

A GUIDE FOR 1-1 DISCIPLESIP



DISCIPLESHIP PATHWAY

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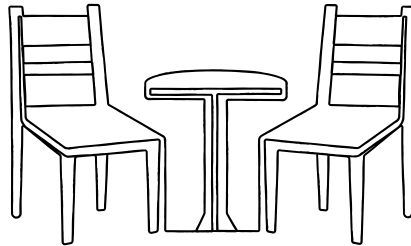
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Throughout this guide, you'll find highlighted links for tablet users and QR codes to scan with your smart phone's camera.

Find the complete pathway, as well as many more resources, at [www.discipleship.guide](#).

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INTRODUCTION

An introduction to the Discipleship Pathway.

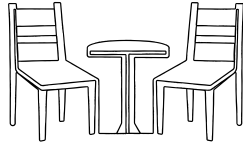


*Scan the code or follow the link below
to listen to a welcome message from
Phil and Megan.*

Find extra resources and audio
versions of the text read by the
authors at

discipleship.guide/welcome.

Welcome.



Discipleship is training in the Way of Jesus. Perhaps the best English word for discipleship is the word apprenticeship, because that's what a disciple is: an apprentice of Jesus. It's where we learn from Jesus how to do things the way Jesus does them. The call to make disciples is a call to walk with Jesus, become just like him, and bring more people into that way of life.

You don't have to read too far into the Bible to discover some of our enemy's primary tactics. In Genesis 3, the serpent has a two-pronged attack. First, he attacks our ideas. He says "Did God really say?..." to Eve. This is all about getting us to question what is true. If the accuser can change our ideas, our worldview, he is winning.

Second, he attacks our desires. He shows Eve the fruit, and it says it was good for eating and pleasing to the eye. If he can get us to want the wrong things, there's really nothing that will stop us from doing the wrong things. Humans are absolutely brilliant when it comes to rationalizing the things we want. So in just the third chapter of the Bible, we've learned our enemy's pattern: he attacks our ideas and our desires. He wants your truth, and he wants your heart.

In his book, *Live No Lies*, John Mark Comer summarizes the enemy's strategy well, "Deceptive ideas that play to disordered desires that are normalized in a sinful society."

There it is: the enemy attacks our ideas, our desires, and wants these things normalized in society. I have no doubt that when Paul wrote Romans 12:1-2, he was writing with something like this in mind. He knew that there are deceptive ideas and disordered desires that have become normalized in society, and he says to the Romans, "don't conform to that, but be transformed instead."

We modern people generally think too highly of our own rational powers. We think that we independently decide to do things, be things, become

things; that we are the masters of our destinies. But the Ancients understood that we are shaped just as much as we shape ourselves. In other words, there is something that is trying to form you.

When you think about it, the notion that we choose for ourselves who we are would be just the kind of idea the enemy would want us to have. C.S. Lewis' famous demon Screwtape said, "Our policy, at the moment, is to conceal ourselves." The less we realize that we are being conformed, the happier Screwtape will be.

It's clear that if we are going to be transformed, it will be done by a power other than ourselves. We don't transform ourselves any more than we save ourselves. This is the work of God in our lives. We partner with God in this transformation. But it is ultimately a work of God alone.

When we talk about discipleship, it isn't enough to talk about spiritual growth or spiritual formation. When we think of discipleship, we must think of *counterformation*. There is something actively trying to get us, and we must actively counter it. Discipleship is not just formation, it is counterformation in the way of Jesus. If you do not have practices and habits in your life to help you actively counter the formational pull of this age, you are losing the battle. There is no such thing as "neutral." We are going one direction or the other. We must know what is shaping us and deliberately choose who to follow.

Thankfully, for 2000 years the church has had practices that we know will effectively transform and renew us in the way of Jesus. When we do these things in the context of community, we create colonies of the Kingdom of God here on Earth.

Our discipleship must have teeth in it. What we need are practices and relationships that don't just counter this age, but pull us toward Christ. Things that will silence the voices we hear in the world, and amplify the voice of God. That is precisely what we've tried to do with this discipleship pathway.

Dallas Willard said that the greatest danger to the church today is that of

pitching its message too low. In other words, the danger is that we'd settle for a mediocre faith, kicked about by the whims of culture, always wondering if God really does speak and if we really can hear him.

Invite someone on this journey with you. Commit to these practices wholeheartedly. See it through. God does speak. And yes you can hear him. It must be our life's work to become people for whom it is easy to hear the voice of God and do what he says. People who can obey all Jesus has commanded. People who are being transformed, not conformed.

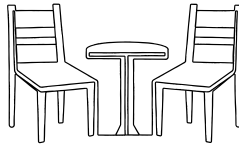
As you begin, please know we have prayed for you. It is our sincere desire to walk in the way of Jesus together.

Rev. Phil Wiseman



Listen to the full message online at tablechurchdsm.org/podcastpage/counterculturalformation.

How It Works.



You set the pace.

Welcome to the Pathway! This book is designed with a particular purpose. The journey works best when you step through the chapters in order, one practice at a time. Want to take it slow? Just do at least one practice every week. A practice is simply one section of a chapter. Can't get enough? Feel free to do more. Either way, you'll get out of it what you put in to it; so give it all you've got.

Every time you complete a practice, you'll be prompted to let your discipler know. There will be prompts to start up a conversation about what you just learned. As you communicate throughout the week, choose whatever method is best for you. Email, phone, texting, Voxer, and Marco Polo are all great options.

Meet weekly.

You'll meet in person weekly to stay connected and pray together. Feel free to meet in person or online; whatever's best. Every time you meet, you'll each answer three questions to get your conversation started.

- How has God spoken to you since we last met?
- What spiritual victories have you experienced or witnessed since we last met?
- What regrets or burdens do you carry today? How can I help you?

No doubt this will spur a lot of conversation, but also feel free to just enjoy getting to know each other and talking about life.

It's all outcome based.

The pathway is full of really useful tools, but the point isn't just to finish the work. The point is to complete the outcome. Every section has one very

specific goal. Move through the suggested opportunities and practices, and feel free to dive in to the extra resources we throw your way— just remember not to move on to a new section until you’ve completed that outcome!

The outcome is the point, because that’s when you’ll put Jesus’ teachings into practice.

Pray for your next disciple.

Right now, even before you begin, pray for the person you’ll disciple next. You don’t have to wait until you’re done with the Pathway to start.

Whether you disciple someone soon, or after you finish the Pathway, don’t forget: by the time you’ve completed this journey, you’ll be inviting someone else to do it too.



Find extra resources and complete your registration at discipleship.guide/welcome.



CHAPTER ONE: PRAYER

Establish a meaningful rhythm of prayer.



Find extra resources and audio
versions of the text at
www.discipleship.guide/prayer.

1: Prayer and the Life of Jesus

Never Too Busy to Pray

Prayer is the most fundamental practice in the life of a Jesus follower. It's like oxygen for our souls! Your life with God can only be as good as your prayer life. No matter how often you go to church, or how many Bible studies you lead, they can never make up for a lack of prayer.

So what does Jesus teach us about prayer? Plenty. To kick this chapter off, let's just look at his example in Luke 5:12–16:

“While Jesus was in one of the towns, a man came along who was covered with leprosy. When he saw Jesus, he fell with his face to the ground and begged him, “Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean.” Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. “I am willing,” he said. “Be clean!” And immediately the leprosy left him. Then Jesus ordered him, “Don't tell anyone, but go, show yourself to the priest and offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded for your cleansing, as a testimony to them.” Yet the news about him spread all the more, so that crowds of people came to hear him and to be healed of their sicknesses. But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.

Luke 5:12–16 NIV

The lesson for us here is simple: Jesus was NEVER too busy to pray. His popularity was on the rise, news was spreading about him, and people were coming in droves to see him. However, instead of giving a speech accepting his nomination to be the next King of Israel, Jesus decides to disappear. When Jesus disappears, he doesn't just excuse himself for a moment. He takes a trek into the wilderness. Imagine prayer retreats that were days long (we know at least one of them was 40 days long).

There was no amount of busyness, nothing so urgent, and nothing so spectacular that could keep Jesus from regular times of focused, meaningful prayer. His life was saturated with it.

This is the way of Jesus.

JOURNAL



On a scale of 1-10, how much does prayer fit in with your life right now?

What do you want your prayer life to be like? Describe it.

Are you there yet? If not, what's stopping you?

RESPONSE

What is one change you will make today to take your prayer life to the next level?

Message your response to your discipler before moving on.

2. Practice Prayer

Building a Prayer Habit

A great prayer life rarely comes to us naturally; a flowing prayer habit begins as a prayer experiment. No matter how you'd describe your prayer life right now, I promise, it can get even better. That's what this practice is for. One of the simplest ways to deepen our prayer life is to pray as we read the Bible. We've provided some scriptures for you as well as a helpful guide to bring some structure to an activity that can otherwise feel confusing or just tough to grasp. Over the next several days, plan time into your schedule to stop and follow these prompts.

Make space.

Remove external distractions like other people or your phone and your task list, but also internal ones—the stuff you think might be in the way, the things that keep you from hearing God's voice clearly. Perhaps you'll need to forgive someone or get forgiven. Maybe it's hard for your mind to settle down, or maybe you just need to tell God straight up that you're not sure he's listening. Whatever it is, put it out there. Know and trust that God is in the room with you (even if you don't feel it yet) and let the Holy Spirit help you to even picture Jesus sitting with you like a friend.

Interact with God's Word.

Go over the day's passage once to read it, a second time to know it, and a third time—more slowly this time—to let it sink in.

Start a conversation.

You'll see there are some prompts provided. Complete them in a new way each day. Don't just fill in the blanks like you're taking a test. Talk to God as you write. He hears your prayers whether you write them out or not. The action of writing it down is for you, not for him. Work through this daily practice slowly. Even if you really take your time, this may only take 15 minutes. It's worth it. Remember, this is an experiment with God, so it's ok if it feels a little strange—you're just trying things out. As you write, sit and listen. When you think you might be hearing God's voice, respond. Journal through the experience as you go.

JOURNAL



Day 1: Psalm 8

____ / ____ / _____

God, you're good because...

Today this feels heavy. I need to hand it over...

Thank you for...

I'm asking for...

Jesus, what do I need to hear from you?...

Day 2: 1 John 1: 5-10

____ / ____ / _____

God, you're good because...

Today this feels heavy. I need to hand it over...

Thank you for...

I'm asking for...

Jesus, what do I need to hear from you?...

Day 3: John 17: 20-26

____ / ____ / _____

God, you're good because...

Today this feels heavy. I need to hand it over...

Thank you for...

I'm asking for...

Jesus, what do I need to hear from you?...

JOURNAL



Day 4: Col. 3:12-17

___ / ___ /

God, you're good because...

Today this feels heavy. I need to hand it over...

Thank you for...

I'm asking for...

Jesus, what do I need to hear from you?...

Day 5: Eph. 6: 10-18

___ / ___ /

God, you're good because...

Today this feels heavy. I need to hand it over...

Thank you for...

I'm asking for...

Jesus, what do I need to hear from you?...

RESPONSE

Complete the practice for each Scripture prompt.
What is God speaking to you this week?

Message your response to your discipler before moving on.

2. Voice

A Conversational Relationship with God

In his book, *Hearing God*, Dallas Willard shares a story from his early days in ministry. During Sunday dinner, his family discussed the morning's sermon. The pastor laid out all the ways God had spoken to him and given him a new vision for the church. Dallas remembers his wife's grandmother, Mema, sitting deep in thought before quietly saying, "I wonder why God never speaks to me like that."

He recalled, "This simple comment, which came like a bolt out of the blue from the heart of this woman of unshakable faith and complete devotion, forever changed my attitude toward glib talk about God's speaking to us... Mema, in fact, had a richly interactive life with God, as we all knew. But for whatever reasons, she had not been able to relate her experience of God's presence in her life...to the idea of God's speaking with her. This left her at a loss for how to deal with the conversational side of her friendship with God."

