

A DEEPER WALK



Rev. Casey Shorr

GRIP

Author: Rev. Casey Shorr

Materials produced and distributed by the Mesoamerica Region of the Church of the Nazarene

Address: 125 metros este de los Tanques AyA, carretera a Ipis, dentro del Seminario Nazareno, Guadalupe

Goicochea de San José, Costa Rica

Telephone: 506-2285-0867 extension 107 (for David Webb)

Email: dwebb@mesoamericaregion.org

Printed in Costa Rica

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version® (NIV)® Copyright © 1973, 1974, 1984

A DEEPER WALK

GRowing Inwardly and Personally (GRIP)

Connecting with God... Connecting with Others

New Testament Character Studies

INTRODUCTION

If you are new to G.R.I.P. :

Spiritual Formation is simply the process whereby Christians develop greater spiritual depth and maturity by practicing the spiritual disciplines of Bible reading, prayer, journaling, meditation and Scripture memorization. This fourth semester of **G.R.I.P.** continues the practice of these personal devotional habits in the context of exploring the lives and spiritual experiences of key Bible characters in the New Testament.

While it is not essential to have already completed previous **G.R.I.P.** studies to benefit from this workbook, it is helpful for participants to have a working knowledge of the key concepts and disciplines learned in previous **G.R.I.P.** semesters. If this is your first semester of this sort of spiritual formation work, have your instructor or another classmate explain to you the fundamentals of the spiritual disciplines and the goals of the daily devotional work.

In these lessons, the participant will respond to questions specific to the day's reading, and will identify each day's theme and key concepts to apply in meditation and prayer.

When the **G.R.I.P.** group participants gather together weekly for discussion, the aim is for each person to be prepared, as best they can, to share at least one thing that God has shown them personally during the week. In this way all may benefit and grow from the shared spiritual journey of the group.

May the Lord bless you richly as you abide with him daily and draw closer to him in everything.

Week 1	Zechariah & Elizabeth	The God of the Impossible	Memory Verse: Luke 1:37
Week 2	John the Baptist	A Herald of the King	Memory Verse: John 3:30
Week 3	Simon Peter (part 1)	A Fisherman of Faith	Memory Verse: Matthew 18:21-22
Week 4	Simon Peter (part 2)	From Fisherman to Shepherd	Memory Verse: Acts 2:36
Week 5	Philip	Following in Faith	Memory Verse: John 14:21
Week 6	John the Disciple	The Disciple Who Jesus Loved	Memory Verse: 1 John 1:6-7
Week 7	Saul / Paul (part 1)	From Pharisee to Faithfulness	Memory Verse: Romans 8:28
Week 8	Saul / Paul (part 2)	A Man of Missions and Ministry	Memory Verse: Acts 26:17-18
Week 9	Timothy	The Minister and Ministry	Memory Verse: 2 Timothy 4:2-4
Week 10	Encounters with Jesus	Choices and Challenges	Memory Verse: Luke 9:23-24
Week 11	Early Church Encounters	Faces of Faith and Failure	Memory Verse: 1 Peter 2:9
Week 12	Mary	Mother of Jesus	Memory Verse: Luke 1:49-50

G.R.I.P.

New Testament Character Studies

MEMORY VERSE

For Week 1

*Nothing is impossible
with God.*

Luke 1:37

G.R.I.P.

New Testament Character Studies

Week 1 Zechariah and Elizabeth: The God of the Impossible

Day 1 – A Prophet from the Priesthood (part 1)

The greatest thing a human soul ever does in this world is to see something, and tell what it saw in a plain way. Hundreds of people can talk for one who can think, but thousands can think for one who can see. To see clearly is poetry, prophecy, and religion, all in one. John Ruskin

Read this Bible passage slowly and deliberately.

Luke 1:5-25 In the time of Herod king of Judea there was a priest named Zechariah, who belonged to the priestly division of Abijah; his wife Elizabeth was also a descendant of Aaron. **6** Both of them were upright in the sight of God, observing all the Lord's commandments and regulations blamelessly. **7** But they had no children, because Elizabeth was barren; and they were both well along in years. **8** Once when Zechariah's division was on duty and he was serving as priest before God, **9** he was chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, to go into the temple of the Lord and burn incense. **10** And when the time for the burning of incense came, all the assembled worshipers were praying outside. **11** Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. **12** When Zechariah saw him, he was startled and was gripped with fear. **13** But the angel said to him: "Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to give him the name John. **14** He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth, **15** for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even from birth. **16** Many of the people of Israel will he bring back to the Lord their God. **17** And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous--to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

What do we know about John the Baptist's parents from this passage?

His father Zechariah was a _____ who served at the _____,
and his mother Elizabeth was descended from _____.

Why would John's lineage be significant to the Jews who read or heard this story?

How does this passage describe the character of Zechariah and Elizabeth?

What two important details are we given about Elizabeth's physical condition, and why are they important to the story?

1. _____ 2. _____

Study these verses about the importance of prophets and their words in the Bible.

Exodus 7:1-2 Joel 2:28-29 1 Samuel 3:19-20 Isaiah 38:1-8

Everyone is affected by their family history, either genetically or socially. How has your family history affected your spiritual development? Does it still?

John was born into a godly family. If you were called by God to raise a prophet, what things that you do now would enhance or inhibit that effort?

Meditate by imagining that you were responsible for raising a great prophet of God. Would that cause you to arrange your life differently than you do now?

JOURNAL: List two positive characteristics and two negative characteristics you have inherited from your upbringing. What would God have you do with them?

Pray for a willing spirit, that God would use you today despite your faults and flaws.

Recite Luke 1:37 and work on it throughout the week.

G.R.I.P.

New Testament Character Studies

Week 1 Zechariah and Elizabeth: The God of the Impossible

Day 2 – A Prophet from the Priesthood (part 2)

Too many times we miss so much because we live on the low level of the natural, the ordinary, the explainable. We leave no room for God to do the exceeding abundant thing above all that we can ask or think. Vance Havner

Read this Bible passage slowly and deliberately.

Luke 1:5-25 In the time of Herod king of Judea there was a priest named Zechariah, who belonged to the priestly division of Abijah; his wife Elizabeth was also a descendant of Aaron. **6** Both of them were upright in the sight of God, observing all the Lord's commandments and regulations blamelessly. **7** But they had no children, because Elizabeth was barren; and they were both well along in years. **8** Once when Zechariah's division was on duty and he was serving as priest before God, **9** he was chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, to go into the temple of the Lord and burn incense. **10** And when the time for the burning of incense came, all the assembled worshipers were praying outside. **11** Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. **12** When Zechariah saw him, he was startled and was gripped with fear. **13** But the angel said to him: "Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to give him the name John. **14** He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth, **15** for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even from birth. **16** Many of the people of Israel will he bring back to the Lord their God. **17** And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous--to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." **18** Zechariah asked the angel, "How can I be sure of this? I am an old man and my wife is well along in years." **19** The angel answered, "I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to tell you this good news. **20** And now you will be silent and not able to speak until the day this happens, because you did not believe my words, which will come true at their proper time." **21** Meanwhile, the people were waiting for Zechariah and wondering why he stayed so long in the temple. **22** When he came out, he could not speak to them. They realized he had seen a vision in the temple, for he kept making signs to them but remained unable to speak. **23** When his time of service was completed, he returned home. **24** After this his wife Elizabeth became pregnant and for five months remained in seclusion. **25** "The Lord has done this for me," she said. "In these days he has shown his favor and taken away my disgrace among the people."

Where did the angel appear to Zechariah? What was his initial reaction?

List eight things the angel foretold about the child to be born to Zechariah.

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

Study these verses about God doing miracles in the lives of his people.

Exodus 15:25 1 Kings 17:22 2 Kings 4:5 Luke 17:12-14

In your own words, write out what the purpose and mission of Zechariah's son was to be, and who he was to become in relation to the people of Israel.

What was Zechariah's main reason for skepticism about what the angel said? What was the consequence of his unbelief?

What was Elizabeth's reaction to her pregnancy? Why do you think she remained in seclusion for five months?

Meditate upon the awesome, miraculous power of God. How has he revealed himself in powerful ways to you over the course of your life?

JOURNAL: List several family members and friends close to you who are not Christian believers. What ways might the Lord use you to influence them toward a real, saving faith in God?

Pray a prayer of thanks for the miracle of God's relationship with you.

Recite Luke 1:37 and recite it throughout the day.

G.R.I.P.

New Testament Character Studies

Week 1 Zechariah and Elizabeth: The God of the Impossible

Day 3 - A Name from the Lord

The world is not lacking in wonders, but in a sense of wonder. G.K. Chesterton.

Read this Bible passage slowly and deliberately.

Luke 1:57-66 When it was time for Elizabeth to have her baby, she gave birth to a son. **58** Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown her great mercy, and they shared her joy. **59** On the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to name him after his father Zechariah, **60** but his mother spoke up and said, "No! He is to be called John." **61** They said to her, "There is no one among your relatives who has that name." **62** Then they made signs to his father, to find out what he would like to name the child. **63** He asked for a writing tablet, and to everyone's astonishment he wrote, "His name is John." **64** Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue was loosed, and he began to speak, praising God. **65** The neighbors were all filled with awe, and throughout the hill country of Judea people were talking about all these things. **66** Everyone who heard this wondered about it, asking, "What then is this child going to be?" For the Lord's hand was with him.

How did Elizabeth's relatives view the birth of her son? Why?

Who do you think are the "they" mentioned in verse 59? Why do you think "they" ignored Elizabeth's statement about the baby's name, and asked Zechariah?

When Zechariah confirmed John's name by writing it down, he was able to speak. Why do you think this happened at exactly that moment?

List the various reactions to the naming of John.

Zechariah: _____ Neighbors: _____

People of Judea: _____

Everyone who heard: _____

Study these other examples of God deciding the names of special people in the Bible.

Genesis 16:11 Genesis 17:19 2 Samuel 12:24-25 Hosea 1:6 Matthew 1:21

Meditate by remembering the names you have been called, both harmful and helpful. Imagine God personally speaking to you, naming you as his friend, as one he loves.

JOURNAL: Have you ever had to “go against the flow” by doing something you know God wants you to do, yet realizing your friends and family would not understand? Does this still happen in your life? When and how?

Pray by thanking the Lord for knowing you not only by name, but by your heart.

Recite Luke 1:37 and recite it throughout the day.

G.R.I.P.

New Testament Character Studies

Week 1 Zechariah and Elizabeth: The God of the Impossible

Day 4 – The Prayer of Zechariah (part 1)

Angels listen for your songs, for your voice rises to the very gates of heaven when you praise God. Frances J. Roberts

He who does not praise God while here on earth shall in eternity be dumb. Jan Van Ruysbroeck (1293-1381)

Read this Bible passage slowly and deliberately.

Luke 1:67-79 His father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied: **68** "Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has come and has redeemed his people. **69** He has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David **70** (as he said through his holy prophets of long ago), **71** salvation from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us-- **72** to show mercy to our fathers and to remember his holy covenant, **73** the oath he swore to our father Abraham: **74** to rescue us from the hand of our enemies, and to enable us to serve him without fear **75** in holiness and righteousness before him all our days. **76** And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High; for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him, **77** to give his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins, **78** because of the tender mercy of our God, by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven **79** to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace."

What prompted Zechariah to this outburst of prophetic praise (verse 67)?

Who was Zechariah's prophecy about, and what did it have to do with him?

List seven things Zechariah praises the Lord for doing for his people Israel.

What God has done	Verse reference
<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>

Study these verses which refer to the Lord being our salvation.

Psalm 18:46-49 Psalm 68:19-20 Exodus 15:1-3 Isaiah 49:5-10

Meditate by imagining yourself lost in a deep forest or desolate desert, or adrift in the open sea. Now think of God himself coming to rescue you, and the joy you share in it.

JOURNAL: Think of at least three times when God has stepped in and rescued you from a difficult situation or time in your life. How did it change the way you related to him at the time? Has it shaped your relationship with him today?

Pray writing out a prayer of thanks for God's deliverance throughout your life.

Recite Luke 1:37 and recite it throughout the day.

G.R.I.P.

New Testament Character Studies

Week 1 Zechariah and Elizabeth: The God of the Impossible

Day 5 – The Prayer of Zechariah (part 2)

Prayer – secret, fervent, believing prayer – lies at the root of all personal godliness. William Cary

Read this Bible passage slowly and deliberately.

Luke 1:76-79 And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High; for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him, **77** to give his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins, **78** because of the tender mercy of our God, by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven **79** to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace."

Who is Zechariah talking about here? What title does he predict he will have?

List two things Zechariah predicts that the prophet will do as part of his mission.

1. _____

2. _____

What characteristic of God is mentioned as the reason for man's salvation?

What do you think Zechariah means in referring to the "rising sun"?

In your own words, what does verse 79 mean for our world today?

Study these verses that parallel the prophetic "*preparation*" theme in this passage.

Isaiah 40:3 Isaiah 62:10 Malachi 3:1 Matthew 3:1-3

Meditate by envisioning the world being slowly and steadily enveloped by the darkness of sin. In your mind, imagine the light of the gospel in the lives of believers pushing back the darkness and shining light throughout the nations.

JOURNAL: List some people who helped “prepare the way” for you spiritually. How did they do it? Now list some people to whom you can be a “preparer.” How do you think you might do it?

Pray a prayer of thanks for all the ways you have been prepared for your spiritual journey. Pray that you can be as faithful in helping to prepare others.

Recite Luke 1:37 and recite it throughout the day.

Zechariah and Elizabeth: The God of the Impossible

Spiritual Summary – *Week 1*

Do you think God still speaks through people like he did through John? Explain why you think so.

Why do you think God chooses to work through seemingly impossible circumstances in people's lives?

What do you think Zechariah's inability to speak tells us about our own skepticism about how God can work in our lives?

How easy is it for you to express your joy in the Christian hope the way Zechariah did in his prayer? Why is this true of you?

Has God shown you any new truth this week? What is it?

G.R.I.P.

New Testament Character Studies

MEMORY VERSE

For Week 2

*He must become greater;
I must become less.*

John 3:30

G.R.I.P.

New Testament Character Studies

***Week 2* John the Baptist: A Herald of the King**

Day 1 – A Voice in the Desert

Confession, which means to agree with God regarding our sin, restores our fellowship. It is a form of discipline which God requires. Erwin W. Lutzer (1941-)

An unrepented sin is a continued sin. Corrie ten Boom (1892-1983)

Read this Bible passage slowly and deliberately.

Matthew 3:1-12 In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the Desert of Judea **2** and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near." **3** This is he who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah: "A voice of one calling in the desert, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.'" **4** John's clothes were made of camel's hair, and he had a leather belt around his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey. **5** People went out to him from Jerusalem and all Judea and the whole region of the Jordan. **6** Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River. **7** But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where he was baptizing, he said to them: "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? **8** Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. **9** And do not think you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. **10** The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire. **11** "I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me will come one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. **12** His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor, gathering his wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

What three responses from people were the focus of John's preaching?

He called them to _____, they _____ their sins, and were _____.

Why do you think John said what he did to the Pharisees in verses 7-8?

Explain in your own words what you think verses 9-10 meant to the Pharisees. What does it mean to us now? Be as specific as you can in your answer.

In verses 11-12, who is John talking about, and what does he say he will do?

Study these scripture passages dealing with confession and repentance.

Isaiah 55:7 Ezekiel 18:21 Acts 2:38 2 Corinthians 7:10

Meditate by thinking of the worst thing anyone has ever done to you. Have you forgiven them? Now think of the worst thing you have ever done to anyone else. Have you asked forgiveness of both God and the person you wronged? Imagine in your mind that these things happen, even if they haven't happened in reality. Then make a plan, if possible, to go beyond the imagination arena and make it happen in real life.

JOURNAL: In your spiritual journey, have confession and repentance of sin come easily to you, or has it been a learned behavior? How readily do you repent at this point in your walk with God? How could you improve in this area?

Pray for a sensitive spirit, that you might always repent quickly and confess readily.

Recite John 3:30 now, and work on it throughout the week.

G.R.I.P.

New Testament Character Studies

Week 2 John the Baptist: A Herald of the King

Day 2 - The Baptizer

Baptism points back to the work of God, and forward to the life of faith. J. Alice Motyer

In baptism, the Christian is born. His old self is buried and the new self emerges. Whether in the case of infants or adults, baptism signifies this more as a promise than as an actually fulfilled fact. The direction is indicated rather than the arrival. Friedrich Rest (1913-)

Read this Bible passage slowly and deliberately.

Matthew 3:13-17 Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. **14** But John tried to deter him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" **15** Jesus replied, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness." Then John consented. **16** As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him. **17** And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."

Note: *While Jesus desired to be baptized and allowed John to perform the baptism, it was not necessary at all. Jesus led a sinless life (Hebrews 4:15) as a man, and was in fact himself completely divine. As a result, true confession and repentance were not only irrelevant to him personally, but impossible.*

John recognized that something was odd about this whole scenario. Explain.

Why do you think Jesus decided to be baptized by John (verse 15)?

What three supernatural things happened when Jesus was baptized?

What two emotions does verse 17 tell us God possesses?

Note: This is a very unique and important passage in the New Testament. It is one of the most clear evidences of the “God in Three Persons” that we sing about in the Doxology. These verses clearly show simultaneous and individual personal actions by all three members of the Trinity, and so is a great proof text of the Trinitarian doctrine that is a fundamental and non-negotiable tenet of the Christian faith.

Write the phrase from today’s text with the member of the Trinity it reflects.

<u>Person of God</u>	<u>Phrase</u>	<u>Verse</u>
The Heavenly Father	_____	_____
The Son	_____	_____
The Holy Spirit	_____	_____

Study these verses dealing with the concept of baptism.

Matthew 28:19 Acts 22:16 Romans 6:3 Galatians 3:27 Colossians 2:10

Meditate by imagining that you were asked to baptize Jesus. Think of how unworthy you would feel, and what a powerful emotional experience it would be.

JOURNAL: Have you ever been baptized? Was it as an adult, or as a child? What did the experience mean to you then? What does it mean to you now? If you have not been baptized, would you consider it? Why or why not?

Pray a prayer of thanks for the resurrection in Christ that your baptism represents.

Recite John 3:30 now, and work on it throughout the week.

G.R.I.P.

New Testament Character Studies

***Week 2* John the Baptist: A Herald of the King**

Day 3 – Divine Messenger

Always take the lowest place, and the highest will be given to you, for high structures require a solid foundation. The greatest, in the judgment of God, are the least in their own opinion; the more worthy they are, the more humility will be seen in them. Thomas À Kempis (C. 1380-1471)

Read this Bible passage slowly and deliberately.

