

The Way

FOLLOWING
JESUS TOGETHER.
TODAY.



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Preface



First and foremost, it is imperative that the reader understand what this guidebook is not.

This is *not* a statement of how church should be done. It is not an indictment, critique, or even a commentary on the American church. Currently, followers of Jesus must fight for unity more than ever. We should celebrate all the different forms, methods, frameworks, strategies, and expressions that well-meaning followers of Jesus employ in obedience to the Great Commission.

This guidebook is also *not* a thorough discourse on ecclesiology. It will not cover many important subjects related to the nature, structure, and purpose of the Christian Church.

No, what this guidebook is a cataloging—a succinct journal—of how the Holy Spirit has directed a particular group of followers back to the Scriptures in search of a way to establish an authentic faith community today. In no way does this guidebook claim to be the singular, perfect way of doing church.

Secondly, this guidebook will attempt to establish two things:

- The major teachings that guide how The Grace Collective members go about following Jesus together
- The practical tools and disciplines associated with those teachings that help us follow Jesus together

Finally, there will not be an attempt to explicitly capture the atmosphere/spirit/ethos that exists in gatherings of Grace Collective members because of the above-mentioned teachings and tools.

Instead, the anecdotal experience will be mentioned now for practical purposes and a sample liturgy will be added as an appendix:

The meetings and culture are characterized by simplicity. Simplicity is essential and deserves to be constantly pursued in all things. We meet around a table or in a living-room-style environment the way the gospels portray Jesus, and His disciples did. There is a pervasive air of informality and casualness. There is no paid staff so gatherings demand group participation to occur. Leaders are merely guides and facilitators. The Holy Spirit is depended on for illumination. Worship music participation is voluntary and collaborative, usually consisting of a single guitar or an added drum. Sometimes, depending on the gifts available—a YouTube video with lyrics is used instead. Children are encouraged to be in



the gatherings so that biblical community is modeled for them at an early age. Babies, infants, and toddlers are provided a separate area to play when hired help and group participation allows.

Each meeting includes a time of *looking back*, where participants can talk about the good and bad things that happened to them and receive voluntary prayer from others in attendance. While *looking back*, time is also provided for spiritual accountability by way of a short check-in.

Each meeting also includes a time of *looking up* when a passage of Scripture is read and discussed, and the Holy Spirit is sought for teaching.

Meetings end with a time of *looking forward* where participants are encouraged to seek from the Lord specific ways to apply whatever was learned in the looking up time to their lives in the coming week.

Finally, the members are reminded of the tools and disciplines available to them as they re-enter the world as follows of Jesus seeking to *Love God, Love People, and Follow Jesus*.

The gatherings, like everything else, is an attempt at putting first things first. It's about majoring on the majors and ensuring the essentials. Events are uncommon and usually recreational since the major focus of gatherings is to equip the members for the work of daily ministry and establishing regular rhythms and community. Typical meetings are not evangelistic, meant mostly for followers of Jesus and are a time of sacrament and equipping. Special events are for recreation, expanding the social network of members, public education/preaching or a way of pointing to the glory and goodness of God. Christians interested in Loving God and Loving People after the way of Jesus are free to attend gatherings as a way of seeing discipleship services modeled for exploratory or learning purposes.



Church & Disciple



Church & Disciple

We use the word *church* incorrectly. Well, we at least use it in an unbiblical way. The Greek word that we are referring to when we say *church* is a word that the New Testament uses to signify *the individual people (followers) who believe that God the Father has called, or is calling, to be a part of His spiritual family.*

In its earliest Christian usage, the word referred simply to the *followers of “the way,” those who would call themselves practitioners of the specific teachings of the popular, itinerant rabbi, Jesus of Nazareth—wherever they might be found in the known world.*

Given this usage, it is not unreasonable to think that those who first used and popularized this word, the writers of the New Testament, would not be able to understand the way we use the word *church* most commonly today. The idea that *the church* could be defined congregationally as *a church*, by the way it self-defined under the umbrella of certain branding distinctives would have been preposterous. The concept of, “I go to Grace Church, but my friend goes to Ocean Church” simply did not exist. In fact, the premise that a church existed in the same geographical area of another church—in the sense that there was, “a church among many other churches” would have on its face been considered outright anathemal—outside the bounds of prophetic revelation. To say that you were going to a different church instead of to the church would imply that there was another body of Jesus loyalists who gathered separately from all the rest and this, as everyone well knew, was emphatically and repeatedly denied in Jesus’ teachings.

Instead, the New Testament uses the idea of church in **three** (3) distinct forms that express different **volumes of the same principle**—church isn’t a place you go (that may or may not be different from another place you may go)—it is **a people you belong to** and a **gathering of those people**. So, technically, although we know what we mean idiomatically when we say we are *going to church on Sunday morning*, church, in effect, is not somewhere that we can go but rather something we can *be*. You can go to a church building. You can *be* the church. The reverse is not possible.

Nevertheless:

- **The first (1) way** that the Bible uses the word church is to refer to all the people who were, are and will ever follow Jesus. This is typically known as the universal church or the capital “C” church.



- **The second (2)** use refers to a city or regional church—all the people who follow Jesus and live in or around a certain area of the world. Think of how the author of the book of Revelation refers to, “The church in Laodicea.”
- **The final (3) way** that the Bible uses the word church is when it talks about the church at home—all the people who follow Jesus and meet where one or more of them live.

The logical question we must ask at this point is, *why does this matter today?* These are very different times from those of the first century. Is there anything wrong with the way America has re-defined churches around smaller theological or ecclesiological issues? Aren't church distinctives or geography around buildings just another way of collecting God's people?

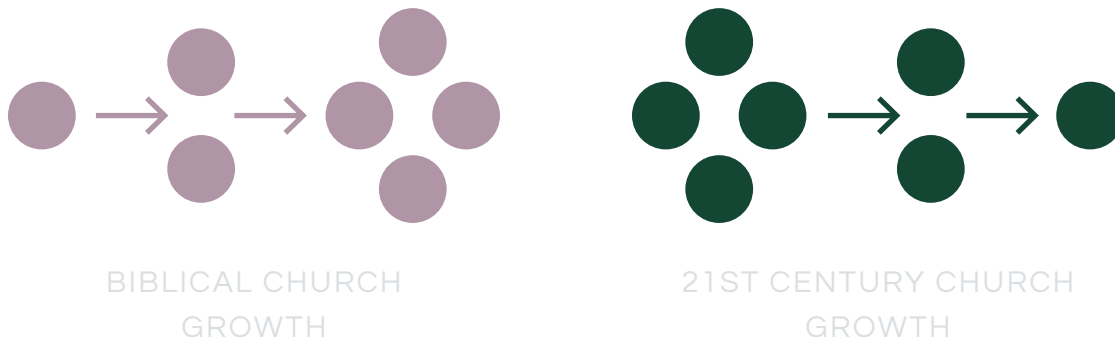
Maybe... but if we don't at least *understand* the biblical church, we run the very serious risk of losing the DNA—the essentials—that Jesus and His disciples embedded in their movement.

Historians who have intricately studied the way Christianity spread and sustained itself in the 1st century have noted the **pivotal order** in the way the **three (3) volumes** of church built upon themselves. Nothing—no religion, no ideology, no political system has ever spread with the tenacity, resolve, and influence with which Christianity spread. Of course, it had the benefit of being true and divine, but we must assume that the mode of delivery and the context in which it unfolded was also divinely appointed and intentional.

The most important thing to understand about the first-century church is that **it started simply**. Of course, this is true of the movement itself, but it is also true of **each expression and location that was reached with the gospel**. This is the nuance that has been lost today.

THE MOST IMPORTANT THING TO
UNDERSTAND ABOUT THE FIRST-CENTURY
CHURCH IS THAT IT STARTED SIMPLY.

It might be helpful to think of the **biblical church** as growing from small to large whereas **21st century churches** tend to grow from large to small. This is important because the DNA of the church body must be developed and transferred at the simplest point, at least to start.



The ancient church knew nothing of evangelistic services or what we might think of as seeker-sensitive/friendly worship services that are commonplace in churches in America.

In the early church, worship centered on communion, and only baptized Christians were admitted to its celebration. Therefore, evangelism didn't take place in church services, but rather, **in kitchens, shops, and markets.**

- The Church started as a spiritual family—a connected group of followers of Jesus who Loved God, Loved People, and Made Disciples and who met locally—the church at home or *the simple church*.
- When groups of these simple churches connected to do something bigger, together, they would form *a city or regional church*.
- All those simple churches networked into regions and stretched across history make up *the universal Church*.

So, when we attract people to a worship service to meet them for the first time, we skip the groundwork that made Christianity attractive in the first place. **We skip the entry point.** We remove the opportunity for someone outside the family of God to join a spiritual family. It would be like birthing a human baby and not allowing them to be part of a nuclear family before throwing them into the larger societal constructs. It's backwards. Therefore, modern churches are constantly preaching the gospel of *small groups*. Time and time

again I have heard from the *stage* of a church building, *on a Sunday morning*, how *church* isn't about being in a building on Sunday mornings. And time and time again I have heard the frustration in a pastor's voice during a private conversation as they express their unbelief that their congregants act like *church* is a show specifically made for them on Sunday mornings. Their remedy for this is something they call a small group. Small groups are a pastor's attempt at correcting the problem that was caused by the unbiblical model of church that is taught and used today—the problem of disordering the beginnings of *church*.

In America, *church* is an institution. An institution is defined as a society or organization founded for a purpose, or by an established law, practice, or custom. It is a **system** and people are conformed by systems—especially when it is a pervasive one. So, sadly, no matter how hard our poor pastor tries to preach a different way of doing things—a way that forces community on the congregation—it will never happen organically in a system that is built to combat it.

Luckily, all of this can be avoided by using a biblical model of church and keeping things simple! In time, a growing group of small churches can work together, grow new leaders, and accomplish better things God has planned for His people. Simple churches are like cells in a growing body and if they multiply themselves, they can connect and network into a city or regional church. This way they will always share the same DNA since they are all related and share common beginnings. They are connected out of the same first multiplying family.

From these connected churches, in the New Testament, new servant leaders emerge called Elders and Deacons, Shepherds and Oversees of the flock. We learn in God's Word that a multitude of small churches in the city of Jerusalem were served by seven (7) of these servants and in Ephesus a similar small group of leaders formed - shepherds who were to follow the model of the Good Shepherd Jesus and lay down their lives for their flock. In addition to or in place of meeting with their own spiritual family, these leaders meet and pray and fellowship and encourage one another in much the same way that any simple church in a home would.

This city group evidenced five (5) leadership gifts that were given by the Holy Spirit. Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers to equip His people for the work of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up.



It is very important to know that these spiritual gifts are given not so a small group of leaders can do all the work of the church but so they can serve and prepare the followers of Jesus to do the work—so that the *whole body of believers* could *work together* to accomplish all God has in His heart to do. It may be that the most detrimental thing to ever happen to the Universal Church in all of history - the end spiritual effect being more hurtful - is the over emphasis on professionalism amongst followers of Jesus.

In God's perfect plan He created us to live in balance—**to produce and to consume, to create and to use up, to pour out and to be filled so we can pour out again.** But in our broken world, people have rejected God's plan, and many spend their energy living out just part of God's perfect equation. **They learn but they don't share. They are filled up but they never pour out. They consume but they don't produce.**

The rest of *The Way: Following Jesus Together. Today.* will essentially be a guidebook for how to balance being both a **consumer** and a **producer**. ***In general, the four (4) areas that need to be balanced are: Scripture. Prayer. Body Life. and Persecution/Suffering.*** Simple tools will be presented throughout the book to help us not just be **consumers** in these four (4) areas but to be **producers** and **sharers** as well.

At any time, being a **follower** of Jesus in community means being vigilant to the needs of those around you. Those who need Scriptural knowledge, those who need prayer, those who need help in Body Life and those who need help with persecution. Look for how you can contribute something that God has given you every time we gather. It could be sharing a verse with someone who needs encouragement, praying for someone who is sick, watching someone else's child during a meeting since they don't seem to ever be able to participate, or walking through hard times with someone at their job. This kind of participation is an integral part of being a *follower*.

Another word for **followers**—*the individual followers who believe that God the Father has called, or is calling, to be a part of His spiritual family*—is **disciple**. A disciple is the word the Bible uses for anyone who **follows** God, so the Church, in reality, is solely made up of disciples.

Jesus solidified the role of the disciple forever when he left us with these simple words after His resurrection:



“All authority in heaven and earth have been given to me. Therefore—Go and make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey all I have commanded, and I will be with you always—even to the end of the age.”

Most evangelicals have heard The Great Commission talked about so much we tend to turn our minds off when it comes up anymore. We likely miss the importance of using the word *commission* (defined as: a group of people officially charged with a particular function). But the truth is that The Great Commission is used so much in biblical discussions of church because if you break this passage down just a bit you will find **the absolute essence of church life and function:**

- First (1), Jesus said—**All authority has been given to me.** So in God’s kingdom, Jesus is our king. We are His citizens, subject to His will. His desires, purposes, intentions, priorities and values are the highest and best. As king, His word is the law.
- Second (2), Jesus said—**Make disciples**—and he added in three (3) simple details on how to do it:

Make disciples all the time—wherever we’re going and **as we go.**

Make disciples by **baptizing** them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. When someone decides to follow Jesus—they should be baptized.

Make disciples by teaching them to obey all he commanded. As they grow—we should teach every disciple **how to obey** everything that Jesus commanded.

Remember, as king, Jesus’ word is law. That law was summarized by him in this way: Love the Lord God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind and with all your strength and love your neighbor as yourself. Jesus said that all the law and the prophets - can be summarized in these two things—**Love God and Love People.**

Remember, Jesus (in The Great Commission) commanded that we make disciples, so that means that every new disciple needs to learn how to make disciples too.



This is where it all begins. Pulling it all together:

- A disciple is a follower of Jesus who Loves God, Loves People, and Makes Disciples.
- Simple churches are spiritual families who Love God, Love Others, and Make Disciples who multiply.
- Some churches have buildings, programs, and staff but simple churches don't need any of these things to Love God, Love Others, and Make Disciples who multiply. Since our lives today are way too full and anything extra makes a church more complicated and thus harder to multiply, our method leaves things like buildings, budgets, paid staff, outreach programs to the possible future. First, we must understand and obey Jesus' commands to Love God, Love Each Other, and Make Disciples. Nothing is more important than these.

Establishing these commands as normal rhythms of our lives is where we start.