Have you ever wondered if God speaks to you? We want to hear from God but it all seems so mysterious. And many of us believe we're not one of those people who "hears from God." You may have heard Christians say that they've "heard God's voice", but what does that actually look like in real life? Is it audible? Is it obvious? Is it something I think or feel? If I've heard from God and then talk about it, what will people think?

The truth is, God does speak to us. This is central to our faith. You might have heard prayer explained as "talking to God," but prayer is meant to be a conversation with God. Prayer isn't just talking to God, it's hearing from him too. In fact, prayer happens any time we interact with God; through his Word, through conversations with people, or even through seeing a beautiful painting or sunset and saying, "Thank you."

The fact is, you might be hearing from God a lot more than you think. We read about people in the Bible talking with God and assume they had some special line of communication with him. But it's not as though God only speaks to a select few with special abilities to hear him. God made

each one of us and knows exactly how to speak to us so we can understand.

In John 10, Jesus describes himself as the Good Shepherd. He knows his sheep and they know him. They know his voice above all the others. In Matthew 28, Jesus tells his disciples, "...surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Jesus is with us—always. That means wherever you are, Jesus is too. And when he talks, you can hear his voice above the noise. We can be confident that God is here, and that he individually cares for us and speaks to us every day. We just need to stop and quiet ourselves long enough to listen. The more we do that, the easier it gets to hear him.

A vibrant prayer life isn't just about asking God for things or getting help with making decisions. Prayer is about talking back and forth with God and getting to know him. A great prayer life happens as you live life with God.

Yes, admitting you have conversations with God might look strange to the world. But here's my question for you: Would you be willing to look a little crazy if it meant you were caught up in an incredible life with God?

Experimenting with prayer might seem a little silly or awkward at first. It's humbling. But getting humble is actually a great place to start. It means we're ready to let God be God, and to hear what he has to say.

I'm inviting you to start experimenting more with prayer. This will be easier for some of us than others— again, let's just be honest. Prayer can be a huge roadblock. But I'm challenging you to embrace this practice, and to continue to talk with God as a habit. We often have no idea what we're missing out on, if we'd only be willing to get a little uncomfortable.

JOURNAL



What is the difference between talking *to* God and talking *with* God?

How would our everyday lives change if we spent our days in a back and forth conversation with God?

RESPONSE

What is God speaking to you through this journal?

Message your response to your discipler before moving on.

3. Awareness

Training to See More Than Meets the Eye

Read 2 Kings 6:8-22.

Elisha is a prophet. Prophets listen for the voice of God, and help bring people close to the heart of God. At this point in the story, Israel is in a conflict with the Arameans, and they're outmatched. However, God is actually telling Elisha the enemy's battle plans. That keeps Israel one step ahead, and the King of Aram is convinced there's a spy in his army. The king realizes he's not dealing with a spy, he's dealing with a prophet— and now he's out to get Elisha.

The Aramean army surrounds the city, intent on trapping Elisha. The text says, "When the servant of the man of God got up and went out early the next morning, an army with horses and chariots had surrounded the city. "Oh no, my lord! What shall we do?" the servant asked. "Don't be afraid," the prophet answered. "Those who are with us are more than those who are with them." And Elisha prayed, "Open his eyes, Lord, so that he may see." Then the Lord opened the servant's eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha." (2 Kings 6:15-17 NIV).

The king saw Elisha as a threat, and out of that fear, he pulled out all the stops to get rid of him. But the thing is, even if he did capture Elisha, he'd never be able to trap God. The king focused on what he could see with his eyes, but Elisha and his servant saw more. Elisha prayed for his servant's eyes to be opened to see a fuller picture of reality, and he did. In light of all those horses and chariots of fire, the Aramean army didn't look so terrible.

So we need to ask ourselves: where are we looking? And how are we looking? We need to ask God to open our spiritual eyes so we can see the world like he does. The Apostle Paul prayed like this all the time. In Ephesians he writes, "I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, and his incomparably great power for us who believe." (Ephesians 1:18-19a NIV).

When our eyes are open, we can see God's love and his power at work in the world, right here among us. God is with us, and he's fighting for us. Too often we see one without the other, but we can't separate them.

As disciples, we must learn to see everything through Jesus; the good and the bad. We live with confidence that God is making things right—no matter how things look on the surface. Disciples see hope where everyone else sees a lost cause. We see beauty in the ugliest places. We have a fuller perspective of what's going on. Our sight and perspective motivate us to live by faith, not fear. We understand more than what meets the eye, because we see everything in light of Jesus. We see sunsets, work, play, people, social media, art, war, and our breakfast cereal through Jesus.

Disciples experience everything through Jesus. He is here and we know it. God is everywhere— but that doesn't mean we always see him. If we want to see what God is doing, we're going to need to put our whole lives into it. Jeremiah 29:13 says, "You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart." Here is the key: we often pray and ask God to show up, but the fact is, he is already here to be found. God gives us a wide-open invitation.

If we don't hold anything back, he won't either. We want God to help us with the battles all around us— we want him to show us what he's doing, and take care of it all for us. We want God to be our protector. If someone is against us, we want God to work in their life and reveal the truth to them so they can have a change of heart— but we don't always invite God to change our hearts first. How often do we seek divine help, without actively submitting ourselves to God?

You see, if we want God to take care of all the things going on around us, we're going to need to let him take care of what's going on in our own hearts. If we want God to guide us as we navigate the everyday circumstances of life, and we want him to fix what's going wrong in the world, we need to first listen when he tells us what's wrong with us. That's the deal. When we can't see God or hear what he's saying, we are quick to say he's distant and silent— when really, we're the ones far away and closed off to what's happening.

If we want some of God's help, but not all of it, if we're holding anything back— something is in the way between us and Jesus. We can't see clearly until we hand it over. We can't ask God to help us see what to do about something outside ourselves if we want to stay blind to what's going on within us. It just doesn't work that way.

Perhaps we only see a little because we're only surrendering a little. Remember: we will seek God and find him when we seek him with all our hearts. If we want God to show up in our lives, we have to want to see everything he has to show us.

In a way, our level of God-awareness is linked to our desire for self-awareness. We say we want to hear God's voice, but do we really want to hear everything he has to say?

Disciples live connected to Jesus and they know it; Jesus is not only near us, but with us. As we submit ourselves to God, his light wins over our lives. Jesus has always been present, but we haven't always seen him. He has always been speaking, but we haven't always heard his voice. God is here to be found. We don't need to seek mountaintop experiences to see and hear him. In fact, we experience God most easily within the events of our everyday lives.

In his book, *Hearing God*, Dallas Willard writes, "God is not looking for a holy place. Places are holy because God is there". This place where you are, right now, is a holy place. God is here, and he's eager to meet with you. Are you eager to meet with him? Are you willing to see everything he has to show you? How do you need your eyes opened to God's presence in your life?

Here are some prompts to ask yourself that can guide you to that answer. Consider these questions and journal your responses to them. Remember, this is a practice, not a test. If you're not certain about a particular answer, offer a guess.

JOURNAL



1. What direct actions have you taken this week in response to God? What were the results?
2. How is God speaking to you through other people this week? How did you respond?
3. What important thing are you putting off today? Why do you avoid it?
4. Who needs more than you are giving today?
5. Does any part of you resist rest? What parts of you are uncomfortable just being with God? Why?
6. What burden is Jesus asking you to surrender? What gift does he have to replace it? Do you want it?
7. When was your last moment of true joy? What produced that joy, and how can you pursue that today?

RESPONSE

Name one thing God wanted you to hear through this practice today.
Name at least one thing you will do about it.

Message your response to your discipler before moving on.



COMPLETE THE OUTCOME

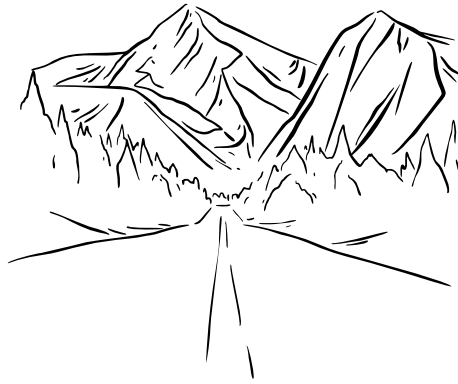
The outcome of this chapter is to establish a meaningful rhythm of prayer.

Describe your rhythm of prayer today.



Discuss your response with your discipler.

When you both agree that the outcome is complete, you're ready to move on to the next chapter.



CHAPTER TWO: CALLING

*Discern God's redemptive work in your past
and establish a life theme.*



Find extra resources and audio
versions of the text at
discipleship.guide/calling.

1: Calling and the Life of Jesus

Discerning God's Presence and Purpose

Your past—with all the pain, mistakes, and victories—is what God can use to help you understand your unique role in his kingdom. For example, consider the story of Peter. Peter was Jesus' most passionate follower, prone to have moments of brilliance as well as crash-and-burn failures. You may know the story of Peter denying that he even knew Jesus, or that time Jesus called him "Satan." Yet, despite these glaring mistakes, Jesus shows Peter how his failures can be redeemed.

It happens on a beach near the Sea of Galilee, when Peter and the resurrected Jesus have a moment to themselves. Jesus takes this moment to refine Peter's calling once again:

When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?" "Yes, Lord," he said, "you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my lambs." Again Jesus said, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" He answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Take care of my sheep." The third time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you love me?" He said, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my sheep. Very truly I tell you, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go." Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, "Follow me!"

John 21:15–19 NIV

Scholars have pointed out that Jesus' repetition of the question three times likely echoes Peter's three denials of Jesus. Perhaps this was why Peter was hurt after the third question: he knew what Jesus was really talking about. But notice that it's that moment of sadness where the healing for Peter could begin.

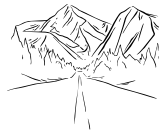
It's as though Jesus is saying to Peter, "These awful things have happened, yes. But that doesn't mean we're through. In fact, because of your failures, you will actually glorify me more than you could have before."

Do you believe that God can redeem the pain, heartache, and mistakes in your past? If you're willing to be open and honest, vulnerable and willing, he will.

By the end of this interaction with Jesus, Peter had been reinstated. He had a new mission and a new sense of purpose. By the end of this chapter, if you're willing to do the hard work of being vulnerable and diligent in prayer, you will too. One important aspect of following Jesus is understanding how God has worked with your life experiences to form you into who you are today.

We often think our lives are chains of random, meaningless events. However, when we encounter Jesus, we realize that we have a God who is present in all of it—even the difficult times.

In this chapter, you'll have an opportunity to plot out the main events of your life, with your discipler as a guide. You'll begin to recognize what God has been doing and saying throughout your lifetime, even when you couldn't see or hear him. As we start to see God in our own stories, we discover the unique ways we belong within God's story. This helps us understand who we are and what we are uniquely called to do.



At your next meeting, your discipler will share their own timeline and life theme with you. You'll not only get to know one another on a whole new level, but you'll get inspired to create a timeline and life theme of your own.

You can move forward into Part 2 now if you'd like, but hearing about your discipler's timeline first can help get you started.

Are you both new to the Pathway?

Many people walk through this guide for the first time with a friend who is also new to the Pathway. If neither of you have completed Chapter 2 before, don't worry! You can complete the next step on your own, then meet to discuss your timelines and perhaps help each other narrow down a Life Theme if you get stuck.

2: Creating Your Timeline

Looking Back

We are often so overwhelmed with simply living our lives that we rarely have an opportunity to step back and ask, “What does it all mean?” This exercise will do just that.

