

THE PATHWAY EXPERIENCE

LEADING OTHERS PART 2





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INTRODUCTION

Followers of Jesus are all “works in progress.” Leading Others Part 1 of the Discipleship Pathway gave us an overview of this journey. We saw that our salvation is in Christ, our identity is in Christ, our life is from Christ and our authority is through Christ. God has done what was impossible for us — He raised those who were dead in sin to life in His Son.

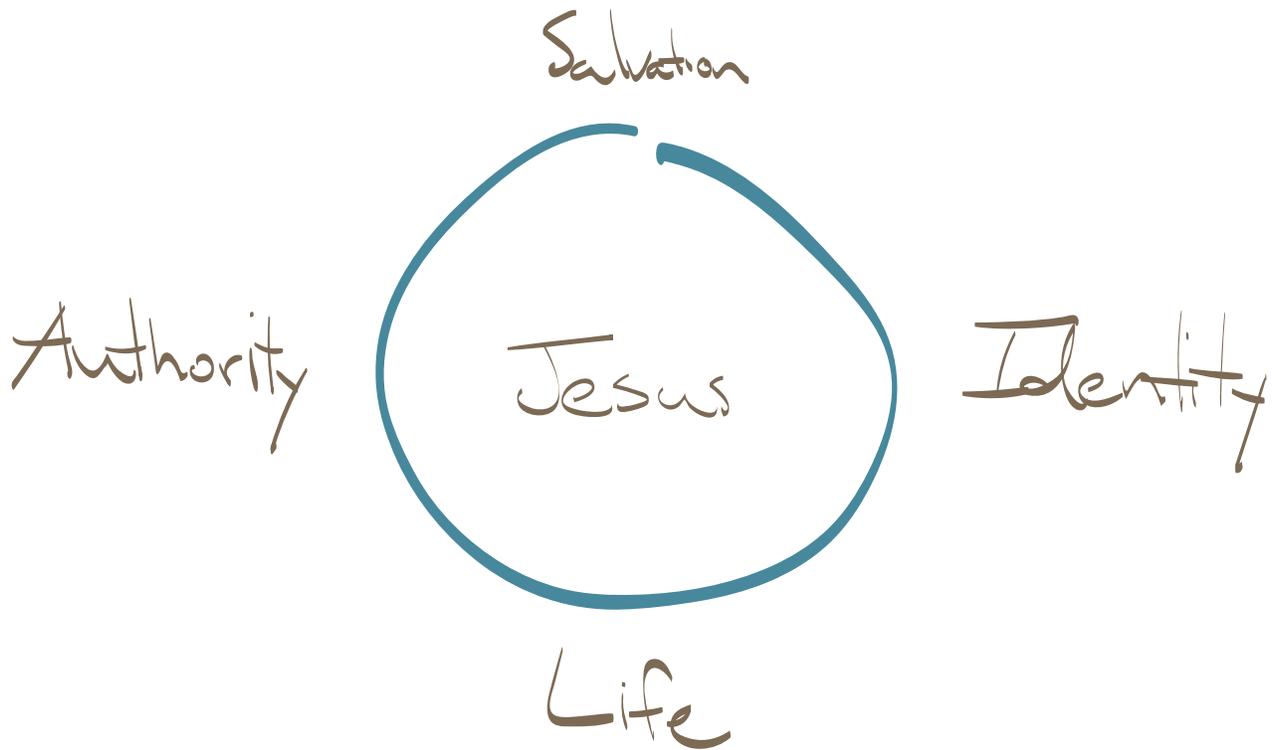
In Leading Others Part 2, we will take a look at what this means for us in everyday, going-to-work, studying-for-classes, serving-the-community, spending-time-with-our-family life. Knowing that we have salvation, identity, life and authority is one thing; realizing what that means in how we treat others, where we put our focus and how we spend our time is another. It will take some self-examination and there will be both good days and not-so-good days, but the effort is worth it.

The best part is that we have help to figure all this out. God has given us Himself. As we live a Jesus-centered life and as we remember what that means, we know that He is for us. He continues to work on us and shape us. When we stumble, we can always be confident that we belong to Him and that He loves us. We are created new in Christ for the good that God planned. Nothing can change that; nothing can separate us from Him.

This journey is not just about you. God wants us to lead others so that they too can see what the Jesus-centered life is all about.

Before you get started, take some to time to reflect on the Jesus-Centered Life diagram on page 2. Remember all that you have been given when you began your journey in Christ and pray that God will give you even greater understanding of what that means.

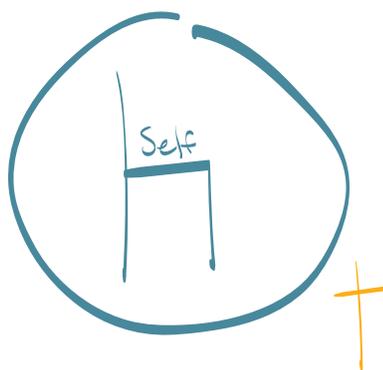
JESUS-CENTERED LIFE



THE THREE CHAIRS DRAWING

Who is in charge of your life? All of us — even Christians — can let self-interest drive us. What we think is right can become the key thing that directs our decisions and sets our standards.

