us. Amen.



Week 5 | The Way of Forgiveness

Day 4 | Redeemed and Reconciled - Our Return Back to God

Command: *Forgive offenders.* [Matthew 18:21-22 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *In Him, we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and understanding.* [Ephesians 1:7-8 \(NKJV\)](#)

Reflect: In the ICU, I spend much time listening to many patients while holding their hands for support and comfort as they share their stories about their lives as they near the end of their lives. This window of time is holy and sacred. Often, I would ask them if there were any family members or friends to contact so no words are left unsaid. Most of the time, family and dear friends come and are with their loved ones until they take their last breath.

There was one particular older gentleman who had no family or friends to come and see him. He shared he had done so many bad things in his life that have hurt the people who cared most about him who eventually gave up and abandoned him. He shared his severe illness was punishment from God who would never forgive him. As I sat with him, I shared there are no sins too great for God to forgive through the blood of Christ Jesus. In this sacred time, I shared with him that his past is not on trial. Through Jesus's sacrifice on the cross, his blood covered his sins. He received Christ that day and passed away knowing he did not die alone as God was with him.

The measure of God's forgiveness is not about beating ourselves up. Rather, the measure of God's forgiveness is according to the riches of **His grace**. The Apostle Paul started this verse with "In Him" meaning God has already given this blessing to us through Christ's sacrifice on the cross. His blood bought us from our slavery to sin that we cannot do ourselves. Forgiveness is the ultimate true freedom given by Christ and in Christ.

Reaction: Forgiveness is freedom in Christ. Who do we need to forgive to receive freedom that only Christ can give.

Prayer: Jesus, I know that I am a sinner and need your forgiveness. I believe that you died on the cross for my sins and rose from the grave to give me life. I know you are the only way to God. Please forgive me, change my life, and show me how to know You. Amen.



Week 5 | The Way of Forgiveness

Day 5 | Embracing Forgiveness and Extending Grace

Command: *Forgive offenders.* [Matthew 18:21-22 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.* [Matthew 6:12 \(NKJV\)](#)

Reflect: In this verse, Jesus emphasizes the value of forgiveness in our interactions with God and other people. By asking God to “forgive us our debts,” we confess our need for his grace and mercy. We acknowledge that we owe a debt of sin because we have fallen short of his ideal standard. Through this prayer, we humble ourselves and request God to forgive us and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

The second line of the prayer, “as we also have forgiven our debtors,” serves as a reminder that forgiveness involves forgiving others as well as forgiving yourself. Jesus focuses on the mutually exclusive relationship between asking for and offering forgiveness. Our capacity for forgiveness comes from a heart that has known the fullness of God's mercy and grace.

When we choose to forgive people, we choose to release them from their obligation to repay us and to show them compassion, mercy, and love in the same way that God has shown them to us. We are freed from the bonds of bitterness, resentment, and rage when we forgive. It is an act of submission and a manifestation of God's nature in us. We mirror the transforming power of God's forgiveness and welcome his healing into our relationships by forgiving others.

React: What steps could you take to better comprehend the extent of God's mercy in our own lives? Are there any outstanding disputes or grievances that prevent you from forgiving others? How can you move toward reconciliation and forgiveness? How can you develop a spirit of mercy toward those who have harmed you, that reflects the compassion and grace of God?

Pray: Gracious Father, I come before you and acknowledge my need for your forgiveness. I thank you for the tremendous grace you have extended to me through Jesus Christ. Please help me to completely comprehend the extent of your forgiveness, so that it can influence my views and behavior toward others. Give me the ability to forgive those who have harmed or wronged me as you have done for me. May your grace and kindness flow through me to repair and rebuild connections. In Jesus' name, amen.



Week 6 | The Way of Guidance

Day 1 | Seeking God's Guidance and Protection

Command: *Watch and pray.* [Matthew 26:41 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.* [Matthew 6:13 \(NKJV\)](#)

Reflect: In this verse from the Lord's Prayer, Jesus teaches us to seek God's guidance and protection in our daily lives. By praying, "lead us not into temptation," we confess our weakness, vulnerability, and our need for God's help to avoid sin and make wise and moral choices. We are aware that we are susceptible to being led astray without God's guidance.

We demonstrate our reliance on God's power to prevail in our spiritual conflicts when we pray for freedom from the evil one. We admit the existence of a spiritual foe who aims to sabotage our beliefs, cloud our judgment, and mislead us. By offering this prayer, we declare our faith in God's ability to save us from the grips of evil and to keep us secure in his loving care.

We invite God's wisdom and protection as we look to him for direction and protection. We give him the authority to mold our ideas, aspirations, and deeds into what he sees fit. This prayer serves as a reminder that we are not alone in our troubles and that we have a steadfast and mighty God who battles for us and gives us the strength to live triumphant lives.

React: How can you actively seek God's guidance in your daily decisions and choices? What are some common temptations or areas of weakness in your life, and how can you rely on God's strength to resist them? In what ways can you cultivate a deeper trust in God's protection and deliverance from the schemes of the evil one?

Pray: Father in Heaven, I come before you and acknowledge my need for your direction and protection. Help me avoid temptations and assist me in making decisions that reflect well on you. I acknowledge the existence of the evil one and ask for your freedom from his nefarious plans. Please give me the knowledge and awareness to understand his strategies and the stamina to maintain my faith. May you rule over all aspects of my life with your presence and strength. Amen.



Week 6 | The Way of Guidance

Day 2 | A Prayer to Equip You

Command: Watch and pray. [Matthew 26:41 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. [Colossians 4:2 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: "Lord, give me the eyes to see. Guard my heart from the Evil One." This is a silent prayer I pray each morning before my crazy day begins. Give me the eyes to see. I ask the Lord to help me be aware of the injustices, the hurt, and the brokenness that surround me so I can pray over them. I also ask for the Lord to reveal the temptations that are coming at me so that I may guard my heart through prayer, and remember the Words the Lord has given me in scripture to combat these invitations to sin.

I alone cannot fight this battle which is why Colossian 4:2 asks me to devote myself to prayer, being watchful and thankful. Thankfully, we have Christ who has already won the war against sin, who can guide us to be watchful until He returns.

React: How are you relying on the Lord to help you be on guard and watchful to the temptations of this world?

Pray: Lord, give me the eyes to see. Guard my heart from the Evil One.



Week 6 | The Way of Guidance

Day 3 | The Way of Guidance

Command: Watch and pray. [Matthew 26:41 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever— the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.* [John 14:16-17 NIV](#)

Reflect: According to “Psychology Today”, the average person makes approximately 35,000 decisions per day. When I have time to ponder a decision, I can research, pray, ask others to pray, read my Bible and get input from trusted friends. However, it’s often quick decisions that I struggle with the most. C.S. Lewis said, “Good and evil both increase at compound interest. That is why the little decisions you and I make every day are of such infinite importance.” My split second responses in all of these seemingly insignificant situations, have the potential to be life changing both for me and those around me. *How do I react to someone’s unkind words directed at me? How do I respond to others when I am under pressure, tired and frustrated?*

When I’m tempted to quickly respond in worldly ways, I often give a knee-jerk reaction. But that’s not the person I want to be. My deepest desire is to be a reflection of my heavenly Father. In order to be able to quickly provide a godly reaction in the future, I need to be prepared ahead of time. Jesus’ response to Satan in Matthew 4 demonstrates a powerful weapon in fighting temptation. He uses words straight from the Bible, to put Satan in his place. I can prepare for battling temptation by knowing God’s word and memorizing verses that will set my heart in the right direction.

The Holy Spirit lives in us and faithfully guides us. The more I pray and am aware of the Spirit in me, the better I can recognize his voice. Regularly, asking for God’s guidance and being aware of his leading helps me develop a habit of walking in the way of guidance. I’m still a work in progress. Thankfully, when I react in negative ways, I know that Jesus will faithfully extend forgiveness to me. His presence in me and around me will continue to supernaturally guide me.

React: Memorize a Bible verse this week. *Every word of God is flawless; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him.* Proverbs 30:5

Pray: Thank you Jesus for giving me heavenly tools to fight temptation. Show me the way of guidance. Help me to hear your voice and walk in your ways.



Week 6 | The Way of Guidance

Day 4 | Sign Posts

Command: Watch and pray. [Matthew 26:41 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it. [1 Corinthians 10:13 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: Recently my teen passed his drivers permit. While he was studying, I happened to flip through his booklet and noticed a section on the different sign posts. When he was a passenger, he never really paid attention to the various signs we encountered on our drives, even though they are always present. Those same signs he was once oblivious to have taken on a new level of importance. Now, they can drastically determine where he goes and how he gets there.

God is the author and perfecter of our lives. He gives us free will to decide the direction we choose to take. Sometimes we think our way is better only to find out the hard way, it wasn't after all. Circumstances in life and God's still small voice are metaphoric signs that tell us when there's no U-turn, when to stop, slow down, proceed with caution, or a dead end. The question remains, are we really paying attention? The path of life is neither a straight path nor the fastest, but God guides you to your destination, knowing the conditions ahead. Whatever it is you're facing today, whether it deals with a particular fear, your health, finances, an estranged relationship or an addiction, trust that God provides a way out so you can overcome it. Pray without ceasing and watch God move.

React: What signs has God been giving you that something needs to change in your life? Tell God a specific prayer request you would like direction in.

Pray: Thank you Lord for being my guide and for protecting me from dangers I see and don't see. Lord, heighten my senses to hear your voice, see your hand, and feel your presence at work in my life. I pray that you give me a responsive heart that is sensitive to the guidance of your Holy Spirit. Today I say, let your will be done in my life.



Week 6 | The Way of Guidance

Day 5 | Pray

Command: Watch and pray. [Matthew 26:41 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. [1 Peter 5:8 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: For me, it is a blessed reminder to witness God's presence in every aspect of my life. From the radiant sun, to the mountains that declare His glory, and the gift of my family. Even in the joyous moments of summer spent with friends, I find His fingerprints everywhere. Truly I'm grateful, for all good things flow from Him alone.

Yet, as I turn on the news, I am confronted with the stark reality of evil. Reports of heinous crimes, innocent missing children, the carnage of war, and countless other acts of wickedness can obscure my vision of Him.

The adversary, the devil, is indeed as real as our loving God, and a relentless spiritual battle wages for the redemption of our souls. This sobering truth only serves to heighten the urgency of clinging to God's Word. In a world scarred by brokenness and ravaged by sin, it becomes crucial for us to maintain communication with the Creator of the Universe - our Heavenly Father - to whom we have a direct line. It is through this constant connection that we find the strength to resist and overcome the allure of evil that surrounds us.

React: When you get a feeling of love in your heart, do you pray to God and thank him? When you scroll to social news, do you pray for our broken world?

Pray: Heavenly Father, Divine Creator of the World, I humbly come before You, seeking Your guidance and grace. Open my eyes, I pray, to behold the goodness that is in our world. Grant me the wisdom and discernment to recognize Your hand at work amidst the trials and tribulations. Help me to turn to You in prayer, seeking solace and direction when confronted with injustice and unrighteousness. You, who hold all knowledge and understanding, I surrender myself to Your will. In Your infinite wisdom, lead me on the path of righteousness and grant me the strength to follow Your divine guidance. Amen.



Week 7 | The Way of Worship

Day 1 | Worship Your Way Out

Command: *God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in the truth.* [John 4:24 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *But I will sing of your strength, in the morning I will sing of your love; for you are my fortress, my refuge in time of trouble.* [Psalm 59:16 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: God's still, small voice resonated as if he was standing beside me, saying, "Worship your way out of this." It came at a time when I felt hopeless and defeated as I was battling for my health. I mustered all the breath I had and began to pour my heart out in worship, to the one who holds my life in his hands. That act of surrender to God unlocked a series of events that I can only describe as divine intervention. He made a way where I thought there was no way. I came out the other side healed and empowered, and utterly convinced of the power of worship.

The Lord reminded me of a specific story in the Bible about King Jehoshaphat of Judah in 2 Chronicles 20 where worship changed the trajectory of a seemingly impossible situation. The king had just received the terrible news that a greater, powerful army was coming to war against him and his people and was stricken with fear. He immediately sought the Lord's guidance and acknowledged God's matchless power and sovereignty. He publicly recounted all the times God powerfully intervened in the past, to remind the people of Judah of the God they serve. King Jehoshaphat and his people were instructed to meet the enemy in battle the next day, and not to be afraid or discouraged, because the battle is not theirs, but God's. 2 Chron. 20:15 (NLT). Encouraged and empowered with holy boldness, they worshiped and marched to the battlefield only to realize the moment they began to sing and praise the Lord, the enemy armies began fighting against each other and destroyed themselves. Judah got the victory without having to go to war. Not every battle is for you to fight. The act of surrender through worship allows God to show you who he is—the Waymaker.

React: Can you remember the times when God powerfully intervened on your behalf? Take time right now to thank God for his faithfulness in your life.

Pray: All-powerful God, you are my rock and my fortress. Both when times are good and when times get rough, help me fix my eyes on you, stand on your Word, and worship you in Spirit and truth.



Week 7 | The Way of Worship

Day 2 | A Personal Journey to Authentic Worship

Command: *God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in the truth.* [John 4:24 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *Be filled with the Spirit. Speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord.* [Ephesians 5:18b-19 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: There was a time when my faith felt stagnant, and I longed for a deeper connection with God. Going through the motions of worship without truly engaging my heart left me empty. But one day, during a worship service, a song stirred something within me. Its familiar melody took on a new meaning, and tears streamed down my face as I sang, surrendering my heart to God.

In the weeks that followed, I embarked on a personal journey to explore the depths of worship. I dove into Scripture, seeking wisdom on what it truly means to worship God. That's when Ephesians 5:19 caught my attention. It revealed that worship is more than a performance, it's about pouring our hearts before God and engaging in heartfelt conversations with him.

Embracing authentic worship continues to transform me. As I pour out my heart to God, my relationship with him deepens. His presence has become tangible in my life. Worship has become a sacred space where I lay down my burdens, find healing, and encounter his peace.

Reflect: What would it look like to create intentional spaces and moments for worship in your daily life?

Pray: Lord, teach me to approach worship with sincerity and vulnerability. May my worship be a genuine expression of my love and surrender to you. Open my heart to the transformative work of your spirit as I engage in heartfelt conversations with you



Week 7 | The Way of Worship

Day 3 | Acknowledging God's Sovereignty and Glory

Command: *God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in the truth.* [John 4:24 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.* [Matthew 6:13b \(NKJV\)](#)

The Lord is faithful in all his words and kind in all his works. [Psalm 145:13b \(NKJV\)](#)

Reflect: Jesus calls our attention to the kingdom, power, and glory that are God's in the final section of the Lord's Prayer. When we say, "For Yours is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever," we are expressing our belief in God's majesty and sovereignty. We recognize that he alone is the source of all power, dominance, and glory.

This passage confirms the assertion made in Psalm 145:13b that the Lord is gracious and faithful in all his deeds. God's kingdom, power, and glory are built on his faithfulness and benevolence. His empire encompasses all creation and time, extending far beyond the confines of the world. He can do the impossible thanks to his unequalled, limitless power. And the splendor of his glory shines, revealing the majesty of who he is.

Our hearts get in tune with God's everlasting intentions when we acknowledge and announce his kingdom, power, and glory. We change our attention from furthering our personal goals and accomplishments to expanding his name and his earthly kingdom. We invite him to govern and reign in every area of our life by recognizing his sovereignty and submitting to his perfect plan.

React: How can we allow God's sovereignty to guide our viewpoints and deeds while living each day in the consciousness of his kingdom, power, and glory? How does seeing God's goodness and faithfulness in all of his words and deeds encourage us to put our confidence in him and follow his commands? How may our words, deeds, and attitudes actively contribute to advancing God's kingdom and giving him glory?

Pray: O Lord, your kingdom, power, and glory are everlasting. I bow down in front of your presence. Thank you for your faithfulness and kindness in all your words and deeds. Help me to submit my life to your divine authority and to always recognize your sovereignty. I pray that everything I think, say, and do will honor you and progress your kingdom on earth. I declare that the kingdom, the power, and the glory are all yours eternally. Amen.



Week 7 | The Way of Worship

Day 4 | Praise In The Darkest Night

Command: *God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in the truth.* [John 4:24 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *Praise the Eternal! Praise the True God inside His temple. Praise Him beneath massive skies, under moonlit stars and rising sun. Praise Him for His powerful acts, redeeming His people. Praise Him for His greatness that surpasses our time and understanding.* [Psalm 150:1-2 \(Voice\)](#)

Reflect: In my pajamas, I headed outside about midnight. I had my phone in one hand, flashlight in the other. My Epiphyllum had bloomed and I didn't want to miss seeing it. Epiphyllum or "Orchid Cactus" produce large flowers (about the size of my hand) that bloom after dark and then wilt when the sun comes up. I was not disappointed. The fully bloomed flower reminded me of an exploding firework of white light. The beauty was undeniable. How crazy is it that God designed a gorgeous flower that blooms only in the dark of night?

I was reminded of the many times that I have walked dark roads knowing that the Lord was walking with me. His faithful presence brings beauty where there is darkness. God is amazing. That night as I shone the flashlight and took the photos, I praised God. I worshipped him calling him Creator of Beauty, Light of the World, my Way-maker. I thought of all the beauty God brought into my life and the many times I was aware of his supernatural presence. My heart was full.

Whether we gather together with songs of praise or thank him when we are alone in the dark gazing at a beautiful flower, God hears and sees us. This is the way of worship: When we take our eyes off our needs and look at him in adoration and praise, our hearts are filled.

React: Where has God revealed himself in your life? Thank him for the times he has made his presence known to you. Praise him for who he is.

Pray: Father God, when I hear the rhythm of the ocean tide or see the moon and the stars in the dark of night, I am in awe of your creation. When I think about how you have woven my life and walked with me, your love astounds me. There is no match for you, Lord.



Week 7 | The Way of Worship

Day 5 | Music is a Love Language

Command: *God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in the truth.* [John 4:24 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts.* [Colossians 3:16 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: Music has been part of my faith most of my life. Growing up psalms played through the organs or hymns sung by a choir which morphed later in life into contemporary music with the bass of the drum can be felt through the subwoofers. Each completely different but each focused on one thing. Worshiping the Lord.

Funny how music can touch the deepest souls of our being depending on the right style. Each of us have different preferences. But when the words, the music, the moment where we submit to praising our God, we are connected. You can't help but raise your hands, shed tears of joy because in these intimate moments of worship we are praising God for His glory, and inviting Him to continually be a part of our lives. It's an intimate experience that truly reminds us of how great our God is.

React: Have you discovered the type of worship music you feel most connected with God? Take a moment each day to listen and connect with Him, reflect on His greatness, and praise Him for what he has done in your life.

Pray: Lord, thank you for the gift of music and songs that honor you. I pray I pause each day to connect with you and praise you.



Standalone | The Way of Fruitfulness

Day 1 | The Master Gardener

Command: Bear fruit that lasts. [John 15:16 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. [Galatians 5:22-23a \(NLT\)](#)

Reflect: A good friend of mine is an avid gardener. Over the years, she has lovingly and patiently tended to her garden, creating a virtual paradise filled with fruit-bearing trees, tasty vegetables, blooming bouquets of flowers, and heat-tolerant exotic plants. I love visiting her home to enjoy the fruits of her labor.

Her garden didn't just appear. It takes a lot of patience and planning, and much anticipation that her effort will pay off in a bountiful display of goodness and beauty. Through trial and error, she spent years learning about which plants grow best in different types of soil, how much light, fertilizer, and water her plants need, and how to revive a dying plant. I am quite honestly jealous of both her ability to make plants thrive in any environment and her generous supply of patience and love. She is a gift to her neighborhood and her friends whom she blesses with fresh harvests season to season from her garden.