You’ll identify 8-10 of the most pivotal events of your life story and plot them on a timeline, just like a screenwriter would do. (Some people may identify more than 10 events, some less.) Once you’ve identified these events, you’ll begin to build a redemptive perspective and recognize how God has worked with these seasons to shape you into who you are today. Once you see that, you’ll begin to understand your purpose and calling in new ways.

You’ll need to set aside about 2 hours to complete this timeline, so plan accordingly, and it may take you several days of additions and edits before it really feels “done”. Don’t rush. If you need to leave this project and come back to it again the next day to complete it, do so. It can be surprisingly triggering to head back into our past; positively and negatively. Whatever you do, give it all you’ve got. It’ll be worth it.

Pause

To begin, pause. Sit with God and ask him to guide you as you survey the significant events of your life together.

Make a List

Using the journal pages provided in the back of this book, begin to make a list. Identify every significant Life Turn you can think of. Life Turns are threshold moments. These are events that bring you through a “doorway”; something happens, and once you’re on the other side, you can never go back. Life Turns can be as simple as the birth of a sibling, or working hard and earning a spot on the team. They can also be defining losses like the breakup of a friendship, or the death of a parent. If you think of something, write it down, and refine your list later.

Remember to ask God for guidance; you probably have more defining moments than you realize. Also, don't feel pressure to only locate events that seem like a "big deal". Even very small things can have a big impact. If it seems significant, write it down.

As your list comes in to focus, give each event a title, and describe it in a few sentences. These events can be both positive or negative in nature, so it might help to ascribe each one a number value on a scale from -10 to +10 to keep track of ups and downs.

To jog your memory, it can be helpful to work in time increments. Perhaps start with the first 5-10 years of your life, then move on through each decade of life from there, up until present day.

Create Your Timeline

Once you've completed your list of Life Turns, plot them on the timeline provided. Plot your Life Turns in sequence, using a vertical line for each. Allow the height or depth of the vertical line to reflect the positive or negative value you placed on each one. Label each line with the title you chose. (Note that additional pages are provided so you can add to this timeline in the future.)

Look Back

Finally, return to the events you've ascribed a negative value. These are your Negative Turns. For the last step, begin to identify a redemptive perspective. Redemption is about recovering something that was lost. God doesn't author pain and suffering, but he does redeem it. Identify God's voice, help, gifts, and presence within these difficult seasons.

How did you grow as a person?

What did you gain through this suffering or difficulty?

Begin to recognize God's presence within these Negative Turns. You'll talk about this more with your discipler, so don't worry if you have trouble identifying these redemptive threads in detail. Just get started.

SAMPLE TIMELINE

GREAT INFLUENCE
Governor over all of Egypt.

PHARAOH'S DREAM
Called out of prison, God helps interpret again.

EXCELLING
Excelled in prison, gained influence.

PROSPERING
Fruitful in slavery, running Potiphar's house.

DREAM
God's promise of influence.

GIFTED
Interpret dreams for Pharaoh's men with God's help.

SOLD
Taken into slavery.

ACCUSED
Accused of rape, back to prison.

FORGOTTEN
2+ years waiting, forgotten in prison.

PIT
Thrown into well by my brothers.

26 Born



Here's a sample timeline from the life of Joseph in the Book of Genesis. We can already see an emerging theme. Read all of Gen. 37-50 to see what happens next!

MY LIFE THEME: _____
God helps and delivers.

TIMELINE

BIRTH
YEAR

TODAY

MY LIFE THEME: _____

TIMELINE CONT.



TIMELINE CONT.



3: Establishing a Life Theme

Articulate Your Calling

As you begin to identify the most significant events of your life and plot them on your timeline, you'll start to uncover details you've never noticed before. Spend time simply studying your timeline with God; considering the positive and negative turns, and the redemptive perspectives you've gained.

How have these events worked together to shape you into who you are today?

Where was God speaking and acting within them, even if you didn't realize it at the time?

What unique qualities thread these events together, even if they previously seemed unrelated?

Who has God been for you over and over? How has that formed you into who you are today?

Identify patterns and themes.

The ways God repeatedly works in and through our gifts, passions, failures, suffering, and victories are bright clues into our purpose and calling. For example, many who have suffered with addiction recognize that God is redeeming their past, equipping them to help others with the same struggle. Similarly, some who've endured the loss of loved ones are uniquely gifted to help others grieve.

Bottom line.

The goal of a Life Theme is to be able to articulate your calling; the ways God has moved in your life to form you into who you are today. Calling doesn't have to be complicated. Finding your calling isn't about articulating some great purpose for what you're "supposed to do". Your calling is about naming who God is, and how he uniquely expresses himself to you and through you. It's different for every one of us.

Once you can articulate your calling, you're cut loose to talk about your past, get clarity in your present, and get direction for your future.

It's helpful to be able to say it in a simple sentence. Distilling your calling into one phrase isn't reductive; it's essential. Not only will this give you clarity, but discerning a life theme makes it incredibly easy for you to share your story with others.

Here are some life themes from real people who've walked through the pathway:

Reclaiming joy.

Shaping little hearts.

Helping others find freedom.

Healed healer.

You are not alone.

Hospitality is a person.

Made with grit, full of grace.

Strong and gentle.

Study and wonder.

Good and free.

Take the chance.

Heart wide open.

Sing it out.

Free to search.

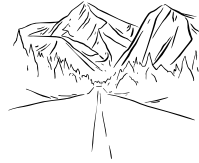
Safe and wild.

Feeling overwhelmed?

Don't forget: your discipler is here to guide you every step of the way. If you feel lost in the weeds, you have a friend to help pull you out! This is perhaps the most challenging chapter of the pathway, but again and again, disciples look back and say it was their favorite part. It's worth it to see it through.

Scan or follow the link to hear
Phil and Megan share their own
life themes at
discipleship.guide/calling.





COMPLETE THE OUTCOME

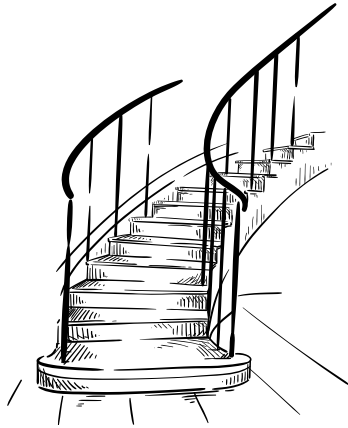
The outcome of this chapter is to discern God's redemptive work in your past and establish a life theme.

What is your life theme?



Discuss your life theme with your discipler.

When you both agree that the outcome is complete, you're ready to move on to the next chapter.



CHAPTER THREE: SELF DENIAL

Practice self denial in a specific and relevant way.



Find extra resources and audio
versions of the text at
discipleship.guide/selfdenial.

1: Self Denial and the Life of Jesus

Losing to Gain

In order to become disciples who follow Jesus, we must first get over ourselves. That's what this chapter is all about: self-denial. There are many places we could go in the Bible to learn about how Jesus exemplified this, but for now we'll limit ourselves to just one: the moment where Jesus washed his disciples' feet. John 13:3–5 says,

“Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.”

John 13:3–5 NIV

The idea of a master washing his follower's feet was so offensive that Peter refuses to let Jesus do it: “You will never wash my feet” (John 13:8). Footwear wasn't what it is today, and most people had very rudimentary sandals. That means that one's feet became very unpleasant as they traveled about the dusty roads of Judea. Not only were the roads dusty, but oxen and donkeys would likely leave plenty of “land mines” along the way, and stepping in one in some point was likely inevitable. Feet then were like feet now: a little gross. That's why one of the primary roles of a servant was to wash their master's feet. In fact, it was a job that was reserved not only for a servant, but for the very lowest ones.

Imagine the hush that fell upon the disciples when Jesus suddenly stood up and started to wrap a towel around himself. That hush would turn to confusion as he picked up the water basin; and it may even turn to disgust when he finally knelt down and started washing their feet. Jesus was upsetting the social order here. He was humiliating himself— or was he? Perhaps we are the ones who have made fools of ourselves by supposing that life is all about generating more acclaim for us. Maybe we are the ones who are out of step with the way things actually are: that those who find life are those who deny themselves, take up a cross, and follow the way of Jesus.

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Where do you most resist denying yourself to follow Jesus?

What would it cost you to put it down?

What might you gain if you did?

RESPONSE

How is God leading you to deny yourself
in order to follow him more?

Message your response to your discipler before moving on.

2: Downward Mobility

The Way of Selfless Ambition

“The great paradox which Scripture reveals to us is that real and total freedom is only found through downward mobility. The Word of God came down to us and lived among us as a slave. The divine way is indeed the downward way.”

— Henri Nouwen, *The Selfless Way of Christ*

When we come to know Jesus, we approach him with our questions, our expectations, and our needs. But we can't begin to follow Jesus until we are ready to obey him. In fact, Jesus says our obedience to him is the fruit of our love for him (John 14:23). The obedience Jesus calls for has love at its root. Throughout Scripture, there is an expectation that those who love God do what he says out of devotion, not duty. We can't walk with Jesus and go our own way. If we follow Jesus, we go where he leads.

On the surface, this can look very positive! After all, God is wise! He loves us! His ways are good for us! Obeying God can make us safer and healthier. Our relationships, finances, and even our bodies benefit from following what God says is good. We want that good stuff. But here is the problem: God achieves these good things in and through us with methods that are often entirely backwards from how the world works.

When we give our lives to Jesus, it doesn't take long before following him means going against the tide of the world, other people's expectations, and especially our own natural desires.

Jesus says if we want to gain life, we'll need to lose our life (Matt. 16:25). He says the path to freedom is to find the one thing in the world we hold most dear, and let it go (see Luke 18:18-29). The key to tapping in to eternity here and now is to align ourselves with selfless ambition. To lay down our own pursuits and desires and take up the things Jesus says matter most.

Jesus himself perfectly embodies that life. When Paul describes how we should relate to one another and the world, he tells us to think and act like Jesus, who lived out the life of a humble servant, obedient even to death (Phil. 2:5-8).

If we are following Jesus closely, humility, sacrifice, and obedience will become a part of our nature, too. We will begin to do things, love things, and create things that will baffle the world, but will reveal the Kingdom of God right here and now. God is at work where you are, and we need to resist the pull of self, the enemy, and the world to join him.

Henri Nouwen often explained that in the world, we seek three things above all else: to be relevant, to be spectacular, and to be powerful. In other words, we want to be essential to the people and things around us. We want to be very relevant; to matter and be missed if we're gone. We want to be needed and wanted. We want to be spectacular; we want to be incredibly good at many things, and enjoy the spotlight because of it. And we want to be powerful. We want to be the masters of our own universe; to call the shots, to hold things together in the way we want them to be. We want to be in control. None of these pursuits bring us peace, because all three attempt to stand us up in a place that only God can occupy. We strive and strive and cannot ever get enough relevance, ability, or power, because we are not God.

Look at the culture around you. Voices everywhere say move yourself up, up, up. Get another degree. Get a better car. Have a better job five years from now than you have today. Have the house you want now, not when you can afford it. Think about how our culture works: success means doing bigger and better things every year, getting more possessions, and securing the right relationships. If we aren't moving up in the world, we're failing. Jesus says we're successful when we actively love our enemies, share our homes with strangers, and forgive people who don't deserve it. That's the good life. Rooted, risky, unglamorous, full life.

Life in the Kingdom of God operates downward; we lay down our lives, we surrender and drop our hold on achievement, performance, and control, and we choose to serve without getting credit. We give costly gifts, choose community growth over individual gain, and place what others need above what we want right now. We become so secure in Jesus we begin to forget that anyone else's opinion ever had power over us. In the Kingdom of God, we don't compete. We rest in our identity in Christ, and out of that identity, we pursue costly obedience in love. The rewards are rich, but mysterious, and often entirely confusing to the world.

JOURNAL



Look back at your life with Jesus. Locate a time when you did something to obey God that looked backwards to the world.