But Jesus shows a different picture. The King is meant to be the One who sits on the throne of our lives. The apostle Paul explained this to a group of self-directed Christians in 1 Corinthians, and we can take what he taught and illustrate it in some helpful drawings.



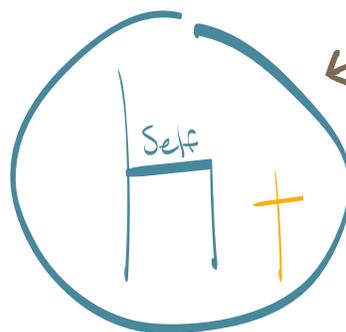
THE NATURAL MAN

1 Corinthians 2:14

HELPLESS

HEEDLESS

HOPELESS



THE SELF-DIRECTED CHRISTIAN

1 Corinthians 3:1–4

STUCK

CONFLICTED

FRUSTRATED



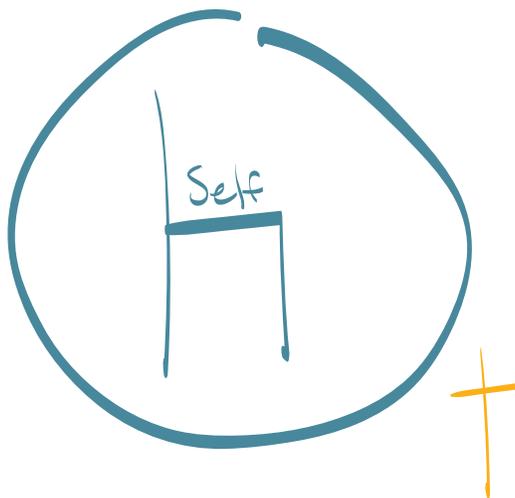
THE SPIRITUAL MAN

1 Corinthians 2:15–16

WISDOM

CHANGE

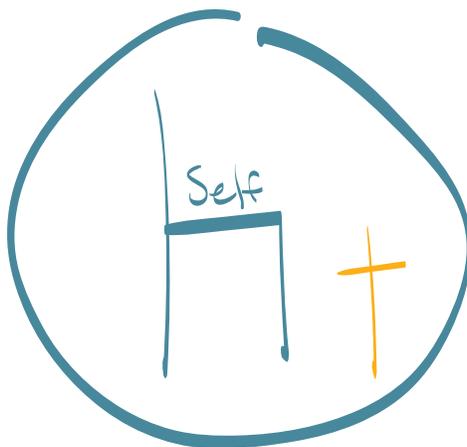
POWER



THE NATURAL MAN

“But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.” [1 Corinthians 2:14](#)

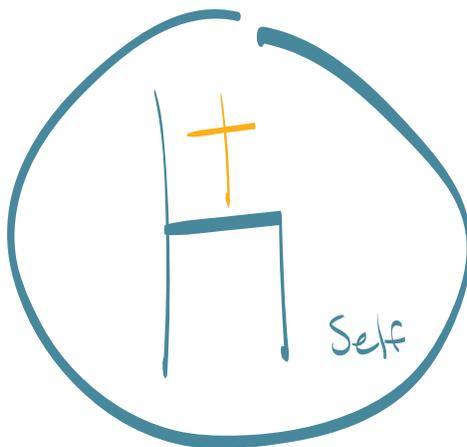
Apart from faith in Jesus, we are helpless, heedless and hopeless. We direct our own lives, we are dead in our sin and we cannot figure out the things of God. Nothing we could ever do in ourselves can restore our relationship with God. When we repent of our sins and trust in Christ for salvation, the miracle is that Christ forever moves from the outside of our circle to the inside.



THE SELF-DIRECTED CHRISTIAN

“And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to infants in Christ. I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able to receive it. Indeed, even now you are not yet able, for you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men? For when one says, ‘I am of Paul,’ and another, ‘I am of Apollos,’ are you not mere men?” [1 Corinthians 3:1–4](#)

