

*More Than A
Feeling
Fall 2020*



Study Introduction

We are embarking on exciting times at Eastpoint. While the world is in a constant state of change, we know that God still sits on the throne, unshakeable and unsurprised by what's going on. Our mission is to be disciples of Jesus who share their faith with others through Knowing God, Finding Freedom, Engaging Community, and Sharing Your Story. Over the next ten weeks, we'll be taking a journey through First John, looking at what it looks like to not only speak our faith, but to demonstrate it through love.

God is always calling us to more. More faith. More obedience. More love. But he also promises to be with us through it all, both on the highest of peaks and in the lowest valleys. He empowers us through his Holy Spirit who resides in everyone who has claimed Jesus as their Savior. The Spirit reveals the things of God to us and throughout John's letter, we learn a lot about the role of the Spirit in our lives.

To become like Jesus is to get to know him and spend time with him. Having a relationship with Jesus is just like any other relationship you have; you must cultivate the relationship to strengthen the bond. Throughout these ten weeks, we're going to look at what it means to Be With Jesus, Become Like Jesus, and Do What He Did through growing in our relationship with him and becoming more Christ-like.

The way this study guide is laid out is that for every week, there are five devotionals. There is a passage from Scripture, a short devotional, followed by an action step for the day. After that, utilize one of the resources on the next page to go deeper into Scripture. At Eastpoint, we call this time with Jesus *Chairtime*. So



find a cozy spot and hang out with Jesus. Learn how he lived his life and engage with your community the way he did. You'll never be the same.

Pursuing Christ is a lifetime commitment, but it is the greatest endeavor we could ever take.

Chairtime Resources

Scripture: We go deeper into Scripture when God reveals the truths of it through prayer. So before you begin each day, pray to God, asking him to reveal himself to you through the Word. After reading the passage and devotional and committing to the action step, utilize one of these three methods to go deeper into what God has for you. If you already have a method, great! Use what works for you.

S.O.A.P.S: The first method is the acronym S.O.A.P.S. In your journal (or wherever you take notes), after you read the passage, write out the following:

Scripture: *What verse stood out to you from your reading? Write it down*

Observe: *Write down any observations you had while reading*

Apply: *How can you apply this verse to your life. Or, how are you going to be different based on what you read?*

Prayer: *Write (or speak) a prayer to God.*

Share: *Who are you going to share this with?*



B.R.E.A.D: The second method is similar to S.O.A.P.S but with a little variance:

Be Still: *Find a place where you can encounter God, ask him to fill the space and then take a minute in stillness. Fix your eyes on Jesus and invite the Holy Spirit to guide your time*

Read: *Read through the passage for the day. Read it a second time, more slowly. Look for one verse that stands out, grabs your attention or interests you. Write it out.*

Encounter: *Taking your chosen verse, begin to meditate on it. What comes to mind and how does it make you feel? What do you think God is trying to reveal through this verse and allow him to speak to your heart and mind? Write a short reflection on what you think he might be saying.*

Apply: *Now, turn your focus outwards, think about how you might be able to apply this to your day and write down the one thing you're going to try and live out.*

Devote: *Finally, close by writing a simple prayer of devotion to God. Ask that God would fill you and commit your day to him.*

Discovery Bible Study: We've used this method for group discussions but the questions are also great for personal Chairtime with Jesus. Read the passage, then answer each question based off what you read:

1. What does this passage say about God?
2. What does this passage say about people?
3. Is there an example and/or command to follow?
4. Is there a sin to avoid and/or repent of?
5. How are you going to be different based on what you read?
6. Who are you going to share this with?



Week 1

The Revealing of Jesus

Day 1

1 John 1:1-4: We proclaim to you the one who existed from the beginning, whom we have heard and seen. We saw him with our own eyes and touched him with our own hands. He is the Word of life. 2 This one who is life itself was revealed to us, and we have seen him. And now we testify and proclaim to you that he is the one who is eternal life. He was with the Father, and then he was revealed to us. 3 We proclaim to you what we ourselves have actually seen and heard so that you may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. 4 We are writing these things so that you may fully share our joy.

It is hard to know someone if you haven't spent time with them. Any type of relationship you have with someone requires spending time with them and getting to know more about them: who they are, what their interests are, what they dislike, etc. It's the same way with Jesus. We can know things about Jesus without actually *knowing* Jesus. Think of your favorite sports player or singer or actor. Chances are you probably know a lot about them but you've never actually met them. You know facts but you have no relationship. Is your relationship with Jesus based on knowing about him or actually knowing him?

The introduction to John's first letter sets the stage for what it looks like to have an intimate relationship with Jesus. John walked side-by-side with Jesus for three and a half years and after Jesus' death and resurrection, he continued to walk with him, though in a different way. Jesus is alive with us just as much as



he was when he walked this earth with John. John saw, touched, and experienced the power of Jesus after he was raised from the dead; he was an eyewitness to it and this opening statement encourages us to pursue the same relationship with Jesus that he experienced.

Where are you with Jesus? Have you been following him for a while? Are you a newer Christ follower? Are you just starting to explore Jesus? Wherever you're at, we want to help you grow closer to Jesus by Being with Him, Becoming Like Him, and Doing What He Would Do.



Day 2

Philippians 2:6-11 **6** Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. **7** Instead, he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form, **8** he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on a cross. **9** Therefore, God elevated him to the place of highest honor and gave him the name above all other names, **10** that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, **11** and every tongue declare that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Hebrews 4:14-16: **14** So then, since we have a great High Priest who has entered heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to what we believe. **15** This High Priest of ours understands our weaknesses, for he faced all of the same testings we do, yet he did not sin. **16** So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most.

It can be hard to relate to someone who seems on another level in terms of influence and power. How many of us can actually say we understand what celebrities or Fortune 500 CEOs go through? How could they ever know what we go through? Jesus had more influence and power than any human who ever walked the earth, yet he did not use that to his advantage. Instead he humbled himself to experience everything we would experience. We can be with Jesus because he can fully relate to us. He endured hunger and thirst. He felt emotions and hardships. He knows what it's like to be on the outskirts of society and culture. He knows what it means to be rejected. Even his best friends left him high and dry before he was crucified. He was tempted in every way that we are tempted, yet he resisted falling into temptation. Is there something in your life that you're struggling with or someone you don't see eye to eye with? Reach out to Jesus. He wants to help you. He hears us when we pray and is waiting for you to come to him.



Day 3

Mark 9:2-8: *2 Six days later Jesus took Peter, James, and John, and led them up a high mountain to be alone. As the men watched, Jesus' appearance was transformed, 3 and his clothes became dazzling white, far whiter than any earthly bleach could ever make them. 4 Then Elijah and Moses appeared and began talking with Jesus. 5 Peter exclaimed, "Rabbi, it's wonderful for us to be here! Let's make three shelters as memorials—one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." 6 He said this because he didn't really know what else to say, for they were all terrified. 7 Then a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my dearly loved Son. Listen to him." 8 Suddenly, when they looked around, Moses and Elijah were gone, and they saw only Jesus with them.*

2 Peter 1:16-18: *16 For we were not making up clever stories when we told you about the powerful coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. We saw his majestic splendor with our own eyes 17 when he received honor and glory from God the Father. The voice from the majestic glory of God said to him, "This is my dearly loved Son, who brings me great joy." 18 We ourselves heard that voice from heaven when we were with him on the holy mountain.*

The story of Jesus and the disciples on the Mount of Transfiguration is perhaps the closest revelation on earth of what heaven will be like. In this moment, we see Elijah (symbolizing the prophets of the Old Testament) and Moses (symbolizing the law) standing on either side of Jesus (the fulfillment of the law and the prophets). What a truly extraordinary moment in history! As Peter writes to defend the second coming of Christ, he uses this experience to confirm that the story of Jesus is not a fable or myth; Peter himself was witness to the power of Christ and he uses this moment to point to what his readers can anticipate when Jesus returns.

How does your idea of heaven shape the way you live your life? Do you live in the confidence of being with Jesus for eternity? Does the idea of living in



eternal perfection drive you to share Jesus with others? We have been given the greatest gift the universe will ever know through Jesus. And we have the opportunity to tell others so they can live in the freedom of Christ, a freedom that no one or nothing else can give.

Who is someone you can share Jesus with today?

Day 4

Psalm 105:1-4: "Give thanks to the Lord and proclaim his greatness. Let the whole world know what he has done. Sing to him; yes, sing his praises. Tell everyone about his wonderful deeds. Exult in his holy name; rejoice, you who worship the Lord. Search for the Lord and for his strength; continually seek him."

Worship of God is not something that happens on Sunday mornings only. It is also not strictly reserved for music (although singing is an excellent way to worship). Our true worship to God is seen in how we live our lives. When we live according to how he has shown us to live through Jesus, we are worshipping God and giving him glory and honor that he rightly deserves. When we are generous with our time, treasures and talents, that is an act of worship. When we help someone in need, knowing that's what Jesus would do, we are worshipping God. It can come in many different forms. Sometimes, just sitting in silence and meditating on His goodness is an act of worship.

How do you worship God? How can you be more consistent in your worship of God?



Day 5

Acts 4:13, 18-22: 13 The members of the council were amazed when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, for they could see that they were ordinary men with no special training in the Scriptures. They also recognized them as men who had been with Jesus... 18 So they called the apostles back in and commanded them never again to speak or teach in the name of Jesus. 19 But Peter and John replied, "Do you think God wants us to obey you rather than him? 20 We cannot stop telling about everything we have seen and heard." 21 The council then threatened them further, but they finally let them go because they didn't know how to punish them without starting a riot. For everyone was praising God 22 for this miraculous sign—the healing of a man who had been lame for more than forty years.