My friend reminds me of God's patience and desire for his children to grow and bear good fruit - fruit that can be a blessing to others. I have heard it said that the best gift you can give to your loved ones is the fruit of your own spiritual transformation - *love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control*. Much like the plants and trees in my friend's garden, we, on our own, are incapable of bearing fruit without the work of our Master Gardener. God lovingly tends to us, watering us with his word, fertilizing us through challenging seasons, and pruning us to bear much fruit. Would you allow him to do his work?

React: What kind of fruit would you like to see grow in yourself in this season? In what ways can you cooperate with the Master Gardener so that you can bear fruit?

Pray: God, thank you for patience with me. There's a lot of pruning to be done, but I am confident that you are cultivating me in ways that will let me bear fruit that blesses others.



Standalone | The Way of Fruitfulness

Day 2 | Abide in Me that You Might Bear Fruit

Command: *Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.* [John 15:4 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you.* [John 15:16 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: Last week we took our Grandson to race go-carts on his last day of summer break. Each time he completed a lap, I was there to take photos and give a thumbs up as he passed the other carts. When the race came to an end, I noticed all the carts slowed at the same time. The track manager used a shutdown transponder to control all the cars. No matter how hard the drivers pressed on the accelerator, they could not increase their speed without the manager's assistance.

Recently, my life slowed down due to health issues. I was blessed with more time to connect with Jesus and reflect on my life. In slowing down, I could see that the way of fruitfulness is to connect with the Lord first in everything I do. He will then use my life in ways beyond my limitations. At times I made my life as a Christian about speed. I packed service opportunities into my life and then squeezed in time to connect with the source of my power: Jesus. As events were added to my schedule, the speed of life increased. I focused on doing rather than abiding. With every opportunity, I increased my speed and decreased my connection to Jesus.

Rather than squeezing more into my schedule, I now realize abiding in Christ is the most important factor in producing the fruits of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness and self-control (Galatians 5). My connection to the Lord is what provides me everything I need to bear fruit. Jesus makes all the difference.

React: Slow down. Breathe. Spend time connecting with Jesus today. Quiet your soul and ask the Lord to speak to your heart as you read your Bible and pray.

Pray: Jesus, thank you for being patient with me as I fill my schedule before I fill myself with you. Show me the way to abide in you so my life will be fruitful beyond my earthly limitations.



Standalone | The Way of Fruitfulness

Day 3 | Faithfulness Over Time Produces Trust

Command: Bear fruit that lasts. [John 15:16 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *Jesus then told them this story: A man had a fig tree growing in his vineyard. One day he went out to pick some figs, but he didn't find any. So he said to the gardener, "For three years I have come looking for figs on this tree, and I haven't found any yet. Chop it down! Why should it take up space?" The gardener answered, "Master, leave it for another year. I'll dig around it and put some manure on it to make it grow. Maybe it will have figs on it next year. If it doesn't, you can have it cut down."*
[Luke 13:6-9 \(CEV\)](#)

Reflect: Faithfulness is making agreements you can keep and then keeping the agreements you make. If you do that for enough time trust arises. We make agreements with God, ourselves, and others with whom we have relationships. It's disheartening to think about the many times I fail to keep my agreements with God. I know how frustrated I get when people don't keep their agreements with me and the shame I feel when I break my agreements with them. I even break agreements I make with myself to regulate my behavior and appetites. I would like to be as faithful to God, myself, and others as God is with me.

Some agreements are implicit while others are explicit. The fig tree had an implicit agreement to produce figs. The agreement was implied because that's what fig trees do. The tree failed to keep its agreement so the owner had no trust that it would produce figs in the future. He directed that the fig tree be cut down. The gardener asked for some grace to help the fig tree keep its agreement. He was more explicit in his agreement with the fig tree. I will help you, but if you fail to keep your agreement, then we can't trust you, and you will literally be cut off. We want to rely on people to keep their agreements with us and we want to reliably keep our agreements with them. When we keep our agreements consistently trust arises, and the relationship is predictable and peaceful. When agreements are broken trust evaporates and the relationship becomes chaotic.

React: So, only make agreements you can keep and be faithful to keep the agreements you make.

Pray: Lord thank you for your faithfulness and your steadfast love that endures forever. I trust in your grace and mercy. May I be as faithful to you as you are to me.



Standalone | The Way of Fruitfulness

Day 4 | Choosing Light Over Darkness

Command: Bear fruit that lasts. [John 15:16 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. [Ephesians 5:11–12 \(ESV\)](#)

Reflect: The exhortation from Ephesians 5:11–12 to “Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness” strikes a chord within me. In a world where temptations and distractions abound, it can be challenging to uphold God’s standards and resist compromising my values. The pressures of society often lure me towards participating in seemingly harmless activities that may lead me astray from God’s truth and righteousness.

Media consumption is one area where I struggle to discern what is edifying and uplifting versus what may desensitize me to sin. Mindlessly turning on the television or scrolling through social media can expose me to content that does not align with God’s principles. I am learning to be intentional about the media I engage with, seeking content that reflects God’s truth and rejecting that which fosters darkness. I have also realized that certain vices, such as gluttony and envy, can easily take hold of my life. Overindulging in small pleasures like a whole bag of chips or envying others’ possessions or achievements harms my spiritual well-being and hinders my relationship with God. To stay on the right path, I am grounding myself in God’s Word daily, seeking his guidance and wisdom. The more time I spend in his presence and truth, the more aware I become of the subtle traps of sin. I am learning to rely on his strength to resist the allure of darkness and to shine his light in every aspect of my life.

React: How can you actively guard myself against temptations and remain attuned to God’s guidance in decision-making? What specific media and entertainment choices do you need to reevaluate to align better with God’s standards? How can you cultivate daily practices and habits that keep you in step with the Spirit and foster a deeper relationship with God?

Pray: Dear Lord, I acknowledge my struggles with the unfruitful works of darkness in this world. Grant me discernment and strength to resist temptation and make choices that honor you while calling out the sin in my life. Help me be intentional about the media I consume and seek content that reflects your truth. Empower me to let go of vices that hinder my spiritual growth and to embrace the righteousness you offer. Guide my steps, O Lord, and lead me closer to your heart each day. In Jesus' name, I pray, amen.



Standalone | The Way of Fruitfulness

Day 5 | Hold On To The Vine

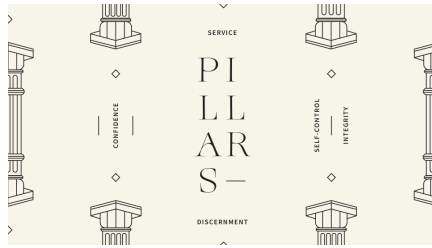
Command: *Bear fruit that lasts.* [John 15:16 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned.* [John 15:5-6 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: To remain or abide means hold to, endure, continue to exist even after people or things have ceased to exist. When I genuinely made Jesus my Lord and savior and decided to go all in and follow him, I thought it was going to be an easy transition. I quickly realized the more I walked deeper with the Lord, I began facing opposition and what seemed like a loss in various areas of my life. Things I used to do before Jesus I had no desire to do anymore. Relationships and friendships I've had most of my life started to gracefully leave. I thought following Jesus was going to add to my life not take things away. Little did I know at the time, following Jesus full heartedly will cost you. It will cost you old habits, old relationships, old mindsets and thinking that no longer serve you and not in alignment with God's will for your life. During this pruning process I clung tight to Jesus and his word, and still do, like it was my life line. I had to put action to my faith and stay connected to Jesus regardless of what's going on. God knew exactly what I needed, when I needed it, to be fruitful for his kingdom. He blessed me more than what I thought I lost and because of his faithfulness I've made it my life's mission, freely I receive, freely I give away. Our job is not to bear the fruit but stay attached to the true vine, Jesus.

React: Are there areas in your life hindering you from being fruitful in God's kingdom that need pruning?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, draw me close to you. For in you I live and move and have my being. Lord, let the fruit I bear glorify you in what I say, what I do, and how I live.



Week 1 | The Way of Confidence

Day 1 | Fear Not

Command: *I leave you peace; my peace I give you. I do not give it to you as the world does. So don't let your hearts be troubled or afraid.* [John 14:27 \(NCV\)](#)

Read: *The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?* [Psalm 27:1 \(NIV\)](#)

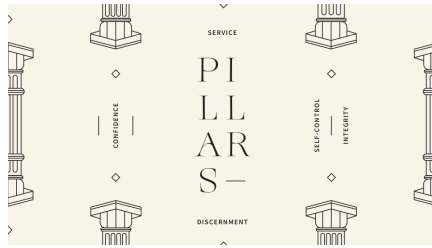
Reflect: The early Christians faced persecution for their belief in Jesus. The Christian disciples faced harsh resistance and anger from the people they were trying to reach. Why did they continue to preach with the threat of violence? The answer is faith, trust, and hope in a living God.

In [Romans 8:38-39](#), Paul wrote... “*For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*” Paul started his life as a persecutor of the Christian faith, but he experienced a conversion that changed his view of Christianity forever. He became one of the most prominent teachers and evangelists for Christianity. Paul wrote multiple books in the New Testament, describing the many ways he was tortured for his beliefs. His new found faith in a loving God, helped him persevere.

There are some parts of the world today, where people still face persecution for their faith in Jesus. As a Christian, I want to remember those that went before me and those that are still suffering today. Their courage and belief in an everlasting life with God is a testimony for the world. Thanks to their willingness to face physical and emotional hardships, to share the love of God, I have a personal relationship with Jesus.

React: We will all face some type of persecution at some time in our lives. How will you handle it? Lean on the Word of God and remember his promise to be our stronghold, light, and salvation. This strength is available to all who trust in the Lord.

Pray: Loving, strong, faithful Father. I pray that you would fill my heart with your love and strength in the face of hardships. I know that you are the light that chases away the darkness. Help me claim those promises when I am weak. I want to feel your presence as I walk through my days.



Week 1 | The Way of Confidence

Day 2 | God's Faithful Love

Command: *Do not be afraid.* [Matthew 10:26-28 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *And so, we know and rely on the love God has for us.* [1 John 4:16 \(NIV\)](#)

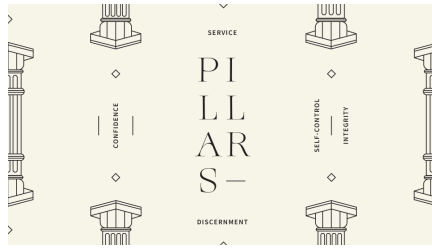
Reflect: I don't like to depend on other people. People often let me down. It is especially disappointing when someone lets me down in a situation that matters. Like when I relied on someone to keep an agreement that affected me financially and they broke it. Or I trust a friend to act in good faith and feel betrayed when they don't. I get anxious when I'm in a position where I have to rely on someone, and the consequences will be significant if they don't come through.

But there is someone who has been a baseline that I can believe in. It is always safe to assume that Christ loves me. This is the prime in my life that defines all my experience: Christ is always with me and that I can always be with him. *Behold I am with you always.* [Matthew 28:20 \(ESV\)](#)

It helps me to meditate on this promise word by word. Behold — “Pay attention to this, this is an amazing thing! I AM — always everywhere, omnipotent, omnipossible. With You — I am alongside and wrapped around you. Always — In every moment of every day I am together with you; always in and around you. And so, I know and can rely on the love God has for me.”

React: Since God is always faithful to be with me, then I will faithfully be with him.

Pray: Yet I am always with you; you hold me by my right hand. You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will take me into glory. Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. [Psalm 73:23-26 \(NIV\)](#)



Week 1 | The Way of Confidence

Day 3 | God is With You

Command: *Do not be afraid.* [Matthew 10:26-28 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *Lord, do not hold this sin against them.* [Acts 7:60 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: The Book of Acts records the story of the first Christian martyr, Stephen. The gospel writer Luke describes Stephen as a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit. Luke also tells us that Stephen was full of God's power and that he performed signs and wonders among the people. Opposition soon arose against Stephen - men falsely accused him of speaking against Moses, God, the temple, and Jewish laws. He was eventually arrested.

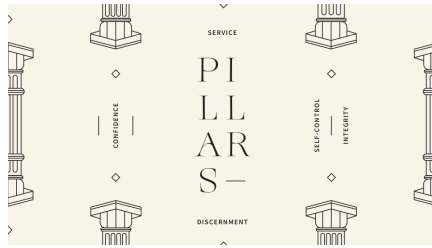
Rather than defending himself, Stephen instead took the opportunity to give his accusers a history lesson - reminding them of God's faithfulness, even as they were continuously unfaithful towards God. Stephen was unafraid. Even in the undoubtedly tense and dangerous situation he found himself in, he chose to honor God with his testimony. This did not bode well for Stephen. He was eventually stoned to death.

When I reflect on Stephen's martyrdom, I am struck by his confidence in the final outcome. Amidst the chaotic scene, Stephen somehow knew that his life was in God's hands. He didn't fear those who could kill his body ([Matthew 10:28](#)). Rather, he had a reverent fear of God, his creator and savior. He had confidence that though his physical body may succumb to earthly death, his soul would live with God forever. And to top that off, Stephen even had deep compassion and love for his murderers, pleading that God would not hold their sin into account.

There are thousands upon hundreds of thousands of stories of martyrdom throughout the history of Christianity - stories of ordinary people unafraid of speaking the truth of the Gospel of Jesus in love. To be honest, I don't have the kind of courage Stephen had. Few people do. Even so, while not all are called to martyrdom, all are called to share the Good News of Jesus. We each have a daily opportunity to lift up Jesus and share his name with others. Persecution may come in the form of hurtful words, or even bodily harm. But even then, I can be confident that God is with me.

React: When you reflect on sharing the gospel with someone, what do you fear the most? What do you suppose can help you mitigate those fears?

Pray: God, thank you for your grace as I fumble through sharing your good news. May I not shrink in fear knowing that you are with me; may I not be dismayed, for you are my God. May you strengthen me and help me; may you uphold me with your righteous right hand. To you be the glory, honor and praise forever. Amen.



Week 1 | The Way of Confidence

Day 4 | A Pilgrim's Progress

Command: *So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.* [Isaiah 41:10 \(NIV\)](#)

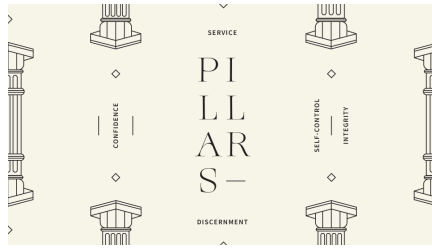
Read: *The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters. He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; My cup runs over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me All the days of my life; And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.* [Psalm 23 \(NKJV\)](#)

Reflect: The classic book, *Pilgrims Progress*, written in 1678 by John Bunyan, details the faith journey of a man named Christian. Along the narrow path to the Celestial City (Heaven), he is opposed by formidable antagonists: “Obstinate” ridicules his faith. “Hypocrisy” tries to teach him to talk, but not walk, his faith. “Giant Despair” beats and imprisons him. Christian walks up “Hill of Difficulty” and through the dark “valley of the shadow of death.” The Way is hard but God always provides wisdom and joy along the Way. Christian is taught by “Evangelist.” He is served and comforted by “Goodwill” and “Charity.” His faith and hope are reinforced by the companion pilgrims “Faithful” and “Hopeful.” He is given God’s words on a “Scroll” to learn and be taught by “Interpreter” (Holy Spirit). His soul is restored, and his thirst is quenched as he rests in green pastures and walks beside still waters along the Way.

As we walk the Way of Jesus, we will crawl up difficult hills, trudge dark valleys, fight despair, and be tempted. We will also be comforted, instructed, and restored. God gives us the Holy Spirit, His Word, prayer, and companion pilgrims to meet our every need. He lays us down in green pastures and leads us beside still waters as he restores our souls and shapes our faith.

React: How are you progressing, Pilgrim? Where are you struggling and where are you thriving? Reflect on God’s provision through the hills and valleys and lean into the tools of comfort he provides.

Pray: Father, thank you for the wonderful ways that you provide. Help me to seek your Spirit, your Word, and your community to help me to progress as a pilgrim along your Way. Amen.



Week 1 | The Way of Confidence

Day 5 | No Fear in Christ Love

Command: *Do not be afraid.* [Matthew 10:26-28 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in them and they in God. And so, we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them. This is how love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment: In this world we are like Jesus. There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.* [1 John 4:15-18 \(NIV\)](#)

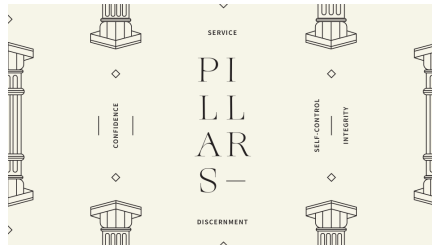
Reflect: My profession is exceedingly enamored with being completely identified with the current social fads. At a recent conference I attended, the atmosphere was infused with an ideology I deemed absurd and harmful. There was an atmosphere of arrogance, demanding compliance or else. It was clear that anyone who didn't agree with and promote their thinking would be viewed with contempt and ostracized. The threat of being cancelled personally, socially, and especially professionally was palpable. I was tempted to challenge some of the speakers, but I felt the fear, and at my stage of life the juice would not be worth the squeeze.

When fear arises, I think of beloved apostle John's words, *"There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love."* And I can follow the lead of Jesus, *"... love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you."* [Matthew 5:44 \(NIV\)](#)

The best response to dismissive unbelief, insults and retaliation is the lavish love of Christ. Displaying the art of agape demonstrates that "we are living in God and God is living in us." Being a gracious expression of the love of God drives fear from our hearts and gives us confidence, not only in the ultimate day of judgement, but also in the current moment. This is fully matured Christ love.

React: Don't shrink in fear in the face of opposition. Rather bloom with the fragrance of the love of God.

Pray: Lord, I pray your generous blessings on those who curse m



Week 2 | The Way of Service

Day 1 | More of Him. Less of Me.

Command: *Be a servant.* [Matthew 20:25-28 \(NIV\)](#)

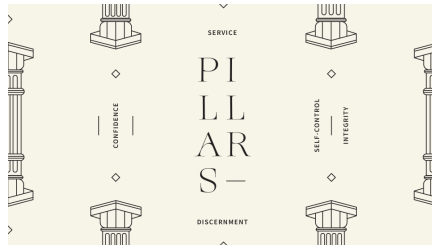
Read: *He must become greater; I must become less.* [John 3:30 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: I vividly remember a time when my desire for recognition clouded my perspective. I was volunteering at a local charity event, and as the day went on, I found myself growing frustrated that others weren't acknowledging my efforts. Feeling unappreciated, I paused to reflect on John 3:30. It was a humbling moment as I realized that my service wasn't about seeking praise; it was about reflecting Christ's love to those in need. From that day forward, I approached my service with a renewed heart, seeking to make Christ's presence known rather than my own. The joy I experienced in knowing that his light shone through my actions far outweighed any fleeting recognition I had once craved.

In the words of John the Baptist, we find a profound lesson on humility and surrender. "He must become greater; I must become less." These simple yet profound words encapsulate the essence of our journey with God. John recognized that his purpose was not to exalt himself but to point others to the ultimate source of greatness, Jesus Christ. In a world that often celebrates self-promotion and personal achievements, this verse serves as a guiding light, reminding us that true significance lies in magnifying Christ, not ourselves.

React: Consider a time when you felt the inclination to take credit for an accomplishment or to seek recognition. How might embracing the principle of John 3:30 have influenced your thoughts and actions in that moment?

Pray: Heavenly Father, we humbly ask for the grace to decrease so that you may increase in every aspect of our life.



Week 2 | The Way of Service

Day 2 | Creating a Chain of Service

Command: *Be a servant.* [Matthew 20:25-28 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood.* [Acts 20:28 \(NIV\)](#)

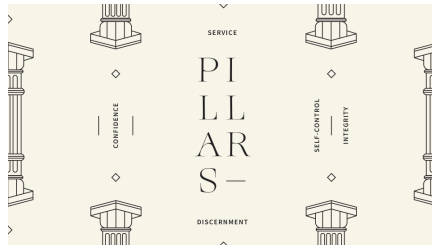
Reflect: When reading Acts 20:28, the first thing that comes to mind is the way my dad loves to serve others. My dad embodies service in everything that he does and in the way he carries himself towards others. He's always available. Always willing to step in to help. Always ready to take someone under his wing, to share wisdom, and to lend a listening ear.