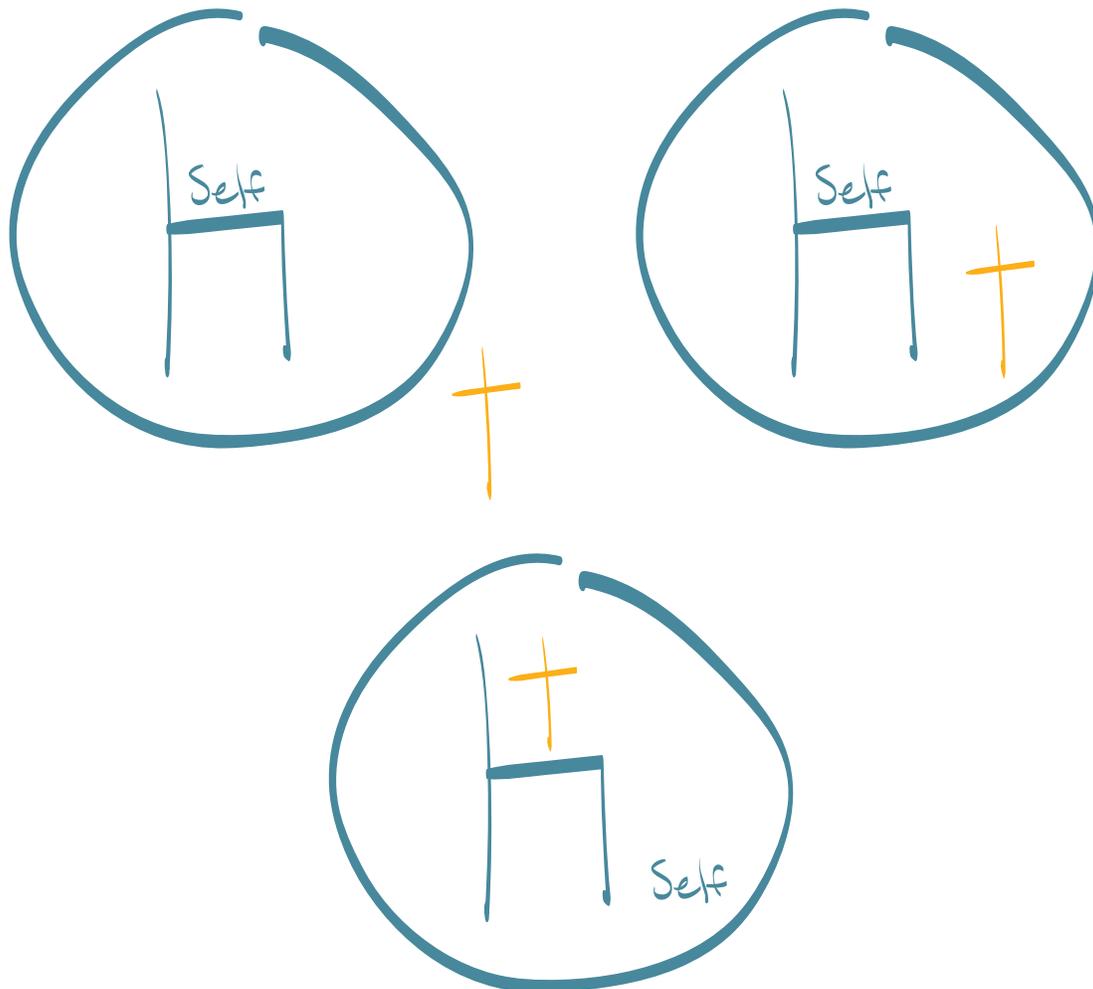
Even though we have faith in Christ, we can sometimes live with “self” on the throne in certain areas. For example, we may surrender to His leading with our money, but we let the self direct how we treat our family and friends. This is a daily fight (Romans 12:1), and we may find ourselves going back and forth over who is in charge. This can lead to frustration, conflict — both internally and with others — and the feeling of being stuck.



THE SPIRITUAL MAN

“But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no one. For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, THAT HE WILL INSTRUCT HIM? But we have the mind of Christ.”
1 Corinthians 2:15–16

God is at work in us. As we ask Him to point out the areas where we need to surrender, He gives us the wisdom to see changes we need to make and the power to do so. But this is a daily process because we are all learning to live with Jesus on the throne in every area. We may slip back to the self-directed life in some areas, but we can trust that God will keep shaping us.



- » In general, which drawing best represents your life right now?
- » In what areas do you struggle to let Jesus be on the throne (for example, money, work life, marriage, emotions etc.)?

1

THE NEW COMMUNITY

EXPOSURE TO THE WORD

Acts 2:41–47 gives us a look at the early church, where we see believers sharing their lives. They spend time together, study God’s Word together, pray together and help each other with basic needs. A Jesus-centered life is meant to be a team sport, a journey that is shared with other believers.

EXPLANATION OF THE WORD

Community: We all live in some sort of community made up by the people we spend time with. In Acts, these believers may not have had much in common as far as the work they did, how much money they had or their influence. But they did have Jesus in common. That was the bond that held them together and gave them a desire to help each other (Proverbs 27:17).

Small Groups: The people we are around the most speak the most into our lives. They influence our lifestyle, our decisions and our direction. Members of the early church got together in small groups to share life with those who could help them grow in Christ (Romans 12:4–5). They realized how important those purposeful relationships are, and they intentionally met on a regular basis (Hebrews 10:24–25).