"Boldness" is the word that sticks out in this passage. Peter and John are on the verge of being imprisoned, and yet they held fast to their belief in the truth of Jesus. The council knew that these two fishermen did not have the same training as them, but they recognized that the two had been with Jesus. The revelation of Jesus to Peter and John had caused them to put their reputation and life at risk, but as they say in verse 19, "Do you think God wants us to obey you (the council) rather than him?"

Do people recognize that you have been with Jesus? Is there something that sets you apart that people can't quite put their finger on? Are you willing to put your reputation on the line and not stop telling people about Jesus, much like Peter and John? There was nothing special about them as people. They were two flawed human beings who spent time with Jesus, believed in his message, received the Holy Spirit, and told others about him, which in turn started a movement that continues two thousand years later. We have the ability to do the same things they did, for we have the same Spirit within us.

Pray for boldness as you go about your day and look for opportunities to share what Jesus has done in your life.



Week 2

Fellowship With God

Day 1

1 John 1:5-10: 5 *This is the message we heard from Jesus and now declare to you: God is light, and there is no darkness in him at all. 6 So we are lying if we say we have fellowship with God but go on living in spiritual darkness; we are not practicing the truth. 7 But if we are living in the light, as God is in the light, then we have fellowship with each other, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, cleanses us from all sin. 8 If we claim we have no sin, we are only fooling ourselves and not living in the truth. 9 But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness. 10 If we claim we have not sinned, we are calling God a liar and showing that his word has no place in our hearts.*

John does not pull any punches in this passage. If we have fellowship with God, we are living in the light. If we don't have fellowship with God, we're living in darkness. And if we claim to live in the light but actually live in darkness, we're liars. Which of the three speaks to your reality? What does it look like to live in the light despite darkness being all around? We don't have to look beyond Jesus. He lived in perfect obedience to God, who is light. When we are growing in our relationship with him and being obedient to what he asks of us, we are living in the light of God. Don't mistake darkness for light. The darkness can look attractive but its path leads to destruction.

How can you move out of the dark spaces in your life and into the light?



Day 2

James 1:16-18: *16 So don't be misled, my dear brothers and sisters. 17 Whatever is good and perfect is a gift coming down to us from God our Father, who created all the lights in the heavens. He never changes or casts a shifting shadow. 18 He chose to give birth to us by giving us his true word. And we, out of all creation, became his prized possession.*

John 3:19-21: *19 And the judgment is based on this fact: God's light came into the world, but people loved the darkness more than the light, for their actions were evil. 20 All who do evil hate the light and refuse to go near it for fear their sins will be exposed. 21 But those who do what is right come to the light so others can see that they are doing what God wants."*

God is consistent light and everything about him is good. Do not be swayed by people who say there are other sources of light and goodness; those things don't exist outside of God. The phrase "coming down" in James speaks of a continual outpouring of the gifts of goodness and perfection that God is bestowing upon us. They never cease or run out. And God never changes. He is the one who was, who is, and who is to come. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. To live in the light is to live in truth. To live in the darkness is to live for fear of being exposed. Light is freedom; darkness is a burden. Jesus came so that we could experience life to the fullest and that is a life that's lived in the light.

How have you experienced fulfillment by living in Jesus?



Day 3

Psalm 32:1-5: *1 Oh, what joy for those whose disobedience is forgiven, whose sin is put out of sight! 2 Yes, what joy for those whose record the Lord has cleared of guilt, whose lives are lived in complete honesty, 3 When I refused to confess my sin, my body wasted away, and I groaned all day long. 4 Day and night your hand of discipline was heavy on me. My strength evaporated like water in the summer heat. 5 Finally, I confessed all my sins to you and stopped trying to hide my guilt. I said to myself, "I will confess my rebellion to the Lord." And you forgave me! All my guilt is gone.*

Hebrews 12:1-2: *Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us. 2 We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith. Because of the joy awaiting him, he endured the cross, disregarding its shame. Now he is seated in the place of honor beside God's throne.*

We've talked a lot this week about living in the light versus the darkness; living according to God versus living according to the world. If you find yourself in darkness or chasing after the things of the world, that does not mean God has rejected you. He is a loving Father who wants to help his children. He knows everything about us. He knows more about us than we know about ourselves and he loves us completely. That is why he sent Jesus to the cross, so that we would not have to live in the darkness any longer. Your past does not have to set the precedent for your future when you turn to God. God does not just fix things that are broken, he makes them new.

Is there something from your past that is hindering you from drawing near to Jesus? Bring it to him and ask him to take it away from you. He wants nothing to come between you and him.



Day 4

Psalm 51:1-4: **1** Have mercy on me, O God, because of your unfailing love. Because of your great compassion, blot out the stain of my sins. **2** Wash me clean from my guilt. Purify me from my sin. **3** For I recognize my rebellion; it haunts me day and night. **4** Against you, and you alone, have I sinned; I have done what is evil in your sight. You will be proved right in what you say, and your judgment against me is just.

Romans 10:9-10: **9** If you openly declare that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. **10** For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by openly declaring your faith that you are saved.

Has there been something on your heart that has been weighing you down? Is there unconfessed sin that you've been holding onto in the hopes that it will just disappear? Are you carrying the burden of living in the darkness? That's where David found himself when he cried out to God in his despair of living in the darkness. This is David's response after he committed adultery with another man's wife, and then had that man essentially murdered in battle to cover up his original sin. It is no use hiding what's already known to God. As we saw yesterday, when we confess our sins and live in the light, God forgives us.

Is there a sin that has come between you and Jesus that is preventing you from experiencing a life of fullness? Confess it to him and ask for forgiveness. There is true freedom at the cross of Jesus.



Day 5

2 Corinthians 5:16-21: 16 *So we have stopped evaluating others from a human point of view. At one time we thought of Christ merely from a human point of view. How differently we know him now! 17 This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun 18 And all of this is a gift from God, who brought us back to himself through Christ. And God has given us this task of reconciling people to him. 19 For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, no longer counting people's sins against them. And he gave us this wonderful message of reconciliation. 20 So we are Christ's ambassadors; God is making his appeal through us. We speak for Christ when we plead, "Come back to God!" 21 For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ.*

Biblical scholar Colin Kruse writes, "to be in Christ means to belong to him through faith, and to belong to him means living in the sphere of his power, being united with him through the Spirit, and to have become a part of the Christian community by baptism." When we accept Christ into our hearts, acknowledging that we are sinners in need of a savior, our old life dies and we are born into a new life in Christ. Part of this new life is reconciling with people who have either wronged us or have been wronged by us. That is the essence of the gospel as Paul outlines here. God sent Jesus to reconcile people to himself. In turn, when we experience that reconciliation with God, we are to go and both reconcile with people and point them to the new life in Jesus that is available to them. Verse 21 is one of the great and humbling truths of the Bible, that Jesus, who never sinned, took on all the sin of the world upon himself, so that we could be right with God. What kind of effort does it take you to make things right with others? Now imagine that effort times every wrongdoing done by every person who will ever exist. That's what Jesus faced on the cross.

Is there someone in your life who you are at odds with? Is there a phone call that needs to be made to reconcile with someone? Do that right now. Don't wait.



To hold a grudge is to carry around unnecessary baggage. Ask God to give you the words to say and be free to live at peace with everyone.



Week 3

Obedience

Day 1

1 John 2:7-11: *7 Dear friends, I am not writing a new commandment for you; rather it is an old one you have had from the very beginning. This old commandment—to love one another—is the same message you heard before. 8 Yet it is also new. Jesus lived the truth of this commandment, and you also are living it. For the darkness is disappearing, and the true light is already shining. 9 If anyone claims, “I am living in the light,” but hates a fellow believer, that person is still living in darkness. 10 Anyone who loves a fellow believer is living in the light and does not cause others to stumble. 11 But anyone who hates a fellow believer is still living and walking in darkness. Such a person does not know the way to go, having been blinded by the darkness.*

The old adage “actions speak louder than words” comes into play here. It is very easy to talk the talk; it is much harder to walk the walk. The command to love one another can be traced back all the way to the Ten Commandments. What John and Jesus before him says about loving one another is not a new or foreign concept; it’s one that has been spoken since the wilderness sojourn fifteen hundred years previous. Humans have a tendency to have poor short-term memories and need to be reminded constantly of the things of God.

What does it mean though to love one another? On the surface it looks like looking out for those who we care about, attending to their needs and being in community with them. Jesus takes it further though. It’s really easy to love someone you get along with; it is very difficult to love someone you disagree



with or don't like. Gary Burge says of the kind of love Jesus and John speak of that, "love becomes a genuine value only when it is tested, when we must reach beyond ourselves and love someone we do not wish to love." By today's cultural beliefs, this kind of love is looked at as hypocritical. What would it look like to set aside differences and find unity in Christ?

Who can you love today who may not see eye-to-eye with you?

Day 2

***John 15:9-14: 9** "I have loved you even as the Father has loved me. Remain in my love. **10** When you obey my commandments, you remain in my love, just as I obey my Father's commandments and remain in his love. **11** I have told you these things so that you will be filled with my joy. Yes, your joy will overflow! **12** This is my commandment: Love each other in the same way I have loved you. **13** There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends. **14** You are my friends if you do what I command.*

What are your motives for love? Is it personal gain? To express or receive an emotional feeling? Or is it a genuine response in gratitude for the other person? When we obey God, it should be out of love for all that he has done for us. Obeying God to try and get something from Him is counterintuitive. You are in essence using God for your own ends. Think of a time when someone used you for their own gains. It probably was not a very good feeling, was it? That's how God feels when we use Him for our own personal ends. He is the one who has given us life and provides the air we breathe. He didn't have to create us; he chose to. There is a big difference between the two. We experience the genuine love of God when we are obedient to his commands and furthermore, we are filled with an eternal joy.