What were the details?

What's happened since?

RESPONSE

Which do you struggle with most: the temptation to be relevant,
spectacular, or powerful?

Where does this surface in your daily life?

Message your response to your discipler before moving on.

3: Practice Fasting

Letting God Do What He Wants

God is good. In fact, everything good comes not just from God, but out of God. God is where everything good begins. When God pours out good things to us, it's a gift. We call that grace. God is doing good things all the time, whether we realize it or not.

But there are actually ways we can arrange our lives around God that put us in a position to receive even more from him, if we want it. That's what spiritual disciplines are. Spiritual disciplines are practices we take up in the midst of daily life that make space for us to meet with God.

John Wesley called these things a means of grace; things like prayer, reading scripture, taking communion, and practicing confession. These are ways we willfully align ourselves with God. We know he'll be there with us, and we expect he'll give us exactly what we need. As you take up any spiritual discipline, always remember that the discipline is a means to an end, but not the end itself. When we meet face to face with God, we change. If we want to become disciples who look, act, and talk like Jesus, our one job is to spend time with him, and let him change us. That's how we get cleaned out, set right, filled up, and sent. We become like Jesus. That's the end goal. The disciplines don't do the work; God does.

And we can't control the work God does. He does whatever he wants. We often approach spiritual disciplines as a transaction: I do or give something, and God does something back. We can't help but insert our own expectations into the deal. The truth is, disciplines aren't a transaction; they're an interaction between us and God. When we practice disciplines, we submit ourselves to God. We stop looking for God to simply give us something we want, and instead get hungry for God to give us himself.

Fasting, like all spiritual disciplines, is both very simple, and very *mysterious*. Fasting from anything is a subtractive discipline; that means we willfully remove or limit a source of comfort (traditionally, food) for a time in order to be more alert to the presence and sufficiency of God.

In the absence of old, familiar security blankets, fasting wakes us up to our wounds, weaknesses, and unholy habits. Fasting makes it easy to see where we are tight-fisted, demanding, or afraid. Fasting reveals what holds us back, and makes Jesus brighter than ever.

Remember: fasting is powerful, but mysterious. We don't fast to manipulate or control God. We fast in order to know God more rightly. He will move. He has good gifts in store for you as you fast; you just can't discover what they are until you participate.

And finally, remember that all seasons of fasting prepare us for a time of feasting to follow. As we deny ourselves, we are made right and ready to enjoy life like we're supposed to: life to the full, with nothing in the way.



PRACTICE FASTING

Practice self denial through a fast. It could involve fasting from one or two meals, or fasting from food for up to 72 hours (or more). If you've never fasted before, resist the urge to do a heroically large fast. Instead, pray and discuss with your discipler where you might begin.

Remember to drink plenty of water, and if other liquids are necessary, that's fine. Simply do what will allow you to move further in the direction of self-denial.

Of course, if a medical reason prevents you from a traditional fast, choose another way to practice fasting that is an equal challenge.

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As you fast, journal any challenges, temptations, thoughts, or prayers that come to mind as you devote that time to seeking God instead of satisfying the desires of the flesh.

RESPONSE

Choose and complete your fast.
How is God speaking to you through this time of fasting?

Message your response to your discipler before moving on.

4: Addiction Inventory

Locating the Things We Turn to When We Don't Turn to God

Life is not easy. Whether you feel like you've "had it easy" in life or not, the fact is, the world can be a hard place. Things go wrong all the time. We get hurt easily and often. Our wounds begin at a very early age. For many of us, our earliest memories are negative ones. It seems life is constantly trying to knock us down, and when it does, we reach out for something to hold us steady.

The problem is, when we're very young, very few of us know we can reach out for Jesus. So we do the best we can, reaching out for a false sense of security and comfort from things that can never measure up to the God we're created to cling to.

We're abused, ignored, or bullied when we're young, and instead of Jesus, we reach out for approval, food, or accomplishment. We grow up with a nagging ache inside that doesn't seem to go away, so we try to fill it with relationships, a good job, substances, or sex.

Meeting Jesus doesn't make these old, insufficient security blankets go away, it just makes them more obvious. In light of Jesus, it's much easier to see where we've fallen for impostors; for comforts that can never satisfy. Old habits die hard, but in Christ, they can die. The key is to first confront the behavior, then submit it to Christ—but don't stop there. You see, behavior modification is not enough. Acknowledging unhealthy behaviors leads us to greater discipline in Christ. And it is by practicing these disciplines of freedom that we uncover the root of our issue; the real brokenness beneath the behaviors.

To that end, take inventory of your life and behaviors. Seek the input of your discipler and those you trust to be sure you are seeing your life rightly, and not disregarding something important.

Go ahead—ask those closest to you if you have any unhealthy habits. None of us are as fine as we think we are. You may think you are not addicted to anything harmful, but, look closely with Jesus. There is likely something there.

He won't point it out to shame you; he'll bring it out to set you free. It's easy to spot our addictions, because the thought of losing them makes us feel anxious and exposed, and we all know what that feels like. We like to think we're in control of our unhealthy habits, and we justify their presence in our lives; but the fact is, they control us. Addiction is the master, and we are the puppet.

Our old, corrupted comforts are much more harmful than we realize, and they don't just affect us; they impact everyone around us. And if we've never lived without the sins we savor, it's hard to estimate how much better life could be without them. Try to imagine it anyway. Imagine what it would be like to really be free. You'd be a new person. You'd be you. Just you, without the baggage. That's how God made you to be.

You can't live a life of open-handed generosity with one hand tied behind your back. Boldly go discover where you are settling for less, pacifying your pain, or denying God the chance to heal you. Discover how much energy you waste maintaining and managing your addictions and imagine how much more you'd have to give if those unholy habits were gone.

You'd have more time, more money, and more creativity to spare to partner with God to heal the world. You really would. If you want to be generous with what you have, you have to discover what has you. Identify your unhealthy behaviors and addictions so you can surrender them and get to the bottom of things.



ADDICTION INVENTORY

Complete the simple inventory on the following page. Write your responses to the questions as you go. This inventory can be surprisingly difficult to complete! The questions are simple, but they require facing reality and the impact of our addictions on our relationships to God, ourselves, and others. Be gentle with yourself, but be honest, too. Brennan Manning once wrote, "That which is denied cannot be healed."

ADDICTION INVENTORY

1. Does the suggestion that you probably have an addictive habit annoy you? Why do you think that is?
2. If you already have some of your own addictions in mind, what are they? List them.
3. Directly ask one or two of the people closest to you if you are addicted to anything (email or call them, text them, etc.) Write their responses down.
4. Do you often wish that you had more of something? What?
5. Do your loved ones often disappoint you or fail to meet your expectations? How?
6. What annoys you most about other people? Why do you think that is?
7. Do you ever do, say, or not do things that you then hide from those closest to you?
8. What is your most common New Year's Resolution, or what acts of denial have you practiced during the season of Lent? Why?
9. Is it easier to give money to another person or cause, or purchase things for yourself? Why is that?
10. What makes you irrationally angry? Why?
11. Do you regularly do or say anything you know other people would think is wrong, but justify your right to do it anyway?
12. Where do you most often resist obeying God? How do you live out that resistance?

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What unhealthy habits did this reveal?

Look beneath the habits. Where is the root? Why do you turn to these things?

Are you willing to take a step to cut ties with these behaviors or sin cycles today?

Decide on at least one clear step toward freedom and make a plan. Your discipler will hold you to it.

RESPONSE

What is your clear step toward freedom?

Message your response to your discipler before moving on.

5: Practice Forgiveness

Cutting Yourself Free

“To forgive is to set a prisoner free and discover that the prisoner was you.”

—Lewis Smedes

Forgiveness isn't just about saying we're sorry, and forgiving someone certainly doesn't mean what they did doesn't matter anymore. Forgiveness, at the heart, is about handing over a burden that's too heavy for us to bear. We can't hold it and be healthy, so we turn it over to Jesus instead. He can take it— he's happy to take it.

Burdens are heavy for us because we weren't born to carry them. The good news is, Jesus was born to carry them. He's already paid for them, so we can hand them over.

Forgiveness reminds us that we're secure; God is in control. When we forgive, we choose to surrender our resentments. We give up anything we're holding against someone and invite God to handle it from here without our interference.

Essentially, we surrender our right to judge, and stop trying to do God's job for him. That's when we get cut free, and that's how we can move forward and heal. Forgiveness is about living untangled and untethered. It's important to remember that our freedom and healing are never dependent on what other people do or say.

So, regardless of what the offending person does in response to our forgiveness, we can be free. In some cases, it might not even be best to tell a person we've forgiven them (in some situations, that could make things worse, not better).

Or, perhaps that person is no longer living. That's OK, because again, forgiveness is ultimately about cutting free from burdens with God's help. He'll guide you to know how to restore broken relationships. Many times, that will mean coming together to resolve differences, but sometimes it will mean keeping a safe distance.

It's important to forgive "in every direction". There are some core ways we might be holding on to grudges and burdens and praying through each one is helpful whenever you know you need to forgive. Untangling ourselves from unforgiveness can seem overwhelming or complicated, so these steps make it easier. Here's an overview of how forgiveness in every direction works:

Identify the problem.

No doubt, you may be aware of many things you need to forgive. Ask God to help you locate just one. Then, remember that if it's been hard to let go, it's probably more complicated than you think. You can't just cut a knot free; you've got to untangle it. Moving through each of these steps helps you do that.

Confess and seek forgiveness from God.

If God shows us something we've done wrong, we need to ask him for forgiveness for our own sin and seek forgiveness from anyone we've sinned against as God leads us.

Let yourself off the hook.

We need to forgive ourselves. Strangely, it can be "easier" to forgive others for what they've done, or to receive forgiveness from God for our own sin than it is to let ourselves off the hook. Have you ever done something you really, really regret? Forgive yourself. Let it go.

Forgive others.

We need to forgive the things other people have done that have hurt us (whether it was intentional or not). Even if you're sure they never intended to hurt you, they hurt you nonetheless. It's a burden, so forgive it and let it go.

Reconcile with God.

God is perfect, and doesn't make mistakes or sin. But that doesn't mean we can't hold a grudge against God. If we're mad that God allowed something to happen, and hurt that he didn't intervene to stop it, we can surrender even that to him, and let him show us what we need to see so we can heal.

Finally, a note about confession.

Have you ever confessed a recurring sin or an area of hurt to God again and again, but it just doesn't get resolved? That's probably because you're confessing privately, but there's so little risk in that, and very little accountability for real life.

When we confess to God, but we're not being honest about our struggles with trusted people in our life, we're "confessing" but we're still letting shame win. We want the issue resolved, but we also want to protect our image.

This is why we're encouraged to confess our sins to one another (James 5:16). Confession is appropriate any time we're burdened by something we need to get off our chest, and confessing to God in the presence of trusted brothers and sisters is a way we live well in this family.

When you're trusted with someone else's confession, take that very seriously. Embrace that person and walk them through the steps of forgiveness they need to take to cut free. Active participation in reconciliation is a privilege and a joy for disciples, so steward that responsibility well.

Confession isn't about guilt; it's a gift. It's a gift to resist shame and lay your burdens out in the open. That's how we break free and heal. Pause now and ask God to bring one of your own burdens to the surface; a place where forgiveness needs to happen. Write it down and keep it for later.

At your next meeting, your discipler will walk you through the steps of forgiveness. Yes, you're going to practice confession together. We often run from our pain and unresolved issues, and that is understandable—but going there with Jesus changes everything.

If God is bringing to mind an issue or wound that contains significant guilt, condemnation, or shame, know that he isn't showing you this to humiliate or expose you; he's revealing a place he wants to set you free.

FORGIVENESS EXERCISE

Complete these steps together at your next meeting. If it's helpful, journal your responses here before you meet.

Identify the problem.