John 3:22-36 After this, Jesus and his disciples went out into the Judean countryside, where he spent some time with them, and baptized. **23** Now John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, because there was plenty of water, and people were constantly coming to be baptized. **24** (This was before John was put in prison.) **25** An argument developed between some of John's disciples and a certain Jew over the matter of ceremonial washing. **26** They came to John and said to him, "Rabbi, that man who was with you on the other side of the Jordan--the one you testified about--well, he is baptizing, and everyone is going to him." **27** To this John replied, "A man can receive only what is given him from heaven. **28** You yourselves can testify that I said, 'I am not the Christ but am sent ahead of him.' **29** The bride belongs to the bridegroom. The friend who attends the bridegroom waits and listens for him, and is full of joy when he hears the bridegroom's voice. That joy is mine, and it is now complete. **30** He must become greater; I must become less. **31** "The one who comes from above is above all; the one who is from the earth belongs to the earth, and speaks as one from the earth. The one who comes from heaven is above all. **32** He testifies to what he has seen and heard, but no one accepts his testimony. **33** The man who has accepted it has certified that God is truthful. **34** For the one whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God gives the Spirit without limit. **35** The Father loves the Son and has placed everything in his hands. **36** Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him."

What reaction did they expect from John to their observation in verse 26? Why?

Which of the images in verse 29 does John use to describe himself? What do the other two images in verse 29 represent? In your own words, explain what they mean and how they relate to one another.

List at least seven truths John states about Jesus in verses 31-36.

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

Is what John said in verse 32 still true today? Give examples from your life.

Study these verses about keeping a proper perspective of humility before God.

Genesis 18:27 Exodus 3:11 Proverbs 30:2-3 1 Corinthians 15:9-10

Meditate upon your own unworthiness before God. Think about how immense his goodness is, and small is your own. Allow this idea to rest in your mind a few minutes.

JOURNAL: What does it mean to you personally to allow Christ to become “greater” in your life, and you to “become less” each day? Give some specific examples of ways that you try to help this process occur.

Pray that you will diminish each day, and that Christ in you will increase each day.

Recite John 3:30 now, and work on it throughout the week.

G.R.I.P.

New Testament Character Studies

Week 2 John the Baptist: A Herald of the King

Day 4 - Doubt in the Darkness

Beware of doubt...faith is the subtle chain that binds us to the infinite. Elizabeth Oakes Smith (1806-1893)

Clouds of doubt are created when the warm, moist air of our expectations meets the cold air of God's silence. The problem is not as much in God's silence as it is in your ability to hear. Max L. Lucado (1955-)

Read this Bible passage slowly and deliberately.

Matthew 11:1-15 After Jesus had finished instructing his twelve disciples, he went on from there to teach and preach in the towns of Galilee. **2** When John heard in prison what Christ was doing, he sent his disciples **3** to ask him, "Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?" **4** Jesus replied, "Go back and report to John what you hear and see: **5** The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor. **6** Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of me." **7** As John's disciples were leaving, Jesus began to speak to the crowd about John: "What did you go out into the desert to see? A reed swayed by the wind? **8** If not, what did you go out to see? A man dressed in fine clothes? No, those who wear fine clothes are in kings' palaces. **9** Then what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. **10** This is the one about whom it is written: "'I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.' **11** I tell you the truth: Among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist; yet he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. **12** From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men lay hold of it. **13** For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John. **14** And if you are willing to accept it, he is the Elijah who was to come. **15** He who has ears, let him hear.

What do you think John's question from prison indicates about his thinking? What point, then, do you think Jesus is making in his seemingly oblique answer?

Who do you think Jesus was talking about in verse 6? Why?

In verses 7-9, what was Jesus saying about who the crowd tends to follow?

List five important truths that Jesus states about John in verses 10-15.

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

Does it seem fair to you that John was imprisoned for his preaching? Explain why you think his moment of doubt was either understandable or surprising.

Study these verses about moments of insecurity and doubt in our walk of faith.

Matthew 14:29-32 Matthew 28:16-17 Luke 24:36-38 John 20:26-27

Meditate by imagining you were thrown in prison for talking about Jesus. Imagine your doubts about your faith in him. Imagine the Lord speaking to you, encouraging you that despite your situation, his kingdom is moving forward.

JOURNAL: Have you or anyone you know ever “fallen away” from their faith because of hard situations in their life, or unmet expectations they had? Describe the circumstances and the outcome.

Pray for strength and confidence in the Lord, even when things become difficult.

Recite John 3:30 now, and work on it throughout the week.

G.R.I.P.

New Testament Character Studies

Week 2 John the Baptist: A Herald of the King

Day 5 - The Danger of Discipleship

In every Christian's heart there is a cross and a throne, and the Christian is on the throne till he puts himself on the cross; if he refuses the cross, he remains on the throne. Perhaps this is at the bottom of the backsliding and worldliness among gospel believers today. We want to be saved, but we insist that Christ do all the dying. No cross for us, no dethronement, no dying. We remain king within the little kingdom of Mansoul and wear our tinsel crown with all the pride of a Caesar; but we doom ourselves to shadows and weakness and spiritual sterility.

A. W. Tozer (1897-1963)

Read this Bible passage slowly and deliberately.

Matthew 14:1-13 At that time Herod the tetrarch heard the reports about Jesus, **2** and he said to his attendants, "This is John the Baptist; he has risen from the dead! That is why miraculous powers are at work in him." **3** Now Herod had arrested John and bound him and put him in prison because of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, **4** for John had been saying to him: "It is not lawful for you to have her." **5** Herod wanted to kill John, but he was afraid of the people, because they considered him a prophet. **6** On Herod's birthday the daughter of Herodias danced for them and pleased Herod so much **7** that he promised with an oath to give her whatever she asked. **8** Prompted by her mother, she said, "Give me here on a platter the head of John the Baptist." **9** The king was distressed, but because of his oaths and his dinner guests, he ordered that her request be granted **10** and had John beheaded in the prison. **11** His head was brought in on a platter and given to the girl, who carried it to her mother. **12** John's disciples came and took his body and buried it. Then they went and told Jesus. **13** When Jesus heard what had happened, he withdrew by boat privately to a solitary place.

Why did Herod have John put in prison? Why had he not executed him already?

Explain in your own words the reasons why John was executed.

Why do you think Jesus reacted the way he did to the news of John's death?

Why do you think Jesus did not do something miraculous to rescue John? Does it seem fair to you that he was killed for preaching about Jesus and his kingdom?

Study these verses about the cost of discipleship in the life of the believer.

Luke 14:26-33

Matthew 10:38-39

Matthew 8:19-22

Meditate by imagining each blessing that God has given you on one side of a scale. Then imagine your personal sacrifices for the kingdom on the other side of the scale. How equally balanced is the scale?

JOURNAL: Write about a circumstance in your life where you had to suffer for the sake of the kingdom of God. What did you learn from it? What is your willingness to sacrifice for Christ today?

Pray that you will be both able and willing to be a faithful disciple for the Lord.

Recite John 3:30 now, and work on it throughout the day.

John the Baptist: A Voice in the Desert

Spiritual Summary – *Week 2*

What have you learned this week about being “*a voice in the desert*”?

How has baptism been significant to you and your family’s life.

What have you learned about the value of spiritual humility from the lessons this week? Have you realized anything as a result of it?

Have you discovered anything new about doubt in your walk of faith? Are you more certain now about your faith than in the past?

Has God shown you any new truth this week? What could you share with the class about it?

G.R.I.P.

New Testament Character Studies

MEMORY VERSE

For Week 3

Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?" Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.

Matthew 18:21-22

G.R.I.P.

New Testament Character Studies

Week 3 Simon Peter: A Fisherman of Faith

Day 1 – From Fishermen to Fishers of Men

Abandon to God is of more value than personal holiness. ... When we are abandoned to God, He works through us all the time. Oswald Chambers

Read this Bible passage slowly and deliberately.

Matthew 4:18-22 As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. **19** "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men." **20** At once they left their nets and followed him. **21** Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, preparing their nets. Jesus called them, **22** and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

What does Jesus invite the fishermen to do?

How hard has it been for you to simply follow Jesus? In what ways is it difficult?

What words demonstrate the enthusiasm with which they followed Jesus?

In verse 20 it says: _____ they left their nets and followed him

In verse 22 it says: _____ they left the boat and their father and followed him

What could the consequences have been of James and John leaving their father?

Study these scripture passages dealing with following Jesus.

Matthew 9:9 Luke 9:61-62 Matthew 19:27-30 John 10:1-18

How did you come to follow Jesus? When and where did you make that choice?

What do you think Jesus meant by saying he would make them “fishers of men”?

Meditate by envisioning yourself at your work today, doing the things you normally do. Then imagine Jesus coming up to you and calling you to give up what you are doing immediately and follow him. What feelings or emotions does that image evoke?

JOURNAL: To what degree has God made you a “fisher of men”? What things do you do in your daily life to bring others to Jesus? Are you satisfied with your obedience to Christ in leading others to him? Do you think God is pleased?

Pray for a sensitive spirit, that you might always repent quickly and confess readily.

Recite Matthew 18:21-22 now, and work on it throughout the week.

G.R.I.P.

New Testament Character Studies

Week 3 Simon Peter: A Fisherman of Faith

Day 2 - The Water Walker

The more we depend on God, the more dependable we find he is. Cliff Richards (1940-)

Read this Bible passage slowly and deliberately.

Matthew 14:22-33 Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd. **23** After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, **24** but the boat was already a considerable distance from land, buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it. **25** During the fourth watch of the night Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. **26** When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. "It's a ghost," they said, and cried out in fear. **27** But Jesus immediately said to them: "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid." **28** "Lord, if it's you," Peter replied, "tell me to come to you on the water." **29** "Come," he said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. **30** But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!" **31** Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. "You of little faith," he said, "why did you doubt?" **32** And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down. **33** Then those who were in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."

What was the initial reaction of the disciples? What does Jesus tell them?

What word does Peter use initially that indicate he still had misgivings?

In verse 28 he says: Lord, _____

In verse 28 he asks Jesus to: _____ me to _____

What does it say about Peter that he stepped out in faith despite his doubts?

How much proof do you normally require from God before acting? Why?

After Peter steps onto the water, what happens? Why do you think this is so?

Study these scripture passages dealing with courage and faith.

Psalm 4:5 Isaiah 26:3-4 Jeremiah 39:15-18 Nahum 1:7 John 14:1

How did this drama between Jesus and Peter effect the others in the boat? Why?

Meditate upon the complete trustworthiness of God. Imagine the thing that frightens you most right now, and then envision Jesus arriving and taking your hand, encouraging you that he will be with you to give you courage. Dwell on this idea.

JOURNAL: What is the most radical act of faith you have ever taken? How long ago did it happen? What was the result in your life and the life of others?

Pray for a willingness to be immediately obedient to what God asks, despite your fears.

Recite Matthew 18:21-22 now, and work on it throughout the week.

G.R.I.P.

New Testament Character Studies

Week 3 Simon Peter: A Fisherman of Faith

Day 3 – The Problem with Preconceptions

The situation today is lots of knowledge, but little understanding; lots of means, but little meaning; lots of know-how, but little know-why; lots of sight, but little insight.. Robert Short

Read this Bible passage slowly and deliberately.

John 13:2-17 The evening meal was being served, and the devil had already prompted Judas Iscariot, son of Simon, to betray Jesus. **3** Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; **4** so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. **5** 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. **6** He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" **7** Jesus replied, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand." **8** "No," said Peter, "you shall never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me." **9** "Then, Lord," Simon Peter replied, "not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!" **10** Jesus answered, "A person who has had a bath needs only to wash his feet; his whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you." **11** For he knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said not every one was clean. **12** When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. "Do you understand what I have done for you?" he asked them. **13** "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. **14** Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. **15** I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. **16** I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. **17** Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.

Note: *In the ancient Middle East, the roads were dirt and the weather was very dry. People wore either sandals or no shoes at all. When people came home, they washed their feet immediately after entering the front door. In homes where there were slaves or servants, it was strictly the servant's duty to wash the feet of the family members as they arrived home. It would be considered extremely demeaning for one who was not a servant or slave to wash someone else's feet.*

What three important things does verse 3 say Jesus knew about himself?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Why do you think Peter was so upset about Jesus washing the disciples' feet?

How do you think this foot-washing demonstration conflicted with Peter's preconceptions of who Jesus was and what Jesus' place would be in the world?

What did Jesus say he was trying to show the disciples? Was it just about the disciples washing one another's feet literally, or does it go beyond that? Explain.

Study these verses about serving one another.

Mark 10:33-34 Matthew 10:42 Luke 22:27 Galatians 6:2 Galatians 6:10

Meditate by imagining yourself as a servant in someone's household. What feelings does that bring out in you?

JOURNAL: Name a person or two (*other than family*) who has been an example of spiritual servanthood to you in your life. When and how did they do it? Are there people who you are serving? Who are they and how do you serve them?

Pray a prayer of humility before the Lord, asking him to give you a servant's heart.

Recite Matthew 18:21-22 now, and work on it throughout the week.

G.R.I.P.

New Testament Character Studies

Week 3 Simon Peter: A Fisherman of Faith

Day 4 – Seeing What Others Do Not

A man of correct insight among those who are duped and deluded resembles one whose watch is right while all the clocks in the town give the wrong time. He alone knows the correct time, but of what use is this to him? The whole world is guided by the clocks that show the wrong time.

Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860)

Read this Bible passage slowly and deliberately.

Matthew 16:13-18 When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?" **14** They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets." **15** "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" **16** Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." **17** Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven. **18** And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.

Note: Several terms require explanation in this passage. First, Jesus refers to himself as the "Son of Man". This is a term by which God spoke to the prophet Ezekiel, and which is used by Daniel to describe what he saw in visions. Jesus also refers to himself this way in each of the gospels, and he is referred to this way by John in his visions in the book of Revelation. The term is meant to emphasize humanity and frailty, as opposed to divinity. It is the unique New Testament reference which accentuates Jesus' incarnation as a man, while still evoking the imagery of the Old Testament prophets and their heavenly visions. Another term here is "Christ", which is simply a Greek version of the Hebrew term "messiah". There is no indication in the gospels that at this point in Jesus' ministry the disciples understood his mission as one to save the world from sin. Instead, they most likely saw him as the "new David" who was sent by God to deliver Israel from the oppression of Rome and establish a new earthly kingdom.

Who did the disciples say people thought Jesus was? How do you think they thought this could be possible?

What was unique about how Peter recognized Jesus' true identity?

What did Jesus tell Peter about the spiritual value of being able to perceive this?

Study these verses about spiritual discernment and what God reveals to us.

Daniel 2:22 Amos 3:7 John 15:15 1 Corinthians 2:10 Ephesians 1:9-10

Meditate by considering how little we actually perceive and understand about life. Now imagine God revealing something of it to you. How do you envision yourself dealing with this important revelation?

JOURNAL: Have you had God reveal something to you in a supernatural way? If so, what was it and how did it happen? What sort of things do you think God should show you, and what would you do with it?

Pray for a greater ability to see and sense God working in your daily world. Thank him for his willingness to include us in his purpose and design for our world. Pray for a sincere willingness to use what he shows you in the building of his kingdom.

Recite Matthew 18:21-22 now, and work on it throughout the week.

G.R.I.P.

New Testament Character Studies

Week 3 Simon Peter: A Fisherman of Faith

Day 5 – The Danger of Denial

We can never talk about God behind his back. We cannot speak of God in his absence. ... The God who is being discussed is also there. The attitude people take to Him can never be merely theoretical. To deny Him is to spite Him to His face.

A. Skevington Wood in *Evangelism: Its Theology and Practice*.

Beware of worshipping Jesus as the Son of God, and professing your faith in Him as the Savior of the world, while you blaspheme Him by the complete evidence in your daily life that He is powerless to do anything in and through you. **Oswald Chambers**

Read these Bible passages slowly and deliberately.

Matthew 26:31-35, Then Jesus told them, "This very night you will all fall away on account of me, for it is written: "'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.'" **32** But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee." **33** Peter replied, "Even if all fall away on account of you, I never will." **34** "I tell you the truth," Jesus answered, "this very night, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times." **35** But Peter declared, "Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you." And all the other disciples said the same.

AFTER JESUS HAD BEEN ARRESTED:

Matthew 26:69-75 Now Peter was sitting out in the courtyard, and a servant girl came to him. "You also were with Jesus of Galilee," she said. **70** But he denied it before them all. "I don't know what you're talking about," he said. **71** Then he went out to the gateway, where another girl saw him and said to the people there, "This fellow was with Jesus of Nazareth." **72** He denied it again, with an oath: "I don't know the man!" **73** After a little while, those standing there went up to Peter and said, "Surely you are one of them, for your accent gives you away." **74** Then he began to call down curses on himself and he swore to them, "I don't know the man!" Immediately a rooster crowed. **75** Then Peter remembered the word Jesus had spoken: "Before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times." And he went outside and wept bitterly.

What three important things does Jesus predict in verses 31 and 32?

What does Peter promise, and how does he compare himself with the others?

What effect did Peter's declaration of loyalty have upon the others?

Can you recall ever making promises to God you did not keep? How and why did that happen? What were the main factors in this?

Study these verses which outline seven factors in Peter's fall.

1. **Conceit** – Matthew 26:33
2. **Ease** – Matthew 26:40
3. **Rashness** – John 18:10
4. **Following from a distance** – Matthew 26:58
5. **Evil Associations** – John 18:18
6. **Open Denial** – John 18:25
7. **Blasphemy** – Mark 14:70-71

JOURNAL: From the list of seven things above, which tend to be the biggest stumbling blocks in your life. Give some examples and explain.

Pray for God to instill in you a deeper commitment and loyalty to serving him.

Recite Matthew 18:21-22 now, and prepare to share it with your group.

Simon Peter: A Fisherman of Faith

Spiritual Summary – *Week 3*

How well do you serve God as a “fisher of men”? Why is this true?

What have you learned this week about “*walking on water*” with Christ?

Have you recognized any preconceptions about God and his work that you may have that hinder your spiritual service? What are they?

How well do you discern things spiritually? What sorts of things?

Is God making you a more loyal follower of Christ than in the past? Give examples of how you are serving him more faithfully and consistently.

G.R.I.P.

New Testament Character Studies

MEMORY VERSE

For Week 4

"Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."