What is your source of joy?



Day 3

Romans 13:11-14: **11** *This is all the more urgent, for you know how late it is; time is running out. Wake up, for our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed.* **12** *The night is almost gone; the day of salvation will soon be here. So remove your dark deeds like dirty clothes, and put on the shining armor of right living.* **13** *Because we belong to the day, we must live decent lives for all to see. Don't participate in the darkness of wild parties and drunkenness, or in sexual promiscuity and immoral living, or in quarreling and jealousy.* **14** *Instead, clothe yourself with the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. And don't let yourself think about ways to indulge your evil desires.*

Think of a time when something was really urgent. Maybe it was a deadline on a work project or you were running late to your kids soccer game. Maybe you or someone you know was in a bad accident and needed urgent care. Whatever the case may be, a sense of urgency creates a heightened awareness to the task at hand. Do we carry the same urgency to tell people about Jesus as the other urgent things in our lives? What makes something urgent is twofold. First, it's important to us in some way. If you don't get this work project done on time, you'll lose the client, get a bad review, maybe a pay cut, etc. The level of urgency is proportionate to the importance of the situation. Second, whatever is urgent in the moment stays rooted in your mind. You are constantly reminded of the importance of what is at stake. You run through different scenarios of the possible outcomes. Will my kid hate me if I miss the beginning of their game? Will they think I'm a bad parent? Will the other parents think I'm a bad parent? How can we keep the mission of Jesus urgent in our minds?

What reminders can you put into place to ensure Jesus is at the forefront?



Day 4

Ephesians 5:1-9: 1 Imitate God, therefore, in everything you do, because you are his dear children. 2 Live a life filled with love, following the example of Christ. He loved us and offered himself as a sacrifice for us, a pleasing aroma to God. 3 Let there be no sexual immorality, impurity, or greed among you. Such sins have no place among God's people. 4 Obscene stories, foolish talk, and coarse jokes—these are not for you. Instead, let there be thankfulness to God. 5 You can be sure that no immoral, impure, or greedy person will inherit the Kingdom of Christ and of God. For a greedy person is an idolater, worshiping the things of this world. 6 Don't be fooled by those who try to excuse these sins, for the anger of God will fall on all who disobey him. 7 Don't participate in the things these people do. 8 For once you were full of darkness, but now you have light from the Lord. So live as people of light! 9 For this light within you produces only what is good and right and true.

Growing up, who were your heroes? Was it someone in your family? An athlete or movie star? A musician? What was it about those people that made them your hero? Did you try to imitate them? When I was a kid, I wanted to be like my father who was a fireman. I had the fireman gear, had a bunch of matchbox fire trucks that I would arrange on the floor as different fire stations and they had to respond to pretend emergencies. I even got to go to work with my dad a lot and ride on the fire trucks. I imitated my dad because I wanted to be like him. In this passage, Paul urges us to imitate Christ in all we do. He modeled perfectly the life that we are each to lead. He spent a lot of time in prayer and scripture. He was busy, but never in a hurry. He took time to be alone with his Father and he had compassion on everyone.

What's one thing you can do today to imitate Christ in your life?



Day 5

John 14:15-17, 23-24: 15 *“If you love me, obey my commandments. 16 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, who will never leave you. 17 He is the Holy Spirit, who leads into all truth. The world cannot receive him, because it isn’t looking for him and doesn’t recognize him. But you know him, because he lives with you now and later will be in you... 23 Jesus replied, “All who love me will do what I say. My Father will love them, and we will come and make our home with each of them. 24 Anyone who doesn’t love me will not obey me. And remember, my words are not my own. What I am telling you is from the Father who sent me.*

Recognition is born from familiarity. How do you recognize people? The world does not recognize the things of God because they are not familiar with God. How do you become familiar with someone? You spend time with them, learning their interests, finding out their story and just being in their presence. It’s the same way with God. When you take time to be with him and learn from him through Scripture, prayer and by being obedient, you start to recognize how he works in your life and you begin to recognize his voice. It might not always be audible, but that subtle nudge in your spirit is the Lord leading and guiding you. And the more time you spend with him, the more you recognize him.

What is something you can do consistently to become familiar with God. No one fully arrives here; we’re constantly growing in Christ until we reach heaven.



Week 4

Growth Into Maturity

Day 1

1 John 2:12-14: 12 I am writing to you who are God's children because your sins have been forgiven through Jesus. 13 I am writing to you who are mature in the faith because you know Christ, who existed from the beginning. I am writing to you who are young in the faith because you have won your battle with the evil one. 14 I have written to you who are God's children because you know the Father. I have written to you who are mature in the faith because you know Christ, who existed from the beginning. I have written to you who are young in the faith because you are strong. God's word lives in your hearts, and you have won your battle with the evil one.

The spiritual life is a progression. We go through phases of growth much like a person progresses from child, to adolescent, to adult. In this passage, John is encouraging believers at all stages of their spiritual life. Just because one has been a believer for a long time does not mean that they too do not need encouragement. John sets a beautiful model here that we would do well to emulate as we seek to encourage those we encounter in our pursuit to become more like Jesus. What confidence arises from encouragement! It can make all the difference in the world to one who is secretly feeling defeated. Do not quench your encouragement. Give it often and freely, even to someone who you think doesn't need it. It is likely they are the ones who need it most.

Who is someone in your life that you can encourage today?



Day 2

John 14:1-7: *“Don’t let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, and trust also in me. 2 There is more than enough room in my Father’s home. If this were not so, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? 3 When everything is ready, I will come and get you, so that you will always be with me where I am. 4 And you know the way to where I am going.” 5 “No, we don’t know, Lord,” Thomas said. “We have no idea where you are going, so how can we know the way?” 6 Jesus told him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me. 7 If you had really known me, you would know who my Father is. From now on, you do know him and have seen him!”*

One of the great advances in technology is the GPS. No longer do we need to rely on the minuscule writing on maps or printed off directions. Instead, we have a gentle voice that accompanies our route to get us to our destination. I’m sure the disciples probably wanted a GPS when Jesus told them of the place he was going to prepare for them. What they didn’t realize in this moment was that they already had the directions to get to where Jesus was going. Jesus tells his disciples that he is “the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through him.” We have a tendency to complicate and overthink things. Jesus’ way is simple. Believe, become, follow, and go. While the process laid out is simple, executing it takes discipline and a reliance on the one giving direction. Jesus’ way is not burdensome. Do not look too far down the road because you might miss what’s right in front of you. Be faithful with what the Lord has put in your path right now.

What is it God has called you to be faithful in right now?



Day 3

Ephesians 6:10-18: **10** A final word: Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. **11** Put on all of God's armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil. **12** For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places. **13** Therefore, put on every piece of God's armor so you will be able to resist the enemy in the time of evil. Then after the battle you will still be standing firm. **14** Stand your ground, putting on the belt of truth and the body armor of God's righteousness. **15** For shoes, put on the peace that comes from the Good News so that you will be fully prepared. **16** In addition to all of these, hold up the shield of faith to stop the fiery arrows of the devil. **17** Put on salvation as your helmet, and take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. **18** Pray in the Spirit at all times and on every occasion. Stay alert and be persistent in your prayers for all believers everywhere.

One of the great revelations of the Scriptures that Paul outlines here is who we're fighting against. It can be really easy to look at someone we disagree with and blame them for their actions. But what Paul lays out here is that our battle is not against other people. The devil would like us to believe that it is and he does a really good job at setting us up against one another. We must be aware of these attacks by the enemy. Paul outlines what equipment is necessary in such a battle against Satan and his minions. Notice that Paul says that we will be able to "resist" the enemy and then after the battle, we'll "stand firm." There is no mention of attack or going on the offensive; Paul's language is of a defensive posture. This seems strange and counterintuitive when speaking of a battle, but we must remember, Jesus has already won. We have the truth through Jesus. We are made righteous through his sacrifice. We have a peace that transcends all understanding through Jesus. Our faith is strengthened by the workings of God in our lives. We have received salvation from Jesus. And the one weapon we have is the Scriptures, the very word of God that "is sharper than a double



edged-sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires.” (Hebrews 4:12).

How can you “stay alert and be persistent” in your battle against the enemy?