When he's hosting a gathering, he ensures everyone is greeted warmly, has a refreshment in their hand, and is seated with other people they feel comfortable with. On top of that, my dad deeply cares about the details, and I think part of it is that he simply cares about the people in his circle.

So many times, my mom and I have felt the frustration of others taking advantage of my dad's kindness. But he's adamant about extending love, grace, and compassion to the people around him. Regardless, I've always admired the way my dad serves others and have always aspired to do the same for the people in my circle.

React: Who's in your circle that God is inviting you to shepherd? What are some ways that you can serve the people in your circle?

Pray: Lord Jesus, help us to take care of others like shepherds and watch over them. Give us the wisdom to guide and protect with love and compassion. Teach us to be humble and serve selflessly, and to speak your truth boldly. Let our actions show your grace and mercy, so others can experience your love through us. In Jesus' name, amen.



Week 2 | The Way of Service

Day 3 | Don't Bake The Cupcakes

Command: *Be a servant.* [Matthew 20:25-28 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him. He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" Jesus replied, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand." "No," said Peter, "you shall never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me."* [John 13:5-8 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: Serving others is not only in how I show love, but also what feeds my soul. I easily understand the lesson Jesus demonstrates as he washes the disciples' feet. However, the lesson provided by Jesus' interaction with Peter has been a more difficult lesson for me to put into practice.

In 2001, I was diagnosed with breast cancer. When I attended my Eastlake Church Growth Group shortly after my diagnosis, a women said to me, "This is your year to heal. Don't bake the cupcakes for your kids' school events. Take the time and allow others to help you." Little did I know how valuable that advice would be to me as a single mother of three children.

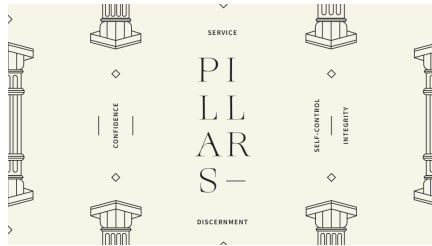
Serving others came easily, while being served was more difficult. However, when I allowed others to help me through my journey, they often shared how blessed they felt to serve me. I later realized that when I did not allow others to act upon the Holy Spirit's call to serve, I was much like Peter refusing to have his feet washed.

I recently read, "Sometimes we show a servant's heart by accepting the service of others for us. If we only serve, and refuse to be served, it can be a sign of deeply rooted and well-hidden pride. Man's humility does not begin with the giving of service; it begins with the readiness to receive it. For there can be much pride and condescension in our giving of service."

There are seasons and times that we need to allow others to serve us as part of God's design. When we do not allow this, we are limiting God's love and care for both ourselves and the one serving. The way of service is to allow the Holy Spirit to speak and lead us both in love.

React: When have you allowed others to serve you? The next time you serve, think about how it blesses you and realize that allowing others to serve you is a blessing to them also.

Pray: Father God, how amazing you are to design us for interconnectedness through serving. Open my eyes to both how I can serve and help me to allow others to serve me according to your design.



Week 2 | The Way of Service

Day 4 | Joy in Service

Command: *Be a servant.* [Matthew 20:25-28 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *You call me “Teacher and Lord, and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.* [John 13:14-15 \(NIV\)](#)

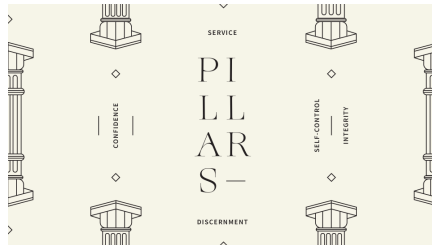
In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: “It is more blessed to give than to receive.” [Acts 20:35 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: I am humbled by one of Jesus’ last interactions with his disciples. He modeled willing service with humility. It is an unmistakable expectation in the life of the Jesus follower. He makes it clear that loving others is accomplished through service. Praise God that we are part of the Community Church Movement and that service is a part of its DNA. There are always opportunities to serve the body of Christ, and communities far and near. God has led me to feed the hungry, serve special needs families through the “Night to Remember” prom, assist with administrative work at the church, and volunteer in the preschool room during service, allowing families to worship comfortably.

God provides a joy in our work for him. As I have served others, I have been transformed. God has been showing me how to love with humility. It has been an honor, and I am so grateful for the Jesus followers who have walked alongside me and shown me the way. Truly, I have been more blessed to give than to receive.

React: Have you taken advantage of any of the opportunities the church has provided to serve others lately? How can you seek out an opportunity to serve this upcoming week?

Pray: Father, I thank You for the example given through Jesus, to love others through service. Thank You that I am a part of a church community that values service. Help me to do my part in showing your love and generosity to others. Amen.



Week 2 | The Way of Service

Day 5 | An Unexpected Lesson

Command: *Be a servant.* [Matthew 20:25-28 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: This is the Kingdom's logic: whoever wants to become great must first make himself a servant; whoever wants to be first must bind himself as a slave— just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give His life as the ransom for many. [Matthew 20:26-28 \(VOICE\)](#)

Reflect: Our family was excited as we headed downtown to serve meals to the homeless. My husband and I had participated in serving several times through a downtown church, but this would be the first time our teenage daughters would join us.

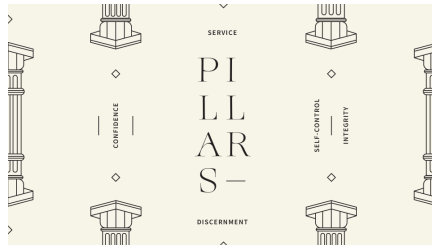
We arrived early because we wanted to make sure our girls could work behind the counter handing out trays. Since this was their first experience serving the homeless, we thought they would feel more comfortable doing that job. Everything went as we hoped and soon we were all busy serving.

Eventually I left my post to check on the girls. Our youngest daughter had just volunteered to help carry a tray for a woman who was struggling to walk. She came back with a smile on her face and her heart was full as she then continued to help others carry their trays through the line. Later, she came to me asking for a cardboard box for one of the women she was serving. The woman explained to me that she had slept outside the night before and she was thinking that she might be more comfortable if she had a flattened cardboard box to sleep on. Although I suggested some other options, she insisted that she only wanted a cardboard box. When we brought a few out from the back, she selected one and exclaimed, "This is perfect!" Her whole face lit up!

Looking back, the most significant part of serving that day was the lesson taught by our daughter, when she was open to where God led her to serve. He gave her the courage to come out from behind the counter and used her as a blessing in unexpected ways. Today I want to remember to serve others with the right attitude and open eyes to follow where God leads. I may sign up to serve with expectations of my experience, but the way of service is that I become a servant and follow the leading of the Holy Spirit as I serve others.

React: Where can you serve others in the church? Where can you serve others in my life outside of church? Ask God to show you opportunities to be a servant to others.

Pray: Thank you Jesus for serving us through your sacrifice on the cross. Please open my eyes to ways that I can serve others with love and humility.



Week 3 | The Way of Discernment

Day 1 | Have Mercy on Me, a Sinner

Command: *Do not judge, or you too will be judged.* [Matthew 7:1 \(NIV\)](#)

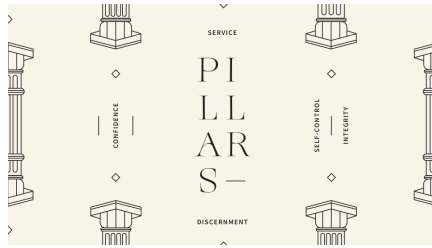
Read: *To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everyone else, Jesus told this parable: “Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other people—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.’ “But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, ‘God, have mercy on me, a sinner.’ “I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”* [Luke 18:9-14 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: Years ago, as I began to reacquaint myself with Jesus and his teachings, I unintentionally began to formulate a set of do’s and don’ts that I thought made a “good” Christian. This checklist of acceptable behaviors played in the back of my mind, becoming the measure by which I judged others. I was much like the Pharisee who propped himself up before God while at the same time belittling and judging the tax collector. I toed the line of acceptable behavior, visibly participated in every “religious” activity offered in the church, and looked down on those who didn’t do the same. Instead of growing in grace and compassion, I felt my heart hardening towards those whom I judged to be “sinners.” I was too busy picking at the speck in the eye of another, I didn’t, or rather, I refused to see the big plank in my own eye. Is it any wonder that few of my friends and family came to faith in Jesus through me?

God’s grace has shown me a different way. Time and again, he invites me to be more like the tax collector who recognizes his failures and brokenness before God. It’s not been easy to chip away at that plank of judgmentalism from my eyes. There’s lots still to pick out.

React: In what ways have you behaved more like the Pharisee than the tax collector? With whom do you most identify with? How would you like Jesus to transform your heart?

Pray: God, have mercy on me, a sinner. Amen.



Week 3 | The Way of Discernment

Day 2 | Planks Begone!

Command: *Do not judge, or you too will be judged.* [Matthew 7:1 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.* [Ephesians 4:29 \(NIV\)](#)

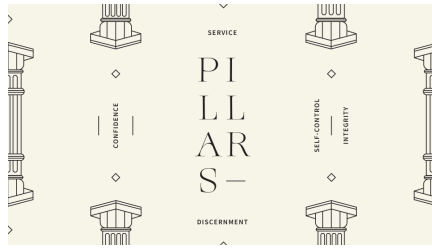
Reflect: In this era of social media and general divisiveness it is easy to fall into the habit of judging others. We know that God is the only righteous judge. We are called not to judge those outside of the church and to act wisely in dealing with matters of judgement inside the church. When judging inside of the church, the goal is redemption and restoration. Even knowing this, Christians can still fall into being judgmental.

I was reminded of this in myself recently. A friend I admire began to vent and unfairly judge some others. She criticized they were being selfish because they were not serving where she thought they should. I believed this was unjust judgement, and then I fell into the trap of judging her. A graceful rebuke over her behavior and a defense of the accused would have been helpful. I was not being helpful. I was not attempting to build her up. I had a plank in my own eye that needed removal. Thankfully, God convicted me and helped me to repent.

The gifts of God's word and Spirit provide the knowledge and the power to transform our judgmental temperaments into graceful hearts.

React: Reflect on Eph 4:29-32 and ask God to transform your heart and responses towards others.

Pray: Father, you are the only just Judge. Prompt me to be helpful, and to build others up. Help me to flee from unjust judgement and to remove my planks.



Week 3 | The Way of Discernment

Day 3 | Judging or Judgement?

Command: *Do not judge, or you too will be judged.* [Matthew 7:1 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *Jesus straightened up and asked her, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?” “No one, sir,” she said. “Then neither do I condemn you,” Jesus declared. “Go now and leave your life of sin.”* [John 8:9-10 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: At a recent family gathering, we were discussing our results from a personality test we had taken. I agreed with the results but was unsettled about having “judging” listed as one of my personality traits.

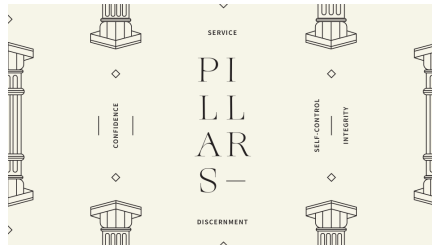
I then recalled the story of the woman caught in adultery. The Pharisees asked Jesus if they should stone a woman who had committed adultery. It appeared that there was no right decision. If Jesus agreed to stone the woman, he would be violating the Roman law by condemning a person to death. If he did not agree to stone her, he would be violating the law of Moses. The Pharisees thought they had Jesus trapped.

Of course, Jesus had the perfect answer. “Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.” The accusers walked away. Jesus and the woman were the only ones left when he asked her, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?” “No one, sir,” she said. “Then neither do I condemn you,” Jesus declared. “Go now and leave your life of sin.” Jesus did not call her “Adulteress” or even refer to her as “Sinner”. Instead, he called her “Woman.” He saw her as God created her. Without condemning the woman, Jesus recognized what she had done was sinful. His response is a beautiful example of judging actions rather than judgment of the person.

I am to use good judgment in making decisions, in my words and actions. At times I may recognize other’s actions as sinful. However, I must be careful to not identify them as the sin itself or to sit in judgment of them for their sin. Judging as a personality trait is not all bad. The Lord calls us to use good judgment and discernment. However, the judgment of people is solely in God’s hands. Thankfully, the Lord doesn’t call us by our sin. As Christians, we receive forgiveness and salvation for our sins through Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross. He knows our names and calls us “Beloved.”

React: Who is someone that speaks words or acts in ways that offend you? How can you remove that as the lens you see them through and instead love them as a child of God?

Pray: Lord Jesus, you have restored my story too many times to count. I’m so thankful that you don’t call me by my sin but instead call me “Beloved.” Help me to remember how much you love those around me also. May I have a heart of discernment and wisdom without making judgements of others.



Week 3 | The Way of Discernment

Day 4 | Love First

Command: *Do not judge, or you too will be judged.* [Matthew 7:1 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.* [James 1:5 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: I had a few minutes to pray while my 22-year-old single daughter was in the bathroom taking a pregnancy test. She had not been feeling well for a few weeks and had stayed home from work that day. “Just to be sure,” I had said, “why don’t you take a pregnancy test.” While she was in the bathroom, my mind started racing and I started worrying. So I prayed. “Dear Lord, please give me wisdom and compassion if the test is positive.”

Then, when she came out of the bathroom in tears, I knew the test was positive. Thankfully, in those seconds between my prayer and her results, God had supernaturally surrounded me with peace. Instead of judgment, he gave me words of compassion and wisdom. I put my arms around her and said, “It’s OK, Honey. We’ll be with you through this, and you know we’ll all love this baby.”

She later said that she was amazed that we had not chastised her for her foolishness of having unprotected sex. She was surprised by our compassion and love rather than judgment and condemnation.

Today she points to the birth of her son as a turning point in her life. She says his birth was a catalyst to bring her closer to the Lord. Furthermore, out of love for her child, she made decisions to follow God’s way in other areas of her life. As he so often does, God took a difficult situation and used it for good in many, many ways.

I’m thankful for God’s generous answer to my split-second prayer. He supernaturally gave me the response I needed and helped me to show compassion instead of judgment. After all, isn’t that what Jesus does for me? His love doesn’t end when I sin. When I need to face difficult consequences, he hears my cry for help. The Lord generously extends me forgiveness, compassion and grace as walks with me through difficult journeys.

React: Is there someone in your life who has taken steps away from God’s way? Pray that God will give you wisdom in reacting to their actions. Know that Jesus calls you to love them. He can redeem their story even if it seems impossible.

Pray: Lord Jesus, you have restored my story too many times to count. I’m so thankful that you don’t call me by my sin but instead call me “Beloved.” Help me to love others and see them how you see me.



Week 3 | The Way of Discernment

Day 5 | Speak Up!

Command: *Do not judge, or you too will be judged.* [Matthew 7:1 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *Yes, speak up for the poor and helpless, and see that they get justice.* [Proverbs 31:9 \(NLT\)](#)

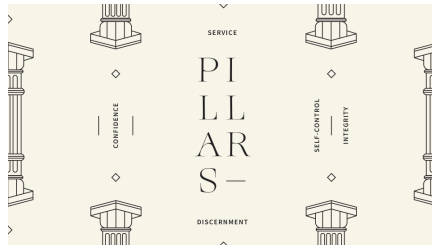
Reflect: My son recently became known as the class snitch. There was some behavior happening on the playground involving older kids that didn't sit right with him, so he reported it to a teacher. Although he was commended by the adults at school for being courageous and doing "the right thing," it was a very unpopular opinion amongst his peers. For days, he struggled with friendships and being accepted. He began questioning himself about whether he did the right thing.

We will come across situations in life that make us question if we should speak up when we see injustice. Proverbs 31:9 answers this question with a resounding "yes." God's word pushes us to move past our comfort zones and to become an advocate for the defenseless and for those that need help being heard. When my son began to question his actions, I made it a point to shout it from the rooftops, "YES! You did the right thing!" I wanted him to understand that he was honoring God's word by defending the defenseless.

Speaking up can feel uncomfortable and sometimes painful. There can be real costs to speaking up. But inaction is not something the Bible makes room for. So next time an unfair situation presents itself to you, remember that honoring God's word is always the right thing to do.

React: How are you using your voice to defend the rights of those who can't defend themselves? What are you doing to speak up for what you know is right?

Pray: Thank you, God, for my voice. Help me to be bold and speak up. Amen



Week 4 | The Way of Self-Control

Day 1 | Taming the Fire of Anger

Command: *Do not be angry.* [Matthew 5:21-26 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *Do not be quickly provoked in your spirit, for anger resides in the lap of fools.* [Ecclesiastes 7:9 \(NIV\)](#) *My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry.* [James 1:19 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: Anger is an emotion that touches each of our lives at some point. I've found myself struggling with its grip more often than I'd like to admit. The instances when I've allowed anger to take the reins have not only left me regretful, but also painted me in the unflattering light of a fool. In these moments, I've noticed a tendency to place the blame on others, as if they were the source of my frustration. This perspective has obscured my judgment and robbed me of my inner calm. The result? Rash actions, hasty decisions, and a dissipation of the peace I deeply desire.

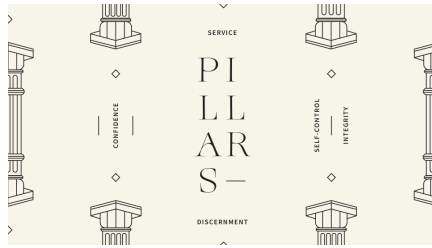
It's been a journey of years—of learning, growing, and at times, stumbling—to heed God's timeless wisdom found in Ecclesiastes 7:9. The key lies in being slow to speak and slower to anger. Yet, these words are easier said than done. Reacting in the heat of the moment feels almost instinctual, while restraining the surge of anger demands a conscious and often difficult effort.

Learning to halt the cascade of fury before it overtakes reason requires practice. It's about taking that critical moment, when emotions are raw and boiling, to pause, breathe, and consult God's guidance. Through this process, I've gradually come to understand that anger can be managed and even transformed into a catalyst for positive change.

The wisdom of [James 1:19](#) echoes, urging us to be “slow to speak, slow to anger.” This counsel is a practical reminder that anger left unchecked can lead to foolishness, but if we harness its energy constructively, we can turn it into a tool for growth and transformation. I've discovered that taking the time to reflect, seeking God's perspective, and striving for empathy toward others involved often paves the way for a more measured and composed response.

React: How can I consistently practice being slow to speak and slow to anger? Can I identify patterns or triggers that frequently kindle my anger? How can I address these triggers in a healthy way?

Pray: Dear Lord, grant me the strength to navigate the turbulent waters of anger with wisdom and patience. Help me to refrain from hastily reacting, and instead lean on your guidance. May I be an instrument of understanding and empathy, even in challenging situations. Let your peace reign in my heart, transforming moments of anger into opportunities for growth and positive change. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.



Week 4 | The Way of Self-Control

Day 2 | Quick to Listen, Slow to Speak, and Slow to Become Angry

Command: *Do not be angry.* [Matthew 5:21-26 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires.* [James 1:19-20 \(NIV\)](#)

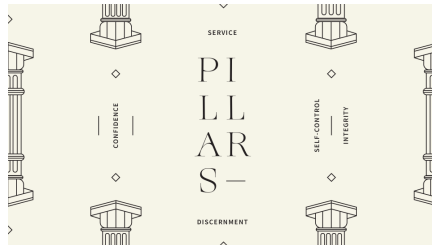
Reflect: I wasn't aware of how quick I was to lose my temper until I started my journey of following the ways of Jesus. You could say that it was simply the norm for me, or the people around me, to simply lose their cool when life got a little hard.