Acts 2:36

G.R.I.P.

New Testament Character Studies

***Week 4* Simon Peter: From Fisherman to Fantastic Faith**

Day 1 – A Fisherman Feeding Sheep

Anyone can love the ideal church. The challenge is to love the real church. Bishop Joseph McKinney

Let none pretend that they love the brethren in general, and love the people of God, and love the saints, while their love is not fervently exercised towards those who are in the same church society with them.

Christ will try your love at the last day by your deportment in that church wherein you are. John Owen

Read this Bible passage slowly and deliberately. **Note:** *This event happened after Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection.*

John 21:1-19 Jesus appeared again to his disciples, by the Sea of Tiberias. It happened this way: **2** Simon Peter, Thomas (called Didymus), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples were together. **3** "I'm going out to fish," Simon Peter told them, and they said, "We'll go with you." So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing. **4** Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus. **5** He called out to them, "Friends, haven't you any fish?" "No," they answered. **6** He said, "Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some." When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish. **7** Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" As soon as Simon Peter heard him say, "It is the Lord," he wrapped his outer garment around him (for he had taken it off) and jumped into the water. **8** The other disciples followed in the boat, towing the net full of fish, for they were not far from shore, about a hundred yards. **9** When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it, and some bread. **10** Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish you have just caught." **11** Simon Peter climbed aboard and dragged the net ashore. It was full of large fish, 153, but even with so many the net was not torn. **12** Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." None of the disciples dared ask him, "Who are you?" They knew it was the Lord. **13** Jesus came, took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. **14** This was now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after he was raised from the dead. **15** When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you truly love me more than these?" "Yes, Lord," he said, "you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my lambs." **16** Again Jesus said, "Simon son of John, do you truly love me?" He answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Take care of my sheep." **17** 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. **18** I tell you the truth, 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." **19** Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, "Follow me!"

Read Luke 5:1-10. List three or four things that are similar about the two stories.

What did Peter do when he realized it was Jesus? What does this say about his personality and inclinations?

Do you see Peter as being *spontaneous* (a positive trait) or just *rash* (negative)? Are you ever spontaneous in responding to God? Are you ever rash? Explain?

Why do you think Jesus asked Peter virtually the same question three times?

What do you think Jesus was trying to tell Peter in verses 18-19?

When Jesus asked Peter “do you love me more than these,” what do you think he meant by “these”? 1. The Other Disciples 2. Peter’s fishing livelihood

3. Something else (explain) _____

Study these verses about God calling us to care for others as he cares for them.

Matthew 18:14 Isaiah 40:11 Matthew 10:42 1 Peter 5:2-4

Meditate by imagining people in your life as God’s flock. Now think of yourself caring for them and loving them like Jesus. What things do you envision yourself doing?

JOURNAL: If Jesus asked you “do you love me more than these,” what would he be pointing to in your life? What could/should/would you do about it? How?

Pray for a heart to help and serve others, especially in spiritual matters.

Recite Acts 2:36 now, and repeat it throughout your days this week.

G.R.I.P.

New Testament Character Studies

Week 4 Simon Peter: From Fisherman to Fantastic Faith

Day 2 – The Preacher of Pentecost (part 1)

If you have the Spirit without the Word, you blow up. If you have the Word without the Spirit, you dry up. If you have both the Word and the Spirit, you grow up. Don Lyon

Read this Bible passage slowly and deliberately.

Note: In Jewish tradition, the day of *Pentecost* is the fiftieth day after the Sabbath of Passover week. (Leviticus 23:15-16), and was therefore the first day of the week. *Pentecost* is also referred to in the Old Testament as the Feast of Weeks (Deuteronomy 16:10), The Feast of Harvest (Exodus 23:16), and the day of firstfruits (Numbers 28:26). In the Christian era, it has come to represent the infilling of believers with the Holy Spirit, based upon the depiction of Acts chapter 2.

Acts 2:1-41 When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. **2** Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. **3** They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. **4** All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. **5** Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. **6** When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard them speaking in his own language. **7** Utterly amazed, they asked: "Are not all these men who are speaking Galileans? **8** Then how is it that each of us hears them in his own native language? **9** Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, **10** Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome **11** (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs--we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!" **12** Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, "What does this mean?" **13** Some, however, made fun of them and said, "They have had too much wine." **14** Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: "Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. **15** These men are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning! **16** No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: **17** "'In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. **18** Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. **19** I will show wonders in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke. **20** The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord. **21** And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.' **22** "Men of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. **23** This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. **24** But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him. **25** David said about him: "'I saw the Lord always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. **26** Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will live in hope, **27** because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay. **28** You have made known to me the paths of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence.'" **29** "Brothers, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day. **30** But he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne. **31** Seeing what was ahead, he spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to the grave, nor did his body see decay. **32** God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact. **33** Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear. **34** For David did not ascend to heaven, and yet he said, "'The Lord said to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand **35** until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.'" **36** "Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ." **37** When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" **38** Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. **39** The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off--for all whom the Lord our God will call." **40** With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation." **41** Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.

The coming of the Holy Spirit upon the believers was evidenced by what three specific miraculous signs?

What does this passage say the crowd thought about the disciples' actions?

Why does this passage say the believers were given the gift of other languages?

Peter preaches about God, who says "I will pour out my Spirit". List at least five amazing things that Peter says will accompany the Spirit's life in believers.

Study these verses about the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in believers.

Ezekiel 36:27 John 14:17 Romans 8:9 1 Corinthians 3:16

Meditate upon the Holy Spirit's ability to do things we can't begin to comprehend. Imagine yourself a conduit for that power into the lives of others. What does it look like?

JOURNAL: What miraculous things has the Holy Spirit done so far in your life? Anything like what is seen in today's scripture reading? What sort of wonderful things would you like him to do? Be specific.

Pray that God will make you a miraculous tool in the hands of the Holy Spirit.

Recite Acts 2:36 now, and repeat it throughout your days this week.

G.R.I.P.

New Testament Character Studies

Week 4 Simon Peter: From Fisherman to Fantastic Faith

Day 3 – The Preacher of Pentecost (part 2)

There is within us all a magnetic draw to seek God's presence in a more exclusive way, focusing on divine attention rather than our own egocentric list of do's. If we do not follow that prompting, we end up fragmenting ourselves from our potential as disciples. And we fragment God, expecting the Spirit's love only in spite of ourselves.

Mary C. Miller in the Covenant Companion

Read this Bible passage slowly and deliberately.

Acts 2:14-41 Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: "Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. **15** These men are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning! **16** No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: **17** "In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. **18** Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. **19** I will show wonders in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke. **20** The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord. **21** And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.' **22** "Men of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. **23** This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. **24** But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him. **25** David said about him: "I saw the Lord always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. **26** Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will live in hope, **27** because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay. **28** You have made known to me the paths of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence.' **29** "Brothers, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day. **30** But he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne. **31** Seeing what was ahead, he spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to the grave, nor did his body see decay. **32** God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact. **33** Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear. **34** For David did not ascend to heaven, and yet he said, "The Lord said to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand **35** until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet." **36** "Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ." **37** When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" **38** Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. **39** The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off--for all whom the Lord our God will call." **40** With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation." **41** Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.

Match the things Peter preached about Jesus with the corresponding verse:

STATEMENT ABOUT JESUS

VERSE

David prophesied Jesus' death and resurrection

God raised Jesus from the dead to prove his sovereignty over death

Jesus did miracles, signs and wonders

God received the Holy Spirit from the Father, then poured it out upon mankind

God deliberately handed Jesus over to the Jews to be crucified

Jesus is the one David meant when he spoke of the "Holy One"

What was the people's reaction to the Spirit-anointed preaching of Peter?

Have you ever had that reaction to hearing or reading God's word? Explain.

What does Peter tell the people is the proper response to this work of the Spirit?

Study these verses about the power of God to confront us through his Holy Spirit.

Psalm 38:4 Psalm 51:3 Acts 24:25 John 16:7-8

Are you sensitive to ways the Holy Spirit prompts you personally? How?

Meditate by thinking of being caked in dirt and grime, in sweltering hot weather. Now imagine that these are your faults and sins. In your mind's eye, see a large, cool pool of fresh water, which is the Holy Spirit's purity, and then jump into it. What does it feel like to you? Doesn't it make you want to stay spiritually clean and fresh afterward?

JOURNAL: How does what Peter says in verses 39-40 apply to your life today? How might God want you to fulfill this call to purity for you and your family?

Pray for the Holy Spirit to continue to guide and challenge you spiritually this week.

Recite Acts 2:36 now, and repeat it throughout your days this week.

G.R.I.P.

New Testament Character Studies

***Week 4* Simon Peter: From Fisherman to Fantastic Faith**

Day 4 – Courage in the Face of Conflict

Prosperity has often been fatal to Christianity, but persecution never. An Amish bishop in The Economist (July 22, 1989)

Read this Bible passage slowly and deliberately.

Acts 3:1-12 One day Peter and John were going up to the temple at the time of prayer--at three in the afternoon. **2** Now a man crippled from birth was being carried to the temple gate called Beautiful, where he was put every day to beg from those going into the temple courts. **3** When he saw Peter and John about to enter, he asked them for money. **4** Peter looked straight at him, as did John. Then Peter said, "Look at us!" **5** So the man gave them his attention, expecting to get something from them. **6** Then Peter said, "Silver or gold I do not have, but what I have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk." **7** Taking him by the right hand, he helped him up, and instantly the man's feet and ankles became strong. **8** He jumped to his feet and began to walk. Then he went with them into the temple courts, walking and jumping, and praising God.

Acts 4:1-22 The priests and the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees came up to Peter and John while they were speaking to the people. **2** They were greatly disturbed because the apostles were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead. **3** They seized Peter and John, and because it was evening, they put them in jail until the next day. **4** But many who heard the message believed, and the number of men grew to about five thousand. **5** The next day the rulers, elders and teachers of the law met in Jerusalem. **6** Annas the high priest was there, and so were Caiaphas, John, Alexander and the other men of the high priest's family. **7** They had Peter and John brought before them and began to question them: "By what power or what name did you do this?" **8** Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them: "Rulers and elders of the people! **9** If we are being called to account today for an act of kindness shown to a cripple and are asked how he was healed, **10** then know this, you and all the people of Israel: It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed. **11** He is "'the stone you builders rejected, which has become the capstone.' **12** Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved." **13** When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus. **14** But since they could see the man who had been healed standing there with them, there was nothing they could say. **15** So they ordered them to withdraw from the Sanhedrin and then conferred together. **16** "What are we going to do with these men?" they asked. "Everybody living in Jerusalem knows they have done an outstanding miracle, and we cannot deny it. **17** But to stop this thing from spreading any further among the people, we must warn these men to speak no longer to anyone in this name." **18** Then they called them in again and commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. **19** But Peter and John replied, "Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God's sight to obey you rather than God. **20** For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard." **21** After further threats they let them go. They could not decide how to punish them, because all the people were praising God for what had happened. **22** For the man who was miraculously healed was over forty years old.

What was the beggar asking for? What did Peter give him?

Has God ever given you something better than what you prayed for? Explain.

In verses 9-12, Peter says what about the power of the healing?

How natural is it for you to verbally credit God for good things in your life? Why?

How much persecution for your faith have you experienced? How do you react?

Study these scripture passages about spiritual boldness.

Mark 15:43 Psalm 27:3 1 Timothy 3:13 Acts 9:29

Meditate by imagining you are one of the disciples in the book of Acts. You are given the opportunity to perform astonishing miracles, yet your friends and family shun you and the religious leaders hate you for what you do. Can you imagine what it feels like?

JOURNAL: Discuss your willingness to “go against the flow” of our highly-secularized culture and live a passionate, dynamic spiritual life. In what ways are you succeeding, and in what ways should you do better. Be specific.

Pray for opportunities to speak boldly for Christ, and the courage to do so.

Recite Acts 2:36 now, and repeat it throughout your days this week.

G.R.I.P.

New Testament Character Studies

***Week 4* Simon Peter: From Fisherman to Fantastic Faith**

Day 5 – Confronting the Counterfeit

Are we driven people, propelled by the winds of our times, pressed to conform or compete? Or are we called people, the recipients of the gracious beckoning of Christ when he promises to make us into something?

Gordon MacDonald (1939-)

Read this Bible passage slowly and deliberately.

Acts 8:9-25 Now for some time a man named Simon had practiced sorcery in the city and amazed all the people of Samaria. He boasted that he was someone great, **10** and all the people, both high and low, gave him their attention and exclaimed, "This man is the divine power known as the Great Power." **11** They followed him because he had amazed them for a long time with his magic. **12** But when they believed Philip as he preached the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. **13** Simon himself believed and was baptized. And he followed Philip everywhere, astonished by the great signs and miracles he saw. **14** When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them. **15** When they arrived, they prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, **16** because the Holy Spirit had not yet come upon any of them; they had simply been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. **17** Then Peter and John placed their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit. **18** When Simon saw that the Spirit was given at the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money **19** and said, "Give me also this ability so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit." **20** Peter answered: "May your money perish with you, because you thought you could buy the gift of God with money! **21** You have no part or share in this ministry, because your heart is not right before God. **22** Repent of this wickedness and pray to the Lord. Perhaps he will forgive you for having such a thought in your heart. **23** For I see that you are full of bitterness and captive to sin." **24** Then Simon answered, "Pray to the Lord for me so that nothing you have said may happen to me." **25** When they had testified and proclaimed the word of the Lord, Peter and John returned to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel in many Samaritan villages.

Do you think these verses indicate that Simon was a true believer? Why?

What pagan misconception did Simon have about the Holy Spirit?

In what ways do people today follow what Peter calls Simon's "wickedness"?

Do you think Peter was more harsh with Simon than he would have been with someone else in the same situation? Why or why not?

Do you think Simon is, to some degree, a victim of his past life? In what way?

Name any wrong spiritual ideas or habits that you might need to correct.

(examples might include lack of prayer, unwillingness to tithe, weak commitment to ministry, etc.)

Study these scripture passages about a spiritual blindness like Simon had.

Matthew 5:8 2 Kings 6:17 Isaiah 11:3 1 Corinthians 2:14 Hebrews 5:14

Meditate by imagining you have very poor vision and require glasses to see. Without them you can barely discern anything, and all of your decisions are suspect. Think, in your mind's eye, of the Holy Spirit not simply giving you glasses to see, but healing your eyes so that your eyes not only see spiritual things well, but supernaturally well.

JOURNAL: Write about a person you've known in the church who was influential and charismatic with other people, yet seemed to lack basic spiritual maturity. What effect did it have upon you and others in the church? Have your spiritual immaturities had a negative effect on others? How and when?

Pray that the Lord will make us authentic and sensitive to the Holy Spirit's work in us.

Recite Acts 2:36 now, and prepare to share it with the class.

Simon Peter: From Fisherman to Fantastic Faith

Spiritual Summary – *Week 4*

What have you learned about your own willingness to “feed sheep”?

Have you experienced a personal Pentecost”, a personal infilling of the Holy Spirit for power in your life? When and how did it happen?

What realizations have you come to this week about your sensitivity to the Holy Spirit’s promptings in your life?

What have you discovered about the effect of persecution on your life?

What important spiritual truth that you have discovered this week would you like to share with the others in your small group?

G.R.I.P.

New Testament Character Studies

MEMORY VERSE

For Week 5

Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him."

John 14:21

G.R.I.P.

New Testament Character Studies

Week 5 Philip: Following in Faith

Day 1 – Follower and Finder

God takes and God keeps the initiative. God alone can make a man a believer. Our part is to accept or reject his initiative. John Powell

Read this Bible passage slowly and deliberately.

John 1:43-50 The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, he said to him, "Follow me." **44** Philip, like Andrew and Peter, was from the town of Bethsaida. **45** Philip found Nathanael and told him, "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote--Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." **46** "Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?" Nathanael asked. "Come and see," said Philip. **47** When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him, "Here is a true Israelite, in whom there is nothing false." **48** "How do you know me?" Nathanael asked. Jesus answered, "I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you." **49** Then Nathanael declared, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel." **50** Jesus said, "You believe because I told you I saw you under the fig tree. You shall see greater things than that."

What is the first thing these verses say Philip did after following Jesus? What does this say about his faith and personality?

Why do you think he told Nathaniel “*come and see*” instead of just explaining?

What important truth do we learn about Jesus in verses 47-48?

List the three titles Nathaniel uses in addressing Jesus? How are they different?

What does what Nathaniel says tell us about his reaction to Jesus?

What do Jesus’ words in verse 50 tell us about Nathaniel’s faith?

Do you think Nathaniel was naturally more trusting or skeptical? Why? Which trait is more prominent in you? How does it affect your spiritual life?

Study these verses about the importance of bringing others to Jesus.

Matthew 4:24 Matthew 9:32-33 Luke 5:17-19 John 8:3-11

Meditate by thinking of yourself as a person lost in the downtown area of a large city, where you knew no one and had no idea where you were. What would it be like for someone to come and offer to help you find your way? Now think of what it would be like for you to be the person helping another find his way spiritually. What could you do?

JOURNAL: Make a list of people who helped bring you to Jesus. Then add to the list other people who you know that have helped people to Jesus. Now add to the list people who you have helped begin a relationship with Jesus. Which of the three lists represent evangelism that has occurred most recently? Why?

Pray for a passion to help those who don't know Jesus personally.

Recite John 14:21 now, and practice it daily through the week until it is memorized.

G.R.I.P.

New Testament Character Studies

Week 5 Philip: Following in Faith

Day 2 – A Test of Faith

God created man something on the order of a rubber band. A rubber band is made to stretch. When it is not being stretched, it is small and relaxed, but as long as it remains in that shape, it is not doing what it was made to do. When it stretches, it is enlarged; it becomes tense and dynamic, and it does what it was made to do. God created you to stretch. **Charles Paul Conn** in *Making It Happen*

Read this Bible passage slowly and deliberately.

John 6:5-14 When Jesus looked up and saw a great crowd coming toward him, he said to Philip, "Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?" **6** He asked this only to test him, for he already had in mind what he was going to do. **7** Philip answered him, "Eight months' wages would not buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!" **8** Another of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, spoke up, **9** "Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?" **10** Jesus said, "Have the people sit down." There was plenty of grass in that place, and the men sat down, about five thousand of them. **11** Jesus then took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed to those who were seated as much as they wanted. He did the same with the fish. **12** When they had all had enough to eat, he said to his disciples, "Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted." **13** So they gathered them and filled twelve baskets with the pieces of the five barley loaves left over by those who had eaten. **14** After the people saw the miraculous sign that Jesus did, they began to say, "Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world."