Day 4

***Luke 24:44-48:** 44 Then he said, “When I was with you before, I told you that everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and in the Psalms must be fulfilled.” 45 Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures. 46 And he said, “Yes, it was written long ago that the Messiah would suffer and die and rise from the dead on the third day. 47 It was also written that this message would be proclaimed in the authority of his name to all the nations, beginning in Jerusalem: ‘There is forgiveness of sins for all who repent.’ 48 You are witnesses of all these things.*

***Acts 8: 29** The Holy Spirit said to Philip, “Go over and walk along beside the carriage.” 30 Philip ran over and heard the man reading from the prophet Isaiah. Philip asked, “Do you understand what you are reading?” 31 The man replied, “How can I, unless someone instructs me?” And he urged Philip to come up into the carriage and sit with him. 32 The passage of Scripture he had been reading was this: “He was led like a sheep to the slaughter. And as a lamb is silent before the shearers, he did not open his mouth. 33 He was humiliated and received no justice. Who can speak of his descendants? For his life was taken from the earth.” 34 The eunuch asked Philip, “Tell me, was the prophet talking about himself or someone else?” 35 So beginning with this same Scripture, Philip told him the Good News about Jesus.*

Think about what is happening in the first passage. A couple of unnamed disciples are walking along the road, when all of a sudden Jesus appears. He then proceeds to show them every place in the Old Testament that speaks to his



arrival and the prophecies he fulfilled. That must have been the ultimate Bible study! The entire Old Testament points towards his coming to earth and being the sacrificial lamb that sets people free. Jesus is the main character of the entire Bible. The first mention of his victory is seen in Genesis 3:15 and Revelation closes with the promise that he will return to make all things new. Anyone who is a Christ follower is a witness to his work in their lives and it's our job to tell of all he's done in our lives. Philip gives us a great model in the second passage where he assists the eunuch in his understanding of the Scripture. People need to hear about Jesus and the place we get to learn about him is the Scriptures.

Who is someone you can sit down and go through Scripture with who may not know it? Don't worry about not knowing everything. Ask the Holy Spirit for guidance and the words to say.



Day 5

Proverbs 4:23-27: *“Guard your heart above all else, for it determines the course of your life. Avoid all perverse talk; stay away from corrupt speech. Look straight ahead, and fix your eyes on what lies before you. Mark out a straight path for your feet; stay on the safe path. Don’t get sidetracked; keep your feet from following evil.”*

One of my favorite ways to pray is by praying Scripture and this is a passage I try to pray daily before I start my day. Maybe you have a passage or two that you like to pray through. Or you pray through whatever you read in the Bible that day. Take some time right now to pray through this passage, line by line. Stop at the end of every line to see if God is saying something to you or pointing your heart in a specific direction. Allow space for him to enter the conversation. Too often, we bring our list of things to pray and don’t spend enough time listening to hear what he says back. Jesus tells us to ask when we pray, we must be cautious though to not make it a one-sided conversation.

Did the Lord say anything to you when you prayed? Look for other Scriptures you can pray through in the Bible. (Hint, check out the Psalms)



Week 5

A Warning

Day 1

1 John 2:18-27: 18 *Dear children, the last hour is here. You have heard that the Antichrist is coming, and already many such antichrists have appeared. From this we know that the last hour has come. 19* *These people left our churches, but they never really belonged with us; otherwise they would have stayed with us. When they left, it proved that they did not belong with us. 20* *But you are not like that, for the Holy One has given you his Spirit, and all of you know the truth. 21* *So I am writing to you not because you don't know the truth but because you know the difference between truth and lies. 22* *And who is a liar? Anyone who says that Jesus is not the Christ. Anyone who denies the Father and the Son is an antichrist. 23* *Anyone who denies the Son doesn't have the Father, either. But anyone who acknowledges the Son has the Father also. 24* *So you must remain faithful to what you have been taught from the beginning. If you do, you will remain in fellowship with the Son and with the Father. 25* *And in this fellowship we enjoy the eternal life he promised us. 26* *I am writing these things to warn you about those who want to lead you astray. 27* *But you have received the Holy Spirit, and he lives within you, so you don't need anyone to teach you what is true. For the Spirit teaches you everything you need to know, and what he teaches is true—it is not a lie. So just as he has taught you, remain in fellowship with Christ.*

John summarizes his purpose in writing this letter in verse 26 of this passage: “to warn you about those who want to lead you astray.” Not much has changed two thousand years later. There are still multitudes of people, both consciously



and unconsciously trying to lead us astray in our pursuit of a relationship with Jesus. What is the distinguishing factor between those who truly believe and those who are trying to lead you astray? It's the Holy Spirit. When we have the Holy Spirit in our lives, we are able to distinguish between what is truth and what is lies. We cannot depend on our own reasoning or wisdom. Human beings do not have the capacity to define truth; that comes from the Holy Spirit living in us. What the world has done is made half-truths seem like *THE* truth. How are we to distinguish what the full truth is? We can ask the Holy Spirit and search the Scriptures, both of which speak truth. He is our counselor, our teacher, and our advocate.

Ask the Holy Spirit to guide your steps today, to live according to the truths of God.

Day 2

Romans 12:9-21: *9 Don't just pretend to love others. Really love them. Hate what is wrong. Hold tightly to what is good. 10 Love each other with genuine affection, and take delight in honoring each other. 11 Never be lazy, but work hard and serve the Lord enthusiastically. 12 Rejoice in our confident hope. Be patient in trouble, and keep on praying. 13 When God's people are in need, be ready to help them. Always be eager to practice hospitality. 14 Bless those who persecute you. Don't curse them; pray that God will bless them. 15 Be happy with those who are happy, and weep with those who weep. 16 Live in harmony with each other. Don't be too proud to enjoy the company of ordinary people. And don't think you know it all! 17 Never pay back evil with more evil. Do things in such a way that everyone can see you are honorable. 18 Do all that you can to live in peace with everyone. 19 Dear friends, never take revenge. Leave that to the righteous anger of God. For the Scriptures say, "I will take revenge; I will pay them back," says the Lord. 20 Instead, "If your enemies are hungry, feed them. If they are thirsty, give them something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals of shame on their heads." 21 Don't let evil conquer you, but conquer evil by doing good.*



From this passage, what traits distinguish the life of a Christ follower?

What area in your life do you want to improve upon based on this passage?

How are you going to do that?

What challenges do you foresee in your life if you were to live this passage out?



Day 3

Ephesians 2:1-10: *Once you were dead because of your disobedience and your many sins. 2 You used to live in sin, just like the rest of the world, obeying the devil—the commander of the powers in the unseen world. He is the spirit at work in the hearts of those who refuse to obey God. 3 All of us used to live that way, following the passionate desires and inclinations of our sinful nature. By our very nature we were subject to God’s anger, just like everyone else. 4 But God is so rich in mercy, and he loved us so much, 5 that even though we were dead because of our sins, he gave us life when he raised Christ from the dead. (It is only by God’s grace that you have been saved!) 6 For he raised us from the dead along with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ Jesus. 7 So God can point to us in all future ages as examples of the incredible wealth of his grace and kindness toward us, as shown in all he has done for us who are united with Christ Jesus. 8 God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can’t take credit for this; it is a gift from God. 9 Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it. 10 For we are God’s masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.*

This passage breaks down into three sections. First, verses 1-3 tell of our spiritual condition before Christ enters our lives. We are born into sin and disobedience and follow that path until we encounter Christ. The second section (verses 4-9) tells of God’s saving grace in our lives. He sent Jesus to the cross to rescue us from the bondage of sin that we were born into. It was nothing that we did to deserve it. God is so rich in mercy and he loves us so much that he willingly did it, despite what it cost him. Lastly, verse 10 tells us that we are his masterpiece and that we are created anew in Christ Jesus. God has a plan for every one of us. He has a purpose for our lives and calls us to live it out through him.



What has God called you to? If you don't know, ask him to reveal that to you and then take steps toward where you feel like he is leading.

Day 4

***Ecclesiastes 5:10-12: 10** Those who love money will never have enough. How meaningless to think that wealth brings true happiness! **11** The more you have, the more people come to help you spend it. So what good is wealth—except perhaps to watch it slip through your fingers! **12** People who work hard sleep well, whether they eat little or much. But the rich seldom get a good night's sleep.*

***Matthew 6:19-21: 19** “Don't store up treasures here on earth, where moths eat them and rust destroys them, and where thieves break in and steal. **20** Store your treasures in heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy, and thieves do not break in and steal. **21** Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be.*

One of the great deceivers we face in this life is money. Paul tells Timothy that “money is the root of all kinds of evil.” Notice Paul does not say it is the root of evil. There is nothing intrinsically evil about money. But when money becomes our idol, the roots of evil begin to grow deep. Look at the long list of crimes committed over money including murder, deception, and manipulation. People are drowning in debt because the world tells us that to have more money means we'll have more happiness. Here's the thing: happiness is temporary. What we gather and store here on earth is temporary. But the treasure we store in heaven is eternal. The joy found in Jesus is worth infinitely more than all the money on earth. So where are the desires of your heart, for there will be your treasure.

What are the desires of your heart? Do they fall more in line with treasures in heaven or treasures on earth?



Day 5

***Jude 17-23:** 17 But you, my dear friends, must remember what the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ predicted. 18 They told you that in the last times there would be scoffers whose purpose in life is to satisfy their ungodly desires. 19 These people are the ones who are creating divisions among you. They follow their natural instincts because they do not have God's Spirit in them. 20 But you, dear friends, must build each other up in your most holy faith, pray in the power of the Holy Spirit, 21 and await the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will bring you eternal life. In this way, you will keep yourselves safe in God's love. 22 And you must show mercy to those whose faith is wavering. 23 Rescue others by snatching them from the flames of judgment. Show mercy to still others, but do so with great caution, hating the sins that contaminate their lives.*

The storms and trials of life can bring doubt to one's journey in faith. We are called to live in community, but the world has become a very isolated place despite our being "connected" more than ever. Jesus' little brother Jude gives us three ways to look out and encourage one another as we face opposition from the enemy, who is trying to satisfy ungodly desires and create division. First, Jude tells us to build each other up (v. 20). Encouragement from a Christ-filled community goes a long way in any scenario. We must be a people who encourage one another towards Christ. Second, we are to show mercy to those whose faith is wavering (v.22). Our natural human inclinations give in to fear and anxiety. We are not perfect and when the storms of life hit us, it can cause a shaking of our faith. When we encounter people whose faith has been shaken, instead of rebuking them, we would do well to walk alongside them, encouraging them in holding fast to Jesus. Third, we are told to show mercy to sinners, but with caution, lest we fall into the trap of the sin they are ensnared by (v. 23). We cannot accomplish any of this on our own; we need the help and guidance of the Spirit.