LOVE GOD, LOVE EACH OTHER, AND MAKE
DISCIPLES. NOTHING IS MORE IMPORTANT
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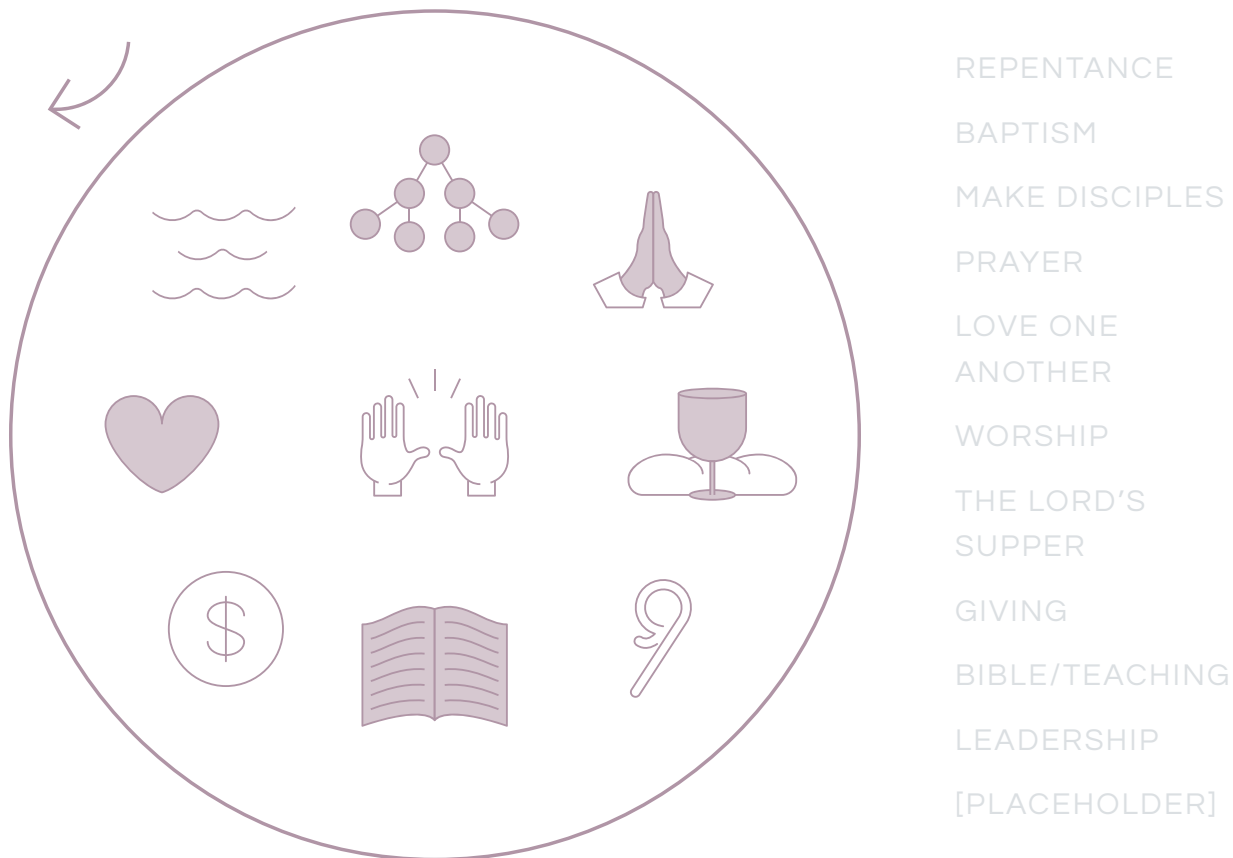
Church & Disciple Church Check



Church & Disciple:

Church Check

CHURCH CIRCLE



Acts 2:36-47 describes for us a simple church in its purest, most uncorrupted form. If you read through this passage, you will find 11 characteristics of a church that we can use to define church. You can use this tool if you ever find yourself wondering if you are in a church (versus a small group) or what you could be doing as a member of a simple church:

- The arrow outside of the circle reflects the repentance needed to enter the church.
- Moving symbols from left to right in the circle you should find these in the passage:
Baptism, Make Disciples, Prayer, Love One Another, Worship, Lord's Supper/
Breaking Bread, Giving, Bible/Apostles Teaching, and Leadership.
- The hard line of the circle symbolizes the [placeholder]

Loving God



Loving God

The first and most important instruction for every follower of Jesus is that we **love God**. You cannot be a disciple, a follower of The Way, without loving God. We heard this right from the mouth of Jesus himself when a scribe, a religious leader of that time asked Jesus a very tough question. Of the 613 laws that God had given in the Old Testament, which one (1) was the most important? Jesus answered, *“The most important is, Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.”* It is very easy to read into this passage our 21st century, western view of romantic or familial love. However, to fully understand this command we must go all the way back to the beginning of God’s relationship with mankind. **We need to deconstruct it a bit.**

LOVE AS FAITHFULNESS & OBEDIENCE

HISTORY: EXODUS 20

At one point in ancient history God **picks a specific people**, a particular line of David as His **favorited people** who would help him do His work on earth and represent him and His character to all the other people. Soon after this those same people, the whole nation, are **enslaved** by the rulers of Egypt. God **doesn’t let His special people be slaves forever and he send someone to miraculously save them. Right after he saves them, he expresses His feelings/disposition toward them for the first time.** He does this by basically inventing His own word and emotion.

CHESED

This word reflects a kind of love that expects return but exists despite it. It’s a love that keeps the covenant together even when someone else breaks it. It is a kind of love that puts itself out there—liability/exposure—in such a way that is meant to inspire **loyalty and devotion and exclusivity**. It is a special God love. That word, later expressed as *chesed*, is usually translated using the word *love* in some way (**loving kindness, steadfast love**). In reality, *chesed* is a very **semantically overloaded word**. It is used only in cases where there is some recognized tie between the parties concerned. It is **never** used indiscriminately to mean general, haphazard, kindly deeds. It is the best available word for **the attitude which both parties to a covenant ought to maintain towards each other**. It combines the two ideas of love and loyalty into one word and represented God’s steadfastness and love for His covenant-people. It was a sure love that would never let Israel



go. Israel's persistent waywardness could never destroy it. Though Israel be faithless, God remains faithful. This is the central context of *chesed* because the continual waywardness of Israel had made it inevitable that, if God is never going to let Israel go, then His relation to His people must be one of loving-kindness, mercy, and goodness, all of which would be entirely undeserved. For this reason, the predominant use of the word comes to include mercy and forgiveness as a main constituent in God's determined faithfulness to His part of the bargain. The loving-kindness of God towards Israel is therefore wholly undeserved on Israel's part. If Israel received the proper treatment for their stubborn refusal to walk in God's way, there would be no prospect for her of anything but destruction, since God's demand for right action never wavers.

All of that said, it is important to realize that though the Hebrew *chesed* can be translated into loving-kindness and mercy, God is never content with anything less than righteousness. **There is a tension here.** In these verses and everywhere else that God's love is expressed in the Old Testament, there is no reference to any sentimental kindness, and no suggestion of mercy apart from **repentance**. His demand for righteousness is insistent, and it is always at the maximum intensity. The loving-kindness of God means that His mercy is greater even than that. The word stands for the wonder of His unfailing love for the people of His choice, and the solving of the problem of the relation between His righteousness and His loving-kindness passes beyond human comprehension. Interestingly, the nearest New Testament equivalent to the Hebrew *chesed* is Greek is *charis*, which means *grace*. This kind of love was meant to encourage and inspire sincere loyalty.

CHESED COMBINES THE TWO IDEAS OF LOVE AND LOYALTY INTO ONE WORD AND REPRESENTED GOD'S STEADFASTNESS AND LOVE FOR HIS COVENANT-PEOPLE.



HISTORY CONTINUED : EXODUS 20

Whilst God is explaining **His love** to these people for the first time, he also asks them to follow a set of **laws/commands/statutes** so that they would be **distinguished** from the rest of the world as the people who were, in fact, specially loved by the one true God. (The most important part of these requests was that the people be exclusively dedicated to God and that the nation not worship any other gods.) Unfortunately, God's people didn't do this. They got scared rather quickly and started worshipping other gods for help. So, God punished them and let them wander around the desert until most of the disobedient generation died off.

HISTORY CONTINUED: DEUTERONOMY 6

But once that generation was gone, God **redelivered** those same commandments to His people. This time though God went out of His to call very special attention to the covenant relationship between them so that they would hopefully take the commandments more seriously than their forefathers.

JESUS' WORDS IN MARK 12

This takes us back to Jesus' words. Jesus' answer to the scribe in the Gospel of Matthew is a direct quote from Deuteronomy 6 when Moses was redelivering the commandments to the nation of Israel. In the Hebrew language Moses says, *She-ma yisrael, adonai eloheinu, adonai echad*, *Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one*. This phrase, now the foundation of the Jewish religion and prayer life was God's way of grabbing the attention of the people and became known simply as the ***She-ma*** (pronounced Shma). The word Shema, translated as **Hear**, is different than the English word for hear/listen. It means **listening, paying attention, understanding, and comprehending, obeying, and responding with action**. So, God is not only called on the people to listen but to also obey.

The words that follow (*adonai eloheinu, adonai echad*) are a bit hard to translate today, but in essence God follows His demand for a listening ear with a proclamation that there is only one, singular God and that he alone is God—there is no other.

He alone is the one who should be worshiped and served.



So, when next, God tells the Israelites outright to love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength it must be understood in this context of **faithfulness and obedience** in no less than three ways:

- First, obedience was included in the use of the word **Shema**
- Secondly, obedience is reinforced by God's claim of **Oneness**
- Thirdly, obedience is encouraged by the **cultural understanding** of God's use of the word **love**

As we now know, In Hebrew culture, love isn't just an emotion, it denotes an action or a response. In this case, love clearly means faithfulness and commitment in response to God's grace. *If there was any question of this meaning, a topical reading of the chapters following Deuteronomy 6 mention the need for the people of Israelite to follow God's commands dozens of times. Loving God comes down to: Loyalty. Rejection of Idolatry. Obedience. Faithfulness to God because he is our savior.*

PEOPLE OF THE BOOK

It should be clear now that loving God means loyal devotion to him and following His commands. But it's hard to love and obey someone that you don't know. I think this is why when God delivered the tablets for the second time, he not only added a prelude about love before jumping into His demand for exclusivity, but also adds some instruction for how to cultivate this love. His advice, that we take to be the most important advice because it is directly related to the successful maintenance of the most important commandment, is that God's people contemplate on Him and His words all the time to work them **into their hearts, minds, and souls**:

“These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the door frames of your houses and on your gates.”



God wants us to long to know him, what he wants and what he cares about in this world. Loving God, in His eyes, means surrounding our lives with His commandments. He wants our lives to be given over to the observance of His commandments. *His word becomes the center of our lives!*

The Wisdom Literature of the Bible—Psalms/Proverbs—are mostly about this idea: *blessed is the one whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on His law, day and night.*

Muslims try and take credit for coming up with this term *People of the Book*. But it was actually a term used for God's people long before Islam was even invented {Even during the times of Muslim violent dominance over the Jewish/Christian people and although Jews and Christians were still considered religious infidels (*kuffar*), they were also given the special designation of *People of the Book* which meant that they were recognized as possessors of a prior revelation from God that was written down. Many times, this gave them a protected people status (*ahlal-dhimma*) which allowed them to live among Muslim governments, undisturbed, and able to observe their faith without interference.

After the temple fell and God's people were spread all around the world for more than 1,800 years the Bible took the place of temples, monuments, governments, and great battles sites. All of them lived on its pages.

Sometimes evangelicals have been accused of turning the Bible into a God itself, and of course we don't want to do that, but at the same time you can't look back at history and not see the focus on written Scripture as something that happened through divine providence.

The Judeo-Christian Culture continued to focus on the written word and at times when it strayed the written Word got God's people back on track (King Josiah of Judah/The Protestant Reformation).

Some of the less known tradition today include:

- Special Jewish holiday of remembrance where people dance with a scroll like a lover.
- Dozens if not hundreds of extra biblical **songs and poems** extolling the importance of the Word.



- Rabbinical Judaism encouraged everyone to view their relationships with their Bible as that of between a husband and wife with give and take and self-development.
- Torah especially was meant for everybody. It is not the exclusive domain of some priestly class. Rather, it is a living, breathing document—the lifeblood of the Jewish people. All should, at all times try to involve themselves personally in its study and practice.
- There are many cultural laws about what to do if a Bible touches the ground, something put on top, etc.
- Every single Jew is commanded to know the Torah. The first sentence that a Jewish child is taught is *Torah tziva lanu Moshe, morasha kehilat Yaakov—Torah was commanded to us through Moses and it is the inheritance of every Jew.*
- Second temple Jews (Jesus' time on earth) memorized the entire Torah by the time they were 12 or 13 years old. Those who wanted to continue formal studies of the Word would then memorize all the prophets. Jesus and the disciples almost certainly did this.
- Every Jew is obligated to study Torah, whether he is poor or rich, healthy or ill, young or old. It was taught that even pauper who derives his livelihood from charity, or if he has family obligations to his wife and children, he must still establish fixed times for Torah study—both day and night. Joshua 1:8: *You shall think about it day and night.*
- The greatest sages/teachers of Israel included wood choppers, water drawers, and blind men. Despite these difficulties, they were amongst those who transmitted Torah in the unbroken chain dating back to Moses.



LOVE LIKE JESUS

Jesus succinctly summarized most of the Jewish Law as *Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.* His brevity though should not be taken to discount the seriousness of His teaching on loyalty to God.

The devotion to God that was asked for in the Old Testament is very evident in the teaching of Jesus in the New. If anything, Jesus expanded it while he clarified and analogized what was evident in the discourses on Horeb and Sinai.

Think about the **Upper Room Discourse** that is found in John 13-17. It contains Jesus' last words to His faithful followers who had been with him since the very beginning of His public ministry. These final words contain a distillation of much of what the twelve disciples had already learned. Jesus spends time reiterating His essential teachings and giving promises of what was to come.

Part of Jesus' final address is an exhortation you have probably heard many times: Believe in God. This command is incredibly common in the New Testament, so much so that many who aren't even followers of Jesus Christ know that Christians believe that belief (or faith) is how you get to Heaven.

WHAT IS BELIEF THOUGH? WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?

Given what we know now about the Jewish context surrounding this issue we shouldn't be surprised when Jesus moved the teaching toward obedience in John 14 when he commented,

“If you love me, you will keep my commandments. Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him.” Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, ‘Lord, how is it that you will manifest yourself to us, and not to the world?’ Jesus answered him, ‘If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. Whoever does not love me does not



keep my words. And the word that you hear is not mine but the Father's who sent me.'"

Jesus' statements here are simple and straightforward, if you love Him you will keep His Word, whoever does not love Him does not keep His words.

In these statements we find the heart of Old Testament commandments and what it looks like to follow God now: **Love for God through obedience.** We see here that obedience and love are intimately bound together. Proper obedience originates from love and faith, not from fear of punishment or disappointment.

Another way that Jesus described the loving devotion we ought to have for God was by using **vivid comparisons and then following these statements with an encouragement to count the cost of following Him.** The love we ought to have for God isn't a cheap and fleeting love but an enduring love, one like no other. This love has a high cost. For instance, Jesus describes this counting the cost in the parable in Luke 14:25-33. He introduces His subject matter by saying: *If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.*

How challenging are these words! Our love for God ought to overshadow all other loves in our life, even the love we have for our parents and our own life. Jesus uses two short parables to make this point, a person attempting to build a tower and a king trying to decide how many troops it will take to win a war. Jesus hits His point home by saying: *So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.* A similar interaction is recorded Mark 10 that perfectly summarizes the entire biblical teaching on this subject. It is known as the **The Rich Young Ruler discourse.** Jesus is getting ready to go on a teaching trip. Someone who claims that they want to be Jesus' newest disciple approaches him and says, *Good teacher, what do I need to do to inherit eternal life?* Jesus responds to him that he should know this, *Follow the commandments!* The young man responds back that he has done this all his life, since he was a kid. Jesus then looks him over and hits him with what he missed in doing them, *One thing you lack: go and sell all you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.* Of course, the young man couldn't do this because he was wealthy and when this discouraged



Jesus' disciples because it suddenly seemed impossible to be a true follower Jesus corrects them by saying, *With people it is impossible, but no with God; for all things are possible.*

The message is the same:

- God's love/grace need to move first
- That salvation (Exodus/Cross) should move us to:

Follow the commandments

Complete and utter devotion to God only

No idolatry (idols or family/money)

We must listen and respond. Not because we can't think for ourselves, but because His ways are smarter, better, and have a more long-term perspective than ours, and we know it.

JESUS' STATEMENTS ARE SIMPLE AND
STRAIGHTFORWARD: IF YOU LOVE HIM YOU
WILL KEEP HIS WORD; WHOEVER DOES NOT
LOVE HIM DOES NOT KEEP HIS WORDS.