Compare the responses of Philip and Andrew to Jesus' testing question. In what ways were they alike? In what ways were they different?

What three phrases in verses 11-13 indicate the miraculous nature of this event?

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

What actions did the disciples take in helping with this miraculous feeding?

Have you ever seen a miracle performed by God? If you have, describe it.

What reaction did the people have after seeing Jesus feed this huge crowd?

How do you think the disciples' faith was affected by their seeing this happen?

Study these other Bible miracles that involved loaves of bread.

Exodus 16:11-17 2 Kings 4:42-44 1 Kings 17:8-16 Matthew 15:30-38

Meditate by imagining you are the most hungry you have ever been in your life. Now use that image and feelings to consider how hungry you are spiritually. Now think of Jesus, the bread of life, fulfilling your spiritual hunger.

JOURNAL: Write about the degree of spiritual hunger in your family, friends and co-workers. Do your gifts and graces seem too small to help feed them? Why? How might God multiply your abilities and efforts to feed others spiritually?

Pray a prayer of thanks to God for the spiritual manna he has provided for you today.

Recite John 14:21 now, and practice it daily through the week until it is memorized.

G.R.I.P.

New Testament Character Studies

Week 5 Philip: Following in Faith

Day 3 - The Sign-Seeker

A man with the vision of God is not devoted simply to a cause or a particular issue but to God himself.

Oswald Chambers (1874-1917)

If you keep watch over your hearts, and listen for the voice of God and learn of him, in one short hour you can learn more from him than you could learn from man in a thousand years. **Johann Tauler** (c. 1300-1361)

Read this Bible passage slowly and deliberately.

John 14:8-13 Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us."

9 Jesus answered: "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"

10 Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. **11** Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves. **12** I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. **13** And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father.

In verse 8, what do you think Philip was really asking to have happen? Why?

List eight things Jesus says about himself, and the corresponding verse.

<u>STATEMENT JESUS MADE ABOUT HIMSELF</u>	<u>VERSE</u>
1. Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father	_____ <u>9</u> _____
2. _____	_____
3. _____	_____
4. _____	_____
5. _____	_____
6. _____	_____
7. _____	_____
8. _____	_____

Study these verses from the Book of John in which Jesus describes himself as "*I am*."

John 6:35 John 8:12 John 8:58 John 10:7-11 John 11:25-26 John 14:6 John 15:5

Meditate upon the amazing nature of Jesus Christ. Think about how he is spiritual bread, light, a way, truth, a shepherd, and many other things to you.

What does Jesus say, by his answer, is the only real sign Philip will receive? How is that like what we should expect as believers?

JOURNAL: Have you ever asked God to give you a sign to confirm his will in your life? Has he ever done it? When and how did it happen? In your life, how is Jesus *himself* the spiritual affirmation you need for your life? Explain.

Pray quietly, seeking a sense of God's presence in your prayer. Thank him for it.

Recite John 14:21 now, and practice it daily through the week until it is memorized.

G.R.I.P.

New Testament Character Studies

Week 5 Philip: Following in Faith

Day 4 – The Selfless Servant

I am often more likely to sense God's presence while engaging in a challenging conversation with a supposed non-believer than while sitting in a "required" prayer meeting; while walking the beach than while watching religious TV; and--most certainly--while talking with people who are searching with humility rather than with those who have arrived at complete certainty. G. Timothy Johnson in Covenant Companion

Read this Bible passage slowly and deliberately.

John 12:20-26 Now there were some Greeks among those who went up to worship at the Feast. **21** They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, with a request. "Sir," they said, "we would like to see Jesus." **22** Philip went to tell Andrew; Andrew and Philip in turn told Jesus. **23** Jesus replied, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. **24** I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. **25** The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. **26** Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me.

Note: In the first century, others besides Jews could come to the temple to worship. Many people in the Greco-Roman culture worshipped multiple gods, and so they thought that when visiting a city or region, one should offer token worship to whatever God or gods were revered in that city or region. At the temple in Jerusalem, naturally that was YAHWEH of the Hebrews. Some Greeks were true converts to Judaism, and although they were limited in their temple access to the outer courtyard, they still participated to some degree in the Hebrew religious feasts. These ones who were not true Jews, but worshipped YAHWEH were referred to as "God-fearers."

Why do you think these Greeks wanted to see Jesus? What reasons do you think most people in our modern world have for seeking Jesus?

When was the last time someone came to you to find Jesus? What happened?

In your own words, paraphrase what Jesus is saying in verses 24-25.

How do you suppose what Jesus said had anything to do with the request for the Greeks to see him?

Describe in your own words the three important things Jesus says in verse 26 about being a servant?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Study these other scripture passages which use grain as spiritual imagery.

Matthew 13:24-30 Mark 4:26-29 2 Corinthians 9:10 Luke 22:31-32

Meditate by imagining your life as a field of wheat. Envision God pouring out nourishing rain and strengthening sunshine upon you as you grow taller and stronger spiritually. As you look at your field with spiritual eyes, do you see weeds interfering with your growth? What kind?

JOURNAL: Write about the idea of you being a spiritual kernel of wheat. In what ways do you sacrifice yourself so that others can be nourished spiritually? Be specific in your critique of your level of servanthood.

Pray for the ability to relinquish yourself to God in the spiritual service of others.

Recite John 14:21 now, and practice it daily through the week until it is memorized.

G.R.I.P.

New Testament Character Studies

Week 5 Philip: Following in Faith

Day 5 – An Ethiopian Evangelism Encounter

The gospel must be preached afresh and told in new ways to every generation, since every generation has its own unique questions. The gospel must constantly be forwarded to a new address, because the recipient is repeatedly changing his place of residence. Helmut Thielicke

Percentage of new church members who have come from another church: 80 Pentecostal Evangel, 3/210/92.

Read this Bible passage slowly and deliberately.

Acts 8:26-38 Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Go south to the road--the desert road--that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." **27** So he started out, and on his way he met an Ethiopian eunuch, an important official in charge of all the treasury of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians. This man had gone to Jerusalem to worship, **28** and on his way home was sitting in his chariot reading the book of Isaiah the prophet. **29** The Spirit told Philip, "Go to that chariot and stay near it." **30** Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. "Do you understand what you are reading?" Philip asked. **31** "How can I," he said, "unless someone explains it to me?" So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. **32** The eunuch was reading this passage of Scripture: "He was led like a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb before the shearer is silent, so he did not open his mouth. **33** In his humiliation he was deprived of justice. Who can speak of his descendants? For his life was taken from the earth." **34** The eunuch asked Philip, "Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?" **35** Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus. **36** As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, **37** "Look, here is water. Why shouldn't I be baptized?" **38** And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him.

What caused Philip to go south on the desert road? How much information did he have about the nature or extent of his trip?

Have you ever had God tell you to do something without explaining it? When?

In verse 27, what personal details are we given about the person Philip meets?

Fill in the blanks to complete this chronological summary of the story:

1. The eunuch was sitting down reading the book of _____
2. Philip was told by the Spirit to stay near the _____
3. Philip asked the eunuch if he _____
4. Philip was invited to _____
5. Philip used the passage from Isaiah to _____
6. The eunuch ordered the chariot to stop so that _____

How willing are you to be a personal evangelist to the people you know or meet?

Study these verses talking about our duty as Christians to share the gospel with others.

Matthew 28:19 Luke 9:2-6 Acts 10:36 2 Timothy 4:1-5

Meditate about the millions of people in the world who have never heard the gospel. Imagine that they are calling for help, but the believers of the world are too busy to answer. What feelings does that evoke in you? What can you do personally to reach them?

JOURNAL: Describe some of your experiences in trying to share the gospel with people you know who are not believers. What keeps you from being more effective and productive in introducing people to Jesus?

Pray that God will give you the determination, patience and passion to witness for him.

Recite John 14:21 now, and prepare to share it with the class.

Philip: Following in Faith **Spiritual Summary – *Week 5***

How much like Philip are you in leading others to Jesus? Why?

What have you learned this week about having your faith tested by God?

Have you gained any new insights into the idea of seeking signs and confirmations from God? What are they?

In what ways is your life a “kernel of wheat” falling to the ground? Explain.

Describe how you practice evangelism. What did you learn this week?

What spiritual truth from this week will you share with the class?

G.R.I.P.

New Testament Character Studies

MEMORY VERSE

For Week 6

There came a man who was sent from God; his name was John. He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all men might believe. He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.

John 1:6-8

G.R.I.P.

New Testament Character Studies

Week 6 John: The Disciple Who Jesus Loved

Day 1 – Works That Benefit the Kingdom

If only we knew how to look at life as God sees it, we should realize that nothing is secular in the world, but that everything contributes to the building of the kingdom of God. Michel Quoist (1921-)

Read this Bible passage slowly and deliberately.

Mark 9:38-42 "Teacher," said John, "we saw a man driving out demons in your name and we told him to stop, because he was not one of us." **39** "Do not stop him," Jesus said. "No one who does a miracle in my name can in the next moment say anything bad about me, **40** for whoever is not against us is for us. **41** I tell you the truth, anyone who gives you a cup of water in my name because you belong to Christ will certainly not lose his reward. **42** "And if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a large millstone tied around his neck.

Why do you think the disciples told the man to stop driving out demons?

Since we know that what Jesus said in verses 39-40 is not literally true, what point do you think he was actually trying to make?

Why is it that Christians sometimes find it so easy to argue doctrinal differences, instead of putting their energies into the work Jesus would have them do?

Some people might read this passage and claim Jesus is saying it doesn't matter what you believe as long as you do the right things. Find, on your own, at least one Bible verse that proves that this is not true. Write it out in the space below.

Jesus states his love for those who follow him in a unique way in verses 41-42. In your own words, describe the results for those who help and hinder Christ.

Study these verses about how the gospel is greater than those who would hinder it.

Mark 2:16-17 Philippians 1:17-18 Matthew 19:13-14

Meditate by imagining yourself looking across a very long bridge to an island, where many of your unchurched and unbelieving friends and relatives live. On the bridge are several large obstacles blocking your way to them, and them to you. Imagine the nature of these figurative obstacles, and how they might be moved or circumvented.

JOURNAL: Was there ever a time in your life when your actions and attitudes were a hindrance to the Gospel? When and how? Now describe the quality and intensity of your witness to unbelievers and the unchurched people you know.

Pray for wisdom about the Gospel message and how we convey it to others.

Recite John 1:6-8 now, and practice it daily through the week until it is memorized.

G.R.I.P.

New Testament Character Studies

Week 6 John: The Disciple Who Jesus Loved

Day 2 – A Gospel for All

No one is excluded from the gospel, but many are excluded by the gospel. **Karl Barth** (1886-1968)

Read this Bible passage slowly and deliberately.

Luke 9:51-56 As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem. **52** And he sent messengers on ahead, who went into a Samaritan village to get things ready for him; **53** but the people there did not welcome him, because he was heading for Jerusalem. **54** When the disciples James and John saw this, they asked, "Lord, do you want us to call fire down from heaven to destroy them?" **55** But Jesus turned and rebuked them, **56** and they went to another village.

What kind of attitude were the disciples displaying by their comment? Do you know believers today who have this sort of attitude about the gospel? What effect do they have upon Christians around them in the church?

Do you think it is significant that this was a Samaritan town? Do you think the disciples would have said what they did if it had been an Israelite town? Why?

Are you less tolerant of some groups, classes or types of people? Try to explain how and why this is so in your life.

What was Jesus' response to the rejection of the town? Should our responses to those who reject us be like that of Jesus? Explain.

Study these scriptures dealing with the Gospel being for everyone.

Mark 16:15 Isaiah 49:6 Ephesians 3:6 Psalm 22:27

Meditate upon God’s great love, and how he loves all people equally. Now imagine the person with whom you have the greatest personal conflict. Imagine God loving them unconditionally, and allow his great love for you to transform your feelings for them.

JOURNAL: Can you think of someone you know who seems unloveable? Why do you think they are this way? How could God use you to share the Gospel with them? What might stand in the way of that happening?

Pray for the “unloveable” people in your life, for their salvation and spiritual growth.

Recite John 1:6-8 now, and practice it daily through the week until it is memorized.

G.R.I.P.

New Testament Character Studies

Week 6 John: The Disciple Who Jesus Loved

Day 3 – The Snare of Spiritual Ambition

In our natural life our ambitions are our own. In the Christian life we have no aim of our own, and God's aim looks like missing the mark because we are too shortsighted to see what he is aiming at. Oswald Chambers (1874-1917)

Read this Bible passage slowly and deliberately.

Mark 10:35-45 Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to him. "Teacher," they said, "we want you to do for us whatever we ask." **36** "What do you want me to do for you?" he asked. **37** They replied, "Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory." **38** "You don't know what you are asking," Jesus said. "Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?" **39** "We can," they answered. Jesus said to them, "You will drink the cup I drink and be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with, **40** but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared." **41** When the ten heard about this, they became indignant with James and John. **42** Jesus called them together and said, "You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. **43** Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, **44** and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. **45** For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Why do you think James and John made this request of Jesus?

How does Jesus react to the question? Why do you think he answered this way?

What do you think Jesus meant by asking them if they could “drink the cup I drink” or be “baptized with the baptism I am baptized with.”? Does he mean this literally or does it mean something else? Explain.

According to verse 40, what do we know about the assignment of places of honor in Jesus' kingdom?

Jesus turned the question of James and John into an opportunity to teach the disciples some important lessons about their attitudes and actions:

1. They are to lead in a way different from that of the _____ (verse 42)
2. Greatness in Jesus' kingdom is for the _____ and _____ (verse 43, 44)
3. _____ was the great example of servanthood for believers to follow (verse 45)

Study these verses, which deal with misdirected personal ambition.

2 Samuel 15:1-4 1 Kings 1:5 Matthew 20:21 Luke 22:24 John 5:44

Meditate by envisioning your arrival in heaven. As you come before Jesus, imagine him looking deep into your soul and asking you where your place should be. Based upon your life on earth, should you be given a seat of honor with his faithful servants and slaves?

JOURNAL: Write about the things in your life about which you have had great ambition. What were they, and why were you passionate in pursuing them? Contrast that with your current ambition to serve in God's kingdom.

Pray for God to cultivate ambition within you not to be recognized, but to serve.

Recite John 1:6-8 now, and practice it daily through the week until it is memorized.

G.R.I.P.

New Testament Character Studies

Week 6 John: The Disciple Who Jesus Loved

Day 4 – The Beloved and the Betrayer

Does not he to whom you betray another. . . know that you will at another time do as much for him?

Michel Eyquem de Montaigne (1533-1592)

Read this Bible passage slowly and deliberately.

John 13:21-26 After he had said this, Jesus was troubled in spirit and testified, "I tell you the truth, one of you is going to betray me." **22** His disciples stared at one another, at a loss to know which of them he meant. **23** One of them, the disciple whom Jesus loved, was reclining next to him.

24 Simon Peter motioned to this disciple and said, "Ask him which one he means."

25 Leaning back against Jesus, he asked him, "Lord, who is it?" **26** Jesus answered, "It is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish." Then, dipping the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, son of Simon.

Note: In the New Testament, John is often referred to as "the disciple whom Jesus loved." While this is a powerful statement of a unique fellowship between John and Jesus, it doesn't mean that Jesus loved any of the other disciples any less. Also, in first-century Palestine meals were often eaten in a semi-reclining position around a low table, as is described in this passage.

Do you think it is significant that John is reclining next to Jesus at the table?

Because of his placement near Jesus, John gets to ask what question?

If you were invited to dinner with Jesus, would you want to sit right next to him, or would you be more comfortable further away? Why?

Verse 22 says they were "at a loss to know which of them he meant." What does this tell us about the disciples and their perception of Judas?

In this brief story, the difference between the beloved disciple and the betraying disciple is probably only a few yards. Do you think it is a coincidence that John sat near Jesus and Judas did not? What do you think this indicates?

Study these passages talking about our love and friendship with Jesus.

John 15:15 John 13:1 Romans 8:35 Galatians 2:20 John 15:9

Meditate about feeling loved. Imagine that you are a very small child, and that you crawl up into the lap of a perfectly loving father, who is overjoyed to have you with him, and wants to share some time with you. Allow that conversation and interaction to take place in your mind.

JOURNAL: In your life, have you chosen to sit as close to Jesus as possible? Why or why not? Describe some times when you have been more of a betrayer than a lover of Jesus. What things caused this, and why? Give an example.

Pray for a fresh loyalty to the God who loves you, and to learn to love as he loves.

Recite John 1:6-8 now, and practice it daily through the week until it is memorized.

G.R.I.P.

New Testament Character Studies

Week 6 John: The Disciple Who Jesus Loved

Day 5 – Proclaiming Spiritual Truth

Witnessing is not a spare-time occupation or a once-a-week activity. It must be a quality of life. You don't go witnessing, you are a witness. Dan Greene

Read this Bible passage slowly and deliberately.

1 John 1:1-4 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched--this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. **2** The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. **3** We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. **4** We write this to make our joy complete.

John describes his encounter with Christ as a sensory experience. What senses are referred to in verse 1?

List several similar metaphors that John uses to refer to Jesus Christ in this passage. Why do you think he uses this imagery to make his point?

John gives two reasons why he is proclaiming the truth of Christ. What are they?

Can you recall the time when you began a relationship of faith in Christ? When did it happen, and what were your feelings and responses?

John refers to what he has “seen and heard” in his experience with Jesus Christ. What are some significant things you have seen and heard in your spiritual walk, and how did they grow your faith?

Study these verse about proclaiming our experiences of Christ to others.

Matthew 10:27 Acts 1:22 Acts 5:30-32 Colossians 1:28-29 2 Peter 1:16-19

Meditate by envisioning yourself in a room full of people who want to know about Jesus. They are listening intently for you to share your spiritual story with them. What do you say?

JOURNAL: Write about the two or three most amazing things God has done in your life, and how it has affected you. How determined are you to share your spiritual story with others?

Pray that God makes you a vibrant encouragement to others in proclaiming your faith.

Recite John 1:6-8 now, and practice it daily through the week until it is memorized.

John: The Disciple Who Jesus Loved **Spiritual Summary – *Week 6***

Which of your personal characteristics are a blessing to others? Which of your personality traits can be stumbling blocks for others?

Is it hard for you to minister to certain types of people? Who and Why?

Are you naturally a spiritual leader or a follower? Why is that true?

Have you ever betrayed Christ in your life? Explain.

How do you proclaim spiritual life to others in your daily life?