Who can you encourage, show mercy to, or build up today?



Week 6

Children of God

Day 1

1 John 3:4-10: **4** Everyone who sins is breaking God's law, for all sin is contrary to the law of God. **5** And you know that Jesus came to take away our sins, and there is no sin in him. **6** Anyone who continues to live in him will not sin. But anyone who keeps on sinning does not know him or understand who he is. **7** Dear children, don't let anyone deceive you about this: When people do what is right, it shows that they are righteous, even as Christ is righteous. **8** But when people keep on sinning, it shows that they belong to the devil, who has been sinning since the beginning. But the Son of God came to destroy the works of the devil. **9** Those who have been born into God's family do not make a practice of sinning, because God's life is in them. So they can't keep on sinning, because they are children of God. **10** So now we can tell who are children of God and who are children of the devil. Anyone who does not live righteously and does not love other believers does not belong to God.

If you have ever had a passion for playing a sport or an instrument, painting, cooking, etc., chances are you've had to practice at your craft. Growing up, hockey was my life and I practiced nearly every day. In high school, Monday practices were skate days where we would just skate as hard as we could for an hour. Needless to say, it was miserable (especially for a goalie with five pound bulky pads on each leg). While those weren't the best practices, they were the most effective. And what made it less miserable was that we knew the payoff was going to be greater in the long run.



Living a life after Jesus takes practice and discipline and not every aspect is enjoyable. In fact, it can be really hard sometimes. But, as we progress in life, we become more and more like Jesus when we spend time with him, become more like him, and do what he would do if he were us. John says that when one has been born into God's family, they do not make a practice of sinning. That doesn't mean that we don't stop sinning. We are not perfect, even when Jesus enters our lives; our bodies are still in their imperfect form. But when Jesus enters our lives, we become conscious of sin and strive not to partake in it habitually. That's what it means to not practice sinning.

What are some practices you can put into place to grow closer to Jesus?

Day 2

Colossians 3:5-17: 5 So put to death the sinful, earthly things lurking within you. Have nothing to do with sexual immorality, impurity, lust, and evil desires. Don't be greedy, for a greedy person is an idolater, worshiping the things of this world. 6 Because of these sins, the anger of God is coming. 7 You used to do these things when your life was still part of this world. 8 But now is the time to get rid of anger, rage, malicious behavior, slander, and dirty language. 9 Don't lie to each other, for you have stripped off your old sinful nature and all its wicked deeds. 10 Put on your new nature, and be renewed as you learn to know your Creator and become like him. 11 In this new life, it doesn't matter if you are a Jew or a Gentile, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbaric, uncivilized, slave, or free. Christ is all that matters, and he lives in all of us. 12 Since God chose you to be the holy people he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. 13 Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others. 14 Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds us all together in perfect harmony. 15 And let the peace that comes from Christ rule in your hearts. For as members of one body you are called to live in peace. And always be thankful. 16 Let the message about Christ, in all its richness, fill your lives. Teach and counsel each other



with all the wisdom he gives. Sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs to God with thankful hearts. 17 And whatever you do or say, do it as a representative of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through him to God the Father.

This passage is one of the great models of what it looks like to live a life of following Christ. I'm not going to say much here. Take time and be still as you read through this passage. Meditate on it. Pray through it. What is Christ saying to you through this passage?



Day 3

John 17:20-24: 20 *“I am praying not only for these disciples but also for all who will ever believe in me through their message. 21 I pray that they will all be one, just as you and I are one—as you are in me, Father, and I am in you. And may they be in us so that the world will believe you sent me. 22 “I have given them the glory you gave me, so they may be one as we are one. 23 I am in them and you are in me. May they experience such perfect unity that the world will know that you sent me and that you love them as much as you love me. 24 Father, I want these whom you have given me to be with me where I am. Then they can see all the glory you gave me because you loved me even before the world began!*

Luke 10:23-24: 23 *Then when they were alone, he turned to the disciples and said, “Blessed are the eyes that see what you have seen. 24 I tell you, many prophets and kings longed to see what you see, but they didn’t see it. And they longed to hear what you hear, but they didn’t hear it.”*

As Jesus closes out his prayer in John 17, it is telling that his desire for his disciples and all those that would come after them (including us today) is for unity. Of all the things to pray for, why unity? Unity in purpose and belief is more far reaching than anything else. Unity inspires and protects. Where there is disunity, there is division, mistrust and dissension. When the church is united in Christ, it is the most powerful entity on the planet. In the passage from Luke, Jesus tells his disciples that the generations before them had longed and written about what they were seeing and experiencing. There is unity in what we experience in Christ and when others see that being lived out, they long to be a part of that.

What are you doing today to contribute to unity in Christ? Is there something you need to repent of that is causing discord or division?



Day 4

Romans 8:12-18: **12** Therefore, dear brothers and sisters, you have no obligation to do what your sinful nature urges you to do. **13** For if you live by its dictates, you will die. But if through the power of the Spirit you put to death the deeds of your sinful nature, you will live. **14** For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. **15** So you have not received a spirit that makes you fearful slaves. Instead, you received God's Spirit when he adopted you as his own children. Now we call him, "Abba, Father." **16** For his Spirit joins with our spirit to affirm that we are God's children. **17** And since we are his children, we are his heirs. In fact, together with Christ we are heirs of God's glory. But if we are to share his glory, we must also share his suffering. **18** Yet what we suffer now is nothing compared to the glory he will reveal to us later.

Dictionary.com defines "obligation" as "something by which a person is bound or obliged to do certain things, and which arises out of a sense of duty or results from custom, law, etc." It can stem from repaying someone something, like I'm obligated to reimburse my friend for paying for my dinner. It can be a family obligation like a birthday party that you might not want to go to but you're obliged to go to support the person. Then there's obligation that finds its roots in manipulation. That's where Paul is headed here when he says we are not obliged to our sinful urges. We don't owe them anything because they don't offer anything of lasting value. When we have the Spirit of the living God within us, we are able to repel those sinful desires. It's not easy and we cannot do it on our own. That's where the Spirit comes in. Through his power, we have a way out when we are tempted. Temptation itself is not a sin; Jesus himself was tempted. Temptation becomes sin when we act on our temptations. Let us look to the Holy Spirit to deliver us from temptation as we go throughout our day.

Is there a sin in your life that you can't seem to shake? Ask God to help you overcome it. Look to others too. There is freedom in bringing to light what hides in the dark.



Day 5

Philippians 3:17-21: *17 Dear brothers and sisters, pattern your lives after mine, and learn from those who follow our example. 18 For I have told you often before, and I say it again with tears in my eyes, that there are many whose conduct shows they are really enemies of the cross of Christ. 19 They are headed for destruction. Their god is their appetite, they brag about shameful things, and they think only about this life here on earth. 20 But we are citizens of heaven, where the Lord Jesus Christ lives. And we are eagerly waiting for him to return as our Savior. 21 He will take our weak mortal bodies and change them into glorious bodies like his own, using the same power with which he will bring everything under his control.*

2 Corinthians 6:14-16: *14 Don't team up with those who are unbelievers. How can righteousness be a partner with wickedness? How can light live with darkness? 15 What harmony can there be between Christ and the devil? How can a believer be a partner with an unbeliever? 16 And what union can there be between God's temple and idols? For we are the temple of the living God.*

What does your conduct demonstrate about you? Does it line up with what you say or proclaim? Paul encountered many people who claimed to follow Christ, but whose conduct revealed that they were really enemies of Jesus. This may sound harsh but it's a warning we need to heed. Those whose conduct did not match what they claimed to believe were leading others astray into dangerous territory that leads to death. When we partner with unbelievers, we run the risk of becoming like them in word and deed. That's not to say that we should avoid unbelievers; after all, our mission is to tell everyone the good news of Jesus. But we must be careful not to imitate them. Paul encourages us to pattern our lives after godly people who exhibit Christlikeness.



Who is someone in your life who models Christlikeness that you can imitate?
Is there someone in your life who you might need to break free from, who is
leading you away from living fully in Christ?



Week 7

Darkness to Light

Day 1

1 John 3:16-24: 16 *We know what real love is because Jesus gave up his life for us. So we also ought to give up our lives for our brothers and sisters. 17* *If someone has enough money to live well and sees a brother or sister in need but shows no compassion—how can God’s love be in that person? 18* *Dear children, let’s not merely say that we love each other; let us show the truth by our actions. 19* *Our actions will show that we belong to the truth, so we will be confident when we stand before God. 20* *Even if we feel guilty, God is greater than our feelings, and he knows everything. 21* *Dear friends, if we don’t feel guilty, we can come to God with bold confidence. 22* *And we will receive from him whatever we ask because we obey him and do the things that please him. 23* *And this is his commandment: We must believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as he commanded us. 24* *Those who obey God’s commandments remain in fellowship with him, and he with them. And we know he lives in us because the Spirit he gave us lives in us.*

Love has become an ambiguous term in culture. I can love my family and my favorite sports team, and my significant other, and the restaurant down the street. Oh yeah, I can love God too. You see where I’m going with this? Love has taken on many different meanings depending on the object of your affection. But is my love for my favorite restaurant the same as the love for my family? Going beyond that, how do you show your love? If it's for your sports team, you root for them through thick and thin. You visit the restaurant you love regularly. The



love that John references here is on another level; it is the purest form of love that exists. According to John, Jesus set the model for what real love is. He demonstrated it on the cross, not only in word but in action. Real love is acknowledged by words and demonstrated through actions. Words alone are not enough. Jesus didn't just say he was going to die to take the sins of the world, he actually did it, at tremendous cost to himself.