Now I've realized that the closer that I am to God, the easier it is for me to be *quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry*. Often I'm reminded of the reality that as I'm the only Jesus follower in my family, some days I might be the only glimpse of Jesus they see. For that reason, I try my best to be the salt and the light and to stay away from my prior tendencies that quickly rise to anger.

Whenever I find myself in situations where my anger seems to be rising or I'm feeling extremely irritable, it's a warning sign that I need to spend some time with Jesus.

React: How can you be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry this week?

Pray: Lord, please help us in those moments when anger tries to take over. Guide us to your loving presence and fill us with your peace. We want our lives to be a testimony to the incredible power of Jesus. Through our words, actions, and how we carry ourselves, may others catch a glimpse of you and be drawn to the hope and love that you bring. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.



Week 4 | The Way of Self-Control

Day 3 | The Big Red Bird

Command: *Do not be angry.* [Matthew 5:21-26 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.* [Ephesians 4:31 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: My friends and acquaintances would likely not guess that I can be quick to anger with some of my family members. Normally I'm fairly even tempered. However, at home I can get angry quickly when I think someone is not being kind or considerate. Even though my angry words are often justified, I know this is not the person God wants me to be. Repeatedly, I've tried to not get angry. But often, in a split second, the fire is lit, words pour out, communication ceases and my regret follows.

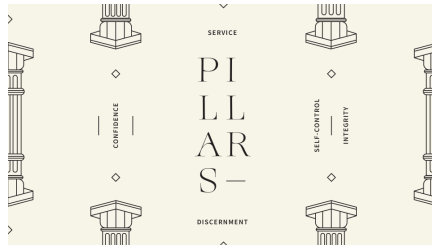
As I read [Ephesians 4:29-32](#), I realized trying to not get angry is like trying not to think about a big red bird. *Are you already picturing that bird in your mind?* In the same way, trying not to get angry puts my focus on anger. Instead, I need to make a habit of focusing on the rest of the verses:

1. Recognize the Holy Spirit as a gift Jesus has given me. v.30 (MSG)
2. Use my words to build others up. v.29
3. Be kind and compassionate. v.32
4. Forgive as I've been forgiven. v.33

Instead of reacting in anger, I can take a deep breath, ask the Holy Spirit for help, and allow my words to be guided by God's wisdom and love. The Lord will be faithful and provide me the words I need at the time. Thankfully, I am forgiven by Jesus and can start again. With the help of the Holy Spirit, I can act and become more like the person God calls me to be. That is the way of Jesus.

React: How can you implement the relational actions listed in Ephesians 4:29-32?

Pray: Lord, your ways are designed for us out love and wisdom. Thank you for the gift of the Holy Spirit that helps me to reflect your ways. Help me to use my words to build others up and demonstrate your compassion.



Week 4 | The Way of Self-Control

Day 4 | Mind Your Reactions

Command: *Do not be angry.* [Matthew 5:21-26 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *In your anger do not sin: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold.* [Ephesians 4:26-27 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: The most regrettable moments in my life are when I neglect to check strong emotions. Especially when anger flashes, and I react rather than pause and think. Nothing good ever happens next. Instead, I harm others with my angry words and looks.

Anger is an involuntary limbic reaction to a real or perceived threat. Abuse, however, is a choice. There is never an excuse for abuse. Unchecked anger infects the soul with resentment and bitterness. Purge it from your mind quickly.

Don't let anger fester into resentment or retaliation. This creates space in your soul for the destroyer to operate, eroding your quality of life. "Do not give an opportunity to the devil." The Greek word for opportunity is *topos*, as in topography — territory, space in your soul. Holding space in your thoughts for resentment grants the enemy territory in your soul to infect you with the virus of bitterness.

There is always a gap between every trigger and your angry reaction to it. The presence of Christ is always in that gap. When anger arises, pause and move your mind into that gap. Bring your mind under the influence of Christ and see the person or situation through the filter of his "Ways". This allows a thoughtful response to whoever or whatever triggered the anger, rather than a mindless reaction. Now you can delete any record of the wrong done to you and operate in Christ's love, because love "is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs." [1 Corinthians 13:5 \(NIV\)](#)

React: Angry drama is common in our culture. "But this is not the way of life that Christ has unfolded within you. If you have really experienced the Anointed One, and heard his truth, it will be seen in your life; for we know that the ultimate reality is embodied in Jesus"!

Pray: Lord Jesus, may I "be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry."



Week 4 | The Way of Self-Control

Day 5 | Less Anger & Self-Righteous, More Grace & Humility

Command: *Do not be angry.* [Matthew 5:21-26 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs.* [1 Corinthians 13:5 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: I played basketball back in high school. There was one time when we were playing on our rival's home court. One of the players on the opposite team was purposefully aggressive towards me and my teammates. She continued to taunt us with such disrespect, so I decided to take it upon myself to teach her a lesson. Although it resulted in me being pulled from the game, It was worth it.

Later that night, our boys' team played the same school, but this time on our campus. Guess who walks right into our gym? The same player I had a run in with earlier. By the end of the game there were two girls punching it out in front of the gym. It was a scene!

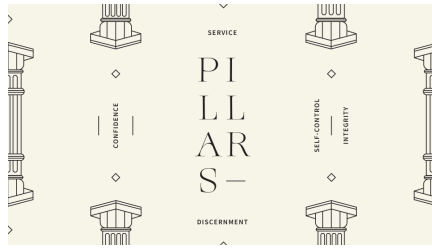
I lived my life feeling like I had to stick up for myself in such an angry way. Physical confrontation was my solution... until Jesus showed me another way.

Read today's verse again. "It" refers to love. [1 John 4:16](#) says, "*And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them.*" God IS love.

Jesus shows me what his love is like. He does not dishonor others. He is not easily angered. As I remain in him, he shows me a different way to live; a life full of love, less anger and self-righteousness, and more grace and humility.

React: Your will alone cannot change your ways. How are you remaining in Christ so he can transform you from the inside out?

Pray: Jesus make your ways my ways. I pray you transform my heart from the inside out.



Week 5 | The Way of Integrity

Day 1 | An Honest Mother

Command: *Keep your word.* [Matthew 5:33-37 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *May integrity and uprightness protect me, because my hope, Lord, is in you.* [Psalm 25:21 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: The Cambridge Dictionary definition of integrity is “the quality of being honest and having strong moral principles that you refuse to change.” As I reflect on people that I know that display integrity, I think right away of my mother.

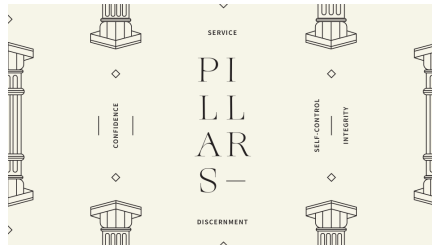
She is a rule follower. She keeps a list of items that are allowed in her recycling bin. She tapes the tops of her batteries correctly, before she turns them in for recycling. When it's time to buy birthday gifts for her family, she makes sure to spend the same amount on everyone, so there is no favoritism. Her concern is for others and how her actions will affect them. She refuses to change her strict, rule following ways and I just realized that she is displaying integrity and commitment.

Her integrity goes beyond following basic rules. She has never been one to gossip. In fact, I don't find out important things from her, because it just is not in her nature to talk about others. A little frustrating at times, but now I get it. When there is dissension in our family, my mom is always the peacemaker. Advising her family to take the high road, forgive, and carry on for the wellbeing of our family. She doesn't suggest that we allow ourselves to be doormats. Instead, our forgiveness brings peace to our own hearts and encourages family relationships to continue with some modification.

Integrity requires being vigilant about our daily decisions, until our actions and behavior become automatic. It has taken my mom 84 years of practice to live and breathe integrity. Her example is important for her children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren to watch and follow. It will be her legacy!

React: Are there people in your life that frustrate you with their need to follow all the rules, all the time? Maybe it's time to look at their behavior differently. Are you witnessing the quality that God admires? Integrity is hard to accomplish, all the time. Think of those rule followers as your examples for living an upright life in God's eyes.

Pray: I want to be the best I can be in your sight. I desire to do the right thing, even when it is hard. Please give me your strength to be a person of integrity.



Week 5 | The Way of Integrity

Day 2 | The Power of Keeping Your Word

Command: *Keep your word.* [Matthew 5:33-37 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *Moses said to the heads of the tribes of Israel: “This is what the Lord commands: When a man makes a vow to the Lord or takes an oath to obligate himself by a pledge, he must not break his word but must do everything he said.”* [Numbers 30:1-2 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: The idea of keeping one's word appears to have less meaning in a world where pledges can be readily forgotten or disregarded. However, God's instruction to the Israelites through Moses in Numbers 30:1-2 emphasizes the significance of the things we say. By taking an oath or making a commitment, we pledge ourselves to keep our word.

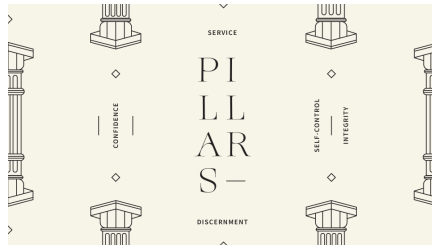
I consider instances in which I made promises—whether to God or to others—and how keeping them has molded my character. It's not always simple to keep our promises; sometimes it takes sacrifice, tenacity, and a dedication to morality. I've learned that keeping my word indicates my dependability as well as my esteem for other people and respect for God's instructions.

This rule applies to all kinds of interactions, not only formal oaths or contracts. Our words carry weight, whether they be promises to see a friend, do a chore, or help someone in need. We establish trust and demonstrate our respect for the parties involved when we follow through.

When keeping our obligations becomes difficult or inconvenient, a challenge often occurs. These are the times when our character is put to the test. Will we put our comfort first or keep our word no matter what? While there may be good reasons to change our plans, integrity requires us to be open with one another and to apologize when we don't live up to expectations.

React: Before making a commitment, how can I make sure that it is in line with my abilities and priorities? How can I explain clearly when I have trouble maintaining my word and, if required, make amends? How do I make sure that I always operate with honesty and transparency in my interactions?

Pray: Lord, please enable me to honor the promises I make and keep them, whether they are to you or to others. Please give me the discernment to consider my promises before making them and the humility to share my concerns honestly when they occur. May my deeds be an expression of my awe and respect for you and those around me. I ask in the name of Jesus, amen.



Week 5 | The Way of Integrity

Day 3 | Ouch!

Command: *Keep your word.* [Matthew 5:33-37 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *Many a man proclaims his own loyalty and goodness, but who can find a faithful and trustworthy man?* [Proverbs 20:6 \(AMP\)](#)

Reflect: I like to think of myself as a person of integrity. I strive to live out my faith. But recently the Holy Spirit reminded me that I am a work in progress.

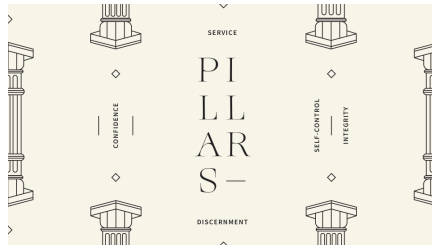
Last week, I arrived 30 minutes before my Grandson's school let out so I could find a parking spot. Even so, every space was taken. I pulled to the side to wait for the next available spot. As I waited, I read a devotional from Ecclesiastes 9:20 that stated "Don't revile people 'even in your thoughts' or curse them 'in your bedroom, because a bird of the air may carry your words, and a bird on the wing may report what you say.'"

Right after I put down my phone, a car pulled in front of me and took a parking spot that was just clearing. I was irritated. How rude and self-centered, was my first thought. Eventually I calmed down and listened to the Holy Spirit, who had been trying to get my attention. I remembered, "Don't revile people 'even in your thoughts.'" The Lord had given me exactly what I needed to act on, but in my own self-centeredness, I had been compelled to point out another person's selfishness.

The irritated person I was that day was not who God calls me to be nor who I want to be. Not only am I embarrassed at my lack of integrity but also was convicted of my self-centeredness. I asked for forgiveness both for my words but also for ignoring the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The way of integrity is that my actions reflect my faith. I'm thankful that the Lord opened my eyes to my lack of integrity and that he is merciful and faithful to forgive me.

React: Ask the Lord to open your eyes to areas where you lack integrity. Then, ask for forgiveness and strength that you might walk in the ways of Jesus.

Pray: Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. [Psalm 139:23-24 \(NIV\)](#)



Week 5 | The Way of Integrity

Day 4 | A Love Legacy

Command: *Keep your word.* [Matthew 5:33-37 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *My little children, don't just talk about love as an idea or a theory. Make it your true way of life, and live in the pattern of gracious love.* [1 John 3:18 \(Voice\)](#)

Reflect: I was given a legacy of integrity by my mother. She lived the ways of Jesus to the best of her ability. Of course she wasn't perfect and made mistakes, but even those times were teaching moments. She taught us that being truthful and acting in accordance to our faith was important, even when it was inconvenient or uncomfortable.

C.S. Lewis stated "Integrity is doing the right thing even when no one is watching." My mom often echoed those words. Her actions made her faith evident to others. When a classmate's mom lost her husband unexpectedly, my mom reached out to her. After a few months, my mom showed up at her house one morning and told her to get dressed, "We're going to lunch." My mom knew she needed the courage and support to get out of the house. They ended up becoming best friends. Even my high school friends would often confide in my mother knowing they could trust her.

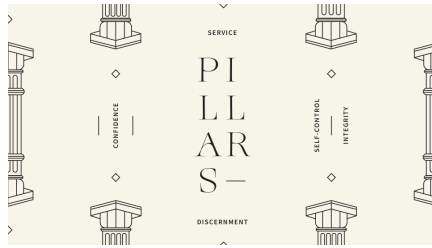
Loving God and loving others is central to our faith. In Matthew 22, Jesus states that the greatest commandment is to love the Lord God with all your heart, soul and mind. He then says the second greatest commandment is to love your neighbor as yourself.

I've often thought of integrity as following moral rules in all aspects of my life. However, as I reflect on my mom's example, I think living a life of love as a Jesus follower is the basis of integrity. If I love the Lord and love others well, I will serve them, be honest, trustworthy, kind and dependable. If acting in love is my priority, I don't have to focus on the rules.

Sometimes I miss the opportunities God gives me to love others, but my ongoing prayer is that the Holy Spirit would open my eyes and my heart to love others with my actions just like my mom demonstrated so well.

React: How can you demonstrate loving God and loving others in your life today? Look for opportunities to live out your faith and honor the Lord.

Pray: Thank you Father God for giving us the Holy Spirit to guide us toward an abundant life of love in action. Please open my eyes to opportunities to love others and give me the strength of character to act upon the Holy Spirit's leading that I might honor you.



Week 5 | The Way of Integrity

Day 5 | 'Yes' be 'Yes'

Command: *Keep your word.* [Matthew 5:33-37 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *Again, you have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not break your oath, but fulfill to the Lord the vows you have made.' But I tell you, do not swear an oath at all: either by heaven, for it is God's throne; or by the earth, for it is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King. And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make even one hair white or black. All you need to say is simply 'Yes' or 'No'; anything beyond this comes from the evil one.* [Matthew 5:33-37 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: Life is a cascade of promises. From the small to the substantial, our words form the foundation of trust. In the bustling heart of parenthood, promises turn pivotal; they're not mere words but lifelines of trust, respect, and love.

I remember a younger version of myself – carefree and perhaps, too casual with my words. “I’ll be there,” I’d say without a second thought, sometimes only to disappoint. It took a friend’s raw honesty to open my eyes to the weight of my promises, or the lack thereof.

Now, as I look at my teenage boys, I feel the weight and worth of every promise I make. My journey from those flakey days to now is not just a path of self-realization but one of responsibility. As I lead by example, I am mindful that I’m not only building the bedrock of our family trust but also laying the foundation of the men they’re becoming.

The words of Jesus in Matthew 5:33-37 are profound yet simple. Let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No.’ In a world muddled with ambiguities and half-truths, the clarity of our intent stands out. Jesus emphasizes not on making lofty oaths but on the purity of our word.

For every parent, especially a mother, these words resonate deeply. We are the first examples of integrity our children see. Our promises, whether about taking out the dogs or showing up for their milestones, become the benchmark of reliability and trustworthiness.

React: So, let us be vigilant with our promises. Let them not be mere words, but testaments of our character. In molding our integrity, we shape the character of the future generation. And as we hold onto our words, let’s remember - integrity truly starts at home.

Pray: Dear Lord, guide us to be guardians of our promises. Let our words reflect our character, and let our actions amplify the sincerity of our intentions. In a world of uncertainty, make us beacons of trust and integrity for our children and all around us. Amen.



Week 1 | The Way of Freedom

Day 1 | Being Transformed

Command: Beware of the Pharisees. [Matthew 23:1-4 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit. [2 Corinthians 3:16-18 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: I discovered these words several decades ago. What Paul lays out here became, for me, the core principles of the journey toward becoming more like Christ. Learning to consistently practice the principle of unveiling my mind so I can gaze intently at the dazzling goodness of Christ. It has provided a process of progressively changing me from a self-centered way of life, into the divine ways of living that display the Glory of God.

The Greek word in the New Testament for transformation is metamorphous. It means to transition from one form to another. This process includes turning my attention toward the Lord and removing any idea or bias that veils a vivid view of his pure goodness and wisdom. Since Christ is never far from any of us, (Acts 17:27) we can do this in any waking moment. His Spirit, with the flow of the energy of his essence, breathes around us continuously. The practice is to notice, and then fix the focus of our attention on the trait of Christ's goodness that we need to deal with.

Doing so over time transforms us into his goodness, so that "in this world we are like Jesus". [1 John 4:17 \(NIV\)](#) It also sets us free from stifling religious attitudes and habitual deficits of character.

React: Notice Christ's presence. Gaze upon his bright goodness as in a mirror, then reflect his goodness.

Pray: Lord, free me from my offensive ways and lead me in the way everlasting.



Week 1 | The Way of Freedom

Day 2 | List-less

Command: *Beware of the Pharisees.* [Matthew 23:1-4 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.* [Galatians 5:1 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: Next week our eldest daughter and her family will be visiting us from out-of-state. We're planning a big family gathering. I've already started lists for things to get done before they arrive. When I check off each item, I feel satisfied with what I've accomplished.

As a list-maker, it's easy for me to make a mental list of the things I need to do to be a "good" follower of Jesus. Read my Bible. Check. Pray. Check. Serve. Check. The list is endless and I can easily become a slave to it. It's also easy for me to feel guilty when items on my list aren't checked. God wants so much more for me.

Jesus sacrificed that I might live a life of freedom. His way is not a set of rules or a moral check list. In "Life Lessons From Galatians: Free In Christ," Max Lucado writes, "Oh, you've done some nice things in your life. But you do not have enough good works to go to heaven regardless of your sacrifice. No matter how noble your gifts, they are not enough to get you into heaven... apart from Christ you aren't holy. So how can you go to heaven? Only believe. Accept the work already done, the work of Jesus on the cross."

When we make our faith centered on a list of rules, we disregard the sacrifice Jesus made on the cross. We become much like the rule-following Pharisees. Instead, Christ calls us to believe, accept his grace, and focus on living a life of love; free from any checklists. We cannot earn his love. The Lord loves us already. He extends grace to us and provides the Holy Spirit to guide us. This is the way of freedom!

React: Are you trying to earn the love of God through what you do? You are already loved by him more than you can comprehend. Accept his love and grace, knowing that he has already paid the price for your freedom. We are free indeed!

Pray: Forgive me, Jesus, when I make my life about a set of rules instead of living in the grace and freedom you want for me. Help me instead to live a life of love as I serve you and serve others.



Week 1 | The Way of Freedom

Day 3 | Freedom to Serve

Command: *Beware of the Pharisees.* [Matthew 23:1-4 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love.* [Galatians 5:13 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: When I recall the freedom I felt right after graduating college, it was like the world had opened up before me, brimming with possibilities. Without the constraints of school and work, time was abundant. Yet, as with many blessings, the true challenge was discerning how to use it wisely.