Ask God to help you locate just one situation in need of forgiveness.

Confess and seek forgiveness from God.

Ask for forgiveness for your own sin and seek forgiveness from anyone you've sinned against as God leads you.

Let yourself off the hook.

Extend forgiveness to yourself.

Forgive others.

Forgive anyone for what they've done intentionally or unintentionally.

Reconcile with God.

Surrender resentments you might hold.



COMPLETE THE OUTCOME

The outcome of this chapter is to practice self denial in a specific and relevant way.

What is the most significant way you have denied yourself through this chapter?



Discuss your response with your discipler.

When you both agree that the outcome is complete, you're ready to move on to the next chapter.



CHAPTER FOUR: SCRIPTURE

Form a meaningful rhythm of scripture reading and study.



Find extra resources and audio
versions of the text at
discipleship.guide/scripture.

1: Scripture and the Life of Jesus

Finding Jesus in Scripture

In this chapter, we're going to orient ourselves to the Bible. We'll learn how to engage with scripture and learn some techniques for studying it. As always, we want to know if this is a discipline that we see in the life of our master, Jesus. How did Jesus use scripture?

Jesus did not have the Bible as we now have it, for obvious reasons—the parts that tell us about Jesus were written after he lived. However, Jesus did have what we call the Old Testament, which happens to make up the majority of the Bible. And it appears that Jesus knew the Old Testament exceedingly well, and that he used it to guide his life.

Take, for instance, Jesus' face-off with Satan in the desert (Luke 4:1–13). Satan tempts Jesus with things like power and wealth, but Jesus refutes him by quoting scripture. It's clear that the truth of scripture has a power over the enemy's advances.

However, Jesus didn't simply know the words of scripture. He also knew the point of scripture. In a day where religious leaders often used the Bible to weigh people down with strict laws, Jesus recognized that the point of the Bible was to point to himself.

“You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life.”

John 5:39–40 NIV

If our study of scripture doesn't bring us to Jesus, we're doing it wrong. As followers of Jesus, there is no replacement for studying the Bible. If Jesus is truly our master, we'll hang on his every word. After all, how can we claim to follow someone if we don't bother to read what they said? Let's immerse ourselves in the Bible, just like Jesus taught us.

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What do you want your relationship with scripture to be like?

Are you there yet? If not, what's stopping you?

RESPONSE

What is one change you will make today to take your time with the Bible to the next level?

Message your response to your discipler before moving on.

2: What Is the Bible?

Living Out God's Story

What exactly is the Bible? That's a big question and could have many answers. The Bible is really a collection of many books, written across many years by many authors. However, for followers of Jesus, it's much more than that. Let me start with a story.

In the year 1791, Mozart was asked to compose a requiem—which is basically a piece of music for someone's funeral. For some reason, Mozart began saying strange things as he wrote it. The legend says that he came to believe that he was actually composing this piece for his own funeral. Wherever Mozart got that idea, we may never know. But whatever the case, Mozart never did get a chance to finish it. You see, he passed away a few months after starting the work, leaving the requiem unfinished.

However, one of Mozart's students completed the work, so today we can listen to the Requiem in D minor in its entirety. It's an amazing piece of music. But what's fascinating is that this student did such a great job that it's not exactly clear where Mozart's work ends and his work begins. See, he had to carefully study the themes of the score, but he also had to understand his teacher's heart in order to complete this unfinished work.

Today, we're talking about scripture. Through the ages, Christians have agreed that God has spoken through the Bible. It's our guiding word and it should instruct our lives and inform all that we do. But how exactly does that work? For many people, it's just a strange, ancient document. It might seem boring, a little weird, and a lot intimidating.

But today, I want to suggest that Scripture is like a great, unfinished work. Instead of a requiem, it's like an unfolding drama that tells the story of God and his people. The Bible is our script that shows us the beginning, and it shows us how things end, but today we are living out the middle section. This story isn't unfinished because God just gave up. It's because God is still writing. And like Mozart's student, our work is to complete the story by carefully studying the themes of the script and by understanding our master's heart.

The analogy isn't perfect. God is still writing, and he is the one who empowers us to complete this work. And it's not like we are adding to the Bible—but we are living out the story that it tells.

Christians are actors in God's great drama, and the Bible is our script. When an actor is preparing for a role, he or she will live and breathe the script. They take the words on the page and embody them by bringing them to life. That's how we should be with scripture. It is our script, but in this case, the drama is not fiction: it's real life!

So you see, scripture is not just something we read, study, or dissect. As Christians, it is the very air we breathe. We must take upon ourselves this story—with all its twists, and turns—because it is the story that we are living out today. So how does this story go? Let's take a deep dive into the 4 "Acts" of the drama of scripture.

We could call Act 1 Creation. We read about this in Genesis 1-2. An all-powerful, loving God forms the universe. He then places his image bearers inside this world to represent him, and he calls it "very good."

Act 2 is called The Fall. This happens in Genesis 3, and it keeps getting worse, all the way through Chapter 11. It's where God's people stop trying to reflect God and instead try to be God. All of creation is now broken, and things start to fall apart.

Act 3 is Redemption. It starts in Genesis 12, where God puts his rescue plan into action. He begins by calling Abraham and his descendants to show the world how He made them to live. It leads us to one Israelite named Jesus, whose life, death, and resurrection show us how everything can get back on track.

Finally, we have Act 4, which is called Completion. We read about this in the book of Revelation. It's where God will one day make all things right again, and we will live with Him, and nothing will get in the way.

Now, the key is to remember that today, we're still living out Act 3. God's mission of redemption is still taking place. Jesus has come, and he sent the Holy Spirit to fill us—which means that today, we're completing the story with Jesus as he brings redemption to the whole world.

The outcome for this chapter is to develop a meaningful rhythm of scripture reading and study. Why is this important? Because just as an actor must know their script in order to become their character, followers of Jesus must know scripture in order to become like Jesus. Scripture is the surest way to know the character and will of the one that we follow.

In what comes next, we'll take a deep dive into the four "Acts" of the drama of scripture. But for now, just remember: you and I are actors in God's great drama, and the Bible is our script.

JOURNAL

What does it mean for the Bible to be your “script?”

How does understanding the Bible as a script differ from seeing it as an instruction manual?

What does your relationship with the Bible look like now, and how would you like it to look in the future?

RESPONSE

What other scripts are you tempted to live out instead of scripture?
How can the Word of God help you live out a better story?

Message your response to your discipler before moving on.

3: Creation

The Beginning

So far, we've said that the Bible is like a script for Jesus followers. Right now we're going to dig in to the first act, which we'll call "Creation." Let's see what we can learn from it.

Here's how the Bible describes our origins. Genesis 1:26-28 says:

Then God said, "Let us make human beings in our image, to be like us. They will reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the wild animals on the earth, and the small animals that scurry along the ground."

So God created human beings in his own image.

In the image of God he created them;

male and female he created them.

Then God blessed them and said, "Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth and govern it. Reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, and all the animals that scurry along the ground."

Genesis 1:26-28 NIV

The first thing we notice about how God made us is this: God created us as royalty. The text says that we will "reign." In other words, we were not made to be slaves. The second thing the passage tells us is that God gave us responsibility. He told us to be fruitful and multiply, and to reign over the earth. As we read on in scripture, we quickly realize that this responsibility is even more than watching over fish, birds, and trees. We are called to represent God to the world. Our job is to extend his reign throughout all of creation! Third, God invites us into relationship with him.

We are God's image-bearers. That means that we are created to be in constant relationship with God. In his book, *Covenant and Kingdom*, Mike Breen puts it like this, "The word translated as 'image' also means 'imprint.' When God created us, he pressed the imprint of his presence upon us."

As we move farther along in the Bible, the word used for this relationship is the word “covenant.” A covenant is a binding promise between two people. It literally means “to become one.” And God enters into a covenant with his people because his desire is to be in a binding relationship with them. God is all about relationships!

In fact, God is so into relationship that it is a part of his nature. Many of us have heard the word “Trinity” before. It’s the understanding that God exists as one God in three persons: the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

This is a mind-bender, and sometimes we are tempted to just shrug it off as something that only college professors talk about. But here we can see just how important this aspect of God is. Trinity means that even before the world began, God eternally existed in relationship. When he made us, he invited us into that relationship. This is central to who God is, and it is crucial for understanding our identity. We were made for relationship with God and with each other.

So at creation, we learn that God created us as royalty, gave us responsibility, and invites us into relationship. This is why we were made. These three truths are huge—big enough to change our lives. But here’s something even more amazing: that’s only the beginning.

JOURNAL

God created us as royalty, gave us responsibility, and invites us into relationship. What lies about your own worth threaten to draw you away from living out those truths?

What does the fact that God exists in relationship (as seen in the Trinity) suggest about who God is and how we should live our lives?

RESPONSE

Is there a place in your life where you could represent God better?

Message your response to your discipler before moving on.

4: The Fall

The Consequences of Sin

We've been comparing the Bible to a script that Jesus followers are supposed to live out. Here, we are going to learn about Act 2 of that script, which we call "The Fall."

One of the greatest joys in my life has been becoming a parent. I will never forget holding my first child in my arms for the first time. She seemed innocent and perfect. As time went on, my daughter grew. She looked at the world with wide-eyed wonder. She was learning new things every day. Surely this was the smartest, cutest, most innocent child there ever was. But eventually I noticed something strange. My perfect child would sometimes do selfish things. Occasionally she'd even do things that were flat out wrong! Eventually I had to accept the unavoidable truth: my children are sinners, just like me.

The word "sin" has fallen out of vogue recently. We want to maintain the right to do whatever we please. So we find endless ways to justify almost any behavior. The words "I was wrong" are rarely on our lips—and we truly believe that we are right. Yet, while we'd love to think that we're right all the time, deep down we know that isn't true. The Bible gives us a more realistic picture of our situation: we have done wrong. We are sinners.

Our first encounter with human sin comes pretty early in the Bible. God gave Adam and Eve one simple command: they could eat from any tree but one. Eventually, the enemy comes along and plants some lies in their minds. First, the serpent gets Eve to question God. He says, "Did God really say you must not eat the fruit from any of the trees in the garden?" Eve responds that they may eat from any tree but one, or else they will die.

Next, the serpent convinces Eve to try to take God's place. He says "You won't die!" Instead, he says that if they eat the fruit from the forbidden tree, they will actually be like God. And so Adam and Eve both eat the fruit and revolt against God. Sin enters the world, and to their horror, they realize that the peace they had was gone. Their perfect relationship with God was immediately changed. Now they were afraid.

The story of Adam and Eve is the story of us all: we want to be like God. In fact, this is the heart of sin. Sin—at least in part—is where we try to take God's place. But as we will see, sin has terrible consequences.

First, sin makes us slaves. You may remember that in the beginning, God created us as royalty. Sin undoes all that. The Apostle Paul wrote: You can be a slave to sin, which leads to death, or you can choose to obey God, which leads to righteous living. (Romans 6:16)

Sin doesn't mean we're no longer made in God's image; but because of sin, the light of that image has flickered out. We've been cut off from the power source.

Second, sin spreads chaos. After the fall, we read about this growing spiral of evil that infects all of humanity. It gets to a place where everything is in complete disorder. Originally, God gave us responsibility—to represent him to the world. Instead, chaos was everywhere.

Finally, sin causes us to be alone. When Adam and Eve sinned, the intimacy they had with God and each other was suddenly gone. They were ashamed and afraid. We were made for relationship with God and others, but sin wrecks that relationship.

This stuff isn't very fun to think about. But we cannot skip this part. If we do, then the glory of God's redemption will be lost on us. So remember: sin makes us slaves, spreads chaos, and causes us to be alone.

JOURNAL

What is your initial reaction to the word “sin”?