How do you demonstrate love? How can you demonstrate the love of Christ?

Day 2

***Genesis 4:1-8:** Now Adam had sexual relations with his wife, Eve, and she became pregnant. When she gave birth to Cain, she said, "With the Lord's help, I have produced a man!" **2** Later she gave birth to his brother and named him Abel. When they grew up, Abel became a shepherd, while Cain cultivated the ground. **3** When it was time for the harvest, Cain presented some of his crops as a gift to the Lord. **4** Abel also brought a gift—the best portions of the firstborn lambs from his flock. The Lord accepted Abel and his gift, **5** but he did not accept Cain and his gift. This made Cain very angry, and he looked dejected. **6** "Why are you so angry?" the Lord asked Cain. "Why do you look so dejected? **7** You will be accepted if you do what is right. But if you refuse to do what is right, then watch out! Sin is crouching at the door, eager to control you. But you must subdue it and be its master." **8** One day Cain suggested to his brother, "Let's go out into the fields." And while they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother, Abel, and killed him.*

While the story of Cain and Abel is a tragedy, there is an important principle here that can help us in our struggle against temptation. Cain is given a choice in verse 7. He could either do what was right and be accepted, or he could continue down the path that he was already going. He had failed in his attempt to present



his gift to the Lord, but God gave him a second chance. God isn't a one and done type of God. He gives us opportunities to learn and grow from our shortcomings. It's not a matter of if we fail, it is when, but God uses those opportunities to grow us in our faith. Failure only occurs when there is nothing to be learned. Cain had every chance to turn towards what was right but he did not.

The second part of verse 7 tells us that sin is waiting to control us. We must be on our guard against evil. Cain was not and what resulted was the first recorded murder in human history. Looking throughout the Scriptures and the course of humanity, apart from Jesus, everyone has messed up. A lot. Because of God's grace though, we can use those experiences to learn and to become more like Jesus.

How has God used negative experiences in your life to make you become more like Jesus?



Day 3

Matthew 5:21-26: 21 *“You have heard that our ancestors were told, ‘You must not murder. If you commit murder, you are subject to judgment.’ 22 But I say, if you are even angry with someone, you are subject to judgment! If you call someone an idiot, you are in danger of being brought before the court. And if you curse someone, you are in danger of the fires of hell. 23 “So if you are presenting a sacrifice at the altar in the Temple and you suddenly remember that someone has something against you, 24 leave your sacrifice there at the altar. Go and be reconciled to that person. Then come and offer your sacrifice to God. 25 “When you are on the way to court with your adversary, settle your differences quickly. Otherwise, your accuser may hand you over to the judge, who will hand you over to an officer, and you will be thrown into prison. 26 And if that happens, you surely won’t be free again until you have paid the last penny.*

Jesus is all about people. He builds people up through love and forgiveness but deep-seated anger does the reverse. Jesus is not talking about righteous anger, but the kind of anger that breeds malice and ill-will towards others. He doesn’t just liken anger to murder, he says they’re the same thing. That’s pretty intense. Anger towards others causes our hearts to harden and does not allow the Spirit to work in and through us. It builds a barrier that prevents us from both expressing and experiencing the love of God. In his infinite grace, God chose to save that which is imperfect (us) by sending his perfect Son to die for our imperfections. Every single human being has sinned against God, but instead of wiping us out, he did the exact opposite. In light of this, what claim do we have to be angry with anyone? It was all our sins that sent Jesus to his death.

Forgiveness offers a release. To hold anger, malice, or ill-will towards anyone is to be burdened with an ungodly weight.

Is there someone in your life who you are angry with or need to reconcile with? What are you going to do in light of what this passage talks about?



Day 4

James 2:14-17: **14** *What good is it, dear brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but don't show it by your actions? Can that kind of faith save anyone? 15* Suppose you see a brother or sister who has no food or clothing, **16** and you say, "Good-bye and have a good day; stay warm and eat well"—but then you don't give that person any food or clothing. What good does that do? **17** So you see, faith by itself isn't enough. Unless it produces good deeds, it is dead and useless.

Deuteronomy 15:7-8: **7** *"But if there are any poor Israelites in your towns when you arrive in the land the Lord your God is giving you, do not be hard-hearted or tightfisted toward them. 8* Instead, be generous and lend them whatever they need.

In serving others, words are never enough. It's easy to say that you'll do something for someone but it's another thing to actually do it. Say someone asks you what you would do if you were to see a homeless person on the side of the road who looked like they needed assistance. The easy answer is to say that "of course I would help them." But say you were actually walking down the side of the road and the hypothetical question becomes a reality. In the moment, would your actions back up what you said? Does the faith you proclaim demonstrate it in action? James tells us that our faith will be backed up by how we live. This goes for many different scenarios. If you say you have the love of Christ in you, but constantly slander other people, what does that say about your faith? Or you say you are so thankful for the forgiveness of Jesus but you haven't actually forgiven those who have done wrong to you? The greatest witness to a life of faith in Christ is not by what we proclaim, but the actions that demonstrate we believe what we proclaim.

Is your faith demonstrated by actions?



Day 5

Galatians 5:19-26: 19 *When you follow the desires of your sinful nature, the results are very clear: sexual immorality, impurity, lustful pleasures, 20 idolatry, sorcery, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissension, division, 21 envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other sins like these. Let me tell you again, as I have before, that anyone living that sort of life will not inherit the Kingdom of God. 22 But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things! 24 Those who belong to Christ Jesus have nailed the passions and desires of their sinful nature to his cross and crucified them there. 25 Since we are living by the Spirit, let us follow the Spirit's leading in every part of our lives. 26 Let us not become conceited, or provoke one another, or be jealous of one another.*

In Paul's letter to the Galatians, he draws very distinct lines between what the desires of a sinful spirit are and what the fruits of the Holy Spirit are. There is no middle ground when it comes to the Kingdom of God. In the prayer that Jesus modeled for his disciples, one of the lines says "your Kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." Those who bring the Kingdom life to earth are not ones who pursue the desires of the flesh. They are led by the Spirit, which leads to love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Because we have the Spirit of God inside of us, we are not to be conceited, initiate provocation, nor be jealous of anyone. All three cause us to carry a weight that Jesus did not intend us to carry. He wants to free you from the desires of the flesh so that you may know the fulfillment of what it means to live in the Spirit.

Are their desires from your sinful nature that you still carry with you? Ask God to help you be rid of them and to develop the fruits of the Holy Spirit in you.



Week 8

Victory in the Spirit

Day 1

1 John 4:1-6: Dear friends, do not believe everyone who claims to speak by the Spirit. You must test them to see if the spirit they have comes from God. For there are many false prophets in the world. 2 This is how we know if they have the Spirit of God: If a person claiming to be a prophet acknowledges that Jesus Christ came in a real body, that person has the Spirit of God. 3 But if someone claims to be a prophet and does not acknowledge the truth about Jesus, that person is not from God. Such a person has the spirit of the Antichrist, which you heard is coming into the world and indeed is already here. 4 But you belong to God, my dear children. You have already won a victory over those people, because the Spirit who lives in you is greater than the spirit who lives in the world. 5 Those people belong to this world, so they speak from the world's viewpoint, and the world listens to them. 6 But we belong to God, and those who know God listen to us. If they do not belong to God, they do not listen to us. That is how we know if someone has the Spirit of truth or the spirit of deception.

How do you discern truth from lies? What is your method for deciphering the things of God versus the things of the world? It's not always so cut and dry and in the age of "fake news" it can become increasingly difficult to know who or what to believe. Thankfully, we have an advocate, the Holy Spirit, who lives inside of us that guides us in the truth's of God. John faced a dilemma of false teachers who were spreading a false gospel to young believers and swaying them from the truth of Christ. John urges the believers in Ephesus to look to the



Holy Spirit for guidance in all truth. People who speak based on worldly values will garner a following that is contrary to the things of God.

Are you choosing to follow the things of God or the things of the world? How can you strengthen your pursuit of being more like Christ?

Day 2

1 Corinthians 2:10-14: **10** *But it was to us that God revealed these things by his Spirit. For his Spirit searches out everything and shows us God's deep secrets.* **11** *No one can know a person's thoughts except that person's own spirit, and no one can know God's thoughts except God's own Spirit.* **12** *And we have received God's Spirit (not the world's spirit), so we can know the wonderful things God has freely given us.* **13** *When we tell you these things, we do not use words that come from human wisdom. Instead, we speak words given to us by the Spirit, using the Spirit's words to explain spiritual truths.* **14** *But people who aren't spiritual can't receive these truths from God's Spirit. It all sounds foolish to them and they can't understand it, for only those who are spiritual can understand what the Spirit means.*

Isaiah 55:8-9: **8** *"My thoughts are nothing like your thoughts," says the Lord. "And my ways are far beyond anything you could imagine.* **9** *For just as the heavens are higher than the earth, so my ways are higher than your ways and my thoughts higher than your thoughts.*

What does spirituality mean to you? How would you define it? How do you experience it? Paul argues here that true spirituality in Christ comes from the Holy Spirit living inside of us. We have access to God's very thoughts through his Spirit. When we speak of the things of God, it is the Spirit speaking on behalf of us. Human wisdom does not have the capacity to speak of spiritual things. Without the Holy Spirit, our "spirituality" as we define it, is nothing more than worldly wisdom disguised as one's own supernatural creed. God is infinite in all



things, therefore, we need the Holy Spirit to help us understand. The passage from Isaiah tells us that God's ways are higher than our ways and his thoughts higher than our thoughts. We will never be able to fully comprehend God. If we could understand every part of him, he would not be the God of the Bible. The Spirit helps us understand God better and guides us in His ways.