Initially, I squandered this gift. The allure of relaxation, epitomized by binge-watching Netflix, often triumphed over productivity. Yet as the hours rolled by, I couldn't shake off a nagging sensation that I wasn't using my newfound freedom in a way that honored its value or my purpose.

Galatians 5:13 serves as a profound reminder of this very tension. Paul speaks of the freedom we receive as believers, a freedom that can easily be misused. While we might not be indulging in the desires of the flesh in an overt manner, passivity and a lack of purpose can sometimes be its own form of indulgence.

But in my journey, I've also witnessed the beauty of what it means to "serve one another humbly in love". Simple breakfast meet-ups became avenues where I could actively listen to friends, offering my time and attention as a means to support and pray for them.

The embodiment of this spirit of service is seen profoundly in my stepdad. In his retirement, when he could have chosen a life of leisure, he instead dedicates his time to repairing broken bikes. These bikes, lovingly restored, find their way to children in Mexico. Through his hands, they aren't just given a mode of transport, but a taste of Christ's love. Such selfless giving exemplifies what Paul meant when he encouraged us to use our freedom to serve in love.

React:

- ☐ **Value of Time:** Reflect on how you're spending your free time. Are there areas you could redirect towards service or personal growth?
- ☐ **Active Listening:** The next time you're with a friend or a loved one, truly listen. Seek ways to support, encourage, and pray for them.
- ☐ **Seek Opportunities:** Like my step dad with his bikes, there might be unique ways you can serve. What talents or resources can you offer to bless others?

Pray: Dear Lord, thank you for the gift of freedom. Help me to remember that with this freedom comes responsibility. Guide me to use my time, resources, and talents to serve others, reflecting your love in all I do. Let my actions honor you and uplift those around me. Amen.



Week 1 | The Way of Freedom

Day 4 | Truth, Freedom, and Living Genuine Faith

Command: *Beware of the Pharisees.* [Matthew 23:1-4 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”* [John 8:31-32 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: Life has an uncanny way of chaining us to our past. For much of my life, I found myself tethered to guilt. Memories of past missteps, like relentless shadows, would often cloud my days. But in the midst of this storm, a profound truth shone brightly: I am forgiven and loved by God. Truly understanding this simple yet profound truth was like being handed a key to liberation.

However, understanding God's love and forgiveness doesn't mean we won't encounter contradictions. It's disheartening to see signs of judgment from those professing to follow Christ. Rather than being beacons of God's love, these signs often serve as barriers. As believers, we should question whether our actions bring people closer to Christ or push them further away.

One of the most profound moments that deepened my faith was starting a family. It amplified my understanding of God's love and grace. Just as I unconditionally love my family, God's love for us is boundless and forgiving.

Engaging with the faith community, studying his word, and surrounding myself with fellow believers help in nurturing and affirming my faith. They act as constant reminders of Jesus's teachings, emphasizing the importance of understanding the truth and the freedom that comes with it.

React:

- ☐ **Embrace the Truth:** Reflect on personal truths that you might be resisting. Accepting these truths, especially the ones centered around God's love and forgiveness, can lead to personal liberation.
- ☐ **Guard Against Hypocrisy:** Ensure that your actions and words reflect Christ's love and teachings. Avoid becoming a stumbling block for others on their faith journey.
- ☐ **Nurture Your Faith:** Continuously engage with God's word and the faith community. They act as anchors, grounding us in the teachings of Jesus.

Pray: Heavenly Father, thank you for the truth of your love and forgiveness. Help me to walk in the freedom you offer, always reflecting your love in my actions and words. Keep me grounded in your teachings, and may I always be a beacon of your grace and truth to others. Amen.



Week 1 | The Way of Freedom

Day 5 | Finding Freedom in Righteousness

Command: *Beware of the Pharisees.* [Matthew 23:1-4 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.* [Romans 6:18 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: Childhood memories often shape our perceptions in indelible ways. My early years in church painted a picture of a God of rules and consequences. Conversations were rife with talk of hell, the impending end-times, and the pervasive sins of the world. The Bible, rather than being a source of solace, became a tool for highlighting misdeeds before punishment. This instilled a fear-driven faith, an unwavering belief in a God of “DO AS I SAY or ELSE.”

Then, a pivotal moment arrived. At 24, pregnant and unwed, I apprehensively re-entered the church, bracing for judgment. Instead, I was met with open arms. The guilt and weight of my perceived sin melted in the warmth of acceptance, allowing me to truly understand the words of Romans 6:18.

The Pharisees of Jesus' time were not much different from the environment of my early faith journey. Laden with rules and a superficial understanding of God's word, they missed the core message of God's love and grace. But Jesus, in his infinite wisdom, showed us the way. In him, I found freedom, not just from the shackles of sin, but from the oppressive weight of empty religious rituals and legalism.

Now, my faith is different. It's no longer about checking boxes or avoiding hellfire. It's about love, service, and a genuine desire to embrace Jesus' teachings. My past mistakes no longer loom as harbingers of doom. Instead, they are lessons that shape my journey, guiding me towards a deeper relationship with Christ.

React:

- ☐ **Redefining Faith:** Reflect on your understanding of God. Does it stem from fear or love? Seek to build a relationship grounded in God's grace and love.
- ☐ **Embrace Freedom in Christ:** Allow yourself to be freed from past guilt and mistakes. Remember, in Christ we are set free from sin and are called to walk in righteousness.
- ☐ **Expressing Genuine Commitment:** Engage with your faith community, not out of obligation, but out of a genuine desire to serve and grow in Christ.

Pray: Dear Lord, thank you for setting me free from the chains of sin and legalism. Help me to always remember the depth of your grace and love. Guide me to serve you and others out of genuine love and not out of obligation. May my life always be a testament to the freedom and righteousness found in you. Amen.



Week 2 | The Way of Truth

Day 1 | Guarding Against Deception in Pursuit of Truth

Command: Watch out for false prophets. [Matthew 7:15 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them—bringing swift destruction on themselves. Many will follow their depraved conduct and will bring the way of truth into disrepute. In their greed these teachers will exploit you with fabricated stories. Their condemnation has long been hanging over them, and their destruction has not been sleeping.*

[2 Peter 2:1-3 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: In a world brimming with varying ideologies and beliefs, it's easy to encounter teachings that veer away from the core message of the gospel. Our culture often reverberates with the mantra: “You do you.” While self-expression and self-discovery have their place, this sentiment often encourages a focus on self above all else, running contrary to Jesus' call to die to oneself. This worldly wisdom can lead us down paths that might seem right but ultimately pull us away from the foundational truths of the gospel. Take marriage, for instance. Society and contemporary culture offer countless views on marriage roles, but the Bible provides clear direction. The divine prescription for women to respect their husbands and husbands to love their wives isn't arbitrary. Instead, it elucidates the intrinsic nature of men and women and the divine design for marital roles. This biblical framework offers a profound and transformative perspective on the relationship between spouses.

The beauty of our faith lies in the guidance of the Holy Spirit, leading us to truth and shielding us from falsehoods. The Holy Spirit's whispers, nudges, and sometimes even robust prods, guide us in our daily walk, ensuring we stay rooted in truth. But our responsibility is to remain in ongoing conversation with God, acknowledging our limitations and relying on His all-encompassing knowledge.

As we walk in truth, we're also called to be bearers of that truth to others. Friends who seek answers in the universe or within themselves may be genuinely searching for spiritual fulfillment. Our role is to gently and lovingly redirect their gaze towards Jesus, the true source of life and wisdom.

React:

1. **Evaluate Cultural Teachings:** Examine popular sayings or beliefs you encounter daily. Do they align with the gospel's truth?
2. **Cherish God's Design:** Reflect on the biblical teachings about roles in relationships, family, and society. How can you more fully live out these principles?
3. **Stay Connected:** Maintain an ongoing dialogue with God. Ask for His guidance, especially when you encounter new or conflicting teachings.
4. **Be a Beacon:** Engage in conversations with loved ones who may be seeking or embracing differing beliefs. Pray for wisdom and gentleness to share the truth.

Pray: Dear Heavenly Father, thank You for Your word, a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. Protect me from falsehoods and guide me in Your truth. Equip me to discern the teachings I encounter and give me the courage to share Your truth with those around me. May I always stay rooted in Your word and led by Your Holy Spirit. In Jesus' name, Amen.



Week 2 | The Way of Truth

Day 2 | Lie Detector

Command: Watch out for false prophets. [Matthew 7:15 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. [1 John 4:1 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: Are you kidding me? How do you know? Those were my questions as I was told that my bill was counterfeit. I was shocked! It looked and felt so real. I had been duped. In that moment I thought about my daughter who for years had worked at a financial institution where she had learned to discern between *true* and *false* currency. Her ability to make such a quick distinction was her habitual practice of *testing* the bills. This protected her from being easily deceived.

In the same way, how can we know if what is being taught about Jesus is true? It must be tested in the light of God's word. The deceiver of our souls wants to convince us of half-truths. A perfect example would be that Jesus was a good man, but not God. Don't be deceived. Jesus is and will always be fully God and fully human.

React: Where do you need to shed light on your beliefs about Jesus? Do they confirm that he is fully God and fully human? If not, then would you consider accepting that truth today in the light of God's word?

Pray: Lord, help us detect the lies when it comes to believing who your son Jesus really is. May we read the bible consistently to confirm that truth. Despite what we've previously believed allow us to test its validity in your light. Amen.



Week 2 | The Way of Truth

Day 3 | Speaking the Truth in Love

Command: *Abide in truth.* [John 8:31 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."* [John 8:31-32 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: My mom is a strong woman with a kind heart and a resilient spirit. She recently turned 93-years-old and has battled Parkinson's disease for the past ten years. She is weary. I wish I could change her current circumstances, but the one thing I can do is be a compassionate listener and a truth teller.

At times when my mom reflects back on her life she feels regret. There are things she has said and done that she wishes she could change. Yet none of us have the power to change the past, so I tell her the truth: "You were a loving wife, a great mom and a wonderful human. Any mistakes you made have been confessed, covered and forgiven by Jesus. Walk in that freedom."

Another antidote to the regrets of the past that we have discovered is taking the time to go through old pictures together to remember the many happy moments we have shared. By reliving the positive events of the past the dark clouds of regret are blown away by the visual truth of a life that has included much happiness.

Sometimes my mom feels concern for her present circumstances. I sit up and listen with pencil and paper in hand. Since she can no longer fix her present circumstances by herself, she needs the help of her family to effect change. What can we do to make her life more comfortable, more peaceful, more joyful? I like these problems the best since they often include simple action items that can quickly and easily be addressed: a new phone with amplification for diminished hearing; a new CD player to replace the one that died; a comforting hand massage and pedicure. No, I can't take away her battle with Parkinson's, but I can show compassion and care to make her days a little more pleasant and comfortable. This provides her with the reassurance that help is there when help is needed.

Like all of us, my mom worries about the future. What will tomorrow's challenges look like and how will they be addressed? Since we are both powerless to predict the future, I remind her that she has a loving family around her and that together we will address whatever challenges tomorrow brings. Then I join her in acknowledging this powerful truth: "The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness." [Lamentations 3:22-23 \(ESV\)](#)

React: Are you mired down in regrets from the past, concerns for your present circumstances or worries about the future? Is there someone you can talk to who will help you gain perspective and build your faith?

Pray: Father God, thank you that I can confess and release my regrets from the past, that with help from loved ones and friends I can face my present challenges and make positive changes, and I know that you will be with me as I step into the future because you have promised to never leave me or forsake me.



Week 2 | The Way of Truth

Day 4 | One True God

Command: Watch out for false prophets. [Matthew 7:15 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” [John 14:6 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: Life can be challenging, rewarding, confusing, fruitful, and frustrating. I can find myself wallowing in self-pity and doubt when I have an especially hard day. But what brings me out of the funk is the knowledge that Jesus is all I need. I imagine Jesus walking next to me or sitting beside me through the darkness. I know that I am not alone.

My personal relationship has led me to a place where I believe God is the true God, even though I cannot see him or touch him. The verses that I read in the Bible convince me that there can only be one God who created the universe. I hear this truth in worship songs, discussions in growth groups, and sermons.

Being a believer requires investigation and seeking out trusted leaders. If I am not sure about something that I have heard, I reach for my Bible to find the truth. The Holy Spirit gives me the discernment to deny and ignore false gods or false teachings. Discernment helps me figure out what is right and true. As a Christian, our calling is to help others find and follow Jesus.

React: Life is not easy. There are many confusing messages about God. Be careful and be aware. Listen to the feeling in your gut that tells you something doesn’t seem right about this person or that situation. The Holy Spirit is God’s gift to us to use and identify Him as the one true God.

Pray: Jesus, you are the way, the truth, and the life. I want to keep your ways in my heart and head. I want to be clear about what is true. I know you are the one true God.



Week 2 | The Way of Truth

Day 5 | The Only Truth

Command: Watch out for false prophets. [Matthew 7:15 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: Show me your ways, Lord, teach me your paths. Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long. [Psalm 25:4-6 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: When a friend betrayed me, I wanted to yell the truth from the rooftops in order to “set the record straight.” As close friends and family commiserated with me, I initially felt vindicated. They not only agreed with how painful the situation was for me but also how hateful the other person was.

When I lingered in the darkness of the betrayal, the way of the world told me that talking about the situation would help me to feel better, but it only seemed to increase my pain and distance me from the Lord.

Eventually, I realized that the *only* truth I actually needed to focus on was Jesus’ truth. I didn’t need to “set the record straight.” The Lord’s truth is that I needed only to seek him. Jesus tells us the most important commandments are to love God and love others. He tells us to forgive as we have been forgiven. I had been so concerned with getting vindication that I had taken my eyes off the truth of God.

The Lord’s truth includes loving and forgiving others even when the world thinks we should do otherwise. God knows our pain. He is absolutely in love with each of us and only he can heal our broken hearts. He extends us mercy and forgiveness and helps us to do the same for others. That is the *only* truth - God’s truth.

React: Seek to know the truth of God. Read his word, seek his presence, pray.

Pray: Show me your ways, Lord, teach me your paths. Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long. [Psalm 25:4-6 \(NIV\)](#)



Week 3 | The Way of Contentment

Day 1 | He is Enough

Command: Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions.” [Luke 12:15 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: Whoever loves money never has enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with their income. This too is meaningless. [Ecclesiastes 5:10 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: My 6-year-old never seems to have enough. Despite his young age, he's keenly aware that there's always something newer, bigger, and better out there. Whether it's the apps on his iPad or the action figures in his closet, he always craves just a bit more. Sound familiar?

In this era of meticulously curated Pinterest and Instagram posts, it's challenging not to juxtapose the world's “haves” with our own “have nots.” Marketers capitalize on this feeling of inadequacy, trying to incite our discontent by advocating for the superior value of their products and suggesting we deserve MORE. Yet, the Bible counsels us to find contentment in any situation. Realistically, we can't predicate our happiness on ever-changing circumstances. Instead, we should trust in God's unwavering power and strength, regardless of our current situation. By doing so, we liberate ourselves from the perpetual longing for more and find solace in the unique peace only God offers.

React: Where are you currently dissatisfied in your life? Pray that God meets you there so that you may feel the joy of contentment.

Pray: God, you are enough. Help me to be satisfied with all that you've blessed me with. Amen.



Week 3 | The Way of Contentment

Day 2 | The Secret to Being Content

Command: Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions.” [Luke 12:15 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: I have learned to be content in whatever circumstance I find myself. I have learned the secret... I can do all things through the one who strengthens me. [Philippians 4:11-13 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: I grew up in the South Bay and went to college in Oklahoma, then settled in Texas for several years. My dear mother missed me and my family and often expressed her desire for me to return to California. Since she liked to read from the King James Version of the Bible, I lightheartedly quoted Philippians, “I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.” She was not amused. There is a secret in the wisdom of Paul’s words that certainly should be taken to heart. The secret to contentment. How can I be content when my circumstances are difficult, unfair, or lacking and I feel distressed, dissatisfied, frustrated and despondent? What would empower me to have sufficient ability to deal with or at least cope with tough times and maintain a confident peace?

The secret did not come to Paul naturally. He learned it through enduring many hardships while “living, moving and being with the God who is never far from any one of us” [Acts 17:27-28](#). And the secret is this. “I have learned to be content in whatever circumstance I find myself. I have learned the secret... I can do all things through the one who strengthens [empowers, invigorates] me” [Philippians 4:11-13 \(NIV\)](#).

Paul learned the secret of living through the one who empowers us, and we can too. In fact, he prefaces the secret with these words. “Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.” We can learn from Paul’s example and inspired words. He learned the secret from Jesus who invites us to find the rest that comes from learning from him. “Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.” [Matthew 11:29 \(NIV\)](#)

React: I can learn that as I connect with Christ, who is never far from me, I can access sufficient ability to deal with my circumstances and to be content rather than succumb to discontent and complaining.

Pray: Father, help me remember that I can be at ease in difficult moments and tough times because I am infused with Christ’s empowering and invigorating presence.



Week 3 | The Way of Contentment

Day 3 | The Secret to Contentment

Command: Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions.” [Luke 12:15 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. [1 Timothy 6:6-10 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: I was a newly stay at home mom after several years of working in my career path. It made sense for me to stay home after our third child. Adjusting to a one income family had its difficulties. I admired families who seem to be thriving on a one income family and I often wondered what was their secret? They didn’t make any more than we did, yet they didn’t seem to stress about having enough to satisfy their needs. Over the course of walking it out with Jesus and whining about our circumstances, we landed on taking a financial study through our church. I discovered stewardship, worship, generosity, and the secret of my single-income friends that had me baffled, contentment.

I needed to trade in my worldly glasses for those of my Father’s. I viewed my discontentment with the world’s standards of happiness with more material possessions. I quickly learned that yes, money allows us the necessities we need to be generous and serve with our resources. It was seeing things through the Lord’s lens that I began to experience true contentment as a result of viewing my money God’s way. The desire for possessions exchanged for Kingdom work became more meaningful and fueled my contentment for less. It’s ironic, the more I poured out into others with my resources, the fuller I became, and the appetite for more was satisfied.

React: Do you struggle with being content? Where are your resources going, and does it fulfill your appetite for more? Ask God to direct your resources where there is complete satisfaction.

Pray: Lord, I pray you direct me with my resources your way so I may be filled with true contentment. Amen.



Week 3 | The Way of Contentment

Day 4 | Finding True Satisfaction in God's Embrace

Command: Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions.” [Luke 12:15 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, 'Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you. [Hebrews 13:5 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: The quest for satisfaction often leads us down paths that promise happiness, acceptance, and fulfillment. For many, like myself, the desire to please others becomes an exhaustive endeavor, changing one's identity just to fit into the molds crafted by society. Yet, this pursuit leaves us worn out, with a gaping void that people's approval can never fill.

As a young adult, I found myself bending over backwards, trying to win over my peers, to be liked and accepted. It became a relentless chase, leading to an even greater disconnect from God. The more I sought people's approval, the more distant I felt from my Creator. But in His relentless love, God beckoned me back, reminding me of my true identity in Him. Today, I stand unapologetically as myself, knowing that my worth isn't dictated by societal standards but by God's love for me.

Jesus reminded us that if God provides for the birds of the air, won't He much more provide for us, His beloved children? In an environment where every penny counts, it's easy to feel overwhelmed by financial pressures. Living in high-cost areas like California, one might sometimes feel the weight of the world on their shoulders. But in the midst of these challenges, when we pause to reflect on God's blessings and provisions, our hearts overflow with gratitude.

Cultivating contentment is an ongoing journey. It's a daily act of recognizing God's hand in our lives, from the love of our families and friends to the beauty of the world around us. And as we walk this path, we also have the privilege of encouraging others to find their satisfaction in God. After all, in His embrace, we discover an unshakable contentment that the world can never offer.