Loving God Time in the Word



Loving God: Time in the Word

Jesus said—*“make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey all I that I commanded...”* If every follower of Jesus is going to obey all that Jesus commanded, then they need to know what Jesus commands.

The Great Commandment and The Great Commission are a great summary of what God has to say to us, but if a follower is going to grow into the full measure of what God created them to be, then they need to know and obey even more.

SOAPS STANDS FOR: SCRIPTURE + OBSERVATION + APPLICATION + PRAYER + SHARING

It’s a simple way to learn and remember an effective Bible study method that any follower of Jesus can use. Let’s look at each section a little more.

When you read or listen to the Bible:

- **Scripture:** Write out one or more verses that are particularly meaningful to you, today.
- **Observation:** Rewrite those verses or key points from those scriptures in your own words to help you better understand the meaning.
- **Application:** Think about what it means to obey these commands or concepts in your own life. What would you have to do? What would you have to do differently? Write these down.
- **Prayer:** Write out a prayer that tells God what you’ve read in His word and what you understand about obeying His commands and putting what you’ve learned to work.
- **Sharing:** Ask God who He wants you to share with about what you’ve learned and how you’re applying it.



SO, LET'S PUT SOAPS TO WORK:

- **Scripture:** The Bible says—*“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,” declares the Lord. “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts.”* Isaiah 55:8-9
- **Observation:** As a human, I’m limited in what I know and what I know how to do. God is not limited in any way. He sees and knows everything. He can do anything.
- **Application:** Since God knows everything and His ways are best, I’ll have much more success in life if I follow Him instead of relying on my way of doing things.
- **Prayer:** Lord, I don’t know how to live a good life that pleases you and helps others. My ways lead to mistakes. My thoughts lead to hurt. Please teach me Your ways and Your thoughts, instead. Let Your Holy Spirit guide me as I follow You.
- **Sharing:** I will share these verses and this application with my friend, Steve, who is going through a difficult time and needs direction for important decisions he’s facing.

SOAPS IS A SIMPLE WAY TO LEARN AND
REMEMBER AN EFFECTIVE BIBLE STUDY
METHOD THAT ANY FOLLOWER OF JESUS
CAN USE.



Loving God

Family Reading



Loving God: Family Reading

For centuries local and global communities of believers have synced their daily Scripture reading. The synagogues that Jesus preached in followed a reading schedule. Each week certain passages would be read from a community scroll and then discussed.

There are several benefits to doing something similar today:

- It provides a central hub—a common spiritual ground for everyone to be connected through.
- Lectionary readings, as they are called, focus on biblical theology, pointing to the overarching meta-narrative of redemptive history as revealed in Scripture.
- It provides a foundational spiritual discipline for everyone in the community and can act as a bottom-line Jesus-habit that will hopefully catalyze the formation of other disciplines.
- Lectionary readings connect the themes of the Old Testament with similar ones in the New Testament, ensuring that Scripture is read within historical context.
- It ensures that all believers in the community are reading “through the entire Bible” within three years’ time.

The Grace Collective provides a community reading service online at:

<https://gracecollective.online/daily-reading/>

You can also subscribe to the readings in a way that makes them automatically show up on your calendar here:

<webcal://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/feeds/lectionary-daily.ics>



Loving God Praying



Loving God: Praying

Prayer is a powerful tool for loving God because it is a way we can spend time with him, seek His presence and will and generally communicate with him.

Most importantly in this context, it offers us a time to exclaim and mediate on His attributes, actions, laws, commandments, and His faithfulness. The prayer wheel is extremely useful because it utilizes the different ways we can do this—using prayer as it was fully meant to be used, instead of only using it as a way of delivering our wish lists to God.



Loving God: Praying

PRAISE

Start your prayer hour by praising the Lord. Praise Him for things that are on your mind right now. Praise Him for one special thing He has done in your life in the past week. Praise Him for His goodness to your family.

WAIT

Spend time waiting on the Lord. Be silent and let Him pull together reflections for you.

CONFESS

Ask the Holy Spirit to show you anything in your life that might be displeasing to Him. Ask Him to point out attitudes that are wrong, as well as specific acts for which you have not yet made a prayer of confession. Now confess that to the Lord so that you might be cleansed.

READ THE WORD

Spend time reading in the Psalms, in the prophets, or passages on prayer located in the New Testament.

ASK

Make requests on behalf of yourself.

INTERCESSION

Make requests on behalf of others.

PRAY THE WORD

Pray specific passages. Scriptural prayers as well as several Psalms lend themselves well to this purpose.

THANK

Give thanks to the Lord for the things in your life, on behalf of your family, and on behalf of your church.

SING

Sing songs of praise or worship or another hymn or spiritual song.

MEDITATE

Ask the Lord to speak to you. Have a pen and paper ready to record impressions He gives you.

LISTEN

Spend time merging the things you have read, things you have prayed and things you have sung and see how the Lord brings them all together to speak to you.

PRAISE

Praise the Lord for the time you have had to spend with Him and the impressions He has given you. Praise Him for His glorious attributes.



Loving God

Worship Music Hymnal

Loving God: Praying

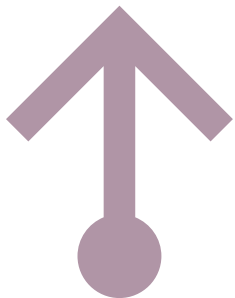
Why do we sing songs when we come together for meetings?

In a consumer mindset it can be easy to perceive worship music as something that only serves us. The celebrity worship singer/band movement of the last few decades has reinforced this idea. This is why you may hear of people who have left a church in search of another because they, *didn't like the worship band*.

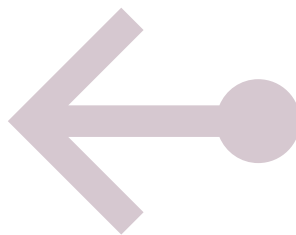
But singing worship songs was not meant to be reserved for those with musical talents who *perform* on a stage with lights and amplifiers. In fact, worship music is a discipline meant for the entire body of Christ.

Moreover, it has three (3) core purposes, all of which have nothing to do with entertainment.

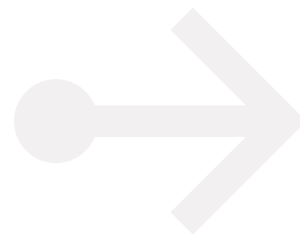
- We sing worship songs **up** to proclaim our admiration to God.
- We sing worship songs **in** to our own hearts and minds. John Piper said we can use songs, to preach His word into your mind until your heart sings with confidence that you are new and care for. In other words, singing songs about the truths of God is a discipline that helps us disciple ourselves.
- We sing worship songs **out** to the other brothers and sisters that we are in community within that moment. It is an opportunity to speak truth and life—to help them internalize the attributes of God and the truths of the Gospel.



UP TO GOD IN
ADMIRATION



IN TO OUR HEARTS
& MINDS



OUT TO OUR
BROTHERS & SISTERS

The Grace Collective Worship Music Hymnal is a separate digital and printed book that we use for singing worship songs: [\[LINK\]](#)



Loving People



Loving People

Volumes have been written about biblical love. Still, it is one of the most misunderstood concepts in the Christianity. Jesus' command to love people is included in His response to the scribe who asked him which of the Old Testament commandments was the greatest: Jesus answered, the most important is, *Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.*

Loving people is relatively straight forward and follows along the same line as the previous chapter on loving God. Loving people, like loving God, is not a matter of emotional or mental assent. Rather, it necessitates obedience, faithfulness, and action. Likewise, its apex is only truly possible within the framework of devotion to God that is inspired by His grace.

The confusion with loving people is usually centered around who exactly it is that Christians/disciples/followers should love. In fact, it wasn't even seconds after Jesus had given His disciples The Great Commandment that someone spoke up and asked who exactly their neighbor was that they should love.

WHO SHOULD WE LOVE?

So, let's decided, according to the Bible, who exactly it is that we should love, before we discuss how it is that God expects us to love. Of course, it must be said emphatically that Christians are to be people of love, people who love, people who display love, people who emanate love, people who stir up love, people who communicate love, and people who sacrificially love. Why? Because God is love and we can love because he first loved us. So, the short answer is that followers of The Way should love everyone.

The truth is though that Christians should not, or at least cannot, love everyone equally without distinction. Christians are to love people in general, but there are distinctions in that love that are not only not sinful but reflect the character of God Himself. There are, essentially, concentric circles that logically, correctly, and biblically govern our love. For example, we are to love our enemies and we are to show Samaritan-style goodness to all people but clearly not in the same way we love and treat our spouses, children, church family, and perhaps even countrymen. The love I have for my spouse is supposed to mirror



he love Christ has for His church. He loves His church in a way He does not love others. He loves them more intimately and intensely. They are, after all, His sheep and He knows them intimately in a way he does not know and love wolves or goats. He laid down His life for the and no greater love has any man than that. So loving people in different degrees reflects God's character. This may be an unpopular thing to say today, but it's true. One other consideration that must be made for this discussion is the principal of moral duty. Nobody has the ability or the capacity to love everyone in the way that the Bible defines love. If it were that simple, instead of the hundreds of Bible passages defining, exemplifying, and teaching on love, each verse might have just said love everyone. But love, by definition, is not something that can be extended so broadly.

LET'S START FROM THE OUTSIDE AND WORK OUR WAY IN:

PEOPLE IN YOUR PATH: ENEMIES | MORAL DUTY: PRESENT

- As followers of Jesus, we are instructed to love our enemies. Judging by the phrasing of this instruction from Jesus, our moral duty to our enemies is low.

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

- Loving our enemies is one way that the people of God distinguish themselves and bring glory to the Father.

PEOPLE IN YOUR PATH: STRANGERS IN NEED | MORAL DUTY: CLEAR

- Repeatedly, Jesus revived the traditional moral duty to strangers when they are in need. The Least of These as he called them, were close to His heart.



- The point of the Good Samaritan story told by Jesus was not that we should love everyone. If you read it closely, you will see that while the lawyer asks Jesus one question, he answers another. The lawyer asks, “Who is my neighbor?” but Jesus answers by telling the crowd, “Who can become your neighbor?” The difference is subtle but significant. Jesus was point out that we have a moral obligation to strangers when we encounter them in need- especially when that need is physical and dire. The priest, the Levite, and the Samaritan all had the same moral obligation to the stranger. Only one of them turned him from a stranger to a neighbor by loving him though.
- When Jesus spoke about The Final Judgement, we learn that he cared deeply about this issue that is so often neglected or undervalued by modern Christians. Note how His focus is once again on those who are economically marginalized:

“When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on His glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. And he will place the sheep on His right, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on His right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.’ Then the righteous will answer him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?’ And the King will answer them, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.’ “Then he will say to those on His left, ‘Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and His angels. For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.’ Then they also will answer, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?’ Then he will answer them, saying, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.’ And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”



- Caring for people in our community, that we don't know, who are hungry, thirsty, poor, naked, and sick is our Christian duty and form of biblical love that shows the world we are followers of Jesus.

PEOPLE IN FAMILY & THE CHURCH | MORAL DUTY: RADICAL

- The deepest level of love and moral duty for followers of Jesus belongs to those in our immediate family and those who are in the Church—both local and global.

The Bible says that if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever. We are to draw distinction upon proximity in family relations. It's natural and biblical. A person who is good to others but neglects his children is worse than a person who is good to his children but neglects others. Why? He has a God given moral obligation towards His children that is greater than that towards others.

We are to love our spouses with the *chesed* love that is paralleled to the extreme love the God has for His bride, the church.

- At the Last Supper, Jesus instructed His disciples to love one another: A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: *just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.*"

Jesus wants His followers to care for each other on the deepest level. This kind of love is supernatural. It is a distinguishing feature of Christians should be their love for one another. Our love for one another flows out of our love for God, which is a result of God's love for us. John, said, "*In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. ... And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother.*"

It is completely impossible to Love God and not love His church—to not love His people.

Our highest duty is to this love. It supersedes family, nationality, pledge, race, political party, etc.



When the Holy Spirit appeared at Pentecost, people were gathered from all over the world—people from other nations with varied interests and backgrounds yet once they were bound in Christ, they began serving each other, pooling their resources, and giving to those in need. This was love in action.

Jesus gave us a model of how to love one another. He loves unconditionally (Romans 5:8), sacrificially (2 Corinthians 5:21), with an ability to forgive (Ephesians 4:32), and forever (Romans 8:38–39). He, and His love, is holy (Hebrews 7:26).

We can follow Jesus' example because of the Holy Spirit.

LOVE ONE ANOTHER

The phrase “one another” is derived from the Greek word *allelon* which means “one another, each other; mutually, reciprocally.”

- It occurs 100 times in the New Testament. Approximately 59 of those occurrences are specific commands teaching us how and how not to relate to one another.
- Obedience to these commands is imperative. It forms the basis for all true Christian communities and has a direct impact on our witness to the world.
- In addition to *allelon*, the Bible uses other words and phrases to instruct us how to relate to others. With that in mind, the following list is not exhaustive, and primarily focuses on the use of *allelon*.

POSITIVE COMMENTS

- Love one another (John 13:34; This command occurs at least 16 times)
- Lay down your life for your friends (John 15:13)
- Be devoted to one another (Romans 12:10)
- Honor one another above yourselves (Romans 12:10)
- Live in harmony with one another (Romans 12:16)
- Build up one another (Romans 14:19; 1 Thessalonians 5:11)
- Be like minded towards one another (Romans 15:5)
- Accept one another (Romans 15:7)
- Admonish one another (Romans 15:14; Colossians 3:16)
- Greet one another (Romans 16:16)



- Care for one another (1 Corinthians 12:25)
- Serve one another (Galatians 5:13)
- Bear one another's burdens (Galatians 6:2)
- Forgive one another (Ephesians 4:2, 32; Colossians 3:13)
- Be patient with one another (Ephesians 4:2; Colossians 3:13)
- Speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15, 25)
- Be kind and compassionate to one another (Ephesians 4:32)
- Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs (Ephesians 5:19)
- Submit to one another (Ephesians 5:21, 1 Peter 5:5)
- Consider others better than yourselves (Philippians 2:3)
- Look to the interests of one another (Philippians 2:4)
- Bear with one another (Colossians 3:13)
- Teach one another (Colossians 3:16)
- Comfort one another (1 Thessalonians 4:18)
- Encourage one another (1 Thessalonians 5:11)
- Exhort one another (Hebrews 3:13)
- Stir up [provoke, stimulate] one another to love and good works (Hebrews 10:24)
- Show hospitality to one another (1 Peter 4:9)
- Employ the gifts that God has given us for the benefit of one another (1 Peter 4:10)
- Clothe yourselves with humility towards one another (1 Peter 5:5)
- Pray for one another (James 5:16)
- Confess your faults to one another (James 5:16)

NEGATIVE COMMENTS

- Do not lie to one another (Colossians 3:9)
- Stop passing judgment on one another and placing stumbling blocks before them (Romans 14:13)
- If you keep on biting and devouring each other...you'll be destroyed by each other (Galatians 5:15)
- Let us not become conceited, provoking, and envying each other (Galatians 5:26)
- Do not slander one another (James 4:11)
- Don't grumble against each other (James 5:9)
- We do all this because we are in a real sense "members of one another" (Romans 12:5; Ephesians 4:25).



Loving People Prayer Walking



Loving People: Prayer Walking

God's Word says that we should *petition, pray, intercede, and give thanksgiving for all people, for kings and all those in authority—that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.*

Prayer Walking is a simple way to obey God's command to pray for others. Prayer Walking is just what it sounds like—praying to God while walking around. Instead of closing our eyes and bowing our heads, we keep our eyes open to the needs we see around us and bow our hearts to ask humbly for God to intervene. You can prayer walk in small groups of two or three or you can prayer walk by yourself. If you go in a group - try having everyone pray out loud, a conversation with God about what everyone is seeing and the needs that God brings to their hearts. If you go by yourself—pray silently or out loud if you pray with someone you meet along the way.