Church: The early believers realized that church is a mission, not a destination. They gathered in homes, in the Temple and other places to grow in their faith and to share the Gospel. When we surrender to Christ, we see that He has given us a command to work together in unity with other believers to honor Him and to tell the world about the hope found only in Him (Matthew 28:18–20). In that way, we are the church every day of the week.

INTRODUCTION

- 1 What brought the believers in Acts 2 together?
- 2 Why is it important for us to be mindful of the people we spend the most time with?

Church is more than a building or something we do on Sundays. It is a community of believers who intentionally get together to worship God, share life and talk with others about Jesus. We need relationships with other people who follow Jesus because we are meant to grow together (Ephesians 2:19–22) and serve each other (Galatians 5:13).

STORYING

Tell the story of the Acts church in your own words.

⁴¹ So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls. ⁴² They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. ⁴³ Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles. ⁴⁴ And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common; ⁴⁵ and they began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need. ⁴⁶ Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, ⁴⁷ praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved. [Acts 2:41-47](#)

Choose two or three questions to discuss from the question bank below.

- » Where do you see yourself in the story of the first church? What compelled them to meet together and to serve one another?
- » In what ways does your life mirror that of the first-century Christians? Why did they feel compelled to get together and serve one another?
- » What attracts or excites you about the kind of community the members of the first church shared? Is there anything you find intimidating about it?
- » Living in community is more than merely hanging out with other Christians. What does it look like to spend time with other believers in the church in a manner that promotes spiritual growth, unity and mission?
- » It is clear that these Christians were from different backgrounds, including different socio-economic classes. How do you explain such a deep commitment to one another in spite of these differences?
- » How does the example of the Acts church compare to the attitudes and practices of our culture?
- » What has God uniquely equipped the church to be able to do? What are the ramifications when the church fails to live up to its calling to love God and love people?

APPLICATION

¹⁷ Iron sharpens iron,

So one man sharpens another. [Proverbs 27:17](#)

- » How would you say that one believer can “sharpen” another? What happens when we aren’t seeking out intentional relationships with other Christians? What barriers might keep us from doing so?

¹⁹ So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God’s household, ²⁰ having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, ²¹ in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into holy temple in the Lord, ²² in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit. [Ephesians 2:19–22](#)

- » With Jesus as the corner stone, what does it look like for Christians to be “built together”?

²⁴ and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, ²⁵ not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near. [Hebrews 10:24–25](#)

- » What’s the point of getting together with other people who live a Jesus-centered life? Are you being encouraged on a regular basis? Why do you think some people get away from meeting with other believers?

2

GOD'S WORD

EXPOSURE TO THE WORD

In Matthew 4:1–11, we see that Jesus faced the same sorts of temptations that we do. But He did so without getting pulled into them, and, in fact, He won a huge victory. Why? Because He trusted in what God said.

One of the main tools we have to get to know our Creator is through His Word — the Bible. We read, study, memorize, listen to, and think through Scripture, not as a way to simply know God's Word, but to know the God of the Word. In verse after verse, His heart comes through loud and clear. As we grow in our relationship with Him, we grow in the Jesus-centered life.

EXPLANATION OF THE WORD

Knowledge: Jesus knew the Bible, but more importantly, He knew the God who gave it to us. That's why He could deal with Satan's temptations. When we study Scripture, we tap into that same God-given Word that Jesus did (2 Timothy 3:16–17). We get to know the way God speaks, His purpose for the world, His purpose for us and who He is (Psalm 119:9–11).

Trust: We can trust what God says because we can trust God (Numbers 23:19). His Word is exactly what He intended to give us so that we could know His character and His actions (2 Peter 1:20–21).

Strength: When we face temptations, it's easy for us to trust in our own strength to get through. But Jesus stuck with God's Word alone. After all, God gave it to us for our instruction and our encouragement (Romans 15:4; Joshua 1:8) and to shape us as we grow in our understanding (1 Thessalonians 2:13).

INTRODUCTION

- 1 Why do we have the Bible?
- 2 Is it possible to grow in our relationship with Jesus if we're not spending time in His Word?

The Bible is “inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16–17). If we hope to grow in knowledge and trust of God, if we hope to be strengthened by Him to fulfill His mission, we must recognize our need for His Word and actively seek Him through consistent study of Scripture.

STORYING

Tell the story of Jesus' victory over temptation in your own words.

¹ Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. ² And after He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He then became hungry. ³ And the tempter came and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread." ⁴ But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.'" ⁵ Then the devil took Him into the holy city and had Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple, ⁶ and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down; for it is written, 'He will command His angels concerning You'; and 'On their hands they will bear You up, So that You will not strike Your foot against a stone.'" ⁷ Jesus said to him, "On the other hand, it is written, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'" ⁸ Again, the devil took Him to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory; ⁹ and he said to Him, "All these things I will give You, if You fall down and worship me." ¹⁰ Then Jesus said to him, "Go, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only.'" ¹¹ Then the devil left Him; and behold, angels came and began to minister to Him. [Matthew 4:1–11](#)

Choose two or three questions to discuss from the question bank below.