React:

1. Self-Reflection: Reevaluate areas in your life where you might be seeking validation or satisfaction outside of God. Commit to seeking His approval above all.
2. Gratitude Journal: Start a daily practice of noting down three things you are grateful for. Over time, watch your perspective shift from lack to abundance.
3. Reach Out: Encourage a friend or family member who might be struggling with discontentment. Share your journey and the hope found in Christ.

Pray: Heavenly Father, thank You for Your unconditional love and unending provisions. Teach me to find my worth and satisfaction in You alone. In Jesus' name, Amen.



Week 3 | The Way of Contentment

Day 5 | Love at First Sight

Command: *Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions.* [Luke 12:15 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal.* [Matthew 6:20 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: As a kid I grew up shopping at swap meets, resale stores and garage sales. I always admired people who could “spot a good treasure” amongst piles of rubble, racks of clothes and deteriorating boxes.

However, over the years my loved ones have allowed those treasures to eventually turn into hoardings. The moths and vermin have not only destroyed the finds, but our family as well. We’ve been robbed of the ability to share our lives, our space, and our hearts due to the displaced love of what really matters.

I am grateful that Jesus spoke about the treasures we can store in heaven. I am glad a place exists where the blessings of God will never suffer any kind of loss. As I continually seek his love and purpose in my own life, I can spot those treasures that are eternal.

I can find joy, hope, and perspective throughout my day despite the messiness of life.

React: What area in your life do you need to declutter to find some peace? Will you begin to clear up some space not only in your surroundings but your heart as well by letting go of things that don’t matter?

Pray: Heavenly Father, thank you for the perspective you give us to let go of what has no eternal value. Help us to see you as our main treasure. There is nothing worth greater value than our relationship with you! Amen.



Week 4 | The Way of Wisdom

Day 1 | Wisdom in Opposition

Command: *Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves.* [Matthew 10:16 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.* [James 1:5 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: In my own life, I encountered a period of intense opposition and adversity. It felt as though the forces against me were insurmountable, and I was constantly met with challenges that left me feeling drained and discouraged. I turned to God in prayer, recognizing that my own understanding was insufficient to navigate these difficult circumstances.

As I sought God's wisdom, I began to see things differently. His wisdom enabled me to view the opposition not as insurmountable obstacles but as opportunities for growth and transformation. Through prayer and reflection, I gained insights and strategies to address the challenges before me.

God's wisdom also brought a sense of peace and perseverance. I realized that the opposition was not a sign of God's absence but an invitation to rely on his strength and guidance. With his wisdom, I was able to respond to adversity with grace and determination, trusting that he was working through the challenges for my ultimate good.

James 1:5 reminds us that God's wisdom is available to us, even in the face of opposition. When we seek his wisdom, we tap into a wellspring of insight, courage, and discernment. We discover that opposition can be a catalyst for growth and a pathway to his greater purposes in our lives.

React: How has seeking God's wisdom in times of opposition transformed your perspective and approach to challenges in your life?

Pray: Heavenly Father, help us see opposition as an opportunity for growth and a path to your greater purposes. May your wisdom be our guiding light in the darkest moments.



Week 4 | The Way of Wisdom

Day 2 | Being Shrewd and Gracious.

Command: *Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves.* [Matthew 10:16 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves.* [Matthew 10:16 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: I grew up in a very legalistic denomination. The measure of our faith was how strictly we adhered to our religious doctrines and how rigidly we kept the rules. In fact, we were taught that our denomination was the only one going to heaven because we kept the rules more precisely than any other church. I attended a college of that denomination during the time of the Jesus revolution. I hope you saw the recent movie. It was a glorious time! The love of Jesus was palpable, and worship exuded a freedom of expression of our love for God and his love for us. There was a new unity among believers. There were spontaneous “Jesus rallies” everywhere, especially on college campuses. I loved going to these outdoor gatherings with my new “Jesus people” friends. I was attending one of these rallies at a nearby university, worshiping with my hands held high, unaware of a photographer for the campus newspaper nearby. When the Dean of my college saw my picture worshiping with all these weird Jesus people, he called me into his office to interrogate me. I remember asking the Holy Spirit for guidance and I think he gifted me with the ability to be as shrewd as a snake while being harmless as a dove. I was able to graciously evade his leading questions and actually trapped him in his own words with a gentle smile that reflected the spirit of that season.

I was learning, at that young age, the principles of practicing presence. *“My eyes are ever on the Lord, for only he will release my feet from the snare.”* [Psalm 25:15 \(NIV\)](#)

React: Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him; do not fret when people succeed in their ways, when they carry out their wicked schemes. [Psalm 37:7 \(NIV\)](#)

Pray: Thank you for your presence. Lead me in your paths with your wisdom and grace.



Week 4 | The Way of Wisdom

Day 3 | Wisdom Comes in Many Forms

Command: *Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves.* [Matthew 10:16 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *And so it was with me, brothers and sisters. When I came to you, I did not come with eloquence or human wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. I came to you in weakness with great fear and trembling. My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on God's power.* [1 Corinthians 2:1-5 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: For many years, my husband and I prayed over my brother to soften his heart towards Jesus and allow him to be his Savior. After tough circumstances and job loss, we welcomed him into our home until he could get back on his feet.

He witnessed our steadiness in attending church services every Sunday and hosting growth groups in our home with friends who were “normal” and lived regular lives as he did. Most importantly, he observed how we lived our daily lives as a family following Jesus.

Over several months he began to ask about our faith, something he didn't care to know about in the past. We invited him to attend an Easter service and by our surprise he accepted our invitation. I noticed his fidgeting during the message; the Holy Spirit was convicting him with the words spoken.

Later that evening friends joined us around the patio table. My brother began to reveal the convictions he felt during service. He began to share the revelations the Holy Spirit planted in his heart. We all felt this common urge and recognized what needed to be asked. However, my husband spoke up for us and asked if my brother was ready to accept Jesus as his Lord and Savior. He was.

The Holy Spirit spoke through so many over the course of time my brother stayed with us. Through my growth group friends, my family members, and our pastor which led to his acceptance of Christ. Wisdom can come in many forms. It can come through wordless actions, the patience to wait on God's perfect timing and discerning when that wisdom needs to be shared.

React: There is no special thing you need to do for the Holy Spirit to grant you the wisdom you need. He gives it to you in his perfect timing. He gives you the urge, the words and the conviction to act. Are you willing to be patient and act on them in his time?

Pray: Lord, grant me the wisdom to know when to speak, when to listen, and when to act. Amen.



Week 4 | The Way of Wisdom

Day 4 | The Holy Spirit Will Teach You

Command: *Be on your guard.* [Matthew 10:17 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *For the Holy Spirit will teach you at that time what you should say.* [Luke 12:12 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: When I first committed to following Jesus, I started serving my church community through youth services and small groups. At first, my serving role was primarily setting up the message notes and pens under every seat in the church auditorium. This role felt comfortable and safe.

A few months later, the youth pastor invited me and encouraged me to co-lead a 9th-grade girls' small group alongside a more seasoned leader. I was terrified. I was new in my faith journey, and I felt extremely unqualified. My biggest worry was, "What if they asked me a question about God that I didn't know the answer to?" or "What if I said the wrong thing?"

The words of Luke 12:12 that say, "for the Holy Spirit will teach you at the time what you should say," are a powerful reminder that we can trust God to give us wisdom and discernment. We can lean in and trust that his Holy Spirit will guide us in what to say, and that he will always lead us toward actions and words of love and kindness towards others.

React: In what ways can you lean in and trust that God will give you wisdom and discernment when you need it?

Pray: Heavenly Father, we thank you for the promise of the Holy Spirit who teaches us and empowers us. Help us to trust in your guidance and to lean on your wisdom. May we be bold witnesses for Christ, knowing that we are never alone, but always led by the Spirit. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.



Week 4 | The Way of Wisdom

Day 5 | Wisdom in the Face of Opposition

Command: *Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves.* [Matthew 10:16 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *Opposition arose, however, from members of the Synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called – Jews of Cyrene and Alexandria as well as the provinces of Cilicia and Asia—who began to argue with Stephen. But they could not stand up against the wisdom the Spirit gave him as he spoke.*

[Acts 6:9-10 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: I was at a loss for words. I had asked to borrow a computer from a loved one and ended up in shock as I read through the emails reflecting an extramarital affair.

I remember asking God for wisdom for the inevitable conversation that would take place within the hour. When faced with their opposing comments about how it wasn't what it seemed, I pressed in and suggested full disclosure to their spouse, counseling, and a book to read.

Their comment about reading the book? "I don't like to read." My response? "Well, it doesn't seem like you have a problem with reading because you read every email. I believe it has more to do with the content."

Immediately they agreed to disclose the extramarital affair, go to counseling, and buy the book. I know I'm not that witty to come up with such a response. But the Spirit of God is. Truth in love always comes from God. It gives us heavenly confidence despite the opposing forces.

React: Where do you need wisdom as you face opposition? How can you speak truth in love?

Pray: Lord, we want to be like Stephen who spoke with the power of your Spirit. May our words be tempered with truth and love. Amen.



Week 5 | The Way of Authenticity

Day 1 | Always Be Humble and Kind

Command: *Beware of pride.* [Matthew 6:1-4 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *That is what the Son of Man has done: He came to serve, not be served—and then to give away his life in exchange for the many who are held hostage.* [Matthew 20:28 \(Message\)](#)

Reflect: I serve in the Fostering Love Community Closet at EastLake Church. Our mission is to support at-risk families in our community, offering love and encouragement, as well as providing them with new and gently used children's clothing to help stretch their family budget.

Our clients connect with us through their relationships with the dedicated case workers from the YMCA Kinship program and Child Welfare Services. Others come to us through spontaneous relationships and friendships within our church family and community. These families grapple with challenges stemming from various reasons: the loss or incarceration of a family member, financial strains from a difficult divorce, or a child transitioning to a safe home due to abuse or neglect. Yet, more than clothing, the predominant need we encounter is the longing for understanding, kindness, and compassion.

When we greet the individuals we serve, our first words are, “Welcome to our family! This is a place where we can give, receive, serve, and share. Please accept what we offer today, and in the future, consider sharing with someone else.”

In a society that prizes self-reliance, self-sufficiency, and independence, it demands profound humility to ask for help. Many opt to mask their vulnerabilities. However, the reality remains that everyone craves love, support, encouragement, assistance, and connection. There are instances when we're in a position to give, and others when all we can do is gratefully receive. This oscillation between giving and receiving defines the human experience.

Jesus, in His humanity, lived amidst us, feeling our emotions and discerning our needs. He ministered to individuals and vast crowds alike, catering to both physical and spiritual needs. He humbled Himself, even to the point of death on the cross. And when we humble ourselves to recognize our need for His love and assistance, we are reborn into God's family—a haven where we hold value and belong, where we can both give and receive.

When was the last time you sought help? In which facet of your life do you presently seek assistance? Do you possess the courage to approach someone you trust, sharing your vulnerabilities?

React: Reflect upon the last occasion you reached out for help. In which area of your life do you currently feel the need for support? Can you summon the bravery to open up about your vulnerabilities to someone trustworthy?

Pray: Jesus, we're grateful for Your humility, for Your decision to experience human life with its spectrum of emotions and challenges. You recognize each of our needs today. Please guide us in acknowledging our own necessities and in being receptive to the needs surrounding us.



Week 5 | The Way of Authenticity

Day 2 | Our Call to Humble Service

Command: *Beware of pride.* [Matthew 6:1-4 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.*

[Philippians 2:5-7 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: In the quiet moments of our lives, when we let the world's noise fade, we can see the profound mystery of humility embodied in Christ. Jesus, the very nature of God, chose not to boast of His divine status. Instead, He humbled Himself, taking on human form, and served us, even unto death.

In 2009, I got a glimpse into the essence of this humility. I had the chance to donate bone marrow to a stranger diagnosed with non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. I was chosen because our DNA perfectly matched – a profound reminder of how intricately God knows and connects each one of us. For five days, I underwent a medical procedure to donate stem cells, expecting nothing in return. This man, whom I had never met and sadly never will, needed something I could offer. The selflessness of Christ, who gave all of Himself for us, spurred me on. It wasn't about accolades or recognition, but simply about loving as Jesus loved. It's a call that challenges me every day. To keep my heart open, praying for God to highlight opportunities to serve, even amidst the rush of daily life. It's a challenge to shift our focus away from our needs and onto the needs of others. To stop waiting for the spotlight and instead shine it on someone else. To value and respect the time and talents of others as we would our own.

Jesus' humility is not just a story from two millennia ago. It's a living, breathing call to action, urging us to humbly serve God and our neighbors.

React: Today, take a moment to reflect on how you can show Christ-like humility in your daily life. Whether it's by actively seeking opportunities to serve, appreciating others more, or simply giving your time and talent without expecting anything in return. Remember, in emulating Jesus, we find our true purpose and joy.

Pray: Lord Jesus, thank You for Your profound example of humility. Teach us to serve as You did. Open our eyes to the opportunities around us, and give us the courage to act. In Your name, we pray. Amen.



Week 5 | The Way of Authenticity

Day 3 | Letting Go and Letting God

Command: *Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.*
[Matthew 6:8 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will."* [Matthew 26:39 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: As I sat in the dimly lit church, tears welled up in my eyes, and my heart felt heavy. I recalled a time in my own life when I faced a moment of intense struggle and uncertainty. I found myself wrestling with a decision that felt too heavy to bear.

Matthew 26:39 paints a vivid picture of that pivotal moment in Jesus' life. He fell on his face in prayer, saying, *"My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will."* This verse reminds me of the profound surrender that Jesus exhibited in the face of his impending crucifixion.

In my own life, I had to make a difficult choice that required surrendering my own desires and fears to God's will. Just like Jesus, I prayed fervently for guidance and strength, asking God to align my will with his. It was in that moment of surrender that I found peace and clarity.

React: This week pause to consider God's will in your decisions, and actively seek guidance through prayer. By practicing humility, you'll discover a profound sense of peace and purpose in your daily journey.

Pray: Heavenly Father, in moments of uncertainty and struggle, help me surrender my own desires to your divine plan. Grant me the strength and clarity to say, *"Not my will, but yours be done,"* and in this surrender, may I find peace and comfort in you.



Week 5 | The Way of Authenticity

Day 4 | The Most Significant Way To Serve

Command: *Beware of pride.* [Matthew 6:1-4 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *Jesus knew that the Father had put him in complete charge of everything, that he came from God and was on his way back to God. So he got up from the supper table, set aside his robe, and put on an apron. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the feet of the disciples, drying them with his apron.* [John 13:3-5 \(MSG\)](#)

Reflect: It was time to assign camp jobs at the 5-week High School Christian Leadership Camp I was attending. Each of us hoped to land one of the choice positions in camp.

As the Director stood before us to give us our assignments, he first asked, “What is the most significant job that you might be assigned this week?” Of course we all named the various jobs that we were hoping for but were surprised when he answered, “The most significant job in this camp is cleaning bathrooms.” He went on to explain how valuable that position was to the experience of those coming to the camp to hear the Word of God.

My camp experience was almost 50 years ago, but I am still reminded of that lesson when I volunteer to serve.

After walking on unpaved dusty desert roads all day in sandals, just imagine how dirty the disciples feet must have been! Washing of the feet was a routine service in Biblical times, but it was usually performed by a servant. Just like cleaning the camp bathrooms, it was an unpleasant and undesirable job.

In the BibleHub.com, Pulpit Commentary, I recently read: “*Among men, the slave washes his master, but with God it is not so.*” (Westcott) Moreover, Jesus washing of the disciples feet is a reflection of how God cleanses us of our sins. He takes the most detestable things we have done, forgives us, cleanses us and provides redemption.

There are times that I have the privilege of serving in ways that delight me. There are also times that I feel led to serve in ways that are inconvenient and uncomfortable. I need to be open to the Holy Spirit’s leading even when the job is not one I would have chosen. Jesus calls me to serve with humility just as he demonstrated.

React: In response to the Lord’s grace and mercy, how can I but offer him my service? When my heart and hands are open to serve in humility, Jesus will use my service in ways beyond my imagination.

Pray: Forgive me Lord, when I make serving about my comfort and needs. You have served me with grace, love and compassion, even when I fail you. Please open my eyes anew to see opportunities to serve others with humility in whatever ways that you lead me.



Week 5 | The Way of Authenticity

Day 5 | Humbly Serve Others

Command: *Beware of pride.* [Matthew 6:1-4 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many.* [Matthew 20:28 \(NLT\)](#)

Reflect: I was raised in a Catholic household and regularly attended Sunday mass with my family. There's a particular memory from my childhood that stands out vividly: a sermon centered on John 13, where Jesus humbly washed the feet of his disciples.

During a reenactment of this powerful moment from John 13, my grandpa took on the role of washing the feet of 12 different men in our congregation. I was truly taken aback. My grandpa, whom I had always revered as the leader of our family and a prominent figure in our community, demonstrated an unexpected act of humility in his old age as he bent down to wash and dry the feet of those 12 men. This moment left an unforgettable impression on me.

As an adult, I now appreciate the profound connection between Jesus' endless love for us and his lifelong commitment to serving others humbly. Jesus consistently exemplified humble service to those around him. Today, he extends the same invitation to us, encouraging us to humbly serve others with love and care, to place the needs of others above our own.

React: What are some ways that Jesus is challenging you to step forward and humbly serve those around you?

Pray: Heavenly Father, we come before you with grateful hearts, inspired by the boundless love and humble service of your Son, Jesus. May we follow His example in our daily lives, serving others with genuine love and care, and placing their needs ahead of our own. In doing so, may we draw closer to your presence. Amen.



Week 1 | The Way of Compassion

Day 1 | Becoming a Channel of Divine Compassion

Command: *Go and do likewise.* [Luke 10:37 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *And walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.* [Ephesians 5:2 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: Life sometimes has a tendency to pile burdens onto our shoulders until we find ourselves staggering under the weight. In these moments, a simple act of kindness, a gesture of human compassion can be like a light piercing through the dark clouds, reminding us of the innate goodness that exists within us all.

I remember the day I was at the airport, with my hands full, trying to manage both luggage and a five month old baby. I was trying to run to my gate, when my son puked all over the front of me and the floor. I was overwhelmed. Then a compassionate stranger saw my situation and came to help clean me up, carry some luggage, and walk my son and I to our flight gate. This stranger saw my struggle, stepped in to ease my burden without expecting anything in return.

This is the very essence of the compassion that Jesus exhibited throughout His time on earth – a boundless empathy and readiness to act, to support, to uplift.

As followers of Christ, we are called to embody this same spirit of compassion, to walk in the way of love, just as Christ did. My own journey has already shown glimpses of this divine compassion – in the way I consciously try to be more aware of those around me, offering a kind smile, a helping hand, or a meal to someone in need.

Yet, the journey of cultivating compassion is ongoing. There might be moments when I wish I could do more, be more. It is in these moments that we need to remember that God looks at our hearts, our intentions, and our willingness to grow.

React: This week, consciously look for opportunities to show compassion in your daily interactions. It might be offering a listening ear to a friend, opening doors for others, or sharing a meal with someone who needs it. Remember, it's the heart behind the action that truly counts.

Pray: Dear Lord, help us to walk in the footsteps of Jesus, to embrace a life filled with love and compassion. Guide us to not only see the needs of others but to step in and be Your hands and feet in this world. Teach us to give without expecting, to love without conditions, and to serve with a joyful heart. May we become channels of Your divine compassion, reflecting Your love in every interaction. In Jesus' name, we pray, Amen.



Week 1 | The Way of Compassion

Day 2 | Supernatural Compassion

Command: *Go and do likewise.* [Luke 10:37 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *Since you are all set apart by God, made holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with a holy way of life: compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience.* [Colossians 3:12 \(Voice\)](#)

Reflect: As a single mom of three children, money was often tight but I tried not to share my financial situation with those around me. One day I was surprised to receive a phone call from an Eastlake Church staff member, who wanted to offer me a twin bed with a fairly new mattress. I wasn't even aware that I needed a bed!