When we learned about creation, we learned that God created us as royalty, gave us responsibility, and invites us into relationship. Notice how sin messes all that up: Sin moves us from royalty to slavery. Sin distorts our God-given responsibilities and spreads chaos instead. Sin destroys relationships and causes us to be alone. Have you seen any of these things happen because of your own sin?

Is there really such a thing as a truly private sin—one that affects no one but yourself?

Is there a sin that you need to confess to God? If so, remember the words of 1 John 1:9: “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”

RESPONSE

How is God addressing your own sin today? How will you respond?

Message your response to your discipler before moving on.

5: Redemption

The Gospel as Good News

Have you ever learned something that completely changed your life? Maybe it was the fact that you were having a baby, or that you had lost your job, or that you passed a big test. All of us know what it's like to learn something that changes everything.

We have a word for this sort of information: it's called "news." News is information that changes the way things are. There's a word you hear a lot around churches, and it's the word "gospel." This word simply means "good news." In other words, the gospel is information that changes everything.

Sometimes people forget that the gospel is good news, and just try to make it into good advice. "Here's how you can have peace in life," or "Here's how you can go to heaven." The fact is, many people today are searching for personal fulfillment, and there are many popular gospels promising those things. But the good news is not just good advice. It's something that actually happened. Jesus Christ lived, died, and rose again. That means that nothing is the same anymore.

Last time, we learned that sin makes us slaves, spreads chaos, and causes us to be alone. But today, we're going to learn that sin doesn't have the final word. Because of what Jesus did, God is bringing redemption to the world.

The gospel is the good news of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection—which means that God sets us free, renews all things, and adopts us as children. One of the things we should notice about this definition is that it all hinges on Jesus. There's a temptation to make the gospel all about us, and what we get out of it. But that misses the heart of things.

Sin makes us slaves. But the good news doesn't simply mean forgiveness for sin—as wonderful as that is. It means freedom from sin's power. God offers us more than forgiveness. He wants to set us free as well. We are forgiven and free!

What's more, God is in the business of renewing all things. Sin spreads chaos, but redemption means that God's original plan will come true. Through Jesus, everything that was broken in the fall is being made new. Finally, God restores our relationships. Whereas sin causes us to be alone, the gospel means that we can be adopted into God's family—never to be alone again.

There is much more to be said about the gospel. One sentence can't possibly sum up all that God has done. But that's the beauty of it—we get to live this life with God, living it out more and more each day. And that is good news.

JOURNAL

Why is it important to remember that the gospel is good news, and not just good advice?

1 Thessalonians 5:23 suggests that God doesn't just forgive us but makes us holy as well. What does it mean for the gospel to be "more than forgiveness?" How is the good news meant to change us?

RESPONSE

How has the gospel changed you?

Message your response to your discipler before moving on.

6: Completion

Joining God in the Renewal of All Things

I have a confession to make. I love to read books, but I start a lot more books than I finish. I don't know if anyone else has a hard time finishing books, but I know I do. It seems like I get about two thirds through, then another book looks more interesting. I always set out with the best of intentions, but they don't always pan out in the end.

I might not always finish what I start. But that's not the case with God. God always finishes what he starts. We have learned that sin messes things up pretty badly. Thankfully, God has rescued us from our sin in the work of Jesus. Today we're going to learn that God isn't finished with us yet. God is making everything new—and that includes you. Revelation 21:3–5 says:

“I heard a loud shout from the throne, saying, “Look, God’s home is now among his people! He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them. He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever.” And the one sitting on the throne said, “Look, I am making everything new!”

Revelation 21:3–5 NIV

These last words are spoken by Jesus, and it gives us a glimpse of what things will be like someday. We all agree that the world we live in now has plenty of sorrow, crying, and pain. However, as Christians we look forward to the day when Jesus returns to earth and sets up the heavenly kingdom. When that day comes, all things will be made new—God will finish what he started.

But the question is, what about today? If that's all stuff that happens in the future, then why bother trying to fix things now? Shouldn't we just try to hang on, make it through life, and hope that we can make it to the end? Some believe this is the case. As a result, there is an assumption that this earth and what happens on it doesn't really matter.

But what if God has already started making all things new? What if this world does matter, because it is the center of God's renewing work? And what if we are called to join God in this mission?

Hundreds of years before Christ, the prophet Joel wrote about a day when God would pour out his spirit on everyone. This would be a sign that God's renewing work has begun.

Then, in Acts 2, we read about Pentecost—which is where the Holy Spirit is poured out on God's people. On Pentecost, the apostle Peter stands up and quotes Joel, saying that the moment Joel looked forward to was happening. God's renewal had begun!

God does not leave us to fend for ourselves. God is working to make all things new, and that includes us. In fact, God is so committed to finishing what he started that he even dwells within us—that's the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is God in us—restoring us, renewing us, and empowering us to join him.

This means that today we can look in the face of pain and sorrow and say with confidence, "you lose." Jesus is alive, and the Holy Spirit indwells us. God's renewing mission guides us. The great awakening has begun, and he is finishing what he started.

God is making everything new—and that includes you.

JOURNAL

Have you ever felt hopeless? How does the truth that God finishes what he starts speak to you in times like this?

The Bible teaches that God's renewing work has already started (Acts 2, Mark 1:15, Colossians 1:20). When God renews something, he repairs what's broken. When has God done this in your life?

RESPONSE

Where do you need renewal today?

Message your response to your discipler before moving on.

7: Inductive Study

Getting Beyond the Surface of God's Word

Inductive Bible Study is an incredible way to encounter God's Word. Often when we read the Bible, we take it in quickly, or we read it at face value.

Consider the difference between looking at a postcard from the ocean, and what it's like to put on a wetsuit and get underwater to explore it yourself. Inductive study invites us to take a deep dive into scripture.

To add another illustration, you could look at it this way: every passage of scripture we read is like a prism. We read it one way, then turn it in the light to examine it from another angle. Suddenly we discover there are endless things to uncover and experience within even just one small passage of God's Word.

This is the living Word of God; God is constantly speaking and revealing himself to us; especially through scripture. So when we dive into a passage inductively, we can be confident that God is present, active, and talking to us as we study.

You can encounter God right now through his Word, and this experience can change you, if you let it.

Practice Inductive Bible Study

Set aside at least 30 minutes for this exercise.

Work through this practice at least once.

1. Watch the [Bible Study Overview Video](#) below. A helpful [Inductive Study Guide PDF](#) is also provided, as well as additional [Bible Study Resources](#).
2. Inductive study works best with a study Bible, but if you don't have one, that's ok. Get your Bible ready, and your journal as well.
3. Open your Bible to **1 John 1**.

Take yourself through the passage slowly. Walk through the chapter step by step as the guide directs. Do not rush. Don't jump from one step to another quickly. Just when you think you've seen all you can see, press in a little farther before you move on; God might have even more for you if you stick around a while.

4. Journal your notes and what God reveals to you.



[Bible Study Overview Video](#)



[Inductive Study Guide PDF](#)



[Bible Study Resources](#)

RESPONSE

How is God speaking through your time in the Word?

Message your response to your discipler before moving on.

8: Lectio Divina

Divine Reading

Lectio Divina (Latin for “divine reading”) began with St. Benedict, and eventually evolved to include four distinct movements: Read (*lectio*), Meditate (*meditatio*), Pray (*oratio*), and Contemplate (*contemplatio*).

The purpose of this practice is not simply to know more of God’s Word or to memorize it (though that will happen as you practice), nor is it to study the context and make complex observations and connections as we do when we read inductively. The purpose of Lectio Divina is to position yourself for an encounter with the Living God; by slowly, methodically, dwelling on one small passage of scripture. Eugene Peterson would tell you to eat it—to devour it intentionally, to savor it bite by bite.

In Lectio Divina we stop on just one verse, or a small group of verses, for a sustained pause. This does not seem productive, nor does it promise a particular outcome. That is the point. Divine reading is a kind of “holy leisure” you can enjoy with God. You’re not in a hurry, and you don’t have to force this exercise to be meaningful. This is a practice. The only goal is to make room to be with God. This might be very new to you, but go all in anyway. Don’t take this too seriously, but do engage yourself in the experience. Think of this as an experiment with God.

Practice Lectio Divina

Set aside 20 minutes for this exercise.

OPEN

Have your journal ready. Choose one of the suggested passages, or select your own, and locate it in your Bible.

Genesis 16:6-15 / 2 Kings 6:8-17 / Psalm 22 / Psalm 73 /
Isaiah 43:14-19 / Matthew 3:13-17 / Mark 5:24-34 / Luke 11:1-13 /
John 10:3-14 / Ephesians 3:14-21

READ

Start by reading through the passage once, then again. Read it out loud if you can. Stretch out with it, get to know it a little. You might notice a few things as you do, but resist the urge to pull much from it right now; you're just warming up. Which words stick out to you as you read? If something resonates with you, stop on it before moving on.

MEDITATE

Now begin again, this time even more slowly. Do something different this time. Follow the words with your eyes, but imagine God reading the passage to you, word by word. Listen as he does. Hear his voice, how it rises and falls as he speaks. This might sound strange to you, but try it anyway. You've got nothing to lose. You're trying something new. Dwell on the words and phrases bit by bit. Perhaps you'll see something new you didn't expect. What do you feel? What's going on in your heart? Engage your imagination: what do you see?

PRAY

What do you need to say to God? Say it, then listen for his response. Give God room to answer. Talk back and forth together. Interact with God. If you need to give something up, cut it loose. If God is giving you something, take it. Don't rush.

CONTEMPLATE

Now tie a bow on what just happened. Take out your journal and write out the verse you've meditated on, then write down what God has been saying. Record the conversation so you can return to it later. Perhaps God is prompting you to do something: to send someone an encouraging text, or to make something right. Let what just happened in this practice move you to action today. God has spoken. What now? This is where the mysterious interaction of Lectio Divina gets practical. Take what God is doing and make it concrete somehow.

RESPONSE

How is God speaking through your time in the Word?

Message your response to your discipler before moving on.



COMPLETE THE OUTCOME

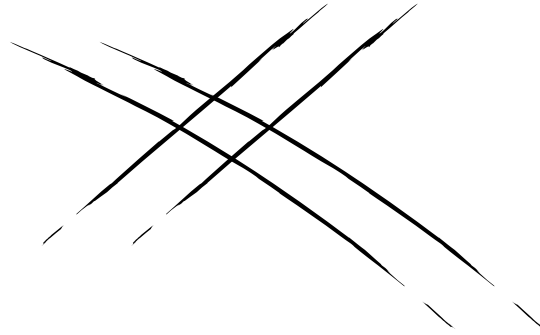
The outcome of this chapter is to form a meaningful rhythm of scripture reading and study.

Have you established a more clearly defined rhythm of scripture reading and study? Describe it below.



Discuss your response with your discipler.

When you both agree that the outcome is complete, you're ready to move on to the next chapter.



CHAPTER FIVE: HOSPITALITY

Extend hospitality to an outsider.



Find extra resources and audio
versions of the text at
discipleship.guide/hospitality.

1: Hospitality and the Life of Jesus

Hospitality and Evangelism

Jesus arguably did most of his ministry around tables. It seems like everywhere you look, he's sharing a meal with someone. Often, the people he was with were those you'd least expect. In an age where the people you ate with were a reflection on your social standing, it's clear that Jesus wasn't interested in maintaining his reputation among the elites. He makes this clear when he shows love to a despised tax collector and his sinful compatriots. Take a look:

“After this, Jesus went out and saw a tax collector by the name of Levi sitting at his tax booth. “Follow me,” Jesus said to him, and Levi got up, left everything and followed him. Then Levi held a great banquet for Jesus at his house, and a large crowd of tax collectors and others were eating with them. But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law who belonged to their sect complained to his disciples, “Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?” Jesus answered them, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance”

Luke 5:27–32 NIV

If the significance of this passage doesn't strike you, it's because you've grown so used to the notion that it's virtuous to be hospitable toward the marginalized. But it hasn't always been this way.