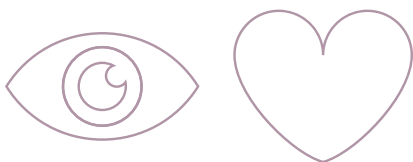
HERE ARE FOUR WAYS YOU CAN KNOW WHAT TO PRAY FOR DURING YOUR PRAYER WALK:

- **Observation:** What do you see? If you see a child's toy in a yard, you might be prompted to pray for the neighborhood's children, for families or for schools in the area.
- **Research:** What do you know? If you've read up about the neighborhood, you might know something about the people who live there, or if the area suffers from crime or injustice. Pray about these things and ask God to act.
- **Revelation:** The Holy Spirit may nudge your heart or bring an idea to mind for a particular need or area of prayer. Listen—and pray!
- **Scripture:** You may have read part of God's Word in preparation for your walk or as you walk, the Holy Spirit may bring a Scripture to mind. Pray about that passage and how it might impact the people in that area.



HERE ARE FIVE AREAS OF INFLUENCE THAT YOU CAN
FOCUS ON DURING YOUR PRAYER WALK:

- **Government:** Look for and pray over Government centers such as courthouses, commission buildings or law enforcement offices. Pray for the area's protection, for justice and for godly wisdom for its leaders.
- **Business and Commerce:** Look for and pray over Commercial centers such as financial districts or shopping area. Pray for righteous investments and good stewardship of resources. Pray for economic justice and opportunity and for generous and godly givers who put people before profits.
- **Education:** Look for and pray over educational centers such as schools and administration buildings, vocational training centers, community colleges and universities. Pray for righteous educators to teach God's truth and protect the minds of their students. Pray that God would intervene in every effort to promote lies or confusion. Pray that these places would send out wise citizens who have a heart to serve and lead.
- **Communication:** Look for and pray over Communication centers such as radio stations, TV stations, and newspaper publishers. Pray for God's Story and the testimony of His followers to be spread throughout the city and around the world. Pray that His message is delivered through His medium to His multitudes and that God's people everywhere will see God's work.
- **Spirituality:** Look for and pray over Spiritual centers such as church buildings, mosques, or temples. Pray that every spiritual seeker would find peace and comfort in Jesus and not be distracted or confused by any false religion.



FINALLY, HERE ARE FIVE WAYS YOU CAN PRAY
FOR PEOPLE YOU MEET DURING YOUR PRAYER WALK:

- As you walk and pray, be alert for opportunities and listen for promptings by God's Spirit to pray for individuals and groups you meet along the way. You can say, *"We're praying for this community, is there anything we can pray for you about? Or say, I'm praying for this area. Do you know anything we should pray for?"* After listening to their response, you can ask about their own needs. If they share, pray for them right away. If the Lord leads, you may pray about other needs as well.
- Use the word BLESS to help you remember 5 different ways you can pray:
 - Body** (health)
 - Labor** (job and finances)
 - Emotional** (morale)
 - Social** (relationships)
 - Spiritual** (knowing and loving God more)
- In most cases, people are grateful you care enough to pray. If the person is not a Christian, your prayer may open the door to a spiritual conversation and an opportunity to share your story and God's story. You can invite them to be a part of a Bible study or even host one in their home. If the person is a Christian, you can invite them to join your prayer walk or train them how they can prayer walk and use simple steps like praying for areas of influence or the B.L.E.S.S. prayer to grow God's family even more.



Loving People Care Group Meetings



Loving People: Care Group Meetings

Jesus said: *“From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked.”*

Jesus shared many stories of accountability and told us many truths of how we will be held responsible for what we do and say. Jesus tells us these things now, so we can be ready for later. And because we will be accountable to Him one day, it’s good to practice being accountable to one another now.

Accountability Groups are made up of two or three people of the same gender—men with men, women with women—who meet once a week to discuss a set of questions that help reveal areas where things are going right and other areas that need correction. Every follower of Jesus will be held accountable, so every follower of Jesus should practice accountability with others. They can even meet by phone if they’re unable to meet face-to-face. Everyone in the group needs to understand that what is shared is confidential.

ACTIVITY [45 MIN]

Break into groups of two or three people of the same gender. Spend the next 45 minutes working together through the Accountability Questions List 2. Since you haven’t done a group reading before this session, just skip over the questions about previous readings. List 1 is a great option as you get further into training.

ACCOUNTABILITY QUESTIONS | LIST 1

- Pray that we will become like Jesus.
- How are you doing? How is your prayer life?
- Do you have any sin to confess? (Relational, Sexual, Financial, Pride, Integrity, Submission to Authority, etc.)
- Did you obey what God told you last time? Share details.
- Did you pray for the “Unbelievers” on your relationship list this week? Did you have the chance to share with any of them? Share details.
- Did you memorize a new verse this week? Quote it.
- Did you read at least 25 chapters in the Bible this week?
- What did God say to you this week from the Word?
- What are you going to specifically do about it?
- Did you meet with your Accountability group this week? How did it go?



- Did you model or assist someone in starting a new Accountability group this week? Share details.
- Do you see anything hindering my walk with Christ?
- Did you have the opportunity to share the gospel this week? Share details.
- Practice 1-3 minute testimonies and the gospel right now.
- Who can you invite to the group next week? If the group is four or more, multiply it. Close with prayer regarding what was shared.

ACCOUNTABILITY QUESTIONS - LIST 2

- How have your insights from last week's reading shaped the way you think and live?
- Who did you pass your insights from last week on to and how was it received?
- How have you seen God at work?
- Have you been a testimony this week to the greatness of Jesus Christ with both your words and actions?
- Have you been exposed to sexually alluring material or allowed your mind to entertain inappropriate sexual thoughts?
- Have you acknowledged God's ownership in your use of money?
- Have you coveted anything?
- Have you hurt someone's reputation or feelings by your words? Have you been dishonest in word or action or exaggerated?
- Have you given into an addictive (or lazy or undisciplined) behavior? Have you been a slave to clothing, friends, work, or possessions? Have you failed to forgive someone?
- What worries or anxieties are you facing? Have you complained or grumbled?
- Have you maintained a thankful heart?
- Have you been honoring, understanding and generous in your important relationships? What temptations in thought, word, or action have you faced and how did you respond? How have you taken opportunities to serve or bless others, especially believers?
- Have you seen specific answers to prayer?
- Did you complete the reading for the week?



Loving People

B.L.E.S.S.

Prayer



Loving People: B.L.E.S.S. Prayer

Finally, here are five ways you can pray for people you meet during your Prayer Walk or one another.

As you walk and pray, be alert for opportunities and listen for promptings by God's Spirit to pray for individuals and groups you meet along the way.

You can say, *"We're praying for this community, is there anything in particular we can pray for you about?"* Or say, *"I'm praying for this area. Do you know anything in particular we should pray for?"* After listening to their response, you can ask about their own needs. If they share, pray for them right away. If the Lord leads, you may pray about other needs as well.

USE THE WORD B.L.E.S.S. TO HELP YOU REMEMBER
5 DIFFERENT WAYS YOU CAN PRAY:

- **Body** (health)
- **Labor** (job and finances)
- **Emotional** (morale)
- **Social** (relationships)
- **Spiritual** (knowing and loving God more)



In most cases, people are grateful you care enough to pray.

If the person is not a Christian, your prayer may open the door to a spiritual conversation and an opportunity to share your story and God's story. You can invite them to be a part of a Bible study or even host one in their home.

If the person is a Christian, you can invite them to join your Prayer Walk or train them how they can Prayer Walk and use simple steps like praying for areas of influence or the B.L.E.S.S. Prayer to grow God's family even more.

Making Disciples



Making Disciples

SOCIAL CONTEXT

The social environment that Jesus grew up in was probably chaotic. The cultural scene was characterized by religious and political upheaval. People in Israel were hungry to know how to live for God in the midst of it all. They knew from their own tragic history how painful life could become when their nation strayed from the path that God had laid out for them in Scripture. In Sepphoris, for instance, a town just three miles from Nazareth, the Romans quelled a rebellion by burning the city to the ground and then selling its survivors into slavery. This happened in 4 BC, around the time of Jesus's birth. Imagine what it would have been like growing up so close to such a disaster. It would be like being born in Manhattan on September 11, 2001. Though you hadn't witnessed the destruction of the World Trade Center towers, you would grow up hearing the story until it became seared into your mind. Because of their continuing oppression by the Romans, the Jewish people cried out to God daily, begging for a Messiah to deliver them.

It was into this hotbed of social ferment and religious longing that the greatest of all rabbis appeared on the scene. No wonder he attracted a crowd wherever he went.

JEWISH BIBLE LEARNING

Jesus—like all Jewish boys—probably began learning to read and memorize the Torah and much of the Hebrew Scriptures by the time he was just five or six years old.

- After age ten, he would have begun to learn the Oral Torah, the rabbinic traditions handed down for interpreting the Written Torah.
- By the age of thirteen most boys would have concluded their formal study and then begun to learn a trade.
- The most talented among them would have been encouraged to continue studying throughout their teenage years at the bet midrash (“house of interpretation”) at the synagogue until they married at the age of eighteen or twenty.
- Only the most brilliant would go on to become disciples of a great rabbi.

During the first century, knowledge of the Scriptures was widespread. Even ordinary people devoutly studied the Torah, meeting together in their local synagogue. Each Sabbath a



member of the congregation would read from the Scriptures and expound on the day's passages. Gifted rabbis, like Jesus, who happened to be in town would also be asked to speak. In the early first century, many people were involved in living and teaching their faith, not just an educated few.

RABBI

Rabbi literally means, my master. In Jesus's day, it was a term of respect for teachers of the Scripture. It wasn't until after AD 70—when the temple was destroyed - that rabbi became a formal title. In the centuries prior to Jesus' time, certain men distinguished themselves by their earnest desire to study and teach the Torah. In Jesus's day, a person would honor one of these learned men by addressing him as *my master (rabbi)*.

For the most part these teachers did not hail from wealthy or priestly classes, but from the ranks of ordinary folk. They could be blacksmiths, tailors, farmers, tanners, shoemakers, woodcutters, and of course, carpenters. Many of them worked seasonally, traveling, and teaching in the months when they were free. Rabbis interpreted the Torah, explained the Scriptures, and told parables. Some traveled from village to village, teaching in synagogues. Though they relied on the hospitality of others, rabbis were never paid. They often took disciples who would study under their direction for years, traveling with them everywhere they went. Study sessions were often conducted outdoors in vineyards, marketplaces, beside a road, or in an open field. Disciples would then go out on their own, holding classes in homes or in the synagogue.

THE GOAL OF A RABBI

Along with instructing the crowds, a rabbi's greatest goal was to raise up disciples who would carry on his teaching. This was not merely an academic exercise, a matter of downloading volumes of data into someone else's head. As important as knowledge of Scripture was, there was one thing more important—a rabbi's moral character. A popular saying at the time was, "*If the teacher is like an angel of the Lord, they will seek Torah from him, but if not, they will not seek Torah from him.*" Essentially, the mission of a rabbi was to become a living example of what it means to apply God's Word to one's life. They would strive to live out the command from God to, "Be holy because I, the LORD your God, am holy."



So, think about Jesus now. Isn't this what he did. What better way to teach people to be like him than to walk the earth as a rabbi?

The importance of this modeling can be illustrated in a silly way: Imagine handing an instruction sheet to a five-year-old who wants to learn to ride a bike. It would be far better to begin by showing her how to ride and then putting training wheels on her bike. Then, once she's ready for the wheels to come off, she will need someone to run alongside her as she makes that first thrilling attempt. That's what the rabbi-disciple relationship was all about.

So often we focus on Jesus's mission on the cross to save us from our sins. As marvelous as that is, it's critical for us to grasp the importance of his mission on earth as a rabbi. His goal was to raise up disciples who would become like him. As followers of Jesus, we are still called to live out the adventure of discipleship, becoming like Jesus through the power of his Spirit at work within us. To do that, we need to tune into what he was saying by developing the ears of a first-century Jew. As we do, we'll discover that there are many times in the Gospels when knowing what Jesus doesn't say becomes just as important as knowing what he does say.

FOLLOWING THE RABBI

To follow a rabbi meant something other than sitting in a classroom and absorbing his lectures. Rather, it involved a literal kind of following, in which disciples often traveled with, lived with, and imitated their rabbis, learning not only from what they said but from what they did—from their reactions to everyday life as well as from the way they lived. The task of the disciple was to become as much like the rabbi as possible. This approach to teaching is much more like a traditional apprenticeship than a modern classroom. Around the world, and for thousands of years, apprenticeship traditions have been largely unchanged. Westerners are hardly aware of this very different, but surprisingly effective, way of teaching.

In Jesus' day, Jewish boys and girls didn't learn math by taking classes. Instead, they watched how their fathers measured and calculated as they were building, and they noticed how their mothers counted their money at the market. The girls didn't take home economics classes but learned to pluck and cook a chicken by helping their mothers and sisters. Children didn't crack open their history textbooks either. Instead, they learned the



epic stories of their ancestors as their family gathered around the glow of the evening fire. Though most Jewish people were educated in the Scriptures and though Jewish boys learned to read in school, the usual method of learning was through hands-on experience, imitating someone who possessed the skills they wanted to acquire. After finishing school at the age of thirteen, a boy learned his life's work by joining his father and brothers in the family trade. Sometimes a father would apprentice his son to another craftsman and the boy would move into his master's home for several years. Working all day at his mentor's side, he would also perform menial chores, gradually gaining know-how as he observed the craftsman's expert hands. Learning wasn't so much about retaining data as it was about gaining essential wisdom for living, absorbing it from those around him. This was the ancient method whereby rabbis trained their *talmidim*. Talmidim (tahl-mee-DEEM). A disciple or student is someone who dedicated himself to learning a rabbi's understanding of Scripture and his way of living it out. In Greek, a disciple is a *mathetes* (plural, mathetai).

The call to discipleship is one that has echoed down the centuries, not just within the Christian church. It has characterized Judaism as well. Even Jewish rabbis today are commissioned during their ordination ceremonies to *raise up disciples*, a quotation known from Jesus' time. Where did the rabbis develop their ideas of discipleship? They found their model in Scripture, especially in the relationship of two men—the prophets Elijah and Elisha.

When Elijah called Elisha, the younger man gave up everything, abandoning his prosperous farm to become Elijah's personal servant, humbly attending to his needs, and accompanying him everywhere he went. Like any disciple, Elisha's goal was not just to study from Elijah, but to become like Elijah to carry on his ministry as a prophet to Israel. Several aspects of Elisha's life exemplified discipleship in Jesus's time. First, Elisha went to live with Elijah, spending year after year with him. That made sense because the goal wasn't just academic learning but personal transformation. As the Jewish historian Shmuel Safrai explains it, *"a disciple did not grasp the full significance of his teacher's learning in all its nuances except through prolonged intimacy with his teacher, through close association with his rich and profound mind."*

To that end, the disciple would accompany the rabbi on all his daily rounds: going to court, helping the poor, burying the dead, redeeming slaves, and so on. In all these things the disciple sought to be a humble and caring companion, doing personal acts of service,



and helping the teacher in all things. The Gospels make it clear that this is the kind of relationship Jesus had with his own disciples. Jesus was constantly surprising his disciples both by his words and by his actions. He was challenging their way of looking at God and at others, welcoming sinners into his kingdom and associating with people that other rabbis would have scorned. His *talmidim* followed him everywhere. And as they did, their hearts were challenged and changed. But the changes that he worked in his disciples' lives did not come instantly or even easily. Our culture is fascinated with instant fixes but the changes that he worked in his disciples' lives did not come instantly or even easily. Our culture is fascinated with instant fixes and extreme makeovers. Just like Ange Peter, we chafe at the years it takes to train as an apprentice. But discipleship has always been about a process. As Christians we can become addicted to stories of miraculous change, believing that if God is listening to our prayers, every sinful urge we feel will be healed immediately. Contrast this with the record of the Gospels. Think how often the disciples messed up. They made mistakes to the very end—even on the last night they spent with Jesus prior to his death. After eating the Passover meal, his closest disciples fell asleep while men armed with clubs and swords made their way up the Mount of Olives to arrest Jesus. At the precise moment their rabbi most needed them, they failed him. While the Gospels record many instances of Jesus instantly healing people's illnesses, we know of not even one instance in which he simply waved his hand to immediately fix an ugly habit for one of his disciples. Instead, he simply kept teaching and correcting them, giving them time to grow (God seems to work like this much of the time in our own lives. He lets our weaknesses and difficulties drive us to himself, keeping us close. Miracles happen, but the inner transformation we so desperately desire can only be achieved over time. God seems to prefer it this way, perhaps because he knows we can only become like him by maintaining a constant close connection).