When I offered the bed to my teenage son, his eyes lit up. He told me his back was hurting from sleeping on the bed that he had slept on since he was in kindergarten. He knew that buying a new bed wasn't in my budget, so he hadn't mentioned it to me.

Instantly, I knew that the Holy Spirit had been at work. I was thankful to the staff member had been *clothed with compassion*, had listened to the Holy Spirit and acted upon the Lord's leading. I felt seen and loved, not only by her, but especially by the Lord.

When I ask the Holy Spirit to clothe me with compassion as I serve others, he supernaturally opens my eyes to needs I may not be aware of. Not every single parent needs a twin bed; not every person battling an illness needs meals; not every grieving family needs flowers. When I ask the Holy Spirit to lead me, he shows me the best way to compassionately bless others.

React: Keep your eyes open to the people around you. Ask the Lord to reveal needs so that you might walk in the way of compassion and love.

Pray: Lord Jesus, you are our ultimate example of compassion. Thank you for the many ways you have showered me with love. Please open my eyes to the needs of others in our church and our community. Lead me to be a reflection of you as I bless others in compassionate ways.



Week 1 | The Way of Compassion

Day 3 | Jesus in Disguise

Command: Go and do likewise. [Luke 10:37 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: ‘When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’ “The King will reply, “Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.” [Matthew 25:38-40 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: In the Bible God identifies with the powerless and vulnerable members of our society and he takes up their cause. He is a father to the fatherless, and the defender of widows and the poor. What we choose to do for them in their hour of need, is what we choose to do for Jesus.

Mexican song-writer Jesús Adrián Romero expresses this truth in his song *Ayer Te Vi* (I Saw You Yesterday). I invite you to read the following words as you listen to the song on your digital music app:

*I saw you yesterday (Jesus)... It was clearer than the moon
There were no doubts left in me ... It was a clear appearance
My heart skipped a beat when I saw you*

*I saw you yesterday ... after having looked for you for so long
Before the sun came out ...
Asking you in prayer to allow me to see your face*

*I saw you yesterday
I saw you in a street child without a place to sleep
I saw you in his outstretched hands asking for bread to live
I saw you in his pleading eyes and in his hesitant smile*

*I saw you yesterday
I saw you in a hospital room, I saw you cry out of loneliness
I saw your troubled face in a terminally ill patient with no hope of living,
tired of suffering so much
I saw you yesterday*

*You disguise yourself and hide from my sight
But I saw you yesterday*

React: Can you see Jesus in the vulnerable members of our society? How do you respond in their hour of need?

Pray: Lord Jesus, help me see those you called “the least of these” as your image bearers and act accordingly.



Week 1 | The Way of Compassion

Day 4 | Beyond Morality

Command: *Go and do likewise.* [Luke 10:37 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *“Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?” The expert in the law replied, “The one who had mercy on him.” Jesus told him, “Go and do likewise.”* [Luke 10:36-38 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: A man carrying a red suitcase in Paris seemed to be having a heart attack and fell to the ground. Many people passed by and ignored him until a woman stopped to help. At that point the “victim” pointed to the camera and the woman laughed with relief and joy. This social media reel reminded me of the Parable of the Good Samaritan.

“Who is my neighbor?”, the lawyer asked. Jesus didn’t give him an answer that could be turned into another morality rule for self-righteousness. In a surprising turn in this parable, the Samaritan, despised and rejected by everyone, was the one who stopped to help. This is how Jesus led the lawyer to answer his own question: *“The one who had mercy on him”*.

The “one who had mercy” ignored the established physical and cultural barriers between Jews and Samaritans. He went to the injured man. He did not care that the man was considered “impure”. That practice had kept the Levites and the priests from showing compassion and leading others to God.

Often, I’m not aware of the needs of disadvantaged people because I don’t step into their physical and cultural world. I don’t look for them. I don’t talk to them. I allow my busyness, convenience and differences from seeing them as people of great value made in the image of God.

But Jesus did not mean for this parable to be just a lesson on private morality. He wants to change my heart, and that can only happen when I experience and internalize his grace and compassion. Jesus, like the Good Samaritan who was despised and rejected, had compassion on me and came to my rescue. Being God, he did not use his status to his own advantage. He didn’t care that I was impure. He simply came to my rescue.

React: How can we act in love and compassion towards others as Jesus did for us?

Pray: Lord Jesus, may I always remember your undeserved compassion so that I can “go and do likewise”.



Week 1 | The Way of Compassion

Day 5 | Love Your Neighbor

Command: *Go and do likewise.* [Luke 10:37 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?”*

Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself. All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.” [Matthew 22:34-40 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: Mary has a natural ability to care for others. In fact, her job is to care for people that are nearing the end of their life. She gives tirelessly of her time and talent. When necessary, she will spend long stretches of time with her patients, just to make sure they are not alone. In many cases, she has been with her clients when they have taken their last breath. The family members are so grateful to her for providing love, care, dignity, and companionship in the last stages of their loved one’s life.

As a friend, she displays the same qualities. She wants to make sure everyone is comfortable, happy, and well fed. She offers to watch the children of family members, just to give them a break. It is her God given talent to be compassionate and caring.

When I think of Mary, I think of God’s commandment, “*Love your neighbor as yourself.*” She is living this out in her daily walk. Her ability to care for those that are ill and dying is a special gift. We don’t all have this gift, but there are small things we can do. Taking the time to talk and listen to our neighbors, shows them that we care. We can call or text a friend that is going through a rough time. Providing a meal to an exhausted family that has just brought home a newborn, can be such a welcome relief. There is no limit to the creative ways we can show love to each other.

React: *Think of the people in your life. Is there someone that is in need of your attention? Can you give them some comfort through your words, deeds, or actions? Try to schedule a phone call, coffee chat, or just a simple text to let them know you are thinking about them.*

Pray: *Jesus, help me to follow your commandment to love my neighbors. Open my eyes for opportunities to connect and be a witness to your word. Thank you for being a loving God!*



Week 2 | The Way of Illumination

Day 1 | Let It Shine

Command: *Let your light shine.* [Matthew 5:16 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *"Give your way over to the Lord. Trust in Him also. And He will do it. He will make your being right and good show as the light, and your wise actions as the noon day."* [Psalm 37:5-6 \(NLV\)](#)

Reflect: Whenever I see the word light in scripture verses, it brings back a childhood memory of mine when I would sing and dance to that famous Bible song, *"This Little Light of Mine"*. The song lyrics say, *"This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine, let it shine, let it shine."* As a kid, it was easy to shine God's light because I was young and life was simpler. Now as an adult living in a self-centered culture, it is often hard to live out those song lyrics in my daily life.

This reminds me how my husband and I have been called to be lights in our own neighborhood. One of our neighbors is an older widow who lives alone in her house. Understandably, she needs lots of assistance with things like yard care, car maintenance, and technology. In the last few years, she has rung our doorbell, called and texted us hundreds of times, often during the early morning hours or late at night.

Honestly, I don't always feel like answering the door to see what she needs or listen to her ramble on the phone with me, but I've realized my acts of kindness and gentle words show her that God is in the details of her life and he's meeting her needs through people in her neighborhood. Even when it's difficult with our busy schedules or it's an annoying task, I am reminded that I am called to be a light in the world.

React: When you look at your daily interactions and places you go as you do life, are there simple ways you could shine God's light with your actions, words and attitude? What could that look like for you?

Pray: Dear Jesus, thank you for being our everlasting hope and light for us in this world. We want to share your goodness, love and kindness with others we encounter in our everyday lives. Guide us and fill us with your Holy Spirit so your love, hope and kindness can shine through us.



Week 2 | The Way of Illumination

Day 2 | Bring On The Light

Command: *Let your light shine.* [Matthew 5:16 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *The ways of right-living people glow with light; the longer they live, the brighter they shine.*
[Proverbs 4:18 \(Message\)](#)

Reflect: The women in my growth group have a season of pain and darkness in common: cancer. Surprisingly, the other thing we have in common is that we shine a bright light in the lives of those around us.

Our discussions are often centered on when we saw evidence of God's presence during our cancer journeys. Even though the journeys were difficult and sometimes long, our stories light up the room. We know that the Lord walked with us in one of the darkest seasons of our lives. Sharing stories leaves all of us encouraged and in awe of Jesus' faithfulness.

In a similar way, when I reflect on the ways the Lord has been present in my life and I praise God for his faithfulness, the Holy Spirit fills me with light. In the upside-down ways of God, when I praise him, I am blessed. God knows who he is. He doesn't need my praise. We are directed in the Bible to worship the Lord, not for God's benefit, but for ours.

In church, we recently sang "Worthy of My Song" by Phil Wickham. The words rang so true for me: "I'm gonna sing till my heart starts changing. Oh I'm gonna worship till I mean every word. 'Cause the way I feel and the fear I'm facing doesn't change who you are or what You deserve."

Praising God for who he is and where he's walked with us in the past brings light to our spirit even in the midst of difficult seasons. Proverbs 4:18 says the longer we (*believers redeemed by Christ*) live, the brighter we shine. The longer I live, the more time I have to worship Jesus and to share my faith stories with others. And as I do, the Holy Spirit fills me with his light that I might shine brighter in the world.

React: Spend time today thinking about the times in your life when you have experienced God's presence. Thank him. Think about words you can use to describe God. Praise him.

Pray: Father God, you have walked with me through many trials in my life and I know you will be faithful to walk with me in the future. I thank you for your faithfulness, strength, goodness and grace. You are powerful. There is no match for your wisdom and love. Help me to shine Jesus' light that others may know you also.



Week 2 | The Way of Illumination

Day 3 | Shine Brightly

Command: *Let your light shine.* [Matthew 5:16 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *For you were at one time darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live like children of light—for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness, and truth—trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. For the things they do in secret are shameful even to mention. But all things being exposed by the light are made visible. For everything made visible is light, and for this reason it says: “Awake, O sleeper! Rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you!”* [Ephesians 5:7-14 \(NET\)](#)

Reflect: Have you ever met someone who is just “too nice”? Because I have! And in all honesty, I was so skeptical about this individual because of how nice she was to me and to everyone around her. Multiple times, I caught myself thinking: *‘There’s no way she’s that nice!’* I doubted her integrity and intentions when, in reality, this incredible individual was simply allowing the light of Jesus to shine brightly through her everywhere she went.

We all have an invitation from Jesus to shine his light brightly everywhere we go. We can let his light shine by living a life where we allow ourselves to be led by goodness, righteousness, and truth. We can choose to be light or darkness during our conversations, and through our actions where we live, work, and play. So, let’s make people around us wonder: *“How is [your name] so nice?”*

React: How is God inviting you to be the light everywhere you go - where you live, work, and play? Maybe with a specific group of people or a specific person?

Pray: Father God, thank you for the beautiful invitation that you have given us to lean into your presence and allow you to transform us into the light of the world. May we reflect your love, grace, and goodness everywhere we go. In Jesus’ name, amen.



Week 2 | The Way of Illumination

Day 4 | Light The Night

Command: *Let your light shine.* [Matthew 5:16 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *And you, beloved, are the light of the world. A city built on a hilltop cannot be hidden. Similarly it would be silly to light a lamp and then hide it under a bowl. When someone lights a lamp, she puts it on a table or a desk or a chair, and the light illumines the entire house.* [Matthew 5:14-15 \(Voice\)](#)

Reflect: I wanted to shut out the world; turn off the news; exclude difficult people from my life; and not think about anything that made me feel uncomfortable. I felt beaten down and discouraged by the darkness of social media conflicts, the pandemic and the 2019 election and thought the only answer to holding onto the light was to isolate myself from darkness.

One morning I woke early and sat on my porch praying in the dark. Within minutes, the sun began to rise and I saw a sliver of light on the horizon. “God’s hope of a new day” were the words that came to mind. Eventually, the sun illuminated everything around me and the darkness of night disappeared. Everything could be seen in the light. Even the spider web in front of me, previously invisible in the dark, could now be seen clearly.

As I sat and prayed, the Lord spoke to me with this thought: “Light Illuminates darkness.” Jesus is the light of the world. As I seek God, he fills me with the light of the Holy Spirit and brings hope. His light helps me to see clearly in the midst of darkness and to show me how he is at work. His light *in me* illuminates the darkness for those around me.

In the light of the Lord, my fears dissipate and my strength grows. I’m learning to lean in to Jesus when faced with darkness and trust that he will fill me anew with his light.

Saint Francis of Assisi wrote. “All the darkness in the world cannot extinguish the light of a single candle.” Even one small light can make a big impact in a dark room. Much like when I walk with friends through a campground, while holding the only flashlight, I can use my light to lead others.

React: Shining Jesus’ light might include speaking kind words to a stranger, preparing a meal for a neighbor who is ill, serving in our community or helping to build a house in Mexico. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you how you can be a light today and act upon his leading.

Pray: Father God, your light is far more powerful than any darkness in this world. Please fill me with your Holy Spirit that I might shine your light and show your love to others around me.



Week 2 | The Way of Illumination

Day 5 | Walking in the Light

Command: *Let your light shine.* [Matthew 5:16 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.* [1 John 1:7 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: Walking in the light has been a transformative journey in my own life. I remember a time when I felt lost in the darkness of doubt and confusion. It was during a period of intense academic pressure while pursuing my Bachelor's degree. The weight of assignments, exams, and the expectations I placed on myself cast a shadow over my faith. In those moments, it felt as if I was stumbling through a pitch-black tunnel, desperately seeking a glimmer of hope.

However, it was precisely during this challenging time that I encountered the illuminating truth of 1 John 1:7. It became evident that walking in the light meant embracing God's guidance and wisdom in every aspect of my life, even in the midst of academic pursuits. As I began to prioritize my faith and relationship with God, his light started to pierce through the darkness. I found strength in prayer, solace in his Word, and, most importantly, a renewed sense of purpose.

React: As you've reflected on your journey and the concept of walking in the light, would you consider the following questions for your own life?

1. **Prioritizing Your Faith:** How can you prioritize your faith and relationship with God in your daily routines, especially during challenging times?
2. **Fellowship and Community:** Reflect on the importance of fellowship with other believers. Are there ways you can deepen your connections with fellow travelers on this journey of faith?
3. **Sharing the Light:** How can you become a beacon of God's light to those around you? Think about how you can share the warmth and clarity of His presence with others in your daily interactions.

Pray: Heavenly Father, we are grateful for the light you provide in our lives. Help us, Lord, to walk in your light each day. Guide us through the challenges of this world, that we may find fellowship with one another and experience the cleansing power of your Son, Jesus Christ. May we be beacons of your light, sharing it with those around us. In His name, we pray. Amen.



Week 3 | The Way of Inclusion

Day 1 | Reflecting Jesus' Embrace

Command: *But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.*
[Luke 14:13-14 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God.*
[Romans 15:7 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: Growing up, I often felt misunderstood, especially by my family. My unique tastes and introverted nature made me feel like an outsider, and these feelings intensified when I moved from Mexico in middle school, leaving me feeling isolated.

As I transitioned from middle school to college, I carried the weight of doubt, insecurity, and imperfection. It wasn't until my second year in college when I joined a growth group that I truly grasped the transformative power of acceptance. Small gestures, like sharing a slice of pizza, singing karaoke, or a simple "Will you come back next week?" question, had a profound impact on my life.

We all have the opportunity to extend acceptance to those around us, reminding them of their worth to us and to God. Every day, we're invited to reflect the acceptance we've received from God, fostering a sense of belonging and radiating love and grace to the world. Through these acts, we affirm that everyone is loved, accepted, and invited into a loving relationship with our Creator.

React: How can we actively practice accepting and supporting others in our daily lives, mirroring Christ's acceptance of us?

Pray: Dear God, help us to embrace and support one another, just as Christ welcomed us, so that our unity may shine and bring glory to You. Amen.



Week 3 | The Way of Inclusion

Day 2 | The Unexpected Blessings of Inclusion

Command: *But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.* [Luke 14:13-14 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: Words like *Jewish and non-Jewish, religious and irreligious, insider and outsider, uncivilized and uncouth, slave and free, mean nothing. From now on everyone is defined by Christ, everyone is included in Christ.* [Colossians 3:11 \(Message\)](#)

Reflect: It was apparent to all of us in our couples' growth group that God had brought us together. We had invited friends and neighbors and didn't know any of them beyond a passing wave or greeting. But as we shared stories the first night, we realized that we all had blended families with young adult children and we quickly bonded. The group was full and we closed it to new members.

After a couple weeks, another couple requested to join our group. Even though I told them that the group was closed, they persisted. The wife shared that they were not married, but living together with a blended family, and were led to our group specifically. I hesitated. She gently insisted that she felt that the Lord was leading her to our group. I told her that the group was for married couples, but that we would pray about it and ask the group. The entire group agreed to include the couple and the Lord changed my heart.

Soon they were an integral part of our group. A year later, my husband and I attended their wedding. A year after that, as a cancer survivor, I walked with the wife through her own cancer journey. We are now both in the Cancer Survivor Growth Group, continue to pray for each other and encourage each other through the challenges of large blended families. Their friendship is a blessing. The Lord had a plan and a purpose beyond what I thought was a "perfect" group. Boundaries (like a specific type of group or a full group) are often needed. But I learned that being open to the Lord's leading comes first.

Including others in my friendships is much the same way. I may not be initially drawn to befriend someone. However, I need to listen to the leading of the Holy Spirit and remember that *"everyone is defined by Christ, everyone is included in Christ."* Reaching out to include others, to *see* them and show them the love of Jesus is the way of inclusion.

React: Ask the Holy Spirit to open your eyes to those who need to be *seen* this week. Step out of your comfort zone if necessary. Greet the person sitting alone on the patio after church. Ask a neighbor to join your growth group or come to church.

Pray: Lord, you know me better than anyone. Whether I am an extrovert or an introvert, you call me to love others through inclusion. Holy Spirit, please open my eyes to ways that I can include others and give me the courage to do so.



Week 3 | The Way of Inclusion

Day 3 | Embracing Inclusivity in a Divided World

Command: *But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.* [Luke 14:13-14 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.* [Galatians 3:26-29 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: In the bustling cacophony of today's digital age, social media platforms amplify a culture of exclusion. More than once, I've been disheartened by the trend of 'canceling' those with opposing views. The refusal to even listen, solely because someone's perspective clashes with the popular narrative, is perplexing to me.

My time in the Navy further underscored the feeling of exclusion. As one of the few females in my workgroup, I often felt the weight of being different, trying my best to blend in, longing for connections that understood my unique experiences.

But the Gospel offers a radically different narrative, exemplified through stories like that of Zacchaeus in the Gospel of Luke. Zacchaeus was a tax collector, therefore an outcast by societal standards. His only wish was to catch a glimpse of Jesus as he passed by amidst a crowd. While Zacchaeus hid in a tree so as not to attract attention, Jesus nevertheless saw him. In a profound gesture of inclusion, Jesus chose his home for dinner. Through this, Jesus demonstrated that everyone, regardless of their social status or past, has a place at His table.

This same spirit of inclusion resonates in our church's motto: "No perfect people allowed." It's a reminder that we come as we are, and God does the refining.

React: As we navigate an increasingly polarized world, especially in the lead-up to pivotal events like the 2024 elections, it's crucial that our focus remains unwavering: We are FOR Jesus. Our mission isn't tied to earthly politics but to the eternal kingdom. And while opinions and debates might rage on, our responsibility is to anchor our community in Christ's love, pointing always to the Gospel and its message of inclusion.

Pray: Lord, in a world that often promotes division, help us to be ambassadors of your inclusive love. Remind us that in your eyes, we are all equal, all cherished, all welcome. Give us the wisdom to navigate divisive waters with grace, always pointing to your eternal truth. May our church continue to shine as a beacon of inclusivity, serving our community and state, always rooted in your love. Amen.