Bible scholar Donald Hagner helps us understand the significance of this: “Table fellowship in that culture was regarded as a very important symbol of the closeness, indeed the oneness, of those participating...For Jesus and his disciples to be at the same table with tax collectors and sinners implied a full acceptance of them.”

When Jesus sat at the table with Levi and his friends, he was saying to them, “you're with me.” As a result, their lives were changed.

We often don't realize this, but there is a strong correlation between hospitality and evangelism. When we think of evangelism, we might think

of people knocking on doors and sharing tracts. But this is not how Jesus went about it. Jesus got into the lives of people, and within a relationship of love, invited them to the gospel party. Ultimately, that's what hospitality is about—reaching out to those who are far from God and inviting them into a place where they can be known and loved. This is what Jesus followers have done for millennia, and it's how we're going to continue to change the world today.

JOURNAL

Have you ever had anyone evangelize you? How did it make you feel? What can you learn from it?

Does framing “evangelism” in terms of “hospitality” change your impression of it in any way? How?

RESPONSE

How might God be inviting you to grow in inviting others to know him?

Message your response to your discipler before moving on.

2: Person of Peace

Who's Open to What You Have to Say About God?

In Luke 10, Jesus sends seventy of his followers out to proclaim the kingdom of God. He warns them that some people will not receive their message, while others will receive it. Jesus refers to those who accept the message as “sons of peace.” If they find such a person of peace, Jesus instructs them to stay and do ministry among them. However, if someone doesn't receive them, Jesus is clear that they should move on. After all, receiving the gospel is a work of the Holy Spirit, and it's not our job to force people to believe. Finding your person of peace, therefore, is crucial.

A person of peace is simply someone who is open to what you have to say about God. Mike Breen writes that “A Person of Peace is one who is prepared to hear the message of the kingdom and the King.” They are happy to talk to you about things that may lean toward the spiritual. They are someone who may not know God, yet doesn't have a wall up either. It seems that Jesus teaches his followers to simply go with those people instead of spinning our wheels trying to reach those who don't want to hear it.

This understanding of evangelism can be quite helpful. It makes it clear that our job is NOT to convert people—that's God's job. Rather, our job is to be aware of those who are already sensitive to God's stirring. In evangelism, God does the work for us! We just have to have eyes and ears that are open to what God is doing.

So how do we find a “person of peace?” We have a great example of this in the story of Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8:25–40:

After testifying and preaching the word of the Lord in Samaria, Peter and John returned to Jerusalem. And they stopped in many Samaritan villages along the way to preach the Good News. As for Philip, an angel of the Lord said to him, "Go south down the desert road that runs from Jerusalem to Gaza."

So he started out, and he met the treasurer of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under the Kandake, the queen of Ethiopia. The eunuch had gone to Jerusalem to worship, and he was now returning. Seated in his carriage, he was reading aloud from the book of the prophet Isaiah. The Holy Spirit said to Philip, "Go over and walk along beside the carriage." Philip ran over and heard the man reading from the prophet Isaiah.

Philip asked, "Do you understand what you are reading?" The man replied, "How can I, unless someone instructs me?" And he urged Philip to come up into the carriage and sit with him.

The passage of Scripture he had been reading was this: "He was led like a sheep to the slaughter. And as a lamb is silent before the shearers, he did not open his mouth. He was humiliated and received no justice. Who can speak of his descendants? For his life was taken from the earth."

The eunuch asked Philip, "Tell me, was the prophet talking about himself or someone else?" So beginning with this same Scripture, Philip told him the Good News about Jesus. As they rode along, they came to some water, and the eunuch said, "Look! There's some water! Why can't I be baptized?" He ordered the carriage to stop, and they went down into the water, and Philip baptized him.

When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away. The eunuch never saw him again but went on his way rejoicing. Meanwhile, Philip found himself farther north at the town of Azotus. He preached the Good News there and in every town along the way until he came to Caesarea.

Acts 8:25–40 NIV

This story serves as a great model for evangelism. Notice the four steps that Philip takes in identifying and relating to this "person of peace:"

First, Philip is **sensitive to God's leading** (v. 26 and 29). Sure, in Philip's case, either an angel or God's Spirit appear to speak directly to him—which would certainly simplify things, wouldn't it? However, even if you don't hear an audible voice, that doesn't mean you can't also discern the voice of God. The more you pray about the people around you, the more attuned you'll become to the small promptings that can mean something big. Who is that person who repeatedly talks to you about God? Who is

that person who comes to you when they are hurting? Who is that person who you are uniquely positioned to help, or whom God has laid on your heart? These are all indications that God may be prompting us to speak to them about Jesus.

Second, Philip **responds to an invitation** (v.31). Once again, Philip seems to have it easy—after all, the eunuch literally asked him to explain the Bible to him! However, invitations can be more subtle than that too. Perhaps a coworker opens up to you about a difficulty, and you can offer to pray. Or perhaps a neighbor asks for your help with something, and it's a chance to speak into their life more. These invitations may be an indication of a person of peace—someone who wants to learn from you.

Third, Philip is **ready with biblical answers** (v.35). Now, this doesn't mean that we all have to be Bible scholars. However, it's a good idea for every Christian to know some helpful verses that can be given to someone with questions about the faith. (These four verses are a great place to start: Romans 8:38, Romans 6:23, Ephesians 2:4–5, 2 Corinthians 5:15.)

Last, Philip **pointed him to Jesus** (v.35). People today sometimes have (justifiable) problems with the church or with Christians. Our track record is far from spotless. However, numerous studies have shown that while people may have lost hope in the church, they've not lost interest in Jesus. Don't feel like you have to explain or defend everything about Christianity. Just share Jesus—and let the Holy Spirit do the rest.

So start asking God to open your eyes to the people of peace in your life. These people are those who seem open to you and willing to hear what you have to say about God. God is already at work in them. Our job is to simply be obedient.

JOURNAL

Who is a “person of peace”?

Were you ever curious about Jesus? Did anyone help you find him?

RESPONSE

Who are the people of peace in your life right now?
What will you do next to connect with them?

Message your response to your discipler before moving on.

3: Making Room

Bringing Outsiders In

“When God’s people are in need, be ready to help them. Always be eager to practice hospitality.”

Romans 12:13 NIV

“Keep on loving each other as brothers and sisters. Don’t forget to show hospitality to strangers, for some who have done this have entertained angels without realizing it! Remember those in prison, as if you were there yourself. Remember also those being mistreated, as if you felt their pain in your own bodies.”

Hebrews 13:1-3 NIV

“That is why the Good News was preached to those who are now dead—so although they were destined to die like all people, they now live forever with God in the Spirit. The end of the world is coming soon. Therefore, be earnest and disciplined in your prayers. Most important of all, continue to show deep love for each other, for love covers a multitude of sins. Cheerfully share your home with those who need a meal or a place to stay.”

1 Peter 4:6-9 NIV

“The credibility of our faith depends on the quality of our hospitality.”

Jon Tyson

The gospel is the good news that God’s kingdom has come through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, who now rules over all. Therefore, we can be forgiven for our rebellion and enjoy a life with God in His kingdom. In other words, “Good news! Jesus is here. You’re not kicked out; you’re in.” Evangelism happens every time we invite someone in to life with Jesus. And when they take us up on that, they don’t just get a seat at the table; they’re one of the family. They make themselves at home. They’re not an outsider anymore. They’re in. That’s what God did for you, and, good news, you get to make room for everybody else to join in too. The good stuff never runs out with God, so invite everyone you can. There’s always more than enough to go around. This is how disciples are made. Disciples are children of God in the family of God, always eager to fill up seats at the table.

When the kingdom of Jesus takes over our hearts, we don’t just get forgiven; we get a meal and a family. And it’s all so good, we’re constantly

inviting more people in. We can't help it. Nobody should miss out. Jesus is so full, there's always more to share. That's the spirit of hospitality. No matter who you are, you're wanted here. There's room for you. You have a place with us. There are no strangers in the family of God, just friends we don't know yet.

Fred Rogers wrote, "When your heart has room for everybody, then your heart is full of love." God's love has room for everybody. God's love is unconditional, and if you've received it, you're called to let that love change you and move out of you to others. Everywhere, to everyone. No exclusions.

Love is not earned, so it can't be given out based on merit. God is not only loving, God is love (1 John 4:8). Life with God is a life of generous, unconditional love. We are called to be peacemakers (Romans 12:18). Hostility is a sense of opposition or resistance to someone or something. Disciples don't choose to live in hostility toward God or anyone else.

Is any part of your heart hostile to God? Do you ever keep God out or push him away? Is any part of you hostile toward a person, or a group of people? Are you shutting out anyone who needs to be welcomed in? When your heart has room for everybody, then your heart is full of love.

Who is invited to your table? Who has eaten with you at your table this year? How about your relationships? Have you had a falling out with anyone that's left division between you? Are you willing to ask God to mend it? If your heart won't make room for everyone, then to some degree, all the love you give is conditional. You're making a judgement call, deciding who is worthy of love, and who is not. You're deciding who you have room for. This is not the way of Jesus.

To stretch this even further, we are not only called to actively love those we know, but to live with open invitation to strangers, foreigners, and outsiders. Romans 12:13 says, "When God's people are in need, be ready to help them. Always be eager to practice hospitality." The Greek word for hospitality in this verse is *philoxenia*. It means, "to receive and show hospitality to a stranger, that is, someone who is not regarded as a member of the extended family or a close friend."

To show biblical hospitality is to receive a stranger as a guest. In sharing what is most dear to us, a moment of conversion happens: someone we once identified as a stranger is welcomed as a guest and is transformed into a friend.

This is our own story as we were once outside the family of God, and have been welcomed in. God commands us to live out that story again and again with one another.

So how do we live this out? God is love, and he has the capacity to demonstrate active, perfect love to every person, all the time. God can do that. Love is not only what God does; it's who he is. He never gets tired. But when God commands us to love others, he isn't asking us to spread ourselves thin, or wear ourselves out trying to do his job for him. We aren't called to actively minister to every person on the planet all at once. But we are called to be open and generous. All the time. God is calling us to live out the spirit of hospitality with the people in front of us; ready to make room for anyone, at any time.

Hospitality is a position of the heart. Is your heart open? Are your hands ready? God is calling us to take a generous approach to everything we do, seeing this world and the people in it like he does. God isn't asking us to exhaust ourselves by taking care of everyone. He's calling us to keep the door open and a seat ready at our table. He's calling us to keep a reserve ready of all the goods we have (our food, our clothing, our money) so we are always ready to share with those in need.

We don't love out of our own ability, and love rarely makes sense or seems fair. We love as we allow the life of Jesus in us to spill over to others. Your capacity to act is limited, but your ability to love unconditionally is not. Jesus will empower you to love like he does, if you let him.

JOURNAL

Xenophobia is defined as, “fear and hatred of strangers or foreigners or of anything that is strange or foreign.” It essentially means, “stranger fearing.” Consider every kind of “difference” you can think of between yourself and others. Think about cultural, political, and religious differences, but also differences in personality, lifestyle, etc.

Have you ever experienced a fear of the “other”? If so, how? Who makes you uncomfortable? Who do you avoid? Why?

When have you been an outsider, and who invited you in? When have you been the recipient of a gift of generosity? What difference did that make in your life? If this applies, consider writing that person a letter right now, or reaching out to them with a text or phone call. Thank them for welcoming you in, and helping you when you needed it.

RESPONSE

How would you define evangelism? How would you define biblical hospitality? How are they related?

Message your response to your discipler before moving on.

Practice Hospitality

Choose at least one practice, or do all three.

PRACTICE 1: PRAY

Marjorie Thompson explains that, “When we intercede for others in prayer, we welcome them into our inmost sanctuary of compassion. We participate in the spacious hospitality of God’s grace for each person.