Jesus clearly advocated for an austere life. He often spoke of leaving everything, saying that he himself had nowhere to lay his head (Luke 9:57–58). By this he meant that his calling was to serve God through the wandering life of a rabbi, walking from village to village to draw people into God's kingdom. It was a difficult existence. Long days spent hiking up and down the hot, dusty hills of Galilee, preaching to whomever would listen, and depending on the hospitality of others for his most basic needs. Here's how other rabbis described this kind of life: *"This is the path of Torah: a morsel with salt shall you eat, and you shall drink water by measure, and sleep upon the ground, and live a life of painfulness,*



and in Torah shall you labor. If thou do this, happy shall you be, and it shall be well with you.” Because of these statements, some modern Christians have been confused about what discipleship is exactly, equating it with discipline. Of course, discipline is vital to the spiritual life. Jesus himself said, “*Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me (Mark 8:34).*”

But the overall goal of discipleship is not simply to grow in self-discipline, but to us it to be transformed into the likeness of Christ.

Imagine for a moment if someone were to define parenting only as discipline. Of course, children need discipline. But we would have great cause for worry if discipline was the only thing a parent focused on. Sometimes we hear the word “disciple” and conclude that it’s too hard to become one. But think about the alternative. To refuse to become Jesus’s disciples is to consign ourselves to perpetual childhood and condemn ourselves to a wasted, frustrating life. The more we enter into relationship with Rabbi Jesus, the more joy we will experience. To become more like Christ will deepen our relationships and allow us to live more authentically. It may not always be easy, but it will certainly be good, and, as we follow him, we will find ourselves living with greater passion and purpose, experiencing a life of greater fulfillment.

THE RABBI-DISCIPLE BOND

We are already learned that the rabbi-disciple paradigm goes back centuries. But where did it start? In Judaism, the first and prototypical rabbi-disciple relationship was said to be between Elijah and Elisha.

Like these two Old Testament prophets, a rabbi and his disciple were expected to form a close, personal bond—hardly surprising given the amount of time they spent together and the important life issues they were constantly discussing. This closeness between rabbi and disciple was considered essential to the learning process. It has been said, just as one candle lights another only if it is brought close, so a rabbi only teaches well when he is close to his *talmidim*. During the time of Jesus, one’s rabbi was considered to be as dear as one’s own father, and it was traditional for disciples to show the same reverence for their rabbi as their father, or even more.



A couple of sayings at the time were:

- *“Your father brought you into this world, but your rabbi brings you into the life of the world to come!”*
- *“If a man’s father and his rabbi are both taken captive, a disciple should ransom his rabbi first.*
- *“If someone’s father and his master are carrying heavy burdens, he removes that of his master, and afterward removes that of his father.”*
- *“The point of such sayings was to highlight the utter devotion a disciple should display to his rabbi.”*

Rabbis were also deeply committed to their disciples, as evidenced by such sayings as this:

- *“If a disciple is sent into exile, his rabbi should go with him”*

A famous sage by the name of Rabbi Akiva once cared for a sick disciple, coming to his home and even performing housework until he returned to health.

Disciples were supposed to become servants of their rabbi, *“All acts a slave performs for his master, a disciple performs for his rabbi, except untying the sandal.”* To untie someone’s sandal was considered demeaning, the task of a slave. With that as background, we can understand the impact of John the Baptist’s comment that he felt unworthy even to untie Jesus’s sandal (John 1:27).

The fundamental assumption that underlies a discipleship relationship is that Humans are built with an incredible, natural power to imitate. There is no doubt that Jesus understood this human condition immensely. This is probably why he also warned against following anyone else in this specific way. Discipleship is essential because the goal is to learn how to obey laws and some laws can only be learned through serving the teacher of those laws. However, only Jesus can be this teacher. Jesus says we should call no one father/master/rabbi/priest.

I used to think that Jesus’s command to make disciples simply meant teaching people certain beliefs about God, helping them to accept Christ as Lord, and then educating them in doctrinal truth later on. Though all these are important, this way of defining discipleship showed that I, like many Westerners, approached the gospel primarily as information. And



unfortunately, such an approach tends to produce efforts at evangelism that are thinly disguised power grabs. We try hard to foist our belief system onto others, debating with people until they declare our way the best. An Eastern view of discipleship seems far more in keeping with the gospel. The Eastern view encompasses the understanding that Jesus died for our sins and that belonging to him involves repenting and receiving him as Lord. But it also recognizes that Jesus lived transparently in front of his disciples in order to teach them how to live. They, in turn, were to live transparently before others, humbly teaching them the way of Christ. This approach involves not just information but transformation. God's goal isn't simply to fill the world with people who believe the right things. It is to fill the world with people who shine with the brilliance of Christ. Shepherding in Israel is a wonderful metaphor for this kind of discipleship. In many countries, sheep spend their lives in fenced-in pastures where they spend their time grazing and milling about. Many Christians seem to think that the Great Commission is a matter of getting sheep into the pen—inviting people to accept Christ, the high point of their spiritual lives. In Israel, however, where grass has difficulty growing in the arid soil, sheep must know their shepherd, following him obediently from pasture to pasture. There, shepherding is a much more active task.



Making Disciples The Gospel



Making Disciples: The Gospel

HOW DO WE DEFINE “THE GOSPEL?”

The Gospel is a message and the information held within that message. It is a proclamation of *some* good news. Specifically, the good news that God has done the thing that he has been promising to do for a long time. It is the heralding of a shocking series of events that has happened on the world. It is a very public announcement of something that has happened by which the whole world is now a different place and that everyone, individually and corporately, is invited to discover that new world for themselves and live within the new world that has thereby been created. The core message that is proclaimed, the central idea that makes the news good, involves the same God who made the world has fundamentally rescued that world from corruption and decay and has invited all human beings everywhere to find, learn about and follow Jesus, the central character of the story and the one through whom this new world has come to pass and the only one who can show us how to be part of it.

UNDERSTANDING THE MESSAGE TODAY

Since The Gospel message inherently involves the fulfilment of a promise made by God, to understand The Gospel as a piece of good news as described above it is essential that the recipient of the message understand how and why that promise came about. When the message was originally delivered, the hearers would have understood the context of the promise and the reasons for it.

THE DETAILS OF THE GOSPEL MESSAGE

CONTEXT: THE TRIUNE GOD CREATED THE ORIGINAL WORLD

The gospel is about the Triune God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The self-existent, perfectly holy, infinitely glorious Creator of all that is. Before the beginning of the world, there was nothing, but as soon as He spoke, everything came into being. The good Creator made a good creation—the expansive starry night, the mysterious depths of the sea, the sweet pleasure of wine—each proclaiming His workmanship and showing the comprehensive worship He is due. Just as an artist has authority over their artwork, the Creator has authority over His creation.



CONTEXT: SINFUL HUMANITY

As the rightful Ruler, God gave a simple command to the first humans, Adam, and Eve: “Eat this, not that.” But you can guess what happened next: We ate that. God’s very good design soon turned toxic, and death began to dominate. Adam and Eve belittled and blasphemed God by attempting to be God. We don’t desire God; we desire to be God. Sin is cosmic rebellion. Our first parents represented us, and they failed; if you think that you would have done better, you don’t know yourself well enough. This side of the Fall, we are shackled to our selfish desires, unable not to sin. No one forces us to sin. These are not isolated mistakes but symptoms of a deeper problem: We are fundamentally disloyal. We are not sinners because we sin; we sin because we are sinners. Our sin separates us from the God who is holy and just. God does not leave the guilty unpunished. The righteous Judge declares the consequences of sin: everlasting death in hell. If we’re honest, we feel this brokenness on a deep level. Our sin is ultimately unsatisfying, our hearts are restless, our desires insatiable. Even when we get what we want, we cry out, “Surely there has to be more than this!” We are not alone: As the story of Scripture continues to unfold east of Eden, our sin increases, and we move further away from the God in the Garden.

THE MESSAGE | THE EVENT: THE CRUCIFIED KING

But God has not abandoned us! Even before the snake slithered into the Garden, God planned to use His Son to crush the serpent and sin. The rightful King, Jesus Christ, was born of a virgin, through the working of the Holy Spirit. The King came down while we were still dead in our sin. Where Adam rebelled, Christ obeyed. We nailed Him to a cross and mocked Him, yet He cried out, “*Father, forgive them!*” What we intended for evil, God meant for good. For three days Christ’s body lay still, but then His strength returned: He tore off the blood-caked rags of death! He rose from the grave and then rose further still, ascending to heaven as we await the Day when He will come again. Christ lived the life that we could not live and died the death that we should have died. His blood was the substitute, the final sacrifice to absorb the wrath of God. In His body, He bore our sins and suffered for it, pierced so we would be healed. He rose in validation and in victory. The divine Son defeated sin and death. He made us pure and now sits at the right hand of God with all things in subjection to Him.



THE MESSAGE | RESPONSE TO THE EVENT: HOW TO JOIN THE NEW WORLD

We can't initiate our salvation; we respond to the crucified King. Salvation is a gift received. We are drawn by God Himself to be reborn. We respond in faith, affirming and confessing that Jesus Christ is Lord alone. We turn from our sin and toward God. We respond, not because we are afraid, but because we love God. While we used to run away from God, now we run to Him; He is compassionate and will abundantly pardon, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

THE MESSAGE | HOW WE CAN NOW LIVE IN THE NEW WORLD: DISCIPLESHIP AND MISSION

We are given abundant and everlasting life as God's children and new creations: called into rest, made more like Christ by the Spirit each day. The gospel is not about escaping earth to get to heaven; it is about joining in God's mission to bring heaven—Christ's Kingdom—to earth. And our mission is to spread the Good News about Jesus Christ. We grow in our love for God, study the Scriptures, we live in community—biblically loving one another, we make disciples, and we bring restoration by calling for justice in our community and beyond. As citizens of God's Kingdom, we participate in bringing restoration to a broken world while we await full restoration in the coming kingdom.



NOTES ABOUT EXPERIENCING THE NEW WORLD:

- We must learn to obey and teach others to obey the commandments of Jesus
- We must reject the sinful world
- We must become more like Christ who is the supreme example of righteousness
- As we become more like Jesus in the new world we should pursue and experience justice through people entering right relationship with God. The new world involves a ministry of Reconciliation. Reconciling people to God is the best way to experience justice, mercy, and righteousness.
- Entering the new world happens of God, by the Son, and through the Spirit
- Entering the new world is the same as becoming part of the family of God
- There is a cost to entering the new world. Jesus asks us to lay down our lives for him
- Entering the new world involves justification (penal-substitutionary atonement) and sanctification
- Being part of the new world is all about relationship – with God and with others is very important (God)
- Jesus defined entering the new world (the gospel) as. *Repent and follow me, the kingdom of God is at hand*

WE ARE GIVEN ABUNDANT AND
EVERLASTING LIFE AS GOD'S CHILDREN AND
NEW CREATIONS: CALLED INTO REST, MADE
MORE LIKE CHRIST BY THE SPIRIT EACH DAY.

Making Disciples Producer vs. Consumer

Making Disciples:

Producer vs Consumer

Becoming a disciple, a follower of Jesus, means becoming a **producer** in God's world instead of simply a **consumer**. In his perfect plan, God created us to live in balance—to *produce and to consume*, to create and to use up, to pour out and to be filled so we can pour out again. But, in our broken world, people have rejected God's plan, and many spend their energy living out just part of God's perfect equation. They learn but they don't share. They are filled up, but they never pour out. *They consume, but they don't produce. If we're going to help followers of Jesus multiply, then we need to share with them how they can be producers and not just consumers.*

- ***To be a producer and not just a consumer we must be equipped to learn, interpret, and apply Scripture.*** This is pivotal because God's written Word is how we grow spiritually. Over thousands of years and through many different authors, God spoke his word into the hearts of faithful men who captured and shared what they heard. The Scriptures teach us God's story, his plans, his heart, his ways and using it in community can make not just hearers of God's word but doers and sharers, also.
- ***To be a producer and not just a consumer we must be equipped to pray.*** God grows us spiritually through prayer. Prayer is speaking and listening to God. Prayer helps us know God more intimately and understand his heart, his will, and his ways. Prayer helps us minister and serve others, helps us teach and share in specific ways that helps individuals or a group know God better. In community we can develop the habit of praying without ceasing and learning to see the world from a spiritual perspective instead of only relying on what we can visibly see.
- ***To be a producer and not just a consumer we must be equipped to participate in body life.*** God uses his body of believers, which we call The Church or the Followers of Jesus to grow us spiritually. As the gathering of believers, we are connected. God's Word says that in Jesus we are many parts of one body, and we all belong to each other. In other words, we're not just connected to God we're connected with each other. God says to submit to one another. God says to serve one another. Each of us has different strengths and each has weaknesses. God expects us to use our strengths to help others who may be weak. And he expects us to allow others to help us in our weakness using the strengths He has given them. God's Word says God has given each of you some special abilities; be sure to use them to help each other, passing on to others God's many kinds of blessings. Spiritual disciplines help us encourage one



another to love and good works by not only helping us to obey what God tells us to do but also helping us find ways to share what we learn with others.

- ***To be a producer and not just a consumer we must be equipped to endure persecution.***

God also uses persecution and suffering, sacrifice, and loss that we suffer on behalf of Jesus, to grow us spiritually. When people oppress and hurt us because we love and obey Jesus, or when bad things happen even though we love and obey Jesus, God uses those persecutions and sufferings to refine our character and make us more like Jesus. He develops our character, strengthens, and purifies our faith, equips for ministry, and allows us to serve others who are suffering in a special way—all while making Himself known more clearly to everyone who watches us and knows our pain. God tells us that as followers of Jesus we should expect to be persecuted. Jesus said, *“God will bless you when people insult you, mistreat you, and tell all kinds of evil lies about you because of me. Be happy and excited! You will have a great reward in heaven. People did these same things to the prophets who lived long ago.”* Being in close community gives followers of Jesus an opportunity to share the persecutions and sufferings they experience. Intimate community gives us a chance to teach disciples that God’s word says we should expect hard times and to equip them in how to respond well by trusting God’s love even when things go wrong.

PRODUCER VS CONSUMER: SPIRITUAL BREATHING

Breathing is life. We breathe **in**. We breathe **out**. Breathing is also important in God’s new world. In fact, God calls his spirit, *breath*. In the new world, ***we breathe in when we hear from God.***

- We breathe **in** when we **hear** from God through his word, the Bible.
- We breathe **in** when we **hear** from God through prayer, our conversations with Him.
- We breathe **in** when we **hear** from God through his body, the church, other followers of Jesus.
- We breathe **in** when we **hear** from God through his works, the events, experiences and sometimes even the persecutions and sufferings He allows His children to go through.