Week 3 | The Way of Inclusion

Day 4 | See Every Person as Jesus Does

Command: *But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.*
[Luke 14:13-14 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *My brothers and sisters, believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ must not show favoritism. Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in filthy old clothes also comes in. If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, “Here’s a good seat for you,” but say to the poor man, “You stand there” or “Sit on the floor by my feet,” have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?* [James 2: 1-4 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: We were on a family road trip heading up the coast to Canada as a young girl excited to be on an adventure. I recall stopping off at a roadside restaurant to get something to eat. I recall feeling uncomfortable as dozens of eyes fixated on my family as we walked by. We were seated in the back close to the kitchen with another family that looked like us. The hostess threw the menus at our table as I nervously settled in. My parents graciously and patiently chose to overlook the unjust treatment we received. It was my first experience of racism, and I remembered it very clearly. I recall the mixed feelings of shame, helplessness and anger for being in an environment where I knew I was not welcomed. Discrimination comes in many forms. Our human flesh is prone to sin. Sins that judge others according to our own preferences and our biases. However, Jesus calls us to be the salt and light of the earth. The more we remain connected with him the more he reveals how he sees others. It’s essential to remain in Jesus because we are prone to being captivated by our own limited understanding. He can transform our views of people so we “can act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with our God” (Micah 6:8).

React: The world and our biases can tempt us to judge others. Do you honestly see people from Jesus’ perspective? We need him to soften our hearts and show us.

Pray: Jesus, Thank you for being the perfect example of light in this broken world. Open my eyes to the beauty of each human face I come in contact with each day.



Week 3 | The Way of Inclusion

Day 5 | The True Meaning of Hospitality

Command: *But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.*

[Luke 14:13-14 \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *‘When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’ ‘The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’* [Matthew 25:38-40 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: I remember a time when I was hesitant to extend my table to those who couldn't repay me. It was a holiday season, and I was caught up in the festivities with friends and family. The house was filled with laughter, the aroma of good food, and the warmth of close relationships. But amidst the celebration, I felt an unsettling emptiness, a nagging question that I couldn't shake off: *“Is this what hospitality is truly about?”*

I am struck by the passage in the Gospel of Matthew where Jesus talks about the final judgment. He is separating the sheep from the goats based on one simple criterion: how they treated the “least of these.” I realized then that true hospitality is not about reciprocity; it's about grace. It's not about inviting those who can return the favor but about welcoming those who have nothing to offer in return.

That very week, I reached out and invited some friends who didn't know Jesus out to eat and just hang out. The initial awkwardness gave way to genuine conversations, shared laughter, and a newfound sense of community. It was as if the words of Jesus had come alive right there at the table.

This experience was transformative for them and me. I began to understand the heart of God and that hospitality is to extend love and kindness to those who have nothing to give in return. It's a humbling and transformative experience that echoes in eternity.

React: How can you extend your table to those who are marginalized or less fortunate in your community? Are there any fears or hesitations that hold you back from practicing this form of hospitality?

Pray: Lord, help me to see others through your eyes and to extend my table in a way that reflects your grace and love. Give me the courage to step out of my comfort zone and practice the hospitality you command. May my actions be a true reflection of your heart for all people. Amen.



Week 4 | The Way of Invitation

Day 1 | A Place at the Table

Command: *Tell the people there to come.* [Luke 14:23 \(ICB\)](#)

Read: *For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.* [John 3:17 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: While visiting my daughter recently, I learned about her friend facing tough times and being alienated by her immediate family due to differences in lifestyle. She was enduring a period of loneliness and rejection.

This touched my heart, prompting a strong urge to ask my daughter to reach out to her friend and extend an invitation to join our family for dinner. I wanted my daughter's friend to understand that our home offered a safe space where she could feel loved no matter the circumstances.

In John 3:17, we discover an invitation to respond to God's love and grace. Similarly, my daughter's friend had the choice to accept or decline our dinner invitation. She chose to join us, and during that evening, she shared her experiences, her pain, and her longing for acceptance. As a family, we listened and loved. It was a profound and touching moment, embodying the very essence of God's boundless love and grace.

React: Consider those in your circle who may be struggling with isolation and rejection. Could you consider extending an invitation to share God's love and grace with them?

Pray: Heavenly Father, we thank you for the incredible love demonstrated through the gift of your Son, Jesus. Help us to emulate this love by extending invitations of kindness and grace to those in need. May we be instruments of salvation and healing in the lives of others, just as you are in ours. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.



Week 4 | The Way of Invitation

Day 2 | The Impact of An Invitation

Command: *Tell the people there to come.* [Luke 14:23 \(ERV\)](#)

Read: *He commissioned them to preach the news of God's kingdom and heal the sick. He said, "Don't load yourselves up with equipment. Keep it simple; you are the equipment."* [Luke 9:2-3 \(MSG\)](#)

Reflect: We thought it was exciting when our family relocated in a new city away from family and friends. However, our great adventure turned into a difficult time for me, when my husband started his new job and I was home alone with our two boys. I asked God to help me find a friend.

A few days later, a neighbor across the street waved me over and introduced herself. I was excited that God answered my prayer so quickly. However, my excitement was short lived. The neighbor, Kim, and her family went camping most weekends and were busy during the week. *Did God realize that Kim didn't have the availability that I needed?*

Weeks later, Kim waved me over again. She invited me to MOPS (Mothers Of Preschoolers) and explained that it was at a church. There would be food, crafts, a lesson and childcare! Those were some of my most favorite things, so I agreed to go. I immediately loved it and continued to attend. Kim didn't go often, but the format helped me to connect quickly with other young mothers. The Lord used her invitation to answer my prayer in ways beyond my imagination.

My once preschool-aged boys are in their 30's now, but I will never forget the impact that Kim's invitation had on me. When my eldest entered kindergarten the following year, I already had friends that I had met through MOPS.

The impact of Kim's invitation went beyond her words. I'm not in contact with her anymore and don't remember her last name, but if I could, I would tell her "Thank you for thinking to invite me. Thank you for taking the chance that I might have turned down your invitation. Your invitation made a difference in my life."

React: Who can you invite today for coffee or to share a meal; to join a growth group with you; to come to church; or to work alongside of you on a service project? Ask the Lord to guide you, give you the words and extend the invitation.

Pray: Lord Jesus, thank you for invitations from others that have made a difference in my life. Thank you for providing me with everything I need to follow the way of invitation. Please help me to hear and obey the Holy Spirit this week by extending an invitation to someone who needs to be asked.



Week 4 | The Way of Invitation

Day 3 | Extending the Divine Invitation

Command: *Tell the people there to come.* [Luke 14:23 \(ERV\)](#)

Read: *He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.”* [Mark 16:15 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: I remember the first time I felt the nudge to share my faith. It was at a community event, surrounded by people from various walks of life. The atmosphere was vibrant, yet I felt an inexplicable stillness within me. The verse from Mark 16:15 echoed in my mind, urging me to step out of my comfort zone. I found myself in conversation with Sarah, a woman who seemed to be searching for something more in life. As we talked, I felt a compelling urge to share the gospel with her. My heart raced, and my palms were sweaty, but I took a deep breath and shared how Jesus had transformed my life. I told her that the gospel is not just a set of doctrines but an invitation—a divine invitation extended to all, regardless of their past or present circumstances. To my surprise, Sarah listened intently and even asked questions. It was a small step, but it felt like a giant leap in my spiritual journey. I realized that the gospel is not just for me; it's an invitation extended to all.

React: How can you extend the “Way of Invitation” in your life today? Perhaps it's by sharing a Bible verse on social media, inviting a friend to church, or simply offering a listening ear to someone in need.

Pray: Lord, give us the courage to go into all the world and share Your love. May we be Your hands and feet, extending the invitation of the gospel to all. Amen.



Week 4 | The Way of Invitation

Day 4 | My Assignment

Command: *Tell the people there to come.* [Luke 14:23 \(ERV\)](#)

Read: *Jesus followed up. “Yes. For there was once a man who threw a great dinner party and invited many. When it was time for dinner, he sent out his servant to the invited guests, saying, ‘Come on in; the food’s on the table.’ “Then they all began to beg off, one after another making excuses. The first said, ‘I bought a piece of property and need to look it over. Send my regrets.’* [Luke 14:16-18 \(MSG\)](#)

Reflect: The Story of the Dinner Party in Luke 14 tugs at my heartstrings. As a Growth Group Leader, I’ve been discouraged at times when invitations to join my group were declined. However those declined invitations ended up leading me to expand my invitation list just like the servant did in Jesus’ Dinner Party story. When my husband and I started a couples’ group, we didn’t get many signups initially so we invited two couples from our neighborhood who did not attend Eastlake Church. To our surprise they accepted!

Our neighbors and friends couples’ group overflowed with evidence of the Holy Spirit’s presence and power as we shared our God stories. If we had filled our group immediately, we would have missed out on witnessing the Lord’s supernatural work. In Luke 14:15 it says *“That triggered a response from one of the guests: ‘How fortunate the one who gets to eat dinner in God’s kingdom!’”* Much like that guest, we marveled at how the Lord worked in our group.

In the years since we all met together, several of the families have gone down difficult roads of grief, three members battled cancer and one neighbor passed away. Because of our connection that started with an invitation, we’ve continued to lift each other in prayer, offer support and provide encouragement.

The Lord calls all of us to extend invitations. We were created for connection. When we are turned down, we need not be disheartened. Instead, we can ask the Holy Spirit to lead our invitation in a new direction. The Lord is faithful and has a good plan.

React: Who can you invite for a meal in your home, to church or to attend a growth group with you? Ask the Holy Spirit to lead you towards connection and give you the courage to invite.

Pray: Lord Jesus, how blessed I am to eat dinner in God’s kingdom! Please give me the courage to extend invitations that I might share the blessings of your kingdom with others.



Week 4 | The Way of Invitation

Day 5 | We Are Sent People

Command: *Tell the people there to come.* [Luke 14:23 \(ERV\)](#)

Read: *As soon as he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. When the followers saw the Lord, they were very happy. Then Jesus said again, “Peace be with you. It was the Father who sent me, and I am now sending you in the same way.” Then he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit.”*
[John 20:20-22 \(ERV\)](#)

Reflect: When I was in college, one of my closest friends used to share her faith journey, her deep love for her church, and her passion for serving the community through youth summer camps.

I never truly grasped the significance until life around me began to crumble. Feeling lost, I reached out to her, knowing I could trust her. She invited me to her growth group happening later that day, even though she was attending college out of state, meaning I would have to go alone. Initially hesitant, I agreed, and she assured me that her pastor would call to provide directions and details. The pastor's call made me feel obligated to attend, though I was nervous. However, I'll never forget the warmth and welcoming atmosphere of the group.

That's what I aspire to do for others: extend the same invitation that was once offered to me by other followers of Jesus. We are commissioned, just as God sent Jesus. Our mission is to invite others into the loving embrace of God's infinite love.

React: Have you ever had a pivotal moment when someone's invitation or act of kindness had a significant impact on your life? Are there individuals in your circle who may benefit from your invitation or support?

Pray: Lord, grant us the wisdom to understand the importance of reaching out to those in need of acceptance and community, as others have done for us. May we embrace our role as messengers of Your love, leading people into the comforting embrace of Your grace. Amen.



Week 5| The Way of Commitment

Day 1| Beyond Fears and Feelings

Command: *Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear.* [Luke 14:35b \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *Let us consider how to inspire each other to greater love and to righteous deeds, not forgetting to gather as a community, as some have forgotten, but encouraging each other, especially as the day of His return approaches.* Hebrews 10:24-25 (VOICE)

Reflect: Living out the ways of Jesus is not always convenient nor comfortable for me. As a retiree, my life is full of family, gardening and other activities I enjoy at home. Especially as an introvert, I can easily talk myself into staying comfortably at home instead of _____. (fill in the blank: church, growth group, volunteering, serving).

After a recent period where I actually did a lot of staying comfortable, the Holy Spirit and good friends nudged me to do better. In a time of prayer, the Lord put it on my heart to serve more both at church and in my community. Commitment beyond my convenience and comfort is the way of Jesus.

Billy Graham once said “*When we come to Christ, we’re no longer the most important person in the world to us; Christ is. Instead of living only for ourselves, we have a higher goal: to live for Jesus.*”

As I think back to times when I didn’t *feel* like attending my growth group, I’m reminded that every time I conquered my feelings, persevered and went, the Lord was faithful. The conversation was rich and full of encouragement and connection.

Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. James 1:4 (NIV)

As followers of Jesus, we are called to be committed to the ways of Jesus. God designed us to gather in worship, connection and service. As we persevere in following him, we honor God and can see the Lord at work both in our own lives and in the lives of others.

React: How do your actions reflect your faith commitment? What is the Holy Spirit calling you to do beyond your comfort and convenience? Trust God. Persevere beyond your fears and feelings.

Pray: Thank you, Lord, for the many times you have blessed me through the words and actions of those around me. Thank you for your faithfulness when I step beyond my fears and feelings. Help me to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit and trust you as I move forward towards connecting in community.



Week 5| The Way of Commitment

Day 2 | Commitment to a Vision

Command: *Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear.* [Luke 14:35b \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.* [Galatians 6:9-10 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: In 1992, my family was invited to be a part of something very exciting happening in the newly developed Eastlake neighborhood. A small group of people had a vision to build and grow a church that would become a beacon for our community. We jumped onboard without hesitation. What we didn't realize was how this decision would impact our lives and the lives of those around us.

Twenty-five people started meeting together to plan the first public church service. It was all hands-on deck. Our time, talent, and treasure were necessary to make this happen. There was so much to be done and so many roles that needed to be filled. We needed, teachers, musicians, set up and tear down crews, greeters, and ushers. It was amazing to see how all those roles were filled, as we prepared to open our doors to the public.

Not only did this group of people volunteer their time, but they committed to tithing in order to launch the church. This was not a short-term commitment, but a long-term commitment, which our family continues to this day.

That very first church service was a success and people seeking God have continued to come through the doors of our church. They have been welcomed, loved, and included since the beginning. We have been in awe of what God has done with that small group of people, 30 years ago, dedicating themselves to a shared vision. We could never have imagined the different locations with large auditoriums that accommodate so many adults and children every weekend.

Witnessing the growth, baptisms, and changed lives over these many years, has been such an incredible gift to us. It is inspiring to see our thriving church as evidenced by the community outreach and the care for our EastLake Church family. We have received much more than we have given through our ministry. We have dedicated our time, talent, and treasure to EastLake Church, continuously, since 1992 and our reward is eternal!

React: Consider investing spiritually and financially. Be a part of the continuing growth in your church. Be prepared to be blessed and watch what God can do. When you volunteer with your skill set and share your treasures. Incredible things will happen.

Pray: God, I want to be a part of the exciting things that are happening within my church. Help me make space in my busy life to share my time, and resources for the good of others. I can't wait to see what is next for my church.



Week 5| The Way of Commitment

Day 3 | Resident Alien

Command: *Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear.* [Luke 14:35b \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *... seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper...* [Jeremiah 29:7 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: It's interesting to see that God was asking the people of Israel to work for the common good and pray for a society that had taken them captive. God didn't want his people to assimilate into a pagan society, and he didn't want them to withdraw to form a "holy huddle". He asked them to work towards the peace and prosperity of their city so they could thrive and survive for a greater plan.

Like the people of Israel in exile, I long for a better place, a more just and peaceful world. Why do I hunger for a world that I have never fully experienced? This longing points to a time when it did exist, and a time when it will be restored.

This life of harmony in the way that God intended it to be, known as *shalom*, was lost when sin entered our world, affecting our relationship with God, with others, and the rest of creation. The good news is that Jesus came to restore all that was lost and one day he will return to fully complete this mission. The exciting part is that he has called us to be co-participants with him.

As I wait in exile for his return, I'm joining Jesus on his mission to restore *shalom* where I live and work, using my talents, education, knowledge, and resources. I want to work to give my community a foretaste of the healed world that Jesus will bring about someday. Knowing this, my work is not pointless; my work is not in vain.

React: What opportunities is God giving you to bring a foretaste of shalom to your city or workplace?

Pray: Jesus, help me in my decision to sacrificially love my city as you have loved me.



Week 5| The Way of Commitment

Day 4 | The Transformative Power of Commitment

Command: *Pray for the welfare/flourishing of our cities.* [Jeremiah 29:7 ERV](#)

Read: *And now, brothers and sisters, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. In the midst of a very severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the Lord's people. And they exceeded our expectations: They gave themselves first of all to the Lord, and then by the will of God also to us.* [2 Corinthians 8:1-5 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: Generosity can manifest in so many unique ways. When I think of selfless giving, my father comes to mind. Despite the luxuries of retirement, he and his wife direct their energy towards brightening the lives of children at the Mexico-Texas border. Collecting, restoring, and then gifting items like bicycles and soccer balls, my dad's actions serve as a testament to the joy of giving.

This past weekend - Commitment Sunday - reminds me of the choices we face in our journey of faith. With the impending horizon of 2024, we can either immerse ourselves in worldly divides or anchor our focus on Jesus. For me, the choice is clear. Entrusting Jesus with my time, money, and efforts seems like the only path forward. It's about aligning with His Word and awaiting the miraculous unfoldings.

Commitment takes tangible forms, as evidenced by our church's community service projects. The memory of my family and I, united in our mission to beautify a local park, remains etched in my heart. Such acts of service, big or small, echo God's love.

Yet, the essence of commitment isn't just about grand gestures. It's in the consistent acts of love – the birthday cards, the volunteering, the genuine moments of being present for others – just as my dad exemplifies.

React: The transformative power of commitment lies in its ripple effect. When one individual leans into selfless service, it inspires others to do the same. As we continue to focus on Jesus, committing our resources and hearts to Him, we're not just building a community but also sowing seeds for a brighter future.

Pray: Lord, guide our hearts towards unwavering service and generosity. As we look to the future, let our actions resonate with Your love and grace. We trust in Your divine plans, knowing that as we lean into Your vision, miracles will manifest, and boundaries will be transcended. Bless our church, community, and land, and let us be instruments of Your enduring love. Amen.



Week 5| The Way of Commitment

Day 5 | Count the Cost

Command: *Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear.* [Luke 14:35b \(NIV\)](#)

Read: *Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul?"* [Matthew 16:24-26 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: I have an annual ritual that I do about this time of the year. I look back at the previous ten months and note where I have actually “progressed” in certain goals I set out to achieve at the beginning of the year. And then I look ahead to the coming year and think about what areas of my life I can “improve” upon. Inevitably, I commit to growing “deeper” in my relationship with Jesus, losing weight and getting stronger, and saving money. In an effort to create habits to accomplish my goals, I start to look up bible reading plans, renew my gym membership, and plan to cancel unnecessary subscriptions. And yet, as I come to the end of every year, I realize that I have over-committed and under-performed. It's not to say that I have not “progressed” in any of those goals. It's more a realization that just “committing” to something does not make it so. Making good on my commitments takes a constant realignment of my priorities and my practices.

Similarly, committing to follow Jesus invites me to daily reexamine my priorities and practices, and denying myself those things that take me further away from him. Taking up my cross to follow Jesus is not an easy task because I am not naturally oriented to obedience. Obedience is a process for me that is often informed by “*What's in it for me?*” When I approach my discipleship and commitment to Jesus with this selfish mindset, I really miss out on the kind of life he invites me into.

Dallas Willard once wrote: “*Nondiscipleship costs abiding peace, life penetrated through by love, faith that sees everything in the light of God's overriding governance for good, hopefulness that stands firm in the most discouraging of circumstances, power to do what is right and withstand the forces of evil.*” In other words, my disobedience will cost me the abundant life only he can promise. Wouldn't I rather forfeit the world and all its promises in exchange for that?

React: Are you committed to following Jesus and his ways? What would it cost you **not** to?

Pray: Jesus, thank you for seeing how hard it is for me to daily follow in your footsteps. And thank you for your patience with me. I know you're doing a good work in me, and in the end, you'll complete it. Amen.