Since hospitality has a special place for the stranger, praying for our enemies (inside or outside the church) is a most fitting expression of the heart’s hospitality.”

Who will you intercede for daily for one week?

PRACTICE 2: CROSS THE THRESHOLD

Alan Hirsch writes, “If every Christian family in the world simply offered good conversational hospitality around a table once a week to neighbors we would eat our way into the kingdom of God.”

Identify someone in your life who feels like an “other”, where some sort of invisible barrier exists between you, and invite them across your threshold (figuratively or hopefully, literally). If the first one or two people you invite refuse you or can’t make it, find someone else.

PRACTICE 3: MAKE ROOM FOR GENEROSITY

Ask God if there is any way you are withholding generosity from someone by not giving what you can. Where are you keeping extras for yourself instead of sharing with those who don’t have access to what you do?

How will you make more room for generosity?

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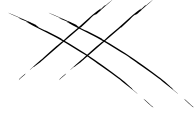
.Which practice(s) did you complete this week?

What were the results?

RESPONSE

What was most challenging about this experience? What might God be revealing through it?

Message your response to your discipler before moving on.



COMPLETE THE OUTCOME

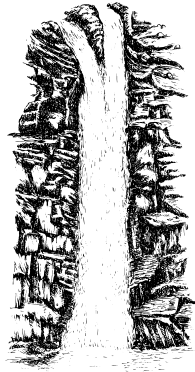
The outcome of this chapter is to extend hospitality to an outsider.

How have you practiced biblical hospitality during this chapter? Describe it below.



Discuss your response with your discipler.

When you both agree that the outcome is complete, you're ready to move on to the next chapter.



CHAPTER SIX: JUSTICE

Identify a justice calling and take a concrete action step.



Find extra resources and audio
versions of the text at
discipleship.guide/justice.

1: Justice and the Life of Jesus

A Foundation of Justice

In Luke 4, Jesus stands in the synagogue and announces his ministry with these words from the prophet Isaiah:

“The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

Luke 4:18–19 NIV

Right from the beginning, we see that Jesus ministry is built on a foundation of justice. Notably, Jesus ends this reading with a reference to “the year of the Lord’s favor.” What does this mean?

You’ve probably heard of the word “Sabbath,” which comes from the Old Testament. Sabbath was the seventh day of the week, when all people were to rest and honor God. One of the unique elements of Sabbath is that even slaves and animals were required to rest (Exodus 20:10). In the ancient world, this was unheard of!

There weren’t only Sabbath days. There were also Sabbath years. Every 7 years was a Sabbath year, where the land was not to be tilled and all were to be at rest. Then, every 50 years there was what was called a year of Jubilee, where debts were cancelled and everyone returned to their ancestor’s land. Another term for the year of Jubilee is Jesus’ phrase, “the year of the Lord’s favor.” Jubilee was like a Sabbath of Sabbaths: those who had nothing were given back their land.

What we see here is that Sabbath brought wholeness back to people’s lives. Those who were drowning in debt found freedom. Those who were overworked found rest. Those who were poor were allowed to harvest from the fields that were lying fallow. It was a time for the oppressed to find

release. Sabbath isn't just about rest. It's about justice.

When Jesus announces his ministry with Sabbath language ("the year of the Lord's favor"), we should remember that he wasn't just saying souls would find rest in him (though that's true). He was building his ministry upon a foundation of justice, where wrongs would be made right.

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Biblical peace is more than the absence of conflict; it's restoring something until it is whole again.

How might you be called to bring shalom to the world? Consider the following questions to begin fleshing that out (and don't worry, you'll continue to talk about this throughout the chapter. Just begin.)

What injustices have you suffered yourself?

What injustices disturb you the most?

For whom do you feel the most compassion?

What do you think Jesus showed the most concern for?

What fractured relationships or habits are present in your life that need peace?

RESPONSE

Have you seen God restore something in your life to wholeness?
Is there a situation or relationship you are praying to be made whole?

Message your response to your discipler before moving on.

2. Justice in the Bible and the Church

Biblical Justice and Wesleyan Tradition

Set aside about 20 minutes to watch both videos and journal a response.

THE BIBLE PROJECT

First, watch this short but powerful [video](#) from The Bible Project. It's a brilliant overview of biblical justice; you may want to watch it twice!



THE WESLEYAN MOVEMENT

Next, watch this [video](#) from The Wesleyan Church. The Methodist Movement is rooted in radical justice and the impact is still sparking renewal today.

JOURNAL 1

How do you think our culture defines justice?

How would you define biblical justice?

How does biblical justice inform the choices you make and how you respond to injustice in the world? What does this mean for you as a Jesus follower?

How do justice and holiness move together in our everyday lives?

RESPONSE

What did these videos stir in you?
How does your love for Jesus compel you to act in the world?

Message your response to your discipler before moving on.

IDENTIFY A JUSTICE CALLING

Set aside at least 30 minutes for this exercise.

READ

Amos 5:24, Isaiah 58:3–6, Micah 6:8, and James 1:27.

PRAY

Ask God to give you his heart for justice.

IDENTIFY

Perhaps you've heard of the "Five Giants of Injustice": spiritual emptiness, oppression, illiteracy, disease, and poverty. These giants are the source of essentially every form of injustice, in one way or another. Which one stirs you the most? Why?

Do you have a job or position, skill, relationship, experience, or interest that might make you a natural part of the solution for any of these giants? How?

Does any one particular issue of injustice make you particularly sad, frustrated, or motivated? Do you have a clear means of addressing that issue in your everyday life?

RESPONSE

Name one area of injustice you are convicted to pursue further.
Choose at least one concrete action step you can accomplish right now and complete it before moving on.

Message your response to your discipler before moving on.



COMPLETE THE OUTCOME

The outcome of this chapter is to identify a justice calling and take a concrete action step.

What justice calling have you pursued during this chapter and how did you act on it?



Discuss your response with your discipler.

When you both agree that the outcome is complete, you're ready to move on to the next chapter.



CHAPTER SEVEN: MAKE DISCIPLES

Extend an invitation to discipleship.

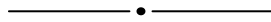


Find extra resources and audio
versions of the text at
discipleship.guide/makedisciples.

1: Discipleship and the Life of Jesus

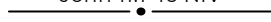
Unlikely Multipliers

We're going to look at discipleship in the life of Jesus through one of Jesus' followers named Thomas. Thomas may be one of the more overlooked disciple-makers in the Bible. Let's begin in John 11:1–16:



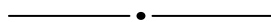
Now a man named Lazarus was sick. He was from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. (This Mary, whose brother Lazarus now lay sick, was the same one who poured perfume on the Lord and wiped his feet with her hair.) So the sisters sent word to Jesus, "Lord, the one you love is sick." When he heard this, Jesus said, "This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God's glory so that God's Son may be glorified through it." Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. So when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was two more days, and then he said to his disciples, "Let us go back to Judea." "But Rabbi," they said, "a short while ago the Jews there tried to stone you, and yet you are going back?" Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Anyone who walks in the daytime will not stumble, for they see by this world's light. It is when a person walks at night that they stumble, for they have no light." After he had said this, he went on to tell them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going there to wake him up." His disciples replied, "Lord, if he sleeps, he will get better." Jesus had been speaking of his death, but his disciples thought he meant natural sleep. So then he told them plainly, "Lazarus is dead, and for your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him." Then Thomas (also known as Didymus) said to the rest of the disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him."

John 11:1–16 NIV



Notice Thomas' **zeal**—he's willing to go to Judea and risk being killed for Jesus' sake!

Next, read John 14:1–6:



"Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going." Thomas said to him,

“Lord, we don’t know where you are going, so how can we know the way?”
Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the
Father except through me.

John 14:1–6 NIV

Here Thomas is portrayed as **confused** and unable to grasp Jesus’ point.

Next, read John 20:20–25:



After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were
overjoyed when they saw the Lord.

Again Jesus said, “Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending
you.” And with that he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you
forgive anyone’s sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are
not forgiven.”

Now Thomas (also known as Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the
disciples when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the
Lord!”

But he said to them, “Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger
where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.”

John 20:20–25 NIV



This takes place immediately after Jesus’ resurrection. At this point, the
zeal has totally faded, and now we see why Thomas has received the
nickname that he’s most known by: “Doubting Thomas.”

Finally, let’s read John 20:26–29:

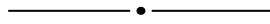


A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them.

Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said,
“Peace be with you!” Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here; see my
hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.”

Thomas said to him, “My Lord and my God!”
Then Jesus told him, “Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”

John 20:26–29 NIV



Thomas finally sees the resurrected Christ, puts his hands in his side, and **believes**. Once he finally believes, Thomas cries out, “My Lord and my God!” This cry was more than just an excited acclamation of faith.

An ancient historian recorded the fact that the emperor Domitian—who was no friend to Christians—demanded to be referred to as “Our Lord and Our God.” Additionally, we’ve found the remains of what NT Wright calls a “positively enormous statue of Domitian” in the ancient city of Ephesus, which is where many believe the book of John was written.

Thomas took the propaganda of the mighty emperor, in the shadow of his statue, and applied it not to Domitian, but to Jesus Christ. So what does all this mean?

John is telling us—through Doubting Thomas—that Jesus is above everything, even the mighty emperor Domitian. He’s using Domitian’s own slogan to proclaim the truth of Jesus Christ. He’s also showing us that in that moment, something fundamentally changed in Thomas.

His commitment to Jesus was once as unpredictable as the waves on the ocean. Now, he’s seen the risen Lord—and has placed him above all else. We don’t hear from Thomas again in the Bible (aside from a couple brief mentions of his name). However, we can be sure something big changed for him in that moment. Why? Because apparently Thomas traveled east and planted a church in India which still exists today.

The Syrian Christians of India trace their history back to this apostle, who left all he knew to travel to a distant land and make disciples. 2000 years of a disciple making legacy: not bad for a doubter, is it?

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Do you doubt your ability to disciple someone? What does Thomas' story have to say about that?

If you have no idea who you might disciple, what specific kinds of prayers do you need to start praying regularly?

RESPONSE

Have you had a “my Lord and my God” sort of moment, where you finally surrender everything to God?

Message your response to your discipler before moving on.

2: The Formation of a Disciple

Following Jesus

Listen to [this message](#) from Table Church on the four stages of discipleship, then journal your responses to the questions below.



1. This sermon traced the formation of the 12 disciples throughout the Book of Mark. We identified four Stages of Discipleship throughout the text: Show Me, Let Me, Break Me, Send Me. Give a brief description of each of the 4 Stages of Discipleship.
2. The point of this message is that the Church often stops short in the disciple making process— but we need to learn to go the whole way. What does it mean to “go the whole way” in making disciples?
3. “Your faith is not there to alleviate your suffering. It’s there to help you suffer well.” Has your faith helped you suffer well? How?
4. Have you endured a Stage 3 (“Break Me”) season in life? How did you grow in the way of Jesus through that experience?

5. "In Stage 4, the question of success or failure is largely irrelevant." What does this mean? What could be more important than success for a disciple of Jesus?

RESPONSE

Stage 3 is not simply enduring suffering, but enduring suffering *because you follow Jesus*. Have you ever experienced hardship because you are a disciple of Jesus?

Message your response to your discipler before moving on.



COMPLETE THE OUTCOME

The outcome of this chapter is to extend an invitation to discipleship.

Who have you invited to discipleship? When and how will you begin?



Discuss your response with your discipler.

When you both agree that the outcome is complete, you're ready to move on to the next chapter.



Submit your completion form and
listen to a benediction from Phil
and Megan at
[discipleship.guide/finishline.](https://discipleship.guide/finishline)

JOURNAL

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LIFE THEME: WORDS THAT MOVE

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LIFE THEME: AWAKENING HEARTS AND MINDS TO THE WORDS OF GOD



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