- » Where do you see yourself in this story? Where has the enemy tempted you? Are you tempted to give into your feelings and desires? What Scripture could you use to overcome those temptations?
- » When Jesus answered Satan, how did He frame His responses? Where did He find strength and encouragement? When you answer accusations or temptations, what is your frame of reference?
- » In verse 6, Satan quotes Scripture as part of his temptation. How is this different than the way Jesus uses the Bible? What makes them different in their view of the God of the Word?
- » How else did Jesus show His trust for God's Word? Can you think of other points in the Gospels where He quoted Scripture?
- » In His third response, Jesus says that we're supposed to worship the Lord only. How does this relate to our need to study and live out the truth of the Bible?
- » What is one thing that distracts you from daily study of the Word of God? What habit or routine needs to change for you to make the study and memorization of the Word a priority?
- » Clearly, the Bible is powerful in the face of temptation, but in what other ways does God's Word work in your life?

APPLICATION

¹⁶ All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; ¹⁷ so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work. [2 Timothy 3:16–17](#)

- » According to Paul, for what is Scripture “profitable”? Given Paul’s description of the Bible, how should you go about reading it?

¹³ For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe. [1 Thessalonians 2:13](#)

- » Take inventory of your life: How has God’s Word shaped your thinking and changed your priorities? How might you open yourself up even more to the transforming power of Scripture?

²⁴ Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock. ²⁵ And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock. [Matthew 7:24–25](#)

- » Why isn’t it enough to merely read the Bible? What is one step you might take this week toward living out the truth we are studying?

3

WORSHIP

EXPOSURE TO THE WORD

Luke 10:38–42 compares the reactions of two sisters when Jesus visits. One sister, Martha, focuses on her own work as a way of serving Him. The other sister, Mary, puts herself at Jesus' feet and focuses on Him. True worship, like Mary's, is a whole-life response to who God is and what He's done.

We were made to worship God (1 Chronicles 16:23–31). But because we're all sinners we don't always worship like we should (Romans 1:18–31). As we strive to live the Jesus-centered life, God takes our attention off the things of this world (what we used to worship) and turns our attention to Him. The more we get to know Him, the more we want to respond with praise in everything we do. Our worship becomes a whole-life response for who He is and what He has done.

EXPLANATION OF THE WORD

Focus: Mary shows us what it looks like to truly worship by making Jesus the focus of her attention. Whole-life worship means putting aside the distractions of this world (Hebrews 12:1–2) so that we can truly experience God's goodness (Psalm 27:4).

Gratitude: Like Mary, we can choose "what is better" when we respond in gratitude for who Jesus is and what He's done for us. Worship means more than a style of music or a part of Sunday morning; it is living in response to God's perfect character (Psalm 100) and His unfailing grace (Hebrews 12:28–29).

Devotion: While Martha became irritated by her service, Mary's response to Jesus gave her joy. We give God everything we have — our whole life — because He deserves it (Romans 12:1–2).

INTRODUCTION

- 1 What do you normally think of when you hear the word *worship*?
- 2 What percentage of your daily life would you consider to be worship?

Many Christians tend to think of worship primarily in terms of music. They even refer to the music portion of the service as “worship.” When we look to Scripture, however, we see that God does not want us to compartmentalize the act of worship, but to worship Him in all of life. God calls us to worship continually (Psalm 35:27–28; Hebrews 13:15) and in everything that we do (1 Corinthians 10:31; Deuteronomy 6:4–8). By looking to the example of Mary, you will see that worship is your whole-life response to God for His character and His gracious work in your life.

STORYING

Tell the story of Jesus in Mary and Martha's home in your own words.

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

Choose two or three questions to discuss from the question bank below.

- » Where do you see yourself in this story? Are you more like Martha or Mary?
- » What did Jesus praise about Mary's actions? How did He draw a contrast between the two women?
- » Were you surprised that Jesus confronted Martha about her anger? Do you think we sometimes think of "doing something" as being more important than spending time in worship?
- » It's been said that the more you grow in your walk with Christ, the more you realize how deeply you need His grace. Have you experienced this? How is such a realization vital in cultivating a lifestyle of worship?
- » Has your service to God ever made you feel like a Martha? How can that happen? How might whole-life worship change your perspective?
- » Do you tend to think of worship primarily as an event? How does your approach to worship need to change?

APPLICATION

¹ Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ² fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. [Hebrews 12:1-2](#)

- » What most distracts you from focusing on Christ? How might a greater mindfulness of who Jesus is and what He has done help you overcome these distractions?

¹ Oh give thanks to the Lord, call upon His name; Make known His deeds among the peoples. ² Sing to Him, sing praises to Him; Speak of all His wonders. ³ Glory in His holy name; Let the heart of those who seek the Lord be glad. [Psalm 105:1-3](#)

- » In what environments do you find yourself thinking about God and what He has done for you? What are you doing when you experience the most thankfulness for who He is?