In the new world, *we breathe out when we act on what we hear from God.*

- We breathe **out** when we **obey**.
- Sometimes breathing **out** to **obey** means changing our thoughts, our words, or our actions to bring them into alignment with Jesus and what he wants.
- Sometimes breathing **out** to **obey** means sharing what Jesus has shared with us, giving away what he gave us so that others can be blessed just as God is blessing us.

For a follower of Jesus this **breathing in** and **breathing out** is critical. It's our very life. Jesus modeled this for us:

- He said, *“the Son can do nothing by himself. He does only what he sees the Father doing. Whatever the Father does, the Son also does.”*
- Jesus said, *“I don't speak on my own authority. The Father who sent me has commanded me what to say and how to say it.”*
- Jesus said that every word He spoke and every work He accomplished was based on hearing from God and what he heard.
- Jesus said that his followers would also hear from God because of his Holy Spirit, his breath, that would be breathed into every one of us who follows him.
- Jesus said, *“the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and remind you of everything that I have told you.”*

Jesus was showing us how to live. So how do we hear God's voice? How do we know what to obey? Jesus called himself, The Good Shepherd. Jesus called his followers his sheep. Jesus said, *“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow me.”* Jesus said, *“Whoever belongs to God hears what God says. The reason you do not hear is that you do not belong to God.”*



As followers of Jesus, we must be committed to hearing his voice:

- We hear his voice by being still.
- We hear his voice by focusing on Jesus.
- We hear his voice in our thoughts, our feelings, and impressions.
- We hear his voice when we write down and test what we hear.

Not every voice, not every thought, feeling or impression is God's voice. Sometimes it is the voice of the enemy. Jesus said, our enemy is a liar and the father of lies. Jesus said, our enemy comes to steal, kill, and destroy. But God says that we will hear from him, and we will know it is him when he speaks. With practice and prayer, we can know God's voice better.

- We can learn to know whether what we hear is from God or another voice. Here are ways we can know for sure that it is Jesus leading us:
- When Jesus speaks his voice will always be consistent with what his written Word, the Bible has already told us.
- His spoken voice will never contradict his written voice.
- When Jesus speaks his voice will give our hearts a sense of hope and peace.
- His voice will not leave us condemned or discouraged. Jesus does not condemn. Jesus corrects in love.
- Jesus's voice will not express the works of the flesh: sexual immorality and impurity, debauchery, idolatry and witchcraft, hatred and discord, jealousy and fits of rage, selfish ambitions, dissensions, factions and envy, drunkenness. These things are not from God's voice.
- When Jesus speaks his voice will express the fruit of God's Spirit: love and joy, peace and patience, kindness and goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.
- When Jesus speaks his voice gives us a sense of confidence instead of doubt. We experience inside ourselves a knowledge and peace that what we're hearing is from God.



- We may not hear everything at once. We may hear only part of what we eventually will need to know. But what we hear will be solid, not shifting or changing.
- When we breathe in and hear from God and when we breathe out and obey what we hear and share with others what we've heard, God will speak even more clearly. His breath will breathe through us even more. We will hear his voice more clearly. We will know his voice and not another's. We will see his work in the world and be able to join in and work with him.

As followers of The Way of Jesus, we breathe in, and we breathe out.

PRODUCER VS CONSUMER: EYES TO SEE

As humans, we think about, focus on and work for things that we can see. We call it reality. The way things are. But the kingdom grows more quickly when we focus on things we can't see. Things that aren't there. Or things that aren't there, yet. There are places all around us where God's will is not being done on earth as it is in heaven—giant gaps where brokenness, pain persecution, suffering and even death are a part of normal, everyday life. Every disciple—every follower of Jesus—needs to be able to see not just where God's Kingdom is, but where God's kingdom isn't. Kingdom work is about entering into those gaps and into those dark places and working to close the chasms and bring light and life during our time here on earth.

We can see where God's Kingdom isn't in two ways—through people we already know and through people we haven't yet met.

The first way is through people we already know—our *ongoing relationships* of friends and family, coworkers, classmates, neighbors and more. This is the way God's Story travels *fastest*. We love and care about these people because we know them already. It's natural.

Jesus told a story of a selfish rich man - arrogant in life and now being punished in hell. The rich man begged—“*send Lazarus to my father's home. Let him warn my five brothers, so they won't come to this horrible place.*” Jesus showed us how even the selfish and suffering have some love and concern for those close to them. The people we know are placed in our lives because God loves us and wants us to love them. We need to be good stewards of those relationships with love and patience and persistence. Disciples multiply when they're concerned for the people God's placed around them and they have a



plan to do something about it. You can help increase their care and build a simple plan to multiply in just a few steps.

Here's how: have them write a list of 100 people they already know. Have them break that list into 3 categories:

- Those who follow Jesus
- Those who don't follow Jesus
- Those who they're not sure whether they follow or not.

For the followers—disciples can equip and encourage them to be more fruitful and faithful. For the non-followers —disciples can learn how to share and introduce them to a loving God. For those who they're not sure—disciples can learn to invest their time and learn more.

There's also a way we see where God's Kingdom isn't through people we haven't met. These are people *outside our relationships* - people we don't know, neighbors we've never said more than "hello" to, businessmen and women we pass on the street, strangers in every village, town or city we've never even visited, yet.

- Jesus said, "*make disciples of all nations.*"
- Jesus said, "*you will tell everyone about me in Jerusalem, in all Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.*"

Sharing with people we know is the way God's Story travels *fastest*. Sharing with people we don't know yet is the way God's Story travels *farthest*. If we love and care about these people we don't know, that's not natural. It's supernatural and evidence of the Holy Spirit at work in our lives.

- God's favorites are the least, the last, and the lost. These are the ones He pours out his heart to over and over again. If we want to be like God, then these are the ones we have to invest our lives in.
- God commands us to go. And part of going is to go not just to those who are close by but also to those who live in the spiritually darkest corners of the world—people who sometimes have never even heard the name Jesus.



- God’s Word says—*“God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”* As followers of Jesus we must give grace as He gives it—to the humble, to the desperate, and to the lost.
- Disciples multiply when they’re concerned for the people God’s placed in their lives. Disciples multiply even more when they’re concerned for the people God’s placed nowhere near them. But even then they still need a plan. You can help increase a disciple’s care for others and build a simple plan to multiply by training them to look for the people God’s already prepared to hear.

Jesus said—*“As soon as you enter a home, say, ‘God bless this home with peace.’ If the people living there are peace-loving, your prayer for peace will bless them. But if they are not peace-loving, your prayer will return to you.”*

We call someone who God has already prepared to hear a **person of peace**—someone responsive to God’s message and faithful in **obeying** and **sharing** with others. In a place where we know very few, instead of sharing with our friends, families, co-workers, classmates and neighbors, we train a person of peace how to reach theirs. But the best results always come when we focus on the faithful. Remember faithfulness is demonstrated by **obeying** what God tells us and **sharing** it with others. Faithful people who obey and share are like the good soil that Jesus talked about.

Jesus said—*“a few seeds fell on good ground where the plants produced thirty or sixty or a hundred times as much as was scattered.”*

- Faithful people don’t have hard hearts that reject God’s Word.
- Faithful people don’t fall away when they’re persecuted or when times get hard.
- Faithful people aren’t distracted by the worries of this world or riches that don’t last.
- Faithful people are like the demon-possessed man in the Gerasenes who obeyed and shared what Jesus showed him. One faithful man who obeyed and shared produced many, many people who wanted to know Jesus more.

Opening our eyes to see where the Kingdom isn’t and reaching out through people we know and people we don’t know yet is how disciples multiply and God’s Kingdom grows far and fast.



PRODUCER VS CONSUMER: DUCKLING DISCIPLESHIP

Have you ever seen a group of ducklings out for a walk? No matter where you are in the world, it always looks the same. A Mother Duck leads, and her ducklings follow—one by one—all in a row. The Mother Duck leads. The little ducks follow. But if you look even closer, you'll see something else is happening, too. Each little duckling is actually playing two roles—at exactly the same time. Each little duckling is a **follower**, because it's following the Mother Duck or another duckling that's walking right in front of it. And, at exactly the same time. Each little duckling is a **leader**, because it's leading the duckling (or ducklings) that's walking right behind it. So is the duckling a **follower** or a **leader**?

It's both.

And that's why ducks out for a walk have everything to do with making disciples. God wants his family to grow far—and so He expects every follower to be a leader, every believer to be a sharer, and every disciple to be a disciple maker—at exactly the same time.

One of the traps we fall into, as disciples and disciple-makers, is the false belief that we have to know everything, or even just a lot of things, before we share anything. But that's not how discipleship works. Disciples are like ducklings. To be a leader, they don't have to know everything. They just have to be one step ahead. God wants his family to grow in faithfulness—and so He expects every leader to be a follower, every sharer to be a believer, and every disciple-maker to be a disciple—at exactly the same time, too.

Another trap we fall into, as disciples and disciple-makers, is the false belief that someone, somewhere knows everything and if we just find and follow them, then we're set. But that's not how discipleship works, either. In God's Kingdom, there's only one "Mother Duck" that all of us follow—and that's Jesus Christ. No missionary. No pastor. No seminary professor. Only Jesus deserves the full measure of our faith.

The rest of us are "in process." There will always be someone closer to Jesus that we can follow. And there will always be someone further away that we can lead. But no matter our position, our eyes—and our hearts—should always be fully fixed on Jesus.

In the Bible, Paul, who wrote much of the New Testament and started many of the first churches, didn't just write—*Follow me*. He wrote, "*Follow me, as I follow Christ.*" Paul knew what ducklings everywhere know and what every disciple should know, too—every



disciple should know, too—every leader in God’s Kingdom has to be a follower—and all of us follow Jesus.

In the Bible, Paul also wrote: “*What you have heard from me... share with faithful men, who will be able to teach others, too.*” Paul knew what ducklings everywhere know and what every disciple should know, too. Every follower in God’s Kingdom has to be a leader—and all of us should lead like Jesus, laying down our lives for others.

If you want to see God’s family grow far and grow in faithfulness, then think of disciple-making like ducklings—become a follower and a leader at exactly the same time.

PRODUCER VS CONSUMER: APPRENTICE CYCLE

Training new followers of Jesus involves four (4) phases: *modeling, assisting, watching, and leaving.*

LET’S USE THE EXAMPLE OF RIDING A BIKE:

Model: Think back—before you ever rode a bicycle, you probably saw someone else ride one first. That’s modeling. Modeling is simply showing someone else an example of how it’s done. When a child first sees someone else riding a bike, they get the idea right away. Modeling is that way. It doesn’t have to be done often, and usually it only needs to be done once. Think back to that first bike ride. Did you want to just watch? Or were you excited to get on and give it a try? What if nobody ever gave you the chance? Too much modeling can hurt the training process. Modeling is about showing someone just a little and then giving them a try.

Assist: But what happened on that first ride? Did they just give you the bicycle and walk away? Probably not. When most people learn how to ride a bike, someone is right there for the first few pedals. Walking along side and keeping you on track. That’s assisting. Assisting is allowing a learner to practice a skill but making sure the falls aren’t too hard. Assisting takes longer than modeling. But not too much longer. It requires some handholding, some direction, and some coaching, but it’s just about passing on the basics. It’s not about getting someone to perfect. It’s about getting them to pedal. Can you imagine someone running alongside you as you started to pedal fast and gain some speed? They wouldn’t last long, and you’d never learn to keep your balance. Assisting is about getting someone



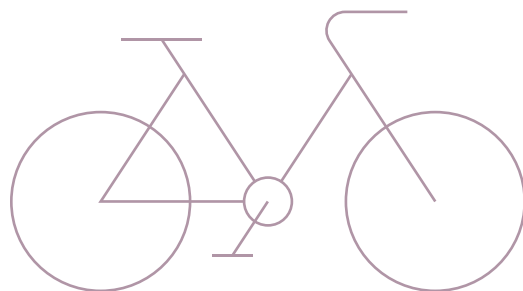
going and allowing them to steer a little on their own. And when they start to move, they're modeling for next learner on the way.

Watch: Even when no one else's hands are on the bike, it doesn't mean the new rider is all alone. Usually there's someone keeping an eye out, but from a distance. That's watching. Watching is influencing a learner until they're competent in their skill, all without having to step in and take control. In bike riding, someone can get up and going fairly quickly, but that doesn't mean they know all the rules of the road. Watching is about making sure someone's going to be safe—even when no one's around. Watching is about making sure not just that someone knows what to do, but also that they'll do it—even when no one's looking.

In this phase of the Training Cycle, the learner will grow and teach others how to grow... so they teach others how to grow... so they teach others how to grow. Disciples who make disciples who make disciples. All the way down to the third and fourth generation. *Watching* is about making sure a learner matures and is not just willing but also able to help others. Watching takes awhile. It may be ten times as long as Modeling and Assisting, combined. It may be longer. But the wait is always worth it. Eventually—the rider just rides the bike. That's what *leaving* is all about. ***Model, assist, watch, and leave.***

Leave: Leaving is like a graduation. A student becomes a teacher. A worker becomes a co-worker. A disciple becomes a friend. In bike riding, the one who teaches you to ride doesn't go along for every ride you take. At times they may ride with you. At times you ride separately, or with others, or alone. *Leaving* is about giving one last gift to someone you love—the gift of freedom. Leaving is about equipping someone to go where you've already gone but also encouraging them to go where you haven't gotten to yet.

Model, assist, watch, and leave. The Training Cycle. From one to many. From a mission to a movement.



PRODUCER VS CONSUMER: COMMUNITY LIFE

Being a producer instead of a consumer applies to how we interact with one another and the world too. Typically, people feel rewarded when they take, when they receive and when they gain more than those around them. In the bible, God shows us we're rewarded not by what we get, but by what we give away.

- God says, *"I will save you, and you will be a blessing to others."*
- Jesus said, *"It is better to give than to receive."*

Giving away what God gives us and blessing others when God blesses us is the foundation for spiritual breathing. We breathe in and hear from God. We breathe out and obey what we hear and share it with others. When we are faithful to obey and share what the Lord has shared with us, then he promises to share even more with us.

- Jesus said, *"Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much."*

This is the pathway to deeper insights, greater intimacy and living the abundant life God created us to live. This is the way we can walk in the good works God has already planned for us to do. If we want to be rewarded with God's greatest rewards, then we must practice the two things that he promises to bless.

- We must obey and share, do and teach and practice and pass on everything that God tells us to do.
- If we want others to receive God's greatest rewards, then we must show them how to do the same thing, too.

This is a major part of being a follower of Jesus and a major part of helping others follow him too.

- We are always both followers and leaders.
- Learners and teachers.
- We are blessed and we are a blessing.

God doesn't want us to wait until we know everything before we start obeying and sharing. That day will never come. God doesn't expect us to be fully mature before we start



multiplying. God wants us to obey what we already know and to share what we've already heard. And then He wants us to teach others to do the same. This is obeying and sharing what He's already told us to do. This is the path to maturity and growth.

PRODUCER VS CONSUMER: COMMUNITY GROWTH

We need to break the habit of thinking in a linear pattern as a way of accelerating kingdom growth. The Next Steps idea of discipleship is based on assumptions that can no longer be made in America. To become a more mature follower of Jesus and to make and grow followers of Jesus who can help other follow him too, we must keep in mind that multiple things can happen at the same time and there is not always a certain order in which they need to happen. When people think about disciples multiplying, they often think of it as a step-by-step process: First prayer. Then preparation. Then sharing God's good news. Then building disciples. Then building churches. Then developing leaders. Then reproduction. When we learn this way, kingdom growth seems to be an easy-to-follow, linear and sequential process. One problem is that it almost never works that way. A bigger problem is that's not how it often works best.