How would you describe the nature of your fellowship with God today?

G.R.I.P.

New Testament Character Studies

MEMORY VERSE

For Week 7

*We know that in all things
God works for the good of
those who love him, who
have been called
according to his purpose.*

Romans 8:28

G.R.I.P.

New Testament Character Studies

Week 7 Saul/Paul: (Part 1) From Pharisee to Faithfulness

Day 1 – The Zealous Accuser

Believers who are motivated by legalism are always anxious to know what is expected of them. They want to do only what is necessary to make themselves look respectable. They crave specific rules so they can know precisely how to behave. They plod along hoping that someday their efforts will pay off. According to the New Testament such people are legalists; they are using the law to establish their righteousness. Erwin W. Lutzer (1941-)

Note: Saul of Tarsus (who is later called Paul, the Apostle Paul) first appears in the New Testament in his role as a Pharisee, which is a title which means he was trained from his youth to be a type of religious ruler among the Jews. He is seen in this story about one of the disciples, Stephen, who was brought before the Sanhedrin (Jewish religious rulers' council) because of his powerful and miraculous preaching and ministry in the Holy Spirit. This passage is the conclusion of a long defense by Stephen of his ministry before the Jewish leaders, among them Saul of Tarsus.

Read this Bible passage slowly and deliberately.

Acts 7:51- 8:3 "You stiff-necked people, with uncircumcised hearts and ears! You are just like your fathers: You always resist the Holy Spirit! **52** Was there ever a prophet your fathers did not persecute? They even killed those who predicted the coming of the Righteous One. And now you have betrayed and murdered him-- **53** you who have received the law that was put into effect through angels but have not obeyed it." **54** When they heard this, they were furious and gnashed their teeth at him. **55** But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. **56** "Look," he said, "I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God." **57** At this they covered their ears and, yelling at the top of their voices, they all rushed at him, **58** dragged him out of the city and began to stone him. Meanwhile, the witnesses laid their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul. **59** While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." **60** Then he fell on his knees and cried out, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." When he had said this, he fell asleep.

1 And Saul was there, giving approval to his death. On that day a great persecution broke out against the church at Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. **2** Godly men buried Stephen and mourned deeply for him. **3** But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off men and women and put them in prison.

Stephen confronted the Pharisees with at least six condemnations of the way they practiced their faith and duty as spiritual leaders:

1. He accused them of being _____ (stubborn).
2. He said they had _____ hearts (like the pagans).
3. He charged them with always resisting _____ (spiritually insensitive).
4. He pointed to their history of _____ the prophets God sent to them.
5. He accused them of murdering both _____ and _____.

How did the Pharisees react to Stephen's words? Why do you think they acted in this way? Have you ever had this reaction to truth spoken to you? When?

Why do you think they covered their ears and attacked Stephen for what he said in verse 56? What was Saul's role in the attack?

What was Saul's ongoing attitude following the death of Stephen? What does this tell us about his spiritual state at this time?

Study these verses about the persecution in the Christian life..

Matthew 24:9-13 Luke 21:12-15 John 15:19-21 2 Timothy 3:12-15

Meditate by imagining yourself at the scene of today's scripture story, listening to Stephen's Spirit-led condemnation of Saul and the Pharisees. What are your feelings?

JOURNAL: How do you react to strong, prophetic voices that God sends into your life? Does it annoy or anger you, or even affect you at all? Do you get overly caught-up in rules and formal religion like the Pharisees? If so, how?

Pray for the Lord to send more "Stephens" into your world to challenge you spiritually.

Recite Romans 8:28 now, and practice it daily through the week until it is memorized.

G.R.I.P.

New Testament Character Studies

Week 7 Saul/Paul: (Part 1) From Pharisee to Faithfulness

Day 2 – A Sensational Summons

Pressure consistently drives me back to a happy and thoroughly satisfying recognition that I am the object of God's call in a specific, special way. Paul Toms

Read this Bible passage slowly and deliberately.

Acts 9:1-31 Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest **2** and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem. **3** As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. **4** He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" **5** "Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked. "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied. **6** "Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do." **7** The men traveling with Saul stood there speechless; they heard the sound but did not see anyone. **8** Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing. So they led him by the hand into Damascus. **9** For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything. **10** In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord called to him in a vision, "Ananias!" "Yes, Lord," he answered. **11** The Lord told him, "Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying. **12** In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him to restore his sight." **13** "Lord," Ananias answered, "I have heard many reports about this man and all the harm he has done to your saints in Jerusalem. **14** And he has come here with authority from the chief priests to arrest all who call on your name." **15** But the Lord said to Ananias, "Go! This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel. **16** I will show him how much he must suffer for my name."

What was the purpose of Saul's journey to Damascus?

Describe in your own words what happened to Saul on the road near Damascus.

Do you think there was a purpose in Saul going blind? What could it be?

Explain what God told Ananias to do. Why did Ananias hesitate in obeying?

List several things God tells Ananias about Saul (Paul's) future life and ministry.

Have you ever had some sort of amazing, life-changing encounter with God? When and how did it happen? What has been the long-term effect on your life?

Study these other Bible instances of life-changing encounters with God.

1 Samuel 10:9 Luke 19:9 Acts 13:12 Acts 16:4

Meditate by imagining you walk by a door, and overhear someone inside talking. You realize it is God, discussing out loud your Christian character and service. What sorts of specific things do you imagine he would be mentioning, and how would you feel about it?

JOURNAL: Write as if you were God talking about you. Use the third person in referring to yourself, and outline the things you encountered in your meditation exercise above. Be as detailed as you can in your critique of your spiritual life.

Pray for an amazing, life changing encounter with God in the near future.

Recite Romans 8:28 now, and practice it daily through the week until it is memorized.

G.R.I.P.

New Testament Character Studies

Week 7 Saul/Paul: (Part 1) From Pharisee to Faithfulness

Day 3 – A Tremendous Transformation

A whale is as unique as a cactus. But don't ask a whale to survive Death Valley. We all have special gifts. Where we use them and how determines whether we actually complete something. Max DePree

Read this Bible passage slowly and deliberately.

Acts 9:17-31 Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord--Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here--has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit." **18** Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized, **19** and after taking some food, he regained his strength. Saul spent several days with the disciples in Damascus. **20** At once he began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God. **21** All those who heard him were astonished and asked, "Isn't he the man who raised havoc in Jerusalem among those who call on this name? And hasn't he come here to take them as prisoners to the chief priests?" **22** Yet Saul grew more and more powerful and baffled the Jews living in Damascus by proving that Jesus is the Christ. **23** After many days had gone by, the Jews conspired to kill him, **24** but Saul learned of their plan. Day and night they kept close watch on the city gates in order to kill him. **25** But his followers took him by night and lowered him in a basket through an opening in the wall. **26** When he came to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples, but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he really was a disciple. **27** But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. He told them how Saul on his journey had seen the Lord and that the Lord had spoken to him, and how in Damascus he had preached fearlessly in the name of Jesus. **28** So Saul stayed with them and moved about freely in Jerusalem, speaking boldly in the name of the Lord. **29** He talked and debated with the Grecian Jews, but they tried to kill him. **30** When the brothers learned of this, they took him down to Caesarea and sent him off to Tarsus. **31** Then the church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace. It was strengthened; and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it grew in numbers, living in the fear of the Lord.

Ananias told Saul he'd been sent to him so that what two things could happen?

List five things Saul does right after his miraculous conversion? (verses 18-20)

- + _____
- + _____
- + _____
- + _____
- + _____

What is meant by the phrase "Saul grew more and more powerful"? (verse 22)

What was Saul able to do well, because of his passion and training? (verse 22)

Would you say that you are able to do this in your life? Why or why not?

List some of the difficulties Saul had in practicing his new life and calling.

1. The Jewish religious leaders reacted by _____ (verse 23).

2. The reaction of the other Jerusalem disciples was: _____
_____ because _____

3. The Grecian Jews he debated with reacted by _____ (verse 29).

List some of the encouragement Saul had in practicing his new life and calling.

1. His followers helped Saul by _____ (verse 25).

2. Barnabas helped Saul by _____ (verse 27).

Describe some of the difficulties and encouragements you have had in pursuing your relationship and service with God.

Study these verses about how a personal encounter with God changes and renews us.

Romans 12:2 2 Corinthians 4:16 Titus 3:5 Colossians 3:10

Meditate by imagining that starting today it was illegal to be a Christian in this country, punishable by imprisonment or death. How do you imagine you would respond to this?

JOURNAL: Describe as best you can the stages of your life's spiritual journey. Detail specific changes you've made in your life since you became a Christian.

Pray that God will continue to transform and challenge you in your daily spiritual walk.

Recite Romans 8:28 now, and practice it daily through the week until it is memorized.

G.R.I.P.

New Testament Character Studies

Week 7 **Saul/Paul: (Part 1)** From Pharisee to Faithfulness

Day 4 – A Tremendous Transformation

Conversion without discipleship is openly implied in much of our evangelical teaching. It has become strangely possible to be Christ's without taking up the cross. C. D. Alexander

If we were willing to learn the meaning of real discipleship and actually to become disciples, the church in the West would be transformed and the resultant impact on society would be staggering. David Watson (1933-1984)

Read this Bible passage slowly and deliberately.

Acts 11:19-30 Now those who had been scattered by the persecution in connection with Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, telling the message only to Jews. **20** Some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus. **21** The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord. **22** News of this reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. **23** When he arrived and saw the evidence of the grace of God, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts. **24** He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and a great number of people were brought to the Lord. **25** Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, **26** and when he found him, he brought him to Antioch. So for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people. The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch. **27** During this time some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. **28** One of them, named Agabus, stood up and through the Spirit predicted that a severe famine would spread over the entire Roman world. (This happened during the reign of Claudius.) **29** The disciples, each according to his ability, decided to provide help for the brothers living in Judea. **30** This they did, sending their gift to the elders by Barnabas and Saul.

To whom did the scattered believers tell the message of the Gospel? (verses 19-20)

What was the result of this evangelistic effort?

List Barnabas' two reactions to what was happening in Antioch. (verse 23)

1. _____ 2. _____

How is Barnabas described here? To what degree do you share these traits?

What did Barnabas and Saul do at Antioch? Why did they stay so long there?

Do you commit yourself to ongoing training in spiritual matters? Who is your spiritual mentor, and how do you submit to their spiritual leadership? Explain.

Study these verses about Christian teaching and discipleship in the early church.

Acts 13:1 Acts 15:35 Colossians 3:16 2 Timothy 2:1-2 Titus 2:1-9

Meditate by imagining you are in a classroom full of people who want to know the truth about Jesus Christ, eternal life, and the Christian religion. You are the teacher. What would you say to them, and how well do you envision yourself explaining these things to them?

JOURNAL: Describe your instruction as a Christian. Was it in a systematic, orderly way, or did you just absorb what you could in your years of being around the church and Christian people? How, primarily, have you been taught?

Pray that you will maintain a teachable spirit, and a humble desire to learn in faith.

Recite Romans 8:28 now, and practice it daily through the week until it is memorized.

G.R.I.P.

New Testament Character Studies

Week 7 Saul/Paul: (Part 1) From Pharisee to Faithfulness

Day 5 – Set Apart for Service

Rivers gain more attention than the little streams that create them. You can name the great rivers of the world but you cannot name their tributaries. However, without the tributaries there would be no river. It must be remembered, too, that the smaller streams, while less well known, are purer and are found on a higher elevation. Some of our lives are tributary lives. It is our role to provide the pure water from the higher elevation that enables another to be a mighty river of power and influence. Robert C. Shannon

Read this Bible passage slowly and deliberately.

Acts 13:1-5 In the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul. **2** While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." **3** So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off. **4** The two of them, sent on their way by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia and sailed from there to Cyprus. **5** When they arrived at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the Jewish synagogues. John was with them as their helper.

What special instruction did the Antioch church receive for Barnabas and Saul?

How did the church prepare to do this thing the Holy Spirit told them to do?

Have you ever prayed and fasted for a specific reason? Explain what happened.

What was the first act of ministry Barnabas and Saul performed? Do you think this is significant? If so, why?

What do you think it means to be “set apart” for service to God? Give examples.

Study these verses that deal with the idea of Christian calling.

1 Corinthians 1:2 Ephesians 1:18 1 Corinthians 1:22-27 Ephesians 4:4-6

Meditate on a vision of yourself at a prayer meeting at church. Suddenly the Holy Spirit speaks to your heart, and calls you to some sacrificial life change in order to serve God. What feelings does this bring out in you when you think of it?

JOURNAL: To what degree do you consider yourself “set apart” from the world around you? How does that work in daily life for you? Do you sense any type of special leading of the Holy Spirit in your life? Why or why not?

Pray that the Holy Spirit will keep his hand upon you as you submit to his leadership.

Recite Romans 8:28 now, and practice it daily through the week until it is memorized.

Saul/Paul: (Part 1) From Pharisee to Faithfulness

Spiritual Summary – *Week 7*

Do you have any of the legalistic tendencies seen in Saul as a Pharisee? Explain why you do or don't tend to be critical and judgmental of others.

How does God usually speak to you? Has it ever been in a sensational way something like what happened to Saul? Describe your experiences.

How have you been transformed by your encounter with Jesus Christ?

Do you believe you could ever be set aside for special service to God by the Holy Spirit? How do you imagine that would happen?

What spiritual truth have you learned this week to share with the class?

G.R.I.P.

New Testament Character Studies

MEMORY VERSE

For Week 8

I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.

Acts 26:17-18

G.R.I.P.

New Testament Character Studies

Week 8 Saul/Paul: (Part 2) A Man of Missions and Ministry

Day 1 – Witnesses to the Word of the Lord

Angels cannot preach the gospel, only beings such as Paul and you and I can preach the gospel.

Oswald Chambers (1874-1917)

Being an extrovert isn't essential to evangelism-obedience and love are. **Rebecca Manley Pippert**

Read this Bible passage slowly and deliberately.

Acts 13:42-51 As Paul and Barnabas were leaving the synagogue, the people invited them to speak further about these things on the next Sabbath. **43** When the congregation was dismissed, many of the Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, who talked with them and urged them to continue in the grace of God. **44** On the next Sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord. **45** When the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and talked abusively against what Paul was saying. **46** Then Paul and Barnabas answered them boldly: "We had to speak the word of God to you first. Since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles. **47** For this is what the Lord has commanded us: "I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth." **48** When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honored the word of the Lord; and all who were appointed for eternal life believed. **49** The word of the Lord spread through the whole region. **50** But the Jews incited the God-fearing women of high standing and the leading men of the city. They stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them from their region. **51** So they shook the dust from their feet in protest against them and went to Iconium.

What does verse 44 indicate about Paul and Barnabas' effect on the city?

This passage does not use the word "preach." What words are used instead to describe the two men's interaction with the people. What does this show us?

Describe the three completely different responses to the Gospel seen here:

1. The people at the synagogue: _____
2. The Jews (Jewish religious leaders) : _____
3. The Gentiles: _____

What do verses 46-47 say Paul and Barnabas were commanded by God to do?

Exactly how did the Jews opposing Paul and Barnabas create trouble for them?

Have you ever seen the Gospel cause reactions like those in this story? Have you ever seen people in the church act like the Jewish leaders? How and why?

Study these verses talking about the effect of God's word upon listeners.

Jeremiah 6:10 Zechariah 7:12 Psalm 50:17 Acts 17:11 1 Thessalonians 2:13

Meditate by imagining you are in a quiet place, waiting before God. Now relax and listen carefully. Are you willing to hear anything the Lord says to you?

JOURNAL: Make a list of some of the things you sense that God has been telling you to change in your life. How well have you listened to his voice about these?

Pray for ears to hear from God in the days to come, and a heart willing to obey.

Recite Acts 26:17-18 now, and practice it daily through the week until it is memorized.

G.R.I.P.

New Testament Character Studies

Week 8 Saul/Paul: (Part 2) A Man of Missions and Ministry

Day 2 – Perilous and Productive Paths

A gem is not polished without rubbing, nor a man made perfect without trials. Chinese Proverb

Great trials seem to be a necessary preparation for great duties. Edward Thomson (1810-1870)

Read this Bible passage slowly and deliberately.

Acts 14:8-23 In Lystra there sat a man crippled in his feet, who was lame from birth and had never walked. **9** He listened to Paul as he was speaking. Paul looked directly at him, saw that he had faith to be healed **10** and called out, "Stand up on your feet!" At that, the man jumped up and began to walk. **11** When the crowd saw what Paul had done, they shouted in the Lycaonian language, "The gods have come down to us in human form!" **12** Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul they called Hermes because he was the chief speaker. **13** The priest of Zeus, whose temple was just outside the city, brought bulls and wreaths to the city gates because he and the crowd wanted to offer sacrifices to them. **14** But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of this, they tore their clothes and rushed out into the crowd, shouting: **15** "Men, why are you doing this? We too are only men, human like you. We are bringing you good news, telling you to turn from these worthless things to the living God, who made heaven and earth and sea and everything in them. **16** In the past, he let all nations go their own way. **17** Yet he has not left himself without testimony: He has shown kindness by giving you rain from heaven and crops in their seasons; he provides you with plenty of food and fills your hearts with joy." **18** Even with these words, they had difficulty keeping the crowd from sacrificing to them. **19** Then some Jews came from Antioch and Iconium and won the crowd over. They stoned Paul and dragged him outside the city, thinking he was dead. **20** But after the disciples had gathered around him, he got up and went back into the city. The next day he and Barnabas left for Derbe. **21** They preached the good news in that city and won a large number of disciples. Then they returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, **22** strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith. "We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God," they said. **23** Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust.

What was the crowd's first reaction to the healing? What does this say about the belief system of the people of Lystra?

Paraphrase in your own words what Paul tries to tell them in verses 15-17.

Describe the three completely different responses to the Gospel seen here:

1. The crowd who saw the man healed: _____
2. The Jews from Antioch & Iconium: _____
3. The people of Derbe: _____

What happened to Paul after he returned later to Lystra and the nearby cities?

“We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God.” To what degree do modern Christians embrace this idea? What hardships are you currently enduring to reach others with the Gospel?

Study these verses about how following Christ involves gaining through losing.

Philippians 3:8 Mark 8:35 Mark 9:35 Matthew 19:29

Meditate by thinking about your most valued possessions. Imagine throwing them into a dumpster or selling them outright and giving the money to charity or the work of the church. Now think of your most priceless relationships. Can you imagine relinquishing those for the love of God and the work of his kingdom? What feelings do these thoughts stir in you?