¹ Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. [Romans 12:1](#)

- » Worship is not an event, but a life that is given to God. What is one step you could take toward cultivating a lifestyle of worship? How might you worship God at home? At work? In your daily routine?

4

PRAYER

EXPOSURE TO THE WORD

Matthew 6:5–13 tells the story of Jesus teaching His disciples to pray. His example shows that prayer is about being in a relationship with our God. We praise Him for who He is, bring our needs to Him and listen for His response.

EXPLANATION OF THE WORD

Relationship: Jesus models prayer as a way of spending time with God, the One who is our good Father (Galatians 4:6). When we pray, we can know for sure that He listens and truly enjoys hearing from us and speaking to us (Psalm 145:18).

Praise: After addressing God as “our Father,” Jesus then challenges His disciples to actively acknowledge and praise God for His holiness. Prayer is not primarily about asking God for things, but about recognizing who God is and delighting in Him (1 Thessalonians 5:16–18).

Surrender: Praying for God’s Kingdom to come means that we are telling God we want Him to be our King before we ask for anything. We are surrendering our will, our desires and our plans to His control (Psalm 47). That is the true posture of prayer.

Petition: Jesus also teaches His disciples how to make petition. We honor God when we ask Him to meet our needs. By looking to God to give us our daily bread and to forgive our sins, we are communicating our absolute dependence and His complete sufficiency (Philippians 4:6–7). When we ask out of a sense of dependence rather than entitlement, we glorify God and find that our loving Father delights to hear our requests and answer us (Matthew 7:11).

INTRODUCTION

- 1 What is prayer?
- 2 What's your biggest fear in prayer?
- 3 What stops you from praying?

God gave us prayer as a means for continual conversation and communion with Him (Daniel 6:10). If we pray simply out of obligation, we miss the point of what Jesus taught. We were created to have intimacy with God, and sincere prayer allows us to do that. Like the disciples, we can learn to pray in a way that shows surrender to and trust in our loving Father.

STORYING

Tell the story of Jesus teaching the disciples to pray in your own words.

⁵“When you pray, you are not to be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners so that they may be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. ⁶ But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, close your door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you. ⁷ “And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words. ⁸ So do not be like them; for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him.

⁹ “Pray, then, in this way: ‘Our Father who is in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. ¹⁰ ‘Your kingdom come. Your will be done, On earth as it is in heaven. ¹¹ ‘Give us this day our daily bread. ¹² ‘And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. ¹³ ‘And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. [For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.]” [Matthew 6:5–13](#)

Choose two or three questions to discuss from the question bank below.

- » What characteristics marked the way the hypocrites (v. 5) and the Gentiles (v. 7) prayed? What did their prayers reveal about how they viewed God?
- » If “your Father knows what you need before you ask Him,” why bother asking? How does asking God strengthen our relationship with Him through prayer?
- » Where do you see yourself in this story? Are you sometimes tempted to pray like the hypocrites or the Gentiles? How so?
- » Read John 14:13–14 and 1 John 5:14–15. Is there a right and a wrong way to ask God for things? How can we be sure that we are praying in Jesus’ name and in accordance with His will?
- » In contrast to the prayers of the hypocrites and the Gentiles, how does Jesus want you to pray?
- » What does it mean for us to “hallow” God’s name?
- » What attitude is required to “close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen”? How does this type of prayer honor God and focus on protecting our relationship with Him?
- » Is it hard for you to think of God as a loving Father? Why or why not?

APPLICATION

⁶ Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"

[Galatians 4:6](#)

- » How does recognizing God as your loving Father change the way you think about Him and talk to Him in prayer?

¹ Bless the Lord, O my soul, And all that is within me, bless His holy name. ² Bless the Lord, O my soul, And forget none of His benefits; ³ Who pardons all your iniquities, Who heals all your diseases; ⁴ Who redeems your life from the pit, Who crowns you with lovingkindness and compassion; ⁵ Who satisfies your years with good things, So that your youth is renewed like the eagle. [Psalm 103:1–5](#)

- » Why is it essential that you set aside time each day to praise God for who He is and what He has done? How is this different from praying to God only when you need something?

¹⁴ This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. ¹⁵ And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him. [1 John 5:14–15](#)

- » When you pray, how often do you ask God what He wants and what He wants of you? Do you truly surrender to what He wants to do in your life? What holds you back?

5

STEWARDSHIP

EXPOSURE TO THE WORD

In Matthew 25:14–30, Jesus tells a parable about three servants who have been given responsibility over their master’s money. When the master returns from a trip, he judges them based on how well they took care of what they had been given. When we realize that all we have comes from God, we understand why He expects us to be good stewards of our time, talent and treasure.

Everything in this world belongs to God because He created it (Psalm 24:1). All that we have comes from Him, and we are responsible as stewards for taking care of these gifts in a way that honors Him (Genesis 1:26; Hebrews 2:7).