Think of a person's life: First birth. Then the first time they hear God's good news. Then when they choose to follow Jesus. After that they first share their story and God's story, and they begin to multiply. And here's where this life ends. From first hearing about Jesus to first sharing about Jesus is what we could consider a spiritual generation. This is how discipleship is usually taught.

But when we use a non-linear pattern, things can happen much faster. Maybe a new disciple starts multiplying immediately. The spiritual generation shortens. Someone hears God's good news sooner. God's family grows more quickly. Or maybe some people are open to gathering a group and sharing what they learn from God's word or from others with friends and family before they ever say yes to Jesus. Sometimes a group may be unable or not ready to hear God's good news immediately. But this group can still learn God's patterns - through efforts like community development or leadership training. This group can begin multiplying God's patterns—learning—obeying—sharing—and teaching others to do the same even before they first hear about Jesus. When this happens, God's ways are imprinted into willing hearts. His patterns are woven into a community and individual lives. Then when God has prepared his way—God's good news can reveal the truth they've



been receiving all along. This is the way an institution, a community, or even a country can come to follow Jesus. Now discipleship is a path to Jesus not just something we share after salvation.

No matter what process, the biggest question is always the same—who is the good soil that will be faithful? Who will learn and practice and share God’s ways? Uncovering this good soil, discovering these good hearts, is worth all our time and energy and effort. These are the ones we pour out our hearts to. These are the ones we pour out our lives for. These are the ones who grow God’s kingdom best. For this reason, as discussed earlier in this section, none of this can happen covertly. You can’t know if the soil is good unless the passion for Jesus and his ways are uncovered in the relationship first.

PRODUCER VS CONSUMER: URGENCY

God’s Word tells us that God is patient with us, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to turn around and follow him. God gives us more time because He knows we only have a short time to do all He’s called us to do and to reach all He’s called us to reach.

The global church—all followers of Jesus, together—is larger than it’s ever been. The global church—all followers of Jesus, together—is a larger portion of the world’s population than ever before. But even with those large numbers—the global church is not growing faster than the global population. That means that while there are more of us who follow Jesus than ever before, there are even more who are not following Jesus and will spend their eternity separated from him, more than there have ever been before.

Making disciples who multiply matters.



PRODUCER VS CONSUMER: TWO CHURCHES (MULTIPLICATION)

By way of a reminder: the Bible talks about God's family as a church in three forms:

- **The universal church**—the gathering of all the believers who were, who are and who will be.
- **The regional or city church**—the gathering of all the believers in a city or a part of a country.
- **The simple church**—the gathering of believers who meet in a small group like in a building or a home.

Followers of Jesus can be a part of two (2) churches to accelerate growth and help turn a faithful spiritual family into a growing city-wide body of believers. God's perfect plan is that we learn to live as a spiritual family.

- This smallest group, this elemental church, is the spiritual family that lives life together and it works best when that family can meet and work together for months or years at a time.
- At the same time, Jesus instructed his followers that they should be continuously starting new spiritual families, growing them to be more like Jesus, and helping them learn how to start new spiritual families, too.

So how do these two things come together—how can we be a part of a church and be in the process of starting new churches, all at the same time? Imagine a basic church, just four families. All the couples are a part of one church. This is their ongoing spiritual family. This is who they do life with, the brothers and sisters who encourage them in love and good works. But these same couples are also each working to start a new spiritual family. They're not participating in the same way they do with their own small group family, but they are helping to model and assist as a new spiritual family gets started and grows.

Imagine this—just one church starting four new churches at the exact same time. This is how fast God can grow his family. This is how the church can increase its pace.



So, what happens with the original church and the four churches that they've started? After helping them launch by modeling and assisting, these couples, the original church, have already helped these new churches begin modeling and assisting, as well. For these four new churches, our couples are now in the watch phase - keeping an eye on the progress of these new churches and coaching as they model and assist new churches they help start on their own. Most people will not be able to model and assist for more than one other spiritual family at a time. But they can watch over and coach multiple churches and help them connect with peer mentors as they grow.

That means one single spiritual family, one small group church, can be part of launching many other small group churches at the same time. That's a lot of fruit.

So, what happens to all these churches as they grow and start new churches that start new churches that start new churches? How do they stay connected? How do they live life as an extended spiritual family? The answer is that all these simple churches are just like the cells in a growing body, and they connect and network into a city or regional church. The churches are related. They share the same spiritual DNA. They are all connected out of the same first multiplying family. And now—with some guidance—they come together as a larger body to do even more.

PRODUCER VS CONSUMER: LEADERSHIP IN NETWORKS

At the city and regional level, God's Word shows that the growing body of believers is served by a new group of leaders. In the New Testament, the church calls these servants Elders and Deacons, Shepherds and Overseers of the flock.

- We learn in God's Word that the multitude of small home churches in the city of Jerusalem, were served by a group of 7 servants—or deacons.
- We learn in God's Word that the multitude of home churches in the city of Ephesus were served by a small group of Elders—shepherds who were to follow the model of the Good Shepherd Jesus and lay down their lives for their flock.

In the city or region, we also see a group of five leadership gifts given. God's Word says—Christ Himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up. These spiritual gifts are given not so a small group can do all the work of the church but so



they could serve and prepare the followers of Jesus to do the work—so the whole body of believers could work together to accomplish all God has in his heart to do. In addition to or in place of meeting with their own spiritual family, these leaders meet and pray and fellowship and encourage one another in much the same way that any simple church in a home would.

- The 3/3rds pattern is used in leadership training meetings and peer mentoring.
- The Four Fields pattern is used for planning, evaluation and coaching at higher levels just as it is at the local level.
- When the leaders meet they share what is happening not only as individuals but also across their network. They represent the families and share about the well-being of the ones they serve.

A good place for a network of spiritual families to center is the place where that network starts. A church network that launches from Tampa will start as a city church in Tampa. As they grow and serve throughout the state, they will act on behalf of the network in Florida. As they send and serve around the country and around the world, they begin to function at a national or even international level. Jesus said—*“If you’re faithful in little things, you will be faithful in large ones.”*

These networks of churches remain connected because of their common spiritual DNA and shared beginnings. Sometimes the networks split off into multiple networks based on language, opportunities to meet or other reasons. This is part of growth and not a problem. The willingness of simple churches and individual followers to learn, obey and share God’s Word is the spiritual DNA of a movement. If it is passed on successfully from generation to generation, from church to church and from believer to believer then everything needed to begin a new movement of multiplying disciples is already present in every spiritual family and in every follower of Jesus. When movements launch movements, that’s when we start to see the “leaven” working through the dough of a city or a state or even a nation. That is how the Kingdom of God comes in such a way that God’s will is being done on earth as it is in heaven. That is how we can finish the Great Commission by making disciples of all nations.



TEACHING: BAPTISM

A discipleship context is crucial to understanding baptism. The disciples would have understood Jesus and the early apostles to be speaking of literal water and would have likely viewed baptism through the lens of Jewish history. Think about how many important events in Jewish history involve water. The Exodus story is generally considered the most important identity moment in all Jewish history. In it, God's people are enslaved. God's people cross through the water (Red Sea). After they cross, they get the Torah and the outline of a new life of freedom leading to the Promised Land.

Paul seems to talk about baptism in this same way in Romans:

- **Romans 4:** Abraham is promised the world
- **Romans 5:** Paul stands back and sums up the Adam/Christ story that leads to our condition
- **Romans 6:** Enslavement but the ability to come through the water that puts you on the path of freedom. You are dead to sin and alive to Christ
- **Romans 7:** You arrive at Mt. Sinai and are given the law (new way to use it)
- **Romans 8:** You are journeying, led by the Spirit, on the way home to your inheritance.

Of course, baptism needs to be placed within a discipleship context because it is a way of following Jesus, a way to identify with him.

- He was baptized himself and he told us to do it too. Jesus said, *“Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”*
- Baptism, or *Baptizo*, in the original Greek language, means a drenching or submerging, like when you dye a cloth, and it soaks in the color and comes out transformed. Baptism is a picture of our new life, soaked in the image of Jesus, transformed in obedience to God.
- It helps us identify with Jesus by showing our death to sin, just as Jesus died for our sins.
- It helps us identify with Jesus by allowing us to perform a burial of our old way of life, just as Jesus was buried.



- It helps us identify with Jesus by picturing our rebirth to a new life in Christ, just as Jesus was resurrected and lives today.
- It is an act of repentance as done by John the Baptist.
- It isn't metaphorical. The Bible's baptism language is very realistic.

Baptism is not some mysterious bit of sympathetic magic but the exodus movement when you leave behind the world of slavery to sin. It is a moment of appeal that can be pointed back to encourage baptized Christians to live up to their baptism. In 1 Corinthians 10 Paul is saying, Don't you realize what happened to you in baptism—all those people left Egypt under Moses and those people didn't have a clue what is going on so watch out—but if you are baptized then you are part of the company that is journeying on to the new creation—to the new world—therefore put to death all that is earthly in you, reckon that you are in fact dead to sin and alive to God. Baptism is an acknowledgement of status—prepositionally, “*I am in Christ.*” Christ died to sin, therefore, even though sin comes and whispers in my ear and lure me, I can turn around and say get lost, I don't belong to you, I am not a slave to you anymore I am a new creation. For Paul it is a complete change of identity. In the west where we have had the influence of infant baptism it is very hard to talk about baptism with the same meaning that it has in Pakistan today. If someone gets baptized, everyone knows what is going on, you are leaving this community, you are joining this community, it really is a death to that whole identity and the structure and the networks and institutions and it's a coming alive to the new one.

TEACHING: COMMUNITY & COVENANT

The spouse of Christ cannot be adulterous; she is uncorrupted and pure. She knows one home; she guards with chaste modesty the sanctity of one couch. She keeps us for God. She appoints the sons whom she has born for the kingdom. Whoever is separated from the Church and is joined to an adulteress, is separated from the promises of the Church; nor can he who forsakes the Church of Christ attain to the rewards of Christ. He is a stranger; he is



*profane; he is an enemy. He can no longer have God for his Father,
who has not the Church for his mother.*

—Cyprian, *Treatise on the Unity*

The main reason that we need to have church membership is because of holiness. God demands a pursuit of holiness from his church. In 1 Corinthians 5:1-12 Paul confronts the church in Corinth for approving of a man walking in blatant, unrepentant sexual immorality. The Corinthians are celebrating this as God’s grace, but Paul warns them that this type of wickedness shouldn’t make them boast, but rather mourn. He calls them arrogant and tells them to remove this man for the destruction of his flesh and the hopeful salvation of his soul. In verses 11-12, he pulls no punches: *“But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler—not even to eat with such a one. For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge?”* Very few churches still practice church discipline. But clearly church discipline is biblical. How can Paul encourage someone to be kicked out if there isn’t an in? If there is no local commitment to a covenant community of faith, then how do you remove someone from that community of faith? Church discipline won’t work if local church membership doesn’t exist.

Church membership occurs through covenant. It doesn’t have to be a formal thing, but it does have to be mutually accepted. Entering covenant with a local body of believers is a serious commitment. If you would enter into the Norfolk TGC Covenant, please make sure that you read this entire document. The covenant here is to do the things described within it. A summary of some of those things and some more plainly stated admonishments are listed below.

THE MAIN REASON THAT WE NEED TO
HAVE CHURCH MEMBERSHIP IS BECAUSE
OF HOLINESS. GOD DEMANDS A PURSUIT
OF HOLINESS FROM HIS CHURCH.



Making Disciples

Relational Stewardship

Have you ever thought of your relationships as something you have a responsibility for? In the same way that you are responsible for stewarding your money and time, you are also responsible for how you steward the relationships with people that God brings into your life. Making and keeping a list of the people in your life is a simple way to help you be more responsible for your relationships. God has already given us the relationships we need to go and make disciples. These are our family, friends, neighbors, co-workers, and classmates—people we’ve known all our lives or maybe just met.

Being good stewards of the people God has already put in our lives is a great first step in multiplying disciples. And it can start with the simple step of making a list. Take the time to make one list of every person that you know how to contact, and you have an ongoing or long-term connection with. Next to each name note whether that person is a *disciple*—someone you believe is already a follower of Jesus, *unbeliever*—someone you believe is not a follower of Jesus, or *unknown*. Every week, read over your list of people and look for relationships that God may be working in. Pray for anyone that comes to mind.

One person that God may direct you to is called A Person of Peace—someone who can help rapidly reproduce disciples even in places where followers of Jesus are few and far between. When Jesus sent out His disciples to new territory to make disciples, He gave them a simple but strategic command. He said, “*carry no money belt, no bag, no shoes; greet no one on the way. Whatever house you enter, first say, ‘Peace be to this house.’ If a man of peace is there, your peace will rest on him; but if not, it will return to you. Stay in that same house, eating and drinking what they give you; for the laborer is worthy of his wages. Do not keep moving from house to house.*”

How can these instructions help us today? When we think of making disciples as a church, our first thought might be, we better get our finances in order, pick an obvious target, and have a clear plan of action. Some church traditions focus on the need to fulfill the command with unrestricted urgency. If Jesus said, “*Go,*” we better go and keep on going! Tell Everyone! Everywhere!! All the time!!! But Jesus, in His instructions, seemed a lot less worried about finances and fervor, and a lot more concerned about focus. Jesus wanted His disciples looking for, and investing in, a Person of Peace.



When you want to make disciples in a place where not many—or maybe even none—exist, then looking for a Person of Peace might be the most important thing you do. A Person of Peace is:

- Someone who is *open* to hearing Your Story, God’s Story and the Good News of Jesus.
- Someone who is *hospitable* and *welcomes* you into their home or their workplace or to join events with family and friends.
- Someone who *knows others (or is known by others)* and who is excited to draw together a small group or even a crowd.
- Someone who is *faithful* and *shares* what they learn with others—even after you’re gone.

In the Bible, we learn of Jesus and His followers meeting Persons of Peace in unexpected ways.

- In the region of the Gadarenes, Jesus met a demon-possessed man who lived isolated and in chains. We would never think of Him as a Person of Peace, but He was **open** to hear from Jesus. He was **hospitable** and **welcomed** Jesus to where He lived. He was **well known** and could easily draw a crowd - even if only for his outrageous behavior. And Jesus found that he was **faithful** and **shared** what Jesus meant to him with his family, his community, and his whole country. In fact, when Jesus came back to that area, a great crowd gathered, excited to see the Man they had heard so much about.
- In Samaria, Jesus met a woman at a well. She was **open** to Jesus, willing to be **hospitable** and answer His request for a drink. We learn she had five husbands and was living with still another man, and so in a small town, she was sure to be **known by others**. And after Jesus spoke to her, she was **faithful** and **shared**—so much and so quickly that the entire town asked Jesus to stay and share with them, too. And He did.



So, if a Person of Peace can live almost anywhere, do almost anything, and be almost anyone we know or meet—how do we find one? Here are three simple ways:

- ***We ask for recommendations from people in the community***—Who’s someone that’s trusted here? Is there someone in this place who thinks of others before themselves? If we hear the same name again and again - we try to meet them, share spiritual ideas, and see if they’re open to hear and share.
- ***We offer to pray for someone*** while Prayer Walking, or at work, or at the game—wherever there’s an opportunity—and then turn that prayer into a spiritual conversation.
- ***We introduce spiritual ideas into conversations*** to see if God is working in a person’s life. If they are open and willing, then we ask if they would be willing to gather a group to discuss even more.

Ask for recommendations, **offer** to pray, **introduce** spiritual ideas. These are all ways we can begin the process of finding a Person of Peace. And no matter how we find them, remember Jesus said a Person of Peace is someone we should be spending most of our disciple-making time with.