JOURNAL: Write out a list of your three most prized material possessions. Now write out a list of the five or ten people most important to you. Cross each one out individually with your pen/pencil, and pray for each one as you do, that you could place that person **AFTER**, and not before, your commitment to Christ.

Pray for the ability to accept hardship for the ministry service God calls us to do.

Recite Acts 26:17-18 now, and practice it daily through the week until it is memorized.

G.R.I.P.

New Testament Character Studies

Week 8 Saul/Paul: (Part 2) A Man of Missions and Ministry

Day 3 – Apologetics in Athens

* **NOTE:** “Apologetics” is a term that describes a systematic approach to sharing one’s faith based upon reason, logic and intellectual arguments and proofs.

We preach to men as if they were conscious they were dying sinners, they are not; they are having a good time.
Oswald Chambers (1874-1917)

Read this Bible passage slowly and deliberately.

Acts 17:16-34 While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was greatly distressed to see that the city was full of idols. **17** So he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the God-fearing Greeks, as well as in the marketplace day by day with those who happened to be there. **18** A group of Epicurean and Stoic philosophers began to dispute with him. Some of them asked, "What is this babbler trying to say?" Others remarked, "He seems to be advocating foreign gods." They said this because Paul was preaching the good news about Jesus and the resurrection. **19** Then they took him and brought him to a meeting of the Areopagus, where they said to him, "May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting?" **20** You are bringing some strange ideas to our ears, and we want to know what they mean." **21** (All the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there spent their time doing nothing but talking about and listening to the latest ideas.) **22** Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: "Men of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. **23** For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. Now what you worship as something unknown I am going to proclaim to you. **24** "The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands. **25** And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else. **26** From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. **27** God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us. **28** 'For in him we live and move and have our being.' As some of your own poets have said, 'We are his offspring.' **29** "Therefore since we are God's offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone--an image made by man's design and skill. **30** In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. **31** For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead." **32** When they heard about the resurrection of the dead, some of them sneered, but others said, "We want to hear you again on this subject." **33** At that, Paul left the Council. **34** A few men became followers of Paul and believed. Among them was Dionysius, a member of the Areopagus, also a woman named Damaris, and a number of others.

According to the first verse of this story, what motivated Paul to talk to them?

In what three places did Paul reason with the Athenians about the Gospel?

1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____

What were the thoughts and responses of the various people Paul spoke with?

1. The philosophers in the marketplace: _____

2. The council at the Areopagus: _____

3. Dionysius and Damaris: _____

Try to re-write, in your own words, the argument for God Paul presents here.

Who explained God and faith to you? What are the main arguments you hear people use in everyday life to defend their lack of faith?

Study these passages about our witness in defense of God's word and God's truth.

2 Timothy 2:15 Luke 21:11-15 2 Timothy 3:16-17 1 Peter 3:15-16

Meditate by imagining you have an appointment to meet with a friend or acquaintance to talk about your faith. How would you prepare your mind and heart for the meeting? What would you do?

JOURNAL: Explain why people you know might not listen to you when you share your faith. Describe what you need to do to deal with the main objections they give you.

Pray for a willingness to become better trained in the reasoning of your faith.

Recite Acts 26:17-18 now, and practice it daily through the week until it is memorized.

G.R.I.P.

New Testament Character Studies

Week 8 Saul/Paul: (Part 2) A Man of Missions and Ministry

Day 4 – The Demetrius Danger

Difficulties are God's errands and when we are sent upon them we should consider it proof of God's confidence, as a compliment of God. Henry Ward Beecher (1813-1887)

Read this Bible passage slowly and deliberately.

Acts 19:23-40 About that time there arose a great disturbance about the Way. **24** A silversmith named Demetrius, who made silver shrines of Artemis, brought in no little business for the craftsmen. **25** He called them together, along with the workmen in related trades, and said: "Men, you know we receive a good income from this business. **26** And you see and hear how this fellow Paul has convinced and led astray large numbers of people here in Ephesus and in practically the whole province of Asia. He says that man-made gods are no gods at all. **27** There is danger not only that our trade will lose its good name, but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis will be discredited, and the goddess herself, who is worshiped throughout the province of Asia and the world, will be robbed of her divine majesty." **28** When they heard this, they were furious and began shouting: "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!" **29** Soon the whole city was in an uproar. The people seized Gaius and Aristarchus, Paul's traveling companions from Macedonia, and rushed as one man into the theater. **30** Paul wanted to appear before the crowd, but the disciples would not let him. **31** Even some of the officials of the province, friends of Paul, sent him a message begging him not to venture into the theater. **32** The assembly was in confusion: Some were shouting one thing, some another. Most of the people did not even know why they were there. **33** The Jews pushed Alexander to the front, and some of the crowd shouted instructions to him. He motioned for silence in order to make a defense before the people. **34** But when they realized he was a Jew, they all shouted in unison for about two hours: "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!" **35** The city clerk quieted the crowd and said: "Men of Ephesus, doesn't all the world know that the city of Ephesus is the guardian of the temple of the great Artemis and of her image, which fell from heaven? **36** Therefore, since these facts are undeniable, you ought to be quiet and not do anything rash. **37** You have brought these men here, though they have neither robbed temples nor blasphemed our goddess. **38** If, then, Demetrius and his fellow craftsmen have a grievance against anybody, the courts are open and there are proconsuls. They can press charges. **39** If there is anything further you want to bring up, it must be settled in a legal assembly. **40** As it is, we are in danger of being charged with rioting because of today's events. In that case we would not be able to account for this commotion, since there is no reason for it."

In your own words, describe why Demetrius was upset. Were his motivations mainly spiritual or economic? What does he say that makes you think this?

Describe the actions and attitudes of the various people in this story:

- 1. Demetrius the silversmith: _____
- 2. The craftsmen of Ephesus: _____
- 3. The people of Ephesus: _____
- 4. The disciples of the city: _____
- 5. The officials of the province: _____
- 6. The Jews in the city: _____
- 7. The city clerk: _____

What does this story show us about the effects of the Gospel on people?

Have you ever had a difficult confrontation about the Gospel with anyone? When? How did it turn out?

Study these verses about other tumultuous events caused by Jesus and his Gospel.
Matthew 27:24 Acts 17:5-8 Acts 21:30-31 James 3:16

Meditate by imagining a discussion at work, school or home about God and the Christian faith. How would you handle things if a commotion got started? Would you have courage to continue?

JOURNAL: What is the danger of becoming like Demetrius? What were his priorities in his passionate appeal to the people? Is this a danger in your spiritual walk? How?

Pray for courage to accept actual personal conflict as part of your walk of faith.

Recite Acts 26:17-18 now, and practice it daily through the week until it is memorized.

G.R.I.P.

New Testament Character Studies

Week 8 Saul/Paul: (Part 2) A Man of Missions and Ministry

Day 5 – Companions in Confinement

What makes us Christians shrug our shoulders when we ought to be flexing our muscles? What makes us apathetic in a day when there are loads to lift, a world to be won and captives to be set free? Why are so many bored when the times demand action? Billy Graham (1918-)

Read this Bible passage slowly and deliberately.

* **Note:** The Apostle Paul was apparently allowed to have visitors and companions during some of his imprisonments. He was encouraged by the presence of these companions, and was helped in his ministry by each of their unique strengths and gifts.

Colossians 4:6-18 Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone. **7** Tychicus will tell you all the news about me. He is a dear brother, a faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord. **8** I am sending him to you for the express purpose that you may know about our circumstances and that he may encourage your hearts. **9** He is coming with Onesimus, our faithful and dear brother, who is one of you. They will tell you everything that is happening here. **10** My fellow prisoner Aristarchus sends you his greetings, as does Mark, the cousin of Barnabas. (You have received instructions about him; if he comes to you, welcome him.) **11** Jesus, who is called Justus, also sends greetings. These are the only Jews among my fellow workers for the kingdom of God, and they have proved a comfort to me. **12** Epaphras, who is one of you and a servant of Christ Jesus, sends greetings. He is always wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured. **13** I vouch for him that he is working hard for you and for those at Laodicea and Hierapolis. **14** Our dear friend Luke, the doctor, and Demas send greetings. **15** Give my greetings to the brothers at Laodicea, and to Nympha and the church in her house. **16** After this letter has been read to you, see that it is also read in the church of the Laodiceans and that you in turn read the letter from Laodicea. **17** Tell Archippus: "See to it that you complete the work you have received in the Lord." **18** I, Paul, write this greeting in my own hand. Remember my chains. Grace be with you.

Tell in your own words how Paul describes each of his prison companions, and what they are doing or intend to do in assisting Paul with his work.

1. Tychicus: _____

2. Aristarchus: _____

3. Jesus (Justus): _____

4. Epaphras: _____

Who else is with Paul that were not listed in the previous question?

If you had been with Paul in prison, what sorts of things would he have been likely to have asked you to do? Which of the people listed sound most like you?

What were Paul's instructions about the letter he was sending (which we know as the Book of Colossians)? Why do you think he wanted this done?

Study these verses about being a faithful partner in ministry with others.

Revelation 2:10 1 Corinthians 4:2 Hebrews 10:24

Meditate by imagining you are on a baseball team. What position do you play? What are your responsibilities as part of the team? Now think of your church as a ministry team. What position do you play in church ministry? Can your fellow workers count on you to be faithful in ministry work?

JOURNAL: Describe your feelings about working at ministry tasks in your local church. How much time do you give, and do you give it cheerfully? How might you improve what you do, and be more of a blessing to others who serve?

Pray that you will see yourself more as a partner in ministry than an individual worker.

Recite Acts 26:17-18 now, and prepare to share it with the class

Saul/Paul: (Part 2) A Man of Missions and Ministry

Spiritual Summary – *Week 8*

How has this week's study encouraged you to improve your witness to others about Christ and the spiritual life?

What have you learned this week about the value of hardship in your life?

What new insights have you gained about your ability to reason with others about the Gospel and the Christian faith?

What did you learn this week from the story of Demetrius and Paul?

From the story of Paul's companions in prison, what have you learned about shared purpose and faithfulness in the Christian life?

G.R.I.P.

New Testament Character Studies

MEMORY VERSE

For Week 9

Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage--with great patience and careful instruction. For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.

2 Timothy 4:2-4

G.R.I.P.

New Testament Character Studies

Week 9 Timothy: Having A Heart for Ministry

Day 1 – A Heritage of Faith

Many have forgotten the value of characteristics and activities which identify the family as unique and different. They are called "traditions." James C. Dobson (1936-)

No other structure can replace the family. Without it, our children have no moral foundation. Without it, they become moral illiterates whose only law is self. Charles Colson (1931-)

Read this Bible passage slowly and deliberately.

2 Timothy 1:1-9 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, according to the promise of life that is in Christ Jesus, **2** To Timothy, my dear son: Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. **3** I thank God, whom I serve, as my forefathers did, with a clear conscience, as night and day I constantly remember you in my prayers. **4** Recalling your tears, I long to see you, so that I may be filled with joy. **5** I have been reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also. **6** For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands. **7** For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline. **8** So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God, **9** who has saved us and called us to a holy life--not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time,

What relational references does Paul make in this passage to emphasize the importance of family in the development of faith?

Verse 3: _____

Verse 5: _____

What does Paul make a special point of reminding Timothy of? (verse 6) Why?

Timothy is given an important description of the Spirit God gives us.

We have not been given a spirit of _____

We have been given a spirit of _____, _____, and _____

Paul tells Timothy that this mighty spirit should motivate him to do three things:

1. _____ (verse 8)

2. _____ (verse 8)

3. _____ (verse 9)

What has God called us to, and for what reason (verse 9)? What do you think this means to you personally? What does this mean for the church?

Study these verses about the influence of our parents and family on our spiritual lives.

2 Chronicles 17:3 1 Kings 22:52 Jeremiah 9:14 2 Chronicles 26:4

Meditate by remembering the spiritual influence your family has had on you. Think of each person individually. If they influenced you negatively, forgive them. If their effect on you was positive, thank God for it. Think about those in your family who you influence. What effect will you have?

JOURNAL: Write about the most positive things you learned about faith and moral living as you were growing up, and tell who you learned it from primarily. Then list some poor examples you have seen in your family.

Pray that you may influence your family toward a tradition of godliness and faith.

Recite 2 Timothy 4:2-4, and practice it daily through the week until it is memorized.

G.R.I.P.

New Testament Character Studies

Week 9 Timothy: Having A Heart for Ministry

Day 2 – A Mindset for Ministry

In order to effectively minister, church leaders must establish priorities for their work. We must first be committed to Christ, then to one another in Christ, and finally to the work of Christ in the world. Ray Ortlund

Read this Bible passage slowly and deliberately.

NOTE: Timothy was a first-century pastor at one of the newly-founded churches in Asia Minor. His mentor, the Apostle Paul, is writing him to encourage him personally as a Christian, and as a church leader. The lessons taught here are not just for the minister called to full-time service. These principles apply just as truly to all followers of Jesus Christ.

2 Timothy 2:1-7 You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. **2** And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others. **3** Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. **4** No one serving as a soldier gets involved in civilian affairs--he wants to please his commanding officer. **5** Similarly, if anyone competes as an athlete, he does not receive the victor's crown unless he competes according to the rules. **6** The hardworking farmer should be the first to receive a share of the crops. **7** Reflect on what I am saying, for the Lord will give you insight into all this.

What three things is Timothy told to do in the first several verses?

1. _____ (verse 1)
2. _____ (verse 2)
3. _____ (verse 3)

List the three analogies used to describe a life of Christian service.

1. _____ (verses 3-4)
2. _____ (verse 5)
3. _____ (verse 6)

Good soldiers and Christians should both do what two things? (verses 3-4)

In your own words, what do you think Paul is telling Timothy in verse 5?

Speculate on what the meaning of verse 6 might be for our lives.

How well do you endure hardship for the Gospel? Why is this true of you?

Study these verses about various aspects of the spiritual struggles we face.

Inward Battle – Romans 7:23 **Spiritual Weapons** – 2 Corinthians 10:4
Invisible Foes – Ephesians 6:12 **The Fight of Faith** – 1 Timothy 6:12

Meditate by imagining that you are a soldier in God’s army. What sorts of things would you be doing to prepare for a battle? Envision yourself preparing yourself for attacks by the enemy.

JOURNAL: Talk about your ability to respond to spiritual discipline in your life. How well do you keep yourself on track in spiritual exercises, like prayer, meditation and journaling? How disciplined are you in serving at your local church? Explain what you do there and how many hours a week you sacrifice to serve in that way.

Pray for a more disciplined approach to spiritual life and service in the coming days.

Recite 2 Timothy 4:2-4, and practice it daily through the week until it is memorized.

G.R.I.P.

New Testament Character Studies

Week 9 Timothy: Having A Heart for Ministry

Day 3 – Handling the Word of Truth

In order to effectively minister, church leaders must establish priorities for their work. We must first be committed to Christ, then to one another in Christ, and finally to the work of Christ in the world. Ray Ortlund

Read this Bible passage slowly and deliberately.

2 Timothy 2:15-19 Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth. **16** Avoid godless chatter, because those who indulge in it will become more and more ungodly. **17** Their teaching will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, **18** who have wandered away from the truth. They say that the resurrection has already taken place, and they destroy the faith of some. **19** Nevertheless, God's solid foundation stands firm, sealed with this inscription: "The Lord knows those who are his," and, "Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness."

List several things that an “approved workman” does, according to these verses.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

What is Paul trying to indicate by his use of the word “workman” in verse one?

Explain, in your own words, the heresy of Hymenaeus and Philetus. What was their effect on other people in the church?

According to verse 16, what happens to us if we engage in “godless chatter”?

Do you know people who claim to be Christians, yet believe things that go directly against the testimony of the Bible? Give an example or two.

In your own words, restate the encouragement Paul gives Timothy in verse 19.

Study these verses about the dangers of being ignorant of the Word of God

Meditate by imagining that today you were sent to the home of a person who wanted to know more about the Bible and what it teaches. Envision yourself talking to them, without a Bible or any written material. Where would you start? What verses could you tell them from memory?

JOURNAL: Try to name the books of the Bible from memory. How many books could you explain to someone who had never read the Bible? Write about your personal history of Bible study, listing the things you have learned well, and the things that perhaps you did not learn well. Write out at least one scripture verse you have memorized. (this week's memory verse would be good).

Pray for a new hunger to become an "approved workman" of God's word.

Recite 2 Timothy 4:2-4, and practice it daily through the week until it is memorized.

G.R.I.P.

New Testament Character Studies

Week 9 Timothy: Having A Heart for Ministry

Day 4 – Live What You’ve Learned

To be a witness does not consist of engaging in propaganda or in stirring people up. It means to live in such a way that one's life would not make sense if God did not exist. Emmanuel Suhard (1874-1949)

Read this Bible passage slowly and deliberately.

2 Timothy 3:10-17 You, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, **11** persecutions, sufferings--what kinds of things happened to me in Antioch, Iconium and Lystra, the persecutions I endured. Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them. **12** In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, **13** while evil men and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. **14** But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, **15** and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. **16** All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, **17** so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Why do you think Paul recounts his past difficulties to Timothy? (verses 10-11)

Does the statement Paul makes in verse 12 resonate with you? Why or why not?

How is what others do compared to what Timothy should do? (verses 13-14)

List five reasons we should be remain “convinced” of our faith. (verses 14-17)

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

We are told the Word of God is useful for what four purposes? (verse 16)

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

How great a benefit does Bible competence give today's Christian? (verse 17)

What does the description "*God-breathed*" mean to you personally?

Study these verses about the inspiration and divine power of the words of the Bible

Ezekiel 1:3 Deuteronomy 8:3 2 Peter 1:21 Revelation 14:13

Meditate by envisioning yourself in your very favorite quiet place in the world. There is no one around, and you are listening for God to speak. Imagine opening your Bible to read, and as you do, you sense God breathing life into you with the words on the page. Hold onto that feeling, and remember it for the next time you are actually reading your Bible.

JOURNAL: How would you rate the training you've received over the course of your life in understanding the Bible? What people were instrumental in teaching you? Be specific. How well do you sense God's "spiritual breath" as you read his word? Explain.

Pray for a sensitivity to God's word as you read it throughout this week.

Recite 2 Timothy 4:2-4, and practice it daily through the week until it is memorized.

G.R.I.P.

New Testament Character Studies

Week 9 Timothy: Having A Heart for Ministry

Day 5 - Disciples and Deserters

O Lord, crucify the world unto me, that though I cannot avoyd to live among the baites and snares of it, yet it may be so truely dead unto me and I unto it. John Winthrop, "The American Puritans,"

Read this Bible passage slowly and deliberately.