EXPLANATION OF THE WORD

Time: The Bible describes the time we have on this earth as being like a vapor that appears for a short time and then vanishes (James 4:14). Each moment is a gift that requires wise and thoughtful use.

Talent: God created each of us for a specific purpose, and He equipped us to fulfill that purpose (Proverbs 16:4; 2 Timothy 1:9). He chose our talents and abilities to align with His plan, and our reasonable response is to use them for Him (Romans 12:1).

Treasure: Just as the servants in the parable made use of their master’s money, all our resources come from our Master too. Making smart use of those resources involves faithfully giving from what God has given you to serve Him and His purposes (1 Timothy 6:17–19).

INTRODUCTION

- 1 How does our culture view time, talent and treasure? How do commercials, TV shows and movies say we should use them? Does that view line up with what the Bible teaches?
- 2 Do you have a tough time living as if God has given you all that you have? Where do you struggle the most?

We live in a culture of consumerism, and we are inundated with messages about getting all that we can while we can. But Scripture paints a different picture: The earth and everything in it belongs to God (Psalm 24:1). Riches and honor come from Him (1 Chronicles 29:12). The Jesus-centered life is about treating our time, talent and treasure as God-given blessings. When you start thinking this way, you will realize that you are meant to serve as a manager of those gifts.

STORYING

Tell the story of the three servants in your own words.

¹⁴ “For it is just like a man about to go on a journey, who called his own slaves and entrusted his possessions to them. ¹⁵ To one he gave five talents, to another, two, and to another, one, each according to his own ability; and he went on his journey. ¹⁶ Immediately the one who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and gained five more talents. ¹⁷ In the same manner the one who had received the two talents gained two more. ¹⁸ But he who received the one talent went away, and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master’s money. ¹⁹ Now after a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. ²⁰ The one who had received the five talents came up and brought five more talents, saying, ‘Master, you entrusted five talents to me. See, I have gained five more talents.’ ²¹ His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.’ ²² Also the one who had received the two talents came up and said, ‘Master, you entrusted two talents to me. See, I have gained two more talents.’ ²³ His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.’ ²⁴ And the one also who had received the one talent came up and said, ‘Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow and gathering where you scattered no seed. ²⁵ And I was afraid, and went away and hid your talent in the ground. See, you have what is yours.’ ²⁶ But his master answered and said to him, ‘You wicked, lazy slave, you knew that I reap where I did not sow and gather where I scattered no seed. ²⁷ Then you ought to have put my money in the bank, and on my arrival I would have received my money back with interest. ²⁸ Therefore take away the talent from him, and give it to the one who has the ten talents. ²⁹ For to everyone who has, more shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but from the one who does not have, even what he does have shall be taken away. ³⁰ Throw out the worthless slave into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’” [Matthew 25:14–30](#)

Choose two or three questions to discuss from the question bank below.

- » Where do you see yourself in this story? Have you ever felt like the wicked servant when it comes to what you have been given?
- » Why did the master praise the first and second servants? What did they do that caused him to reward them?
- » If the wicked servant did not lose any money, why did the master punish him? What did the master expect him to do?
- » What do the words of the wicked servant reveal about how he thinks of his master? How is his attitude different from the other two?
- » Read 2 Corinthians 9:6–8. Does the attitude with which we give matter? How might giving merely out of obligation hinder our spiritual growth? How might it hinder our mission efforts?
- » Read 2 Corinthians 8:9. What is the true basis of Christian generosity?

APPLICATION

¹⁷ Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy. ¹⁸ Instruct them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, ¹⁹ storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is life indeed.

[1 Timothy 6:17–19](#)

- » How can you avoid being selfish with your time, talent and treasure? What steps could you take to reframe your thoughts and be generous with them toward those in need and toward the church?

³⁴ For there was not a needy person among them, for all who were owners of land or houses would sell them and bring the proceeds of the sales ³⁵ and lay them at the apostles' feet, and they would be distributed to each as any had need. [Acts 4:34–35](#)

- » Why wasn't there a needy person in the early church? How might we be more aware of the needs around us? What is the connection between generosity and God's mission?

¹ The earth is the Lord's, and all it contains, The world, and those who dwell in it. [Psalm 24:1](#)

- » Can you really call anything "mine"? If everything truly belongs to God, how should that affect the way you think about what you have? How does that change the way you manage these things?

6

AUTHORITY

EXPOSURE TO THE WORD

In Luke 8:26–39 we meet a demon-possessed man who comes face to face with the authority of Jesus. Here we will learn that there is far more to this world than what we can see. Those who live in Jesus must be aware that our enemy is real and attacks us in various ways. But we also understand that Satan cannot hurt us because Jesus has already defeated him. We have authority in Christ to overcome the enemy.