Ask the Holy Spirit to help you better understand the ways of God.



Day 3

1 Thessalonians 5:14-22: **14** Brothers and sisters, we urge you to warn those who are lazy. Encourage those who are timid. Take tender care of those who are weak. Be patient with everyone. **15** See that no one pays back evil for evil, but always try to do good to each other and to all people. **16** Always be joyful. **17** Never stop praying. **18** Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus. **19** Do not stifle the Holy Spirit. **20** Do not scoff at prophecies, **21** but test everything that is said. Hold on to what is good. **22** Stay away from every kind of evil.

Paul's parting words to the church at Thessalonica are words that are good to be reminded of on a daily basis. Charges such as don't be lazy, encourage the timid and be patient with everyone are the results of living as Christ lived. They naturally flow from one who is pursuing Christ on a daily basis. The mandate to never stop praying allows us to be in communion with God at all times. While the nature of our lives does not allow us to talk to God 24/7 in the sense of what we perceive as praying, an awareness of God's presence in the moment by moment is more what Paul is urging us towards. Don't be fooled, it's not always easy to carry these out. Patience is a lost art in a culture of instant gratification. Being thankful in all circumstances is hard when life keeps throwing you curveballs. But through Christ and a relationship with Him, we do not have to do it alone. His Spirit which lives inside of us when we accept him as our Lord and Savior guides us and helps us carry out these mandates, so that we can be closer to Christ and point others towards him.

Is there something from this passage that you need to work on or be more consistent in? What are you going to do today to move towards that?



Day 4

2 Peter 2:1-4: *But there were also false prophets in Israel, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will cleverly teach destructive heresies and even deny the Master who bought them. In this way, they will bring sudden destruction on themselves. 2 Many will follow their evil teaching and shameful immorality. And because of these teachers, the way of truth will be slandered. 3 In their greed they will make up clever lies to get hold of your money. But God condemned them long ago, and their destruction will not be delayed. 4 For God did not spare even the angels who sinned. He threw them into hell, in gloomy pits of darkness, where they are being held until the day of judgment.*

Revelation 2:2-3: *"I know all the things you do. I have seen your hard work and your patient endurance. I know you don't tolerate evil people. You have examined the claims of those who say they are apostles but are not. You have discovered they are liars. 3 You have patiently suffered for me without quitting.*

It was not just in John's churches where false teachers were prevalent. Peter also had to deal with false teachers and even Jesus himself had to tend to the falsities during his time on earth. It's no different today. There are plenty of false teachers who put on a good face and speak an attractive message that unfortunately, does not always point people to the saving grace and relationship of Jesus Christ. We must be on our guard, as we have seen previously, by relying on the Holy Spirit for guidance when trying to discern the truths that are being spoken. In Acts, Paul commends the Berean Church for searching the Scriptures to see if what he had preached was true. What a great example for us to look to as we discern what is truth and what is lie. Thankfully, it is not up to us to decide what is true or false. The Spirit does that for us. We can also go to Godly people who are in step with the Spirit for guidance and advice when faced with the potential of dealing with truth and lies.



Who is someone in your life who you can go to who is in step with the Spirit? How can you be more in step with the Spirit? (Hint, ask the person for advice).

Day 5

1 Timothy 4:1-8: *Now the Holy Spirit tells us clearly that in the last times some will turn away from the true faith; they will follow deceptive spirits and teachings that come from demons. 2 These people are hypocrites and liars, and their consciences are dead. 3 They will say it is wrong to be married and wrong to eat certain foods. But God created those foods to be eaten with thanks by faithful people who know the truth. 4 Since everything God created is good, we should not reject any of it but receive it with thanks. 5 For we know it is made acceptable by the word of God and prayer. 6 If you explain these things to the brothers and sisters, Timothy, you will be a worthy servant of Christ Jesus, one who is nourished by the message of faith and the good teaching you have followed. 7 Do not waste time arguing over godless ideas and old wives' tales. Instead, train yourself to be godly. 8 "Physical training is good, but training for godliness is much better, promising benefits in this life and in the life to come."*

As a young pastor, Timothy was encountering hypocrites, liars, and deceptive spirits. They were infiltrating the church and Paul wrote to Timothy to encourage him in his pursuit of speaking the truth of Jesus. Paul's mandate in verse 7 is one that we would do well to follow as we go and tell others about Jesus. He tells Timothy to "not waste time arguing over godless ideas and old wives' tales. Instead, train yourself to be godly." When we are saturating ourselves in Scripture and prayer, we are developing our character and integrity to be more Christ-like in how we interact with others. This will allow us to both discern the liars and also to love people and show them the true fulfillment that comes from living in the light of Jesus Christ.

How can you train yourself to be more godly?



Week 9

Love God, Love People

Day 1

1 John 4:14-21: 14 Furthermore, we have seen with our own eyes and now testify that the Father sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. **15** All who declare that Jesus is the Son of God have God living in them, and they live in God. **16** We know how much God loves us, and we have put our trust in his love. God is love, and all who live in love live in God, and God lives in them. **17** And as we live in God, our love grows more perfect. So we will not be afraid on the day of judgment, but we can face him with confidence because we live like Jesus here in this world. **18** Such love has no fear, because perfect love expels all fear. If we are afraid, it is for fear of punishment, and this shows that we have not fully experienced his perfect love. **19** We love each other because he loved us first. **20** If someone says, "I love God," but hates a fellow believer, that person is a liar; for if we don't love people we can see, how can we love God, whom we cannot see? **21** And he has given us this command: Those who love God must also love their fellow believers.

Two words are prevalent in this passage; live and love. When we live in the light of God's grace, we demonstrate love because God is love and God showed us the ultimate act of love by sending Jesus to the cross to die for our sins. He was perfect in everything he did, yet he took on all the brokenness, sinfulness, sickness, guilt, and shame that we would ever experience so that we can live with God forever in heaven. When we come to the reality of God's love for us, that allows us to trust him implicitly. It is hard to trust someone who does not



have your best in mind. God made the ultimate move towards you through Jesus. Make a move back to Him in response to His love for you. He's waiting with open arms. He wants us to spend eternity with Him and he has made a way for that. When we live in the love of God, the troubles of the world do not shake us or cause us to crumble. Instead, we can stand in the confidence of Jesus' love and joy that is made complete through our obedience to Him.

How have you experienced the unwavering love of Christ in your life?

Day 2

John 3:16-21: 16 *“For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. 17 God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him. 18 “There is no judgment against anyone who believes in him. But anyone who does not believe in him has already been judged for not believing in God’s one and only Son. 19 And the judgment is based on this fact: God’s light came into the world, but people loved the darkness more than the light, for their actions were evil. 20 All who do evil hate the light and refuse to go near it for fear their sins will be exposed. 21 But those who do what is right come to the light so others can see that they are doing what God wants.”*

John 3:16 is perhaps the most famous verse in all the Bible. But have you ever taken time to ponder and meditate on what it really means. Take some time right now to read through this entire passage slowly, reading every word out loud and pondering the magnitude of what God has done for us out of the wellspring of his heart.

What stood out to you about this passage?



Day 3

Romans 5:6-11: *6 When we were utterly helpless, Christ came at just the right time and died for us sinners. 7 Now, most people would not be willing to die for an upright person, though someone might perhaps be willing to die for a person who is especially good. 8 But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners. 9 And since we have been made right in God's sight by the blood of Christ, he will certainly save us from God's condemnation. 10 For since our friendship with God was restored by the death of his Son while we were still his enemies, we will certainly be saved through the life of his Son. 11 So now we can rejoice in our wonderful new relationship with God because our Lord Jesus Christ has made us friends of God.*

How much effort does it take to love someone who is close to you? You probably don't have to think twice about it. What about someone you don't like or has wronged you? That's much harder isn't it? Some may say it's impossible. But take a look at verse 8 above. Read it out loud. Replace the word "us" with your name. Replace it with the name of someone you don't like or have a problem with. We are all sinners. We have all done wrong towards God. No one stands higher or lower than the other when it comes to sinful living. We are all on the same playing field. Christ died for *everyone*. There were no exceptions. We can have a relationship with God because of this sacrifice. We are friends with God because of Jesus. But that means doing some difficult things, like loving on those who we think are unloveable.

We have talked a lot about loving those who are unloveable in our lives, but that speaks to the importance of reconciliation. Is there someone over the past few weeks that keeps coming to mind that you need to make things right with? What are you going to do this very hour to move towards reconciliation?



Day 4

1 Peter 1:3-9: **3** All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is by his great mercy that we have been born again, because God raised Jesus Christ from the dead. Now we live with great expectation, **4** and we have a priceless inheritance—an inheritance that is kept in heaven for you, pure and undefiled, beyond the reach of change and decay. **5** And through your faith, God is protecting you by his power until you receive this salvation, which is ready to be revealed on the last day for all to see. **6** So be truly glad. There is wonderful joy ahead, even though you must endure many trials for a little while. **7** These trials will show that your faith is genuine. It is being tested as fire tests and purifies gold—though your faith is far more precious than mere gold. So when your faith remains strong through many trials, it will bring you much praise and glory and honor on the day when Jesus Christ is revealed to the whole world. **8** You love him even though you have never seen him. Though you do not see him now, you trust him; and you rejoice with a glorious, inexpressible joy. **9** The reward for trusting him will be the salvation of your souls.