2 Timothy 4:9-18 Do your best to come to me quickly, **10** for Demas, because he loved this world, has deserted me and has gone to Thessalonica. Crescens has gone to Galatia, and Titus to Dalmatia.

11 Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, because he is helpful to me in my ministry.

12 I sent Tychicus to Ephesus. **13** When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, and my scrolls, especially the parchments. **14** Alexander the metalworker did me a great deal of harm. The Lord will repay him for what he has done. **15** You too should be on your guard against him, because he strongly opposed our message. **16** At my first defense, no one came to my support, but everyone deserted me. May it not be held against them. **17** But the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. And I was delivered from the lion's mouth. **18** The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

What seems to be the Apostle Paul's emotional mindset here? Why? (verses 9-10)

Of the people mentioned in the story, who acted faithfully in helping Paul?

<u>PERSON</u>	<u>ACTION</u>	<u>FAITHFUL? (yes, no, not sure)</u>
1. Cresens	went to Galatia	NOT SURE
2. Demas		
3. Titus		
4. Luke		
5. Mark		
6. Tychicus		

What is Paul's attitude and response to Alexander's actions? What is Timothy told to do with regard to this person?

How do verses 14-17 model for us forgiving others and relying upon God?

Paul says the Lord rescues and strengthens him for what specific reason?

Study these verses about the steadfast support that God gives us.

Joshua 1:5 Isaiah 54:10 John 14:18 Hebrews 13:5

Meditate by imagining you run off of a cliff on a hang-glider. You can feel the wind under the wings holding you up, sometimes lifting, sometimes lowering. As you are soaring over the beautiful landscape below, imagine it is God's hand holding you up rather than the wind. Embrace the feeling of God holding you, and submit to his complete control of your journey.

JOURNAL: In your Christian life, can others count on you to be steady in your support? Are you faithful to worship, study and fellowship with others in your local church, or have you allowed other things to become a distraction? How do you think the other workers in your church see you; as a Luke or Timothy, or as more of a Demas? Explain your answer and feelings about it.

Pray for a steadfast, supportive spirit toward the ministries of your church and friends.

Recite 2 Timothy 4:2-4, and prepare to share it with your small group

Timothy: Having a Heart for Ministry **Spiritual Summary – *Week 9***

Who were your most significant spiritual teachers? When and how?

Do you serve the Lord well as a good soldier, enduring hardship? Why?

How has your Bible competency improved over the last year? What are you doing to improve it, or what should you do to move forward in this area?

Of the uses of Scripture listed in 2 Timothy 3:16, which are you most receptive to and which are you least receptive to? Why is this so?

Can other Christians and church ministries count on you for help? How?

What spiritual truth have you learned this week to share with your group?

G.R.I.P.

New Testament Character Studies

MEMORY VERSE

For Week 10

Then he said to them all: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it.

Luke 9:23-24

G.R.I.P.

New Testament Character Studies

Week 10 Encounters with Jesus

Day 1 – Zacchaeus: Small Man, Big Faith

The greatest proof of Christianity for others is not how far a man can logically analyze his reasons for believing, but how far in practice he will stake his life on his belief. T. S. Eliot (1888-1965)

Read this Bible passage slowly and deliberately.

Luke 19:1-10 Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. **2** A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. **3** He wanted to see who Jesus was, but being a short man he could not, because of the crowd. **4** So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way. **5** When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today." **6** So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly. **7** All the people saw this and began to mutter, "He has gone to be the guest of a 'sinner.'" **8** But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount." **9** Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. **10** For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost."

NOTE: In Jesus' day, Palestine was occupied and governed by the Romans. To collect taxes, the Romans employed locals like Zacchaeus. These tax-collectors were typically corrupt, and were hated because they often overcharged people for personal profit. With the power of the Roman army behind them as protection, they operated with impunity, and thus were especially despised by the other local inhabitants, who saw them as traitors and collaborators. It is for this reason the people called Zacchaeus a "sinner."

List five things we are told about Zacchaeus from verses 1-3.

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

How was Zacchaeus' response to Jesus different from that of others that day?

Why do you think Jesus wanted to go to Zacchaeus' house that day? Give several reasons why this might be true.

What specific things did Zacchaeus promise to do in response to Jesus' call?

What is the spiritual significance of these promises by Zacchaeus, and how should our actions be like his?

Study these “before and after” verses showing Bible characters’ lives transformed

	<u>BEFORE</u>	<u>AFTER</u>
Peter	Matt 26:74	Acts 5:15
Demoniac	Mark 5:5	Mark 5:15
Samaritan Woman	John 4:17-18	John 4:29
Saul of Tarsus/ Paul	Acts 9:1	Acts 21:13

Meditate by considering what you were like before you accepted Jesus as your savior. Think of several specific things you did then, and how you regret them today. Now think of the things you do today by comparison, and meditate upon God’s grace in calling you from your life of sin.

JOURNAL: Write about a person you know that has been drastically transformed for the better by a personal encounter with Jesus Christ. How did it happen? What things actually changed? Perhaps that person is you....

Pray for a continued, dramatic, transformative experience with Christ this week

Recite Luke 9:23-24, and practice it daily through the week until it is memorized.

G.R.I.P.

New Testament Character Studies

Week 10 Encounters with Jesus

Day 2 – The Rich Young Man: The Prison of Possessions

I have held many things in my hands, and I have lost them all; but whatever I have placed in God's hands, that I still possess. **Martin Luther** (1483-1546)

All you are unable to give possesses you. **André Gide** (1869-1951)

Read this Bible passage slowly and deliberately.

Matthew 19:16-26 Now a man came up to Jesus and asked, "Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?" **17** "Why do you ask me about what is good?" Jesus replied. "There is only One who is good. If you want to enter life, obey the commandments." **18** "Which ones?" the man inquired. Jesus replied, "'Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, **19** honor your father and mother,' and 'love your neighbor as yourself.'" **20** "All these I have kept," the young man said. "What do I still lack?" **21** Jesus answered, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." **22** When the young man heard this, he went away sad, because he had great wealth. **23** Then Jesus said to his disciples, "I tell you the truth, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. **24** Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." **25** When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished and asked, "Who then can be saved?" **26** Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

What was the young man's perspective on how eternal life is obtained? (verse 16)

What five commandments does Jesus specifically name as points of obedience?

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

What do the commandments cited by Jesus have in common? Is this important?

What sort of attitude and activity does Jesus equate spiritual perfection with?

In your own words, explain what Jesus says about wealth in verses 24-26.

Study these verses warning about wealth and possessions. Beside each verse, list the personal danger that it attributes to riches and the desire for them.

VERSE

WARNING

Deuteronomy 8:13-14

Psalm 62:10

Mark 4:19

1 Timothy 6:9

Meditate by imagining you have been given ten million dollars. What would you do with it? Now imagine you are given \$20. What would you do with it? Are you inclined to believe you would be more generous if you had more money, and that more money would make you more generous?

JOURNAL: How do you handle the concerns of money in your life? Do you worry about not having enough? Are you faithful to God and generous with others with the money you do have? Personally, is tithing a problem or a blessing for you? Why?

Pray that your possessions or lack of them will never cause you to stumble spiritually

Recite Luke 9:23-24, and practice it daily through the week until it is memorized.

G.R.I.P.

New Testament Character Studies

Week 10 Encounters with Jesus

Day 3 – Matthew Levi: A Supper for Sinners

People in general, Christian people in particular, tend to divide sins into two categories: their sins and our sins. The Bible, of course, knows no such distinction. Sin is sin, without partiality shown to the sins of God's people--our sins.

-- Joe Bayly in Out of My Mind

Read this Bible passage slowly and deliberately.

Matthew 9:9-13 As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth. "Follow me," he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him. **10** While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house, many tax collectors and "sinners" came and ate with him and his disciples. **11** When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and 'sinners'?" **12** On hearing this, Jesus said, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. **13** But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

What do you find amazing about Matthew's response to Jesus? Why?

List three ways in which this story is similar to that of Zacchaeus. (Day 1, Luke 19)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Name three details of this story which are different from that of Zacchaeus.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Who do you think Jesus was saying in his words about a doctor and the sick?

NOTE: At the time of Jesus' ministry, the Jewish religious leaders believed individuals remained "clean" by observing the primary Laws of Moses as well as many man-made rules invented and interpreted by generations of Pharisees. In Matthew 9:11, they asked the disciples why Jesus, their rabbi ("teacher") ate with sinners and tax collectors, they were expressing their amazement that any rabbi would risk becoming "unclean" by his proximity and association with "sinners," and with *Gentile* sinners in particular. The Pharisee's view of cleanliness with regard to the Hebrew law was a major factor in many of their encounters and misunderstandings with Jesus throughout the New Testament storyline.

What do you think Jesus' said the words "*I desire mercy, not sacrifice*" in response to what he heard the Pharisees say? (See Hosea 6:6, which he is quoting here)

What do the words "*I desire mercy, not sacrifice*" mean to you in everyday life?

Study these verses about the nature of God's desires for our devotion to him

Micah 6:6-8 Isaiah 1:11 1 Samuel 15:22 Psalm 51:17

Meditate by imagining the church as a hospital. What is your role in helping the sick? What does Jesus do in the hospital? What are the main diseases treated throughout the building.

JOURNAL: Describe the types of people you associate with on a day-to-day basis. Do you ever "hang out" with the unchurched or with non-believers? Is most of your time spent with "well" Christians? What do you think Jesus would have you do? Why?

Pray for a new passion to reach those who truly need spiritual help

Recite Luke 9:23-24, and practice it daily through the week until it is memorized.

G.R.I.P.

New Testament Character Studies

Week 10 Encounters with Jesus

Day 4 – The “Almost” Disciples

Salvation is free, but discipleship costs everything we have. **Billy Graham** (1918-)

The great stumbling block in the way of some people being disciples is that they are gifted, so gifted that they won't trust God.
Oswald Chambers (1874-1917)

Read this Bible passage slowly and deliberately.

Luke 9:57-62 As they were walking along the road, a man said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go." **58** Jesus replied, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head." **59** He said to another man, "Follow me." But the man replied, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father." **60** Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God." **61** Still another said, "I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say good-bye to my family." **62** Jesus replied, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God."

In verse 58, was Jesus really talking about places to sleep? If not, what then?

What does Jesus tell the man in verse 59? How does his response differ from that of Zacchaeus and Matthew?

What three hindrances to discipleship are implied in Jesus' responses to the "almost" disciples' excuses?

1. (verse 58) _____

2. (verses 59-61) _____

3. (verse 62) _____

What do you think Jesus meant by what he said in verse 62?

The Bible does not tell us which, if any of the men followed Jesus that day. Do you think any of them did? Why or why not?

If you had this conversation with Jesus today, what would your excuses be?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Study these verses by matching them with the excuse they give for not serving God

Jeremiah 1:6-7

Unimpressive Social Position

Judges 6:15

Afraid God is Too Demanding

Proverbs 22:13

Too Busy with Personal Business

Matthew 25:24-25

Lack of Self-Esteem

Luke 14:18-20

Not Very Eloquent in Speaking

Exodus 3:11

It is Too Dangerous/Frightening

Meditate by imagining you are walking along the road with Jesus. Think about the effect his presence has upon your fears and doubts. Imagine a conversation talking with him about them.

JOURNAL: From the list of excuses from Scripture listed above, which ones are true hindrances to you, and which ones are not? Explain and give examples.

Pray that God will help you past your weaknesses, fears and excuses in serving him

Recite Luke 9:23-24, and practice it daily through the week until it is memorized

G.R.I.P.

New Testament Character Studies

Week 10 Encounters with Jesus

Day 5 – Mary and Martha

We teach what we know; we reproduce what we are. Robert Schmidgall

Let Christ first work in you; then he will work through you. Croft M. Pentz

Read this Bible passage slowly and deliberately.

Luke 10:38-42 As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. **39** She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. **40** But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!" **41** "Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, **42** but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."

What were the two sisters doing while Jesus was at their home?

Mary: _____

Martha: _____

What things might the words “*sat at the Lord’s feet*” indicate about Mary?

What things were distracting Martha from listening to Jesus in her home?

What does the question Martha asks Jesus tell us about her attitude?

Write the phrase from today's verses that corroborate these facts about Martha:

VERSE

PHRASE & VERSE

She would rather work than hear a sermon _____

She is self-pitying _____

She accuses others when angry _____

She is a homeowner _____

She is bossy _____

How does Jesus contrast of Mary and Martha's attitudes? Which is better? Why?

Study these verses about having a teachable spirit in our Christian walk

1 Thessalonians 2:13 Acts 17:11 Proverbs 18:15 Matthew 18:3

Meditate by imagining you are sitting at the feet of Jesus, and he is speaking. What things do you imagine he would say that could touch your heart and change you?

JOURNAL: How receptive are you to spiritual teaching? Are you committed to the role of being a student in your church, or like Martha, are you most comfortable when you are working or leading? Explore this idea honestly with regard to yourself.

Pray for a humble, teachable spirit to serve under the spiritual authority of others

Recite Luke 9:23-24, and prepare to share it with your group at the next meeting

Encounters with Jesus

Spiritual Summary – *Week 10*

How is your faith like that of Zacchaeus? How is it different?

What attitudes or actions do you share with the rich ruler of Matthew 19?

How often do you socialize with non-believers? Why is this so?

What have you learned this week about excuses for not serving God?

Are you more like Mary or like Martha by nature? Give an example.

What spiritual truth have you learned this week to share with your group?

G.R.I.P.

New Testament Character Studies

MEMORY VERSE

For Week 11

*But you are a chosen people,
a royal priesthood, a holy
nation, a people belonging to
God, that you may declare
the praises of him who called
you out of darkness into his
wonderful light.*

1 Peter 2:9

G.R.I.P.

New Testament Character Studies

Week 11 Early Church Encounters

Day 1 – Ananias and Sapphira – Dangerous Deceptions

The purpose of the church, financially, is not to accumulate as much money as possible but to give away as much as possible.

Jerry Hayner in Leadership

What keeps you from giving now? Isn't the poor man there? Aren't your own warehouses full? Isn't the reward promised? The command is clear: the hungry man is dying now, the naked man is freezing now, the man in debt is beaten now--and you want to wait until tomorrow? "I'm not doing any harm," you say, "I just want to keep what I own, that's all." Your own! If everyone took only what he needed and gave the rest to those in need there would be no such thing as rich or poor. After all, didn't you come into life naked, and won't you return naked to the earth? **St. Basil**

Read this Bible passage slowly and deliberately.

Acts 4:32 - 5:11 All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had. **33** With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and much grace was upon them all. **34** There were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales **35** and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone as he had need. **36** Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, whom the apostles called Barnabas (which means Son of Encouragement), **37** sold a field he owned and brought the money and put it at the apostles' feet. **5:1** Now a man named Ananias, together with his wife Sapphira, also sold a piece of property. **2** With his wife's full knowledge he kept back part of the money for himself, but brought the rest and put it at the apostles' feet. **3** Then Peter said, "Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land? **4** Didn't it belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold, wasn't the money at your disposal? What made you think of doing such a thing? You have not lied to men but to God." **5** When Ananias heard this, he fell down and died. And great fear seized all who heard what had happened. **6** Then the young men came forward, wrapped up his body, and carried him out and buried him. **7** About three hours later his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. **8** Peter asked her, "Tell me, is this the price you and Ananias got for the land?" "Yes," she said, "that is the price." **9** Peter said to her, "How could you agree to test the Spirit of the Lord? Look! The feet of the men who buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out also." **10** At that moment she fell down at his feet and died. Then the young men came in and, finding her dead, carried her out and buried her beside her husband. **11** Great fear seized the whole church and all who heard about these events.

How was what Ananias and Sapphira did different from the other believers?

Why do you think Peter rebuked them?

Does it seem that Ananias' sin is the same as that of Sapphira? Why or why not?

What do you think caused the death of Ananias? Sapphira? Explain.

What does this story seem to indicate about the relationship between stinginess and deceitfulness in the hearts of people? Can you give an example?

Have you ever held back giving something you had promised to God? When? What was the result of this in your life and in your heart?

Study these verses about the results of stinginess in life, and especially toward God
Proverbs 11:24 Ecclesiastes 5:13 Isaiah 43:24 Malachi 3:8

Meditate by imagining you are without a job, home, family, friends and money. Imagine someone comes to you and offers you help getting your life back together. How grateful would you be?

JOURNAL: Write about your tendencies with regard to generosity. Do you tend to be freely generous, or do you tend to give "with strings attached"? Explain and give an example.

Pray that God will make you more generous in an unconditional way

Recite 1 Peter 2:9, and practice it daily through the week until it is memorized.

G.R.I.P.

New Testament Character Studies

Week 11 Early Church Encounters

Day 2 – Prayer, Praise and Personal Faith in Prison

The gospel must be preached afresh and told in new ways to every generation, since every generation has its own unique questions. The gospel must constantly be forwarded to a new address, because the recipient is repeatedly changing his place of residence. Helmut Thielicke

Read this Bible passage slowly and deliberately.

Acts 16:22-34 The crowd joined in the attack against Paul and Silas, and the magistrates ordered them to be stripped and beaten. **23** After they had been severely flogged, they were thrown into prison, and the jailer was commanded to guard them carefully. **24** Upon receiving such orders, he put them in the inner cell and fastened their feet in the stocks. **25** About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. **26** Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everybody's chains came loose. **27** The jailer woke up, and when he saw the prison doors open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself because he thought the prisoners had escaped. **28** But Paul shouted, "Don't harm yourself! We are all here!" **29** The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. **30** He then brought them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" **31** They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved--you and your household." **32** Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house. **33** At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his family were baptized. **34** The jailer brought them into his house and set a meal before them; he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God--he and his whole family.

List the sequence of events of this story in chronological order:

1. Paul, Silas beaten, imprisoned
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____

NOTE: In the first century, Roman jailers were entrusted with prisoners on penalty of their own life. This is why this jailer contemplated suicide (rather than summary execution). This is also seen in Acts 27:41-42, where roman guards were prepared to kill the prisoners rather than let them escape. By not escaping or encouraging any of the others to escape, Paul actually saved the jailer's life.

What does verse 25 show us about the power of our personal witness in faith?

Why do you think the jailer fell trembling feet of Paul & Silas (verse 29)?

What did Paul tell the jailer was necessary for him to be saved?

How were the jailer and his family changed by this supernatural experience?