EXPLANATION OF THE WORD

Spiritual Warfare: The Bible teaches us that there is a parallel reality going on around us right now. There is the world you see — the physical and material. It is the world of touch, sound, taste and sight. But just as real is a spiritual world — a world that is not always as tangible, but nonetheless just as real. You are in it whether you acknowledge it or not. We will learn to engage the war around you. Satan opposes God and His children (1 Peter 5:8–9), but we are not defenseless in the fight (Ephesians 6:10–17). In Christ, God has given us the power, tools and weapons we need to win the battle (2 Corinthians 10:3–4).

The Authority of God: Jesus demonstrated His authority over Satan and his minions by casting out demons (Mark 3:11), resisting temptation (Matthew 4:1–11) and ultimately by dying on the cross to pay for our sin and save us from the same fate as that of Satan. God is infinitely more powerful than Satan, and the Lord will overcome the devil's influence in our lives if we draw near to Christ (James 4:7–8).

The Power of God: In Christ, God has given us every spiritual blessing (Ephesians 1:3), because the same power that raised Jesus from the dead is in us through the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:11).

INTRODUCTION

- 1 What are some of the common ways that our culture portrays Satan? Is that what the Bible teaches?
- 2 What comes to mind when you think of “spiritual warfare”?

Have you wondered why it is so hard for you to do right? Why can you not do what you know you are supposed to do? Why do you keep doing what you know is wrong?

There is a battle for you, your soul, your relationships, your kids, everything about you. The problem is not a battle with addiction or anger or aggravating people in life. The problem is that you are in a war for your very existence.

Despite what our culture may teach, our enemy is real and wants to destroy the work of God. That battle rages on around us every day. But there is something we must keep in mind: One day every knee will bend to Jesus — that includes Satan and the demons (Philippians 2:10). Jesus has already won, and in Him, we have real authority over those spiritual forces that come against us.

STORYING

Tell the story of the demon-possessed man in your own words.

²⁶ They sailed to the region of the Gerasenes, which is across the lake from Galilee. ²⁷ When Jesus stepped ashore, he was met by a demon-possessed man from the town. For a long time this man had not worn clothes or lived in a house, but had lived in the tombs. ²⁸ When he saw Jesus, he cried out and fell at his feet, shouting at the top of his voice, "What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, don't torture me!" ²⁹ For Jesus had commanded the evil spirit to come out of the man. Many times it had seized him, and though he was chained hand and foot and kept under guard, he had broken his chains and had been driven by the demon into solitary places. ³⁰ Jesus asked him, "What is your name?" "Legion," he replied, because many demons had gone into him. ³¹ And they begged him repeatedly not to order them to go into the Abyss. ³² A large herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside. The demons begged Jesus to let them go into them, and he gave them permission. ³³ When the demons came out of the man, they went into the pigs, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and was drowned. ³⁴ When those tending the pigs saw what had happened, they ran off and reported this in the town and countryside, ³⁵ and the people went out to see what had happened. When they came to Jesus, they found the man from whom the demons had gone out, sitting at Jesus' feet, dressed and in his right mind; and they were afraid. ³⁶ Those who had seen it told the people how the demon-possessed man had been cured. ³⁷ Then all the people of the region of the Gerasenes asked Jesus to leave them, because they were overcome with fear. So he got into the boat and left. ³⁸ The man from whom the demons had gone out begged to go with him, but Jesus sent him away, saying, ³⁹ "Return home and tell how much God has done for you." So the man went away and told all over town how much Jesus had done for him. [Luke 8:26–39](#)

Choose two or three questions to discuss from the question bank below.

- » How did the demons respond when they saw Jesus? What does that tell you about His authority?
- » What was the demon-possessed man like when Jesus first arrived? What was he like in the end? What changes happened?
- » When Jesus showed His authority, how did the people in the area respond? Why did they act that way?
- » Why did Jesus not allow the man to go with Him? What did the man do as soon as he left Jesus? What does that tell you about why Jesus used His authority over the demons?
- » You are given authority as a Christian. In what areas of your life do you need to act on that authority? What keeps you from doing so?
- » Where in your life are you feeling attacked right now?

APPLICATION

⁸ Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. ⁹ But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world. [1 Peter 5:8–9](#)

- » In what area of your life do you most need to do battle against the devil? Why is it critical that you look to the Lord's strength rather than your own as you do battle against Satan?

¹¹ Whenever the unclean spirits saw Him, they would fall down before Him and shout, "You are the Son of God!" [Mark 3:11](#)

- » How might considering Jesus' interactions with Satan and the demons give you confidence in your personal fight against them? What can you learn from Jesus in terms of how you combat temptation?

²⁸ Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth does not become weary or tired. His understanding is inscrutable. ²⁹ He gives strength to the weary, And to him who lacks might He increases power. ³⁰ Though youths grow weary and tired, and vigorous young men stumble badly, ³¹ Yet those who wait for the Lord will gain new strength; They will mount up with wings like eagles, they will run and not get tired, they will walk and not become weary. [Isaiah 40:28–31](#)

- » Why is it critical to remember God's character as you seek to stand firm in faith against Satan's attacks? How might you be more mindful of God's perfect character?



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