No one likes tests of any kind, at least no one I have met. They tend to be stressful, high pressure situations. Whether it's a math test, drivers test, or life is testing you, rarely do they bring much happiness in the moment. Peter tells us here though, that when we face tests and trials, it is actually for our benefit, for we are growing in our faith because we see the goodness of God even in the midst of pain and suffering. God does not waste pain. He is able to use that which he hates to accomplish that which he loves. So if you are going through a test right now, look to our perfect Father, who will comfort you, protect you, and guide you through the storm. If you look across the course of human history, there is not one person who ever avoided hardship. It's inevitable but even greater than the inevitability is the graciousness of God, who strengthens us in our weakness.



How has God strengthened you during a storm in life? If you are going through a storm right now, what is he showing you?

Day 5

1 Timothy 6:11-16: *11 But you, Timothy, are a man of God; so run from all these evil things. Pursue righteousness and a godly life, along with faith, love, perseverance, and gentleness. 12 Fight the good fight for the true faith. Hold tightly to the eternal life to which God has called you, which you have declared so well before many witnesses. 13 And I charge you before God, who gives life to all, and before Christ Jesus, who gave a good testimony before Pontius Pilate, 14 that you obey this command without wavering. Then no one can find fault with you from now until our Lord Jesus Christ comes again. 15 For, At just the right time Christ will be revealed from heaven by the blessed and only almighty God, the King of all kings and Lord of all lords. 16 He alone can never die, and he lives in light so brilliant that no human can approach him. No human eye has ever seen him, nor ever will. All honor and power to him forever! Amen.*

Life is a battle that is fought on a daily basis. Everyday we're facing attacks from the enemy who wants to pull us farther away from God. Paul's charge to Timothy here was to encourage him to pursue righteous and godly living which combats the enemy. When our obedience to Christ is demonstrated in everyday living, we present a good witness to the transformation that has occurred within us. Until Jesus returns to earth, we will always be in battle against Satan and his followers. But Jesus has already declared victory over the forces of evil when he rose from the dead. We can live in the confidence of his victory in our day to day living, knowing that we have the power of the Spirit who raised Christ from the dead.

How can you give honor and glory to God today for what he has done in your life?



Week 10

The Life of a Witness

Day 1

1 John 5:1-12: *Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has become a child of God. And everyone who loves the Father loves his children, too. 2 We know we love God's children if we love God and obey his commandments. 3 Loving God means keeping his commandments, and his commandments are not burdensome. 4 For every child of God defeats this evil world, and we achieve this victory through our faith. 5 And who can win this battle against the world? Only those who believe that Jesus is the Son of God. 6 And Jesus Christ was revealed as God's Son by his baptism in water and by shedding his blood on the cross—not by water only, but by water and blood. And the Spirit, who is truth, confirms it with his testimony. 7 So we have these three witnesses— 8 the Spirit, the water, and the blood—and all three agree. 9 Since we believe human testimony, surely we can believe the greater testimony that comes from God. And God has testified about his Son. 10 All who believe in the Son of God know in their hearts that this testimony is true. Those who don't believe this are actually calling God a liar because they don't believe what God has testified about his Son. 11 And this is what God has testified: He has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. 12 Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have God's Son does not have life.*

There are many variations of spirituality present in the world today, but only one truth, that of Jesus Christ. His testimony is not something that was merely thought up as a fable, but one that has witnesses, specifically the Spirit, the water of baptism, and the blood he shed on the cross. John makes an interesting



observation in this passage. In verse 9, he reasons that if we are able to believe human testimony, that should mean that we would have no problem believing God's testimony. The logic behind that statement is that since God is perfect and faithful, then believing his testimony of his Son should not be hard. But humans like to have visual evidence before they believe and since God is spirit and invisible, how can we believe what we do not see? Looking deeper though, there is an infinite amount of evidence that supports the working of God, if we are aware and looking for it. Humans are flawed creatures. God is eternal and perfect. Let us look towards his goodness and grace as we pursue a life lived in his love.

What is your story with God?

Day 2

2 John 6-11: 6 Love means doing what God has commanded us, and he has commanded us to love one another, just as you heard from the beginning. 7 I say this because many deceivers have gone out into the world. They deny that Jesus Christ came in a real body. Such a person is a deceiver and an antichrist. 8 Watch out that you do not lose what we have worked so hard to achieve. Be diligent so that you receive your full reward. 9 Anyone who wanders away from this teaching has no relationship with God. But anyone who remains in the teaching of Christ has a relationship with both the Father and the Son. 10 If anyone comes to your meeting and does not teach the truth about Christ, don't invite that person into your home or give any kind of encouragement. 11 Anyone who encourages such people becomes a partner in their evil work.

The word *deception* covers a wide range of actions. It can be as simple as a little white lie to lead someone astray or it can be conscious manipulation. The effects however are detrimental to the well-being of the deceived. In John's day, there were people who were trying to convince Christians that Christ did not



come in bodily form, that he was a made up entity, robbing him of his humanity. Today, there are more subtle deceivers who try to lead us away from the truth found in Christ. These present day deceivers twist truth to make it more attractive in the world's eye but it ends up bringing less joy and more sorrow. How does one recognize deception? We've seen again and again that is through a relationship rooted in Christ and led by the Holy Spirit.

If you have not started that relationship with Him, ask Him right now to enter your heart. Admit your sins to him and acknowledge your need for a Savior. Let someone know that you've done this! There is a huge celebration in Heaven when lives are turned towards God and we love celebrating that too!



Day 3

John 14:11-14: **11** Just believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me. Or at least believe because of the work you have seen me do. **12** “I tell you the truth, anyone who believes in me will do the same works I have done, and even greater works, because I am going to be with the Father. **13** You can ask for anything in my name, and I will do it, so that the Son can bring glory to the Father. **14** Yes, ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it!

Romans 10:14-15 (The Message): But how can people call for help if they don't know who to trust? And how can they know who to trust if they haven't heard of the One who can be trusted? And how can they hear if nobody tells them? And how is anyone going to tell them, unless someone is sent to do it?

John 14:12 is truly an astonishing passage. Jesus tells us that we will do greater works than he did. How is that even possible? Jesus was one hundred percent God. He had been living in heaven for eternity past, up until he was born in human form. He was perfect and yet, he says we will do greater things. It is made possible through the Holy Spirit, who is at work in us even today. Romans 8:11 says, “The Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from the dead, lives in you.” That's pretty wild. What would happen if we actually believed and trusted that we could do greater things? What would it take for you to believe that? Where do we even start? Paul gives us an answer in Romans 10, where he calls us to go and tell. That's where it begins, in sharing our story. We can't hope to have any impact for Christ if we are not sharing him with others. That's where the power is at work. Jesus works through us and our story to bring others to him so that they can experience freedom and eternity. I can't think of anything more powerful than that.

Who can you share Jesus with today? How have you seen his power at work in your life?



Day 4

John 3:30-36: 30 *He must become greater and greater, and I must become less and less. 31 "He has come from above and is greater than anyone else. We are of the earth, and we speak of earthly things, but he has come from heaven and is greater than anyone else. 32 He testifies about what he has seen and heard, but how few believe what he tells them! 33 Anyone who accepts his testimony can affirm that God is true. 34 For he is sent by God. He speaks God's words, for God gives him the Spirit without limit. 35 The Father loves his Son and has put everything into his hands. 36 And anyone who believes in God's Son has eternal life. Anyone who doesn't obey the Son will never experience eternal life but remains under God's angry judgment."*

We must never think that it's all about us. There is nothing we can do on our own to obtain salvation. It is a miracle that Jesus works in our hearts when we realize our need for him and live in obedience to what he has commanded. We cannot boast in our own accomplishments, for it is the Spirit working in and through us that guides and leads us. And we must always remember that we do not have it in our power to change anyone. That power rests solely on Jesus Christ. We can tell people about Christ, teach them and model the way of living like Christ, but only Jesus can make the heart change that is necessary for repentance. What an incredible privilege, that the Savior of the universe uses us to accomplish his purposes. Let us go out and be obedient to his calling on our lives, to share him with those we encounter on a day-to-day basis.

Did you share Jesus with someone yesterday? If not, make it happen today. If you did, how can you follow up with the conversation you had.?



Day 5

Matthew 28:16-20: **16** Then the eleven disciples left for Galilee, going to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. **17** When they saw him, they worshiped him—but some of them doubted! **18** Jesus came and told his disciples, “I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. **19** Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. **20** Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

Acts 1:8: **8** But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

It is fitting that the last words of this series are the last words Jesus speaks to his disciples before he goes back up to heaven. Look at Matthew 28:17. Right up until his final words, there were still some who doubted. But Jesus knew his purpose for them and it was greater than any doubt they would experience. You are never going to be one hundred percent ready to live a Christ-like life. If you were one hundred percent ready, faith would not be required of you. So don't wait any longer. Jesus promises that he'll be with you until the end of the age. He has given us the power of the Spirit, the most powerful force in the universe. And he has shown us again and again that he is faithful and a keeper of his promises. So go to your neighborhoods, your work, your towns and cities, maybe to the ends of the earth if that's where he's called you. Just go and be obedient, for that is what he's called us to.

What is one area you've grown in your relationship with Jesus during these ten weeks? How can you keep it going?