It’s easy to think that the fairest use of our time is to give away a little bit of ourselves to everyone, equally. But Jesus said—and showed—that He doesn’t want us to be shallow with everyone but to give deeply to a few. Jesus often attracted crowds, but the Bible tells us again and again that Jesus would draw away from those crowds to spend most of His time with just twelve of His closest followers. There were several times, where Jesus would invest even more time with a smaller group of just three. If Jesus, who had much more power, much more energy, much more authority, discipline, wisdom, knowledge, understanding, and compassion chose to spend His time investing deeply in just a few and told His own disciples to do the same, doesn’t it make sense that we should follow and share His perfect pattern?

A Person of Peace—they’re not easy to find—maybe one in a thousand. But like a hidden treasure that’s worth the search, their value in growing God’s family can’t be measured.



Making Disciples Sharing Your Testimony

MAKING DISCIPLES



Making Disciples:

Sharing Your Testimony

TRANSFORMATION INTO THE NEW WORLD BY SHARING YOUR PERSONAL TESTIMONY:

Jesus told His followers, “*You are witnesses of these things.*” As followers of Jesus, we are “witnesses”, too—“testifying” about the impact Jesus has had on our lives. Your story of your relationship with God is called your testimony. Everybody has a story. This is a chance to practice yours.

You should be able to share a short version of your story in about three minutes. There are endless ways to shape your story, but here are some ways that we’ve seen work well with others:

- You can share a simple statement about why you chose to follow Jesus. This works well for a brand-new believer.
- You can share your “before” and “after” story—what your life was like before (Old World) you knew Jesus and what your life your life is like now (New World). Simple and powerful.
- You can share your “with” and “without” story—what your life is like “with Jesus” and what it would be like “without Him.” This version of your story works well if you came to faith at a young age.

When you finish sharing, let your practice partner take their turn. Keep going back and forth until you’ve both finished your five.

Want to make an even greater impact? When sharing your story, it’s helpful to think of it as part of a three-part process:

- **Their story**—Ask the person you are talking with to share about their spiritual journey.
- **Your story**—Then share your testimony shaped around their experience.
- **God’s story**—Finally share God’s story in a way that connects with their worldview, values, and priorities.

And if you’re worried about how to get started - keep it simple. Just share a statement of why you decided to follow Jesus. God can use your story to change lives but remember—you’re the one who gets to tell it.



Making Disciples Sharing The Gospel

Making Disciples: Sharing The Gospel

HOW TO TELL THE GOSPEL TO SOMEONE HEARING IT FOR THE FIRST TIME:

- The Story of God
- God's Story
- Theo-drama
- There is great power in telling story
- Should be a simple narrative at first
- Proclamation not articulation
- God's Story: Creation to Judgement Style

In the beginning, God made the whole world and everything in it. He created the **first man** and the **first woman**. He placed them in a beautiful garden. He made them **part of His family** and had a **close relationship** with them. He created them to **live forever**. There was no such thing as death.

Even in this perfect place, man rebelled against God and brought **sin and suffering** into the world. God **banished** man from the garden. The relationship between man and God was **broken**. Now man would have to face **death**.

Over many hundreds of years, God kept sending **messengers** into the world. They reminded man of his sin but also told him of God's **faithfulness** and **promise** to send a **Savior** into the world. The Savior would **restore** the close relationship between God and Man. The Savior would **rescue** man from death. The Savior would give **eternal life** and be with man forever.

God loves us so much that when the time was right, He sent His Son into the world to be that Savior. Jesus was God's Son. He was born into the world through a virgin. He lived a perfect life. He never sinned. Jesus taught people about God. He performed many miracles showing His great power. He cast out many demons. He healed many people. He made the blind see. He made the deaf hear. He made the lame walk. Jesus even raised the dead. Many religious leaders were **threatened** and **jealous** of Jesus. They wanted Him killed. Since He never sinned, Jesus did not have to die. But He **chose** to die as a **sacrifice** for all of us. His



painful death covered up the sins of mankind. After this, Jesus was buried in a tomb.

God saw the **sacrifice** Jesus made and accepted it. God showed His acceptance by raising Jesus from the dead on the third day. God said that if we **believe** and **receive** Jesus' sacrifice for our sins—If we **turn away** from our sins and **follow** Jesus, God **cleanses us** from all sin and **welcomes** us back into His family. God sends the **Holy Spirit** to live inside us and make us able to follow Jesus.

We are **baptized** in water to show and seal this restored relationship. As a symbol of death, we are buried beneath the water. As a symbol of new life we are raised out of the water to follow Jesus. When Jesus rose from the dead, He spent 40 days on earth. Jesus taught His followers to go everywhere and tell the good news of His salvation to everyone around the world.

*Jesus said—“Go and **make disciples** of all nations, **baptizing** them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit; and **teaching** them to obey all I have commanded. I will be with you always—even to the end of this age.”*

Jesus was then **taken up** before their eyes into heaven. One day, Jesus will **come again** in the same way He left. He will **punish forever** those who did not love and obey Him. He will **receive** and **reward forever** those who did love and obey Him. We will **live forever** with Him in a New Heaven and on a New Earth. I **believed** and **received** the sacrifice Jesus made for my sins. He has made me clean and restored me as part of God's family. He loves me, and I love Him and will live with Him forever in His kingdom. God loves you and wants you to receive this gift, as well. Would you like to do that right now?



Making Disciples Meeting Together



Making Disciples: Meeting Together

When we meet with the spiritual intent, we typically meet in what we call a Three-Thirds Group. A **Three-Thirds Group** is a method of meeting that helps followers of Jesus help one another follow Jesus more closely by dividing their time together into 3 equal parts, so that they can practice obeying some of the most important things that Jesus commands.

This is how it works:

- **Look Back (1/3)**

The first third of the group's time is spent looking back at what's happened since we've been together.

- **Look Up (2/3)**

The middle third of the group's time is spent Looking Up for God's wisdom and direction through scripture, discussion, and prayer.

- **Look Forward (3/3)**

The final third of the group's time is spent Looking Forward to how we can each apply and obey what we've learned.

This type of group can be led by anyone who is taught how to lead in the covenant community. You don't have to be a pastor or elder. The main job of the leader is to facilitate the group and walk everyone through each step in a timely matter. Sometimes in a group, one person might be the one who ends up talking most of the time. Don't let this happen. Everyone in the group has value, so make sure everyone gets a chance to share. If others aren't getting a chance to speak, gently remind whoever's talking the most that each person should be heard.





LOOKING BACK | 20 MINUTES TOTAL

We'll spend the first third of our time looking back by caring for each other through giving thanks, sharing our struggles, and praying for other members of our group. We'll also check in to see if each person in the group has had the opportunity to obey and share what they learned the last time we were together.

STEP ONE | GIVING THANKS.

Take some time to have each person share something they are thankful for.

STEP TWO | SHARING YOUR STRUGGLES & PRAYING FOR ONE ANOTHER.

Now have each person in your group briefly share something they are struggling with. Have someone else pray for them about what they share.

STEP THREE | CHECKING IN.

This is the part that some groups want to skip, because it means asking questions that can sometimes be hard. Please don't skip.

Jesus loved his followers enough to ask hard questions. If we want to be like Jesus, we should love one another enough to do that, too.

In this step, you'll have each person in the group report on whether they obeyed what they heard God ask them to do the last time you were together. Part of loving God is to obey what He tells us. Part of loving one another means helping someone obey what they hear from God. Love means taking someone's commitments seriously—and showing them love graciously - all at the same time.

In this session everyone in attendance should answer these questions:

- How have you obeyed what you learned last time we met?
- Who have you trained in what you've learned?
- Which spiritual disciplines were a part of your life since we last met?
- Which spiritual disciplines were not a part of your life since we last met?





LOOKING UP | 20 MINUTES TOTAL

During the middle third of our time together, we invite God's Holy Spirit to lead our group to better understand God's Word. We'll read a passage from the Bible out loud and then ask and answer some simple questions as a group to help explore and understand better God's purposes and plans

STEP ONE | INVITE GOD'S HOLY SPIRIT TO LEAD

Take a moment to pray. Talk with God simply and briefly. Ask his Holy Spirit to teach you from the passage you are about to read.

STEP TWO | READ GOD'S WORD

The leader for that meeting should read from the Bible or have someone in the group read from the Bible. Passages and outlines are provided through the Multiply Preaching Series Documents.

STEP THREE | ADD CONTEXT TO GOD'S WORD & ASK QUESTIONS

When you've finished reading, the leader should take some time recapping where we are in the teaching series and remind everyone of the context in which the passage is discussed. The flow of each Look Up Time should encourage good hermeneutics. A helpful process is to first ask, what does this passage say? Then ask What does it mean and only finally ask, what does it mean to me?

After the group is reminded of the context the group should answer these two questions at a minimum:

- What did you like about this passage?
- What did you find challenging or hard to understand?
- What can we learn about people from this passage?
- What can we learn about God from this passage?

Remember stick to the passage and keep it simple! When you're studying God's Word in a meeting, try to focus everyone on his words instead of other books, teachers, or opinions. Instead of asking, "What do you think this means?" ask "What does this passage say?" Again, if someone in your group likes to dominate the conversation, gently remind them that God's Holy Spirit and perfect Word is working through everyone in the group, and





we want to hear from all of them if possible. We're all here to learn, together. And don't be afraid of silence or a pause in the discussion. Stay focused on his Word, stick to the passage, and trust God to do the rest.

LOOKING FORWARD | 20 MINUTES TOTAL

In the last third of our time, we'll focus on looking forward to discover how we can obey and train others by what we've learned from God's word. Each member of the group asks God a few simple questions and then waits for his answer in prayer. Then we share and practice our commitments and pray to end our time, together.

STEP ONE | PRAYING FOR GOD'S PURPOSE

Have each person in your group pray silently and ask God these questions:

- God, how can I obey and apply what You're teaching me?
- Who can I train from this passage so they can learn to obey and love You more?
- Who would you have me share my testimony or Your Good News of Jesus with?
- What disciplines do I need to commit time to this week to become more like you?

Ask God's Holy Spirit to give you specific answers, specific names, and specific steps that you can take in the time between now and when your group meets again.

STEP TWO | GATHERING COMMITMENTS

Ask each person in your group to share what they heard from the Lord for each question. Someone may not have heard anything from the Lord on one, two, or even all four questions. They can simply report that they didn't hear. But remember, the group should hear from the Lord. Jesus said—*"My sheep hear My voice."* And the more specific your obedience steps are, the easier it will be to obey them before we meet again.

STEP THREE | COMPLETING OUR TIME TOGETHER

End the meeting time by administering the Lord's Supper and then singing a song together. Instructions for leading the Lord's Supper and a short hymnal are attached to this guidebook. Say a prayer to end the structured time together that focuses on God's grace for what we didn't do coming into our meeting together as well as the power of his grace experienced today in many ways and its ability to fuel us on to adapt more disciplines that make us more like Jesus.



Making Disciples Baptism



Making Disciples:

Baptism

If you have never baptized someone before, it may seem intimidating, but it shouldn't be. Any follower of Jesus can perform a baptism.

Here are some simple steps:

- Find some standing water, deep enough to allow the new disciple to be submerged. This can be a pond, river, lake, or ocean. It could be a bathtub or another way to gather water.
- Let the disciple hold one of your hands with theirs and support their back with the other.
- Ask two questions like these to make sure they understand their decision.

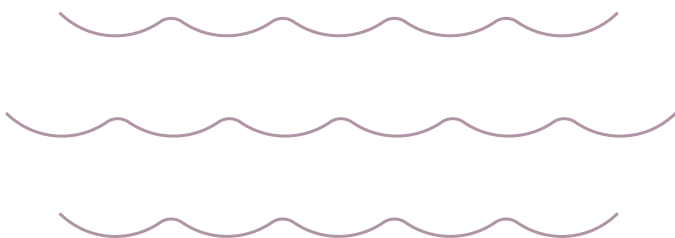
Is Jesus Christ your Lord and Savior? Will you obey and serve Him as your King for the rest of your life?

- If they answer Yes, to both, then say something like this:

Because you've professed your faith in the Lord Jesus, I now baptize you in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

- Help them lower into the water, submerge completely and raise them back up.

Congratulations! You've baptized a new follower of Jesus, a new citizen of heaven, a new child of the Living God. It's time to celebrate!



Making Disciples Lord's Suppper



Making Disciples: Lord's Supper

Jesus said, "I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats this bread will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."

Holy Communion or The Lord's Supper is a way to celebrate our intimate connection and ongoing relationship with Jesus.

Here's a simple way to celebrate:

- When you gather as followers of Jesus, spend time in quiet meditation, silently considering and confessing your sins.
- When you are ready, have someone read 1 Corinthians 11:23-24:

For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me.

- Pass out bread you have set aside for your group and eat.
- Continue the reading with 1 Corinthians 11:25:

In the same way, He took the cup also after supper, saying, this cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.

- Share the juice or wine you have set aside for your group, and drink.
- Finish the reading with 1 Corinthians 11:26:

For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes.

- Celebrate in prayer or singing. You have shared in The Lord's Supper. You are His, and He is yours!



Making Disciples Covenant



Making Disciples: Covenant

PREAMBLE

In accordance with God's use of covenants to unconditionally assure a place for His people in which He would be their center, we at The Grace Collective hereby form a covenant to help guide us to a God-centered work environment. To this end, we hereby agree to a standard of expectations for how we treat and love one another; how we learn, grow, and accomplish the Kingdom work to which we've been called; and, how we honor God and keep Him at the center of all we do.

BASIC ASSUMPTIONS

For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do (Ephesians 2:10).

This covenant is based on the assumptions that each one of us is a child of God; that we are equal in God's eyes; that our relationship with one another is superseded only by our relationship with God; and, that each one of us needs accountability, encouragement, affirmation, and prayer.

LIFE TOGETHER

How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity (Psalm 133:1)!

It is our objective that this covenant expresses our mutual desires:

- to see and be seen as God's children, each blessed with God-given gifts.
- to be honest, transparent, and respectful of one another, even as we do our part to earn the respect of one another.
- to rid our environment of fear, gossip, offense, disrespect, and public criticism.
- to foster an environment of love, peace, joy, fairness, and harmony.
- to prayerfully love, honor, respect, value and encourage each and every member, recognizing each person's God-given gifts, seeing each person as a member of God's family.



- to treat each person in the affirmation of their calling, recognizing the good, and extending grace in shortcomings.
- to place others above myself, trusting each person, being honest with each person, being quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to wrath and not easily offended.
- where there are differences and hurt, to forgive, keeping no record of wrongdoing, walking in the light of transparency, and asking for forgiveness for my own failures. Where differences call for action or interaction, to confront my fellow members privately and in love.
- to love God and each member with a servant's heart, being a living example of Christ's love and grace, doing what I can to contribute to the creation of a community of peace and joy.
- to walk in brokenness before God in His work and in my relationships with others.
- to take ownership of my role and responsibilities in the community, acknowledging that what I do and do not do affects the other members.
- to live together in unity.

SCRIPTURAL REFERENCES

- A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. JOHN 13:34
- By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another. JOHN 13:35
- Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. ROMANS 12:10
- Finally, brothers and sisters, rejoice! Strive for full restoration, encourage one another, be of one mind, live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you. 2 CORINTHIANS 13:11
- 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



- Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. EPHESIANS 4:2
- And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. HEBREWS 10:24
- Finally, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, and be compassionate and humble. 1 PETER 3:8
- And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us. 1 JOHN 3:23
- Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. 1 JOHN 4:7
- Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. 1 JOHN 4:11
- 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

FINALLY, BROTHERS AND SISTERS,
 REJOICE! STRIVE FOR FULL RESTORATION,
 ENCOURAGE ONE ANOTHER, BE OF ONE
 MIND, LIVE IN PEACE. AND THE GOD OF LOVE
 AND PEACE WILL BE WITH YOU.