Have you ever seen a person become a Christian under some sort of unique or miraculous circumstances? Describe what happened.

Study these verses by matching them with the aspect of salvation they describe

John 10:9

For the obedient

Matthew 10:22

Only by the name of Jesus

Acts 15:11

His blood justifies us to salvation

Hebrews 5:9

For those who endure to the end

Acts 4:12

His grace is sufficient

Romans 5:9

Christ is the only door

Meditate by considering what you were like before you accepted Jesus as your savior. Think of the nature and scope of the change in you, and consider God's grace in doing this in you.

JOURNAL: Write about a person you know that has been drastically transformed for the better by a personal encounter with Jesus Christ. How did it happen? What things actually changed? Perhaps that person is you....

Pray for an opportunity this week to share your faith with people around you

Recite 1 Peter 2:9, and practice it daily through the week until it is memorized.

G.R.I.P.

New Testament Character Studies

Week 11 Early Church Encounters

Day 3 – Apollos: Inspiration and Instruction in God’s Word

When you read God's Word, you must constantly be saying to yourself, "It is talking to me, and about me."

Soren Kierkegaard

My conscience has been taken captive by the Word of God, and to go against conscience or Scripture is neither right nor safe. Martin Luther

Read this Bible passage slowly and deliberately.

Acts 18:24-28 Meanwhile a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was a learned man, with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures. **25** He had been instructed in the way of the Lord, and he spoke with great fervor and taught about Jesus accurately, though he knew only the baptism of John. **26** He began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they invited him to their home and explained to him the way of God more adequately. **27** When Apollos wanted to go to Achaia, the brothers encouraged him and wrote to the disciples there to welcome him. On arriving, he was a great help to those who by grace had believed. **28** For he vigorously refuted the Jews in public debate, proving from the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ.

List eight important things these verses tell us about Apollos as a person and Christian leader, with the verse that supports each one.

1. _____ (Verse _____)
2. _____ (Verse _____)
3. _____ (Verse _____)
4. _____ (Verse _____)
5. _____ (Verse _____)
6. _____ (Verse _____)
7. _____ (Verse _____)
8. _____ (Verse _____)

Why do you think Apollos might have needed “more adequate” instruction from Priscilla and Aquila? What might this have included?

What do you think it meant that he “knew only the baptism of John”? Explain.

What types of ministries does this passage say Apollos was involved with?

What phrases in these verses indicate the passion of Apollos for ministry?

1. Verse 25 – “*spoke with great fervor*_____” 2. Verse 26 – “_____”
3. Verse 27 – “_____” 4. Verse 28 – “_____”

How well have you been “instructed in the way of the Lord”? Explain.

Are you willing to be trained and held spiritually accountable by another person? Explain why or why not, and who should assume that role in your life.

What ministry or ministries are you fervent about serving in, and why?

Study these verses about the critical importance of instruction in God’s Word.

Deuteronomy 4:10 2 Chronicles 17:9 Nehemiah 8:13 Matthew 22:29

Meditate upon the power of God’s Word in your heart and life. Imagine yourself sitting quietly in your favorite spot, listening for the Lord. Then envision the encouragement and strength of his word, in hearing and reading, as it penetrates your heart. Hold onto that image a while.

JOURNAL: Write about the most important Bible teacher in your life. What did they teach you about God’s word that affected you so powerfully, and how has it changed your life?

Pray for an opportunity this week to share your faith with people around you

Recite 1 Peter 2:9, and practice it daily through the week until it is memorized.

G.R.I.P.

New Testament Character Studies

Week 11 Early Church Encounters

Day 4 – Consequences of the Counterfeit

We can never talk about God behind his back. We cannot speak of God in his absence. ... The God who is being discussed is also there. The attitude people take to Him can never be merely theoretical. To deny Him is to spite Him to His face. A. Skevington Wood in *Evangelism: Its Theology and Practice*.

Read this Bible passage slowly and deliberately.

Acts 19:13-20 Some Jews who went around driving out evil spirits tried to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who were demon-possessed. They would say, "In the name of Jesus, whom Paul preaches, I command you to come out." **14** Seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, were doing this. **15** One day the evil spirit answered them, "Jesus I know, and I know about Paul, but who are you?" **16** Then the man who had the evil spirit jumped on them and overpowered them all. He gave them such a beating that they ran out of the house naked and bleeding. **17** When this became known to the Jews and Greeks living in Ephesus, they were all seized with fear, and the name of the Lord Jesus was held in high honor. **18** Many of those who believed now came and openly confessed their evil deeds. **19** A number who had practiced sorcery brought their scrolls together and burned them publicly. When they calculated the value of the scrolls, the total came to fifty thousand drachmas. **20** In this way the word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power.

Why couldn't Sceva's sons drive out the evil spirit (verse 14)? Explain.

What does verse 16 tell us about the disposition and abilities of evil spirits?

This encounter brought about what four positive results for the early church?

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

What does their actions indicate they believed about using the name of Jesus to command evil spirits? What was the flaw in their understanding?

Have you ever know anyone who used the name of Jesus regularly, yet showed little or no evidence of really knowing him? What effect did it have on others?

Study these verses by matching them with what they say about the name of Jesus

Acts 10:48

Fearless preaching

Philippians 2:10

The hope of the nations

Acts 3:6

Forgiveness of sins

Matthew 12:21

Every knee shall bow

Acts 9:27

Christian baptism

Acts 2:38

Physical healing

Meditate by simply meditating upon the name of Jesus. Do this by speaking to yourself each of the scripture explanations above, for example “forgiveness of sins in the name of Jesus.” Repeat these until you feel you have sensed God’s presence in the activity.

JOURNAL: How often do you use the name of Jesus in everyday life? Why is this true? What benefit or difficulties would you realize if you used Jesus’ name more often? Explain.

Pray for the name of Jesus to be glorified in your life this week.

Recite 1 Peter 2:9, and practice it daily through the week until it is memorized.

G.R.I.P.

New Testament Character Studies

Week 11 Early Church Encounters

Day 5 – Companions in Confinement

What is most rewarding is doing something that really matters with congenial colleagues who share with us the firm conviction that it needs to be done. Elton Trueblood

Read this Bible passage slowly and deliberately.

Colossians 4:10-14 My fellow prisoner Aristarchus sends you his greetings, as does Mark, the cousin of Barnabas. (You have received instructions about him; if he comes to you, welcome him.) **11** Jesus, who is called Justus, also sends greetings. These are the only Jews among my fellow workers for the kingdom of God, and they have proved a comfort to me. **12** Epaphras, who is one of you and a servant of Christ Jesus, sends greetings. He is always wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured. **13** I vouch for him that he is working hard for you and for those at Laodicea and Hierapolis. **14** Our dear friend Luke, the doctor, and Demas send greetings.

List those named here who were with the Apostle Paul during his imprisonment. If they were helping Paul in some specific way, list it next to their name.

<u>COMPANION</u>	<u>SPIRITUAL WORK</u>
1. _____	_____
2. _____	_____
3. _____	_____
4. _____	_____
5. _____	_____
6. _____	_____

What do Aristarchus, Mark and Jesus (Justus) have in common?

Which of these helps seems most important to you? Why?

What three main concerns did Epaphras lift up in prayer for the church?

Which of Epaphras' prayer topics is most problematic for you personally? Why?

Which of Epaphras' prayer concerns is the least problematic for you? Why?

Study these verses about the value of spiritual workers in God's kingdom

Daniel 12:3 1 Corinthians 9:19 Matthew 9:37-38 1 Timothy 5:17

Meditate by thinking of the world's population as a large mixing bowl of ingredients. What ingredient would you be, and what will your effect be upon the recipe and flavor of the people?.

JOURNAL: Which of the companions of Paul are you least like, based upon what you read here? Why? Which companion are you most like? If you had been with the Apostle Paul, what sort of help would you likely have been able to provide to his ministry work?

Pray that you can be a loyal, durable spiritual companion to those who need you

Recite 1 Peter 2:9, and be prepared to share it with your group when you meet.

Early Church Encounters

Spiritual Summary – *Week 11*

What personal application did derive from Ananias and Sapphira's story?

What spiritual truth did you learn from the story of the jailer in Acts 16?

How does Apollos' life inspire you in your own Christian service? Why?

The story of the Seven sons of Sceva points to what important spiritual truths about the power and use of the name of Jesus?

How would you rate yourself as a spiritual companion to others, in light of what you learned from the story of Paul's prison companions?

What is the most important spiritual truth you learned this week, and how will you apply it in your life. Share this with the group.

G.R.I.P.

New Testament Character Studies

MEMORY VERSE

For Week 12

*The Mighty One has
done great things for me-
- holy is his name. His
mercy extends to those
who fear him, from
generation to generation.*

Luke 1:49-50

G.R.I.P.

New Testament Character Studies

Week 12 Mary, Mother of Jesus

Day 1 – Dealing with the Unexpected

'Twas much, that man was made like God before. But, that God should be made like man, much more.
John Donne

His life is the highest and the holiest entering in at the lowliest door. Oswald Chambers (1874-1917)

Jesus' coming is the final and unanswerable proof that God cares. William Barclay (1907-1978)

Read this Bible passage slowly and deliberately.

Luke 1:26-38 In the sixth month, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, **27** to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. **28** The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you." **29** Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. **30** But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. **31** You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. **32** He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, **33** and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end." **34** "How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?" **35** The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. **36** Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be barren is in her sixth month. **37** For nothing is impossible with God." **38** "I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May it be to me as you have said." Then the angel left her.

There are several important historical and doctrinal facts in the first two verses:

- 1. The angel visited Mary in the town of _____ in the province of _____**
- 2. Mary was a _____, and Joseph was a _____**

Note: Throughout the Bible, angels serve as messengers and servants of God. They usually make important announcements or deliver vital messages. In fact, the word "angel" is derived from both the Hebrew and the Latin words which literally mean "messenger." In this story, the angel is named Gabriel (only a few angels are actually referred to by name in the Bible). For other references to Gabriel, see Daniel 8:16, Daniel 9:21, and Luke 1:19

List several things the angel tells Mary to reassure her in verses 28-30.

Describe Mary's reaction and concerns about the angel's greeting.

The things the angel commanded and promised Mary were that:

She would be with _____ and give birth to a _____, and she should name him _____. The child would be conceived by _____ and he would grow up to be the _____ of Israel.

Study the following verses which refer to the promise of Jesus' birth.

Isaiah 7:14 Micah 5:2 Isaiah 9:6-7 John 1:14

Can you think of a time when something life-changing happened to you that was totally unexpected? What was it, and how did you react?

Meditate on Isaiah 9:6-7, and contemplate what it means for Jesus to fulfill *in your life* the various roles he is attributed in that verse.

JOURNAL: The angel says that “nothing is impossible with God.” Have you ever seen God do a thing in your life that you thought was impossible? What was it? What miraculous thing or things would you like to see God do in your life now?

Pray that you could perceive yourself as God saw Mary; as one highly favored. Be thankful for God's love and faithfulness to you.

Recite as much of Luke 1:49-50 as possible, and work on it throughout the week.

G.R.I.P.

New Testament Character Studies

Week 12 Mary, Mother of Jesus

Day 2 – A Servant’s Song

I long to accomplish a great and noble task, but it is my chief duty and joy to accomplish humble tasks as though they were great and noble. For the world is moved along, not only by the mighty shoves of its heroes, but also by the aggregate of tiny pushes of each honest worker. Helen Keller

Many people neglect the task that lies at hand and are content with having wished to do the impossible.
Teresa of Avila (16th century)

Read this Bible passage slowly and deliberately.

Luke 1:46-55 And Mary said: "My soul glorifies the Lord **47** and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, **48** for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed, **49** for the Mighty One has done great things for me-- holy is his name. **50** His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation. **51** He has performed mighty deeds with his arm; he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts. **52** He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble. **53** He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty. **54** He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful **55** to Abraham and his descendants forever, even as he said to our fathers."

List several things that Mary rejoices over that relate to her personally. (verses 46-49)

What eight things does Mary mention that God has done for the people of Israel?

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

Is it generally easier for you to rejoice in your prayers, or to ask for things? Why?

What things do you rejoice over in your life and relationship with God? Why?

Study the following verses about rejoicing in the Lord and his love for us.

Psalm 16:11 1 Peter 1:8 Psalm 30:5 Philippians 4:4

Meditate by remembering your most joyful memory in as much detail as possible. Then remember that God is the author of all good things and praise him for it.

JOURNAL: List some of the things that have given you great joy in your life in the past and in the present. Write a prayer of thanks to God for these blessings.

Pray for a spirit of joy in everything you do throughout this week.

Recite as much of Luke 1:49-50 as possible, and work on it throughout the week.

G.R.I.P.

New Testament Character Studies

Week 12 Mary, Mother of Jesus

Day 3 – Humble Birth, Holy Birth

Breath, mouth, ears, eyes

he is curtailed who overflowed all skies, all years.

Older than eternity, now he is new.

Now native to earth as I am, nailed to my poor planet, caught that I might be free.

Luci Shaw (1928-)

Read this Bible passage slowly and deliberately.

Luke 2:1-19 In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. **2** (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) **3** And everyone went to his own town to register. **4** So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. **5** He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. **6** While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, **7** and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. **8** And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. **9** An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. **10** But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. **11** Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. **12** This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." **13** Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, **14** "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests." **15** When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about." **16** So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. **17** When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, **18** and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. **19** But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.

Why were Joseph and Mary traveling from Nazareth to Bethlehem?

Quote what the angel told the shepherds about the child born to Mary.

1. How to react to them: (Verse 10) _____ "*do not be afraid*" _____
2. What kind of news they had: (Verse 10) _____
3. Who the news was for: (Verse 10) _____
4. The identity of the child: (Verse 11) _____
5. Where the child could be found: (Verses 11-12) _____

Has God ever revealed anything to you in a miraculous way? When and how?

Study the following verses about the humility that Jesus Christ assumed in this world.

Philippians 2:5-8 John 13:5-17 2 Corinthians 8:9 Matthew 13:55

Meditate upon Mary's humble willingness to be God's holy vessel. Then reflect upon your recent reactions to other people in your life. Have they been more humble or more selfish than they should be?

Identify any of these acts and attitudes of humility and servanthood that apply to your life. Place a number, one to five, in the box to rate your commitment to it. *1 = low, 5 = high*

- I am often willing to do things that others consider unimportant or beneath them
- I spend more time in Christian service each week than with television or entertainment
- I pray more for the needs of others than I do for myself and my own family
- I rarely use the excuse that I am "too busy" in order to avoid Christian service
- I use my talents primarily for God, and only after that for things of the world
- I give generously to God's kingdom work in the church, and to the poor and needy

JOURNAL: How willing are you to change the level of sacrificial service in which you operate each day? What are some specific things you could do?

Pray that the Lord will develop a servant's heart within you.

Recite as much of Luke 1:49-50 as possible, and work on it throughout the week.

G.R.I.P.

New Testament Character Studies

Week 12 Mary, Mother of Jesus

Day 4 – A Mother’s Faith

No man is poor who has had a godly mother. Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865)

The mother-child relationship is paradoxical and, in a sense, tragic. It requires the most intense love on the mother's side, yet this very love must help the child grow away from the mother and to become fully independent. Erich Fromm (1900-1980)

Read this Bible passage slowly and deliberately.

John 2:1-11 On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there, **2** and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. **3** When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, "They have no more wine." **4** "Dear woman, why do you involve me?" Jesus replied. "My time has not yet come." **5** His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you." **6** Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons. **7** Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water"; so they filled them to the brim. **8** Then he told them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet." They did so, **9** and the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine. He did not realize where it had come from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew. Then he called the bridegroom aside **10** and said, "Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now." **11** This, the first of his miraculous signs, Jesus performed at Cana in Galilee. He thus revealed his glory, and his disciples put their faith in him.

Why do you think Mary asked Jesus to take action in this situation? Do you think she expected him to do something miraculous?

What do Jesus' words to Mary say about his perception of his ministry? What do Mary's words to the servants tell about her confidence and trust in Jesus?

Verses 10-11 tell what about the short and long-term results of Mary's request?

How significant do you think it is that Mary, Jesus' mother, was a factor in his first public miracle?

Study the following verses about trusting Christ in all circumstances.

John 12:35-36 John 14:1 Hebrews 13:6

Meditate upon Mary's confidence in Jesus, and upon your confidence in him.

JOURNAL: Write down a few things God has done in your life to give you confidence in him. Were any of these things unexpected or miraculous?

Pray for confidence this week, not in your own strength or that of others, but in Christ.

Recite as much of Luke 1:49-50 as possible, and work on it throughout the week.

G.R.I.P.

New Testament Character Studies

Week 12 Mary, Mother of Jesus

Day 5 – A Mother’s Grief

Mothers write on the hearts of their children what the world's rough hand cannot erase. Anonymous

Read this Bible passage slowly and deliberately.

John 19:23-27 When the soldiers crucified Jesus, they took his clothes, dividing them into four shares, one for each of them, with the undergarment remaining. This garment was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom. **24** "Let's not tear it," they said to one another. "Let's decide by lot who will get it." This happened that the scripture might be fulfilled which said, "They divided my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing." So this is what the soldiers did. **25** Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. **26** When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, "Dear woman, here is your son," **27** and to the disciple, "Here is your mother." From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.

What does it say about Mary’s character, that she was at the cross at this time?

What do you think Jesus was saying in verse 26-27?

If you are a parent, what is the most difficult thing you have watched one of your children go through? How did it affect your faith in God?

Have you ever seen someone else suffer along with their child? When and how?

Study the following verses about dealing with suffering and grief.

Psalm 10:14 Lamentations 3:31-33 John 16:20-22

Meditate upon some of the hurts and grief you have experienced in your life. Imagine walking under a cold mountain waterfall, and the Lord washing that pain away in joy.

JOURNAL: Has the Lord ever turned the griefs in your life into joy? How and when did it happen? How long did it take for God to do this?

Pray that God will give you a thankful heart, even for the griefs you have suffered.

Recite as much of Luke 1:49-50 as possible, and work on it throughout the week.

Mary, Mother of Jesus

Spiritual Summary – *Week 12*

What did God show you this week about dealing with the unexpected?

How have you determined to increase the Christian service in your life?

What has the Lord shown you this week about rejoicing in him?

Describe how your view of humility and self have changed this week.

Has God shown you any new truth about grief in your life?

What have you discovered this week that you can share with your class?



Material produced and distributed by
Discipleship Ministries, Mesoamerica Region, Church of the Nazarene