



WEEK 1: REVEAL

Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you
the thing or things in which you place
your hope other than God.

WEEK 1 INTRODUCTION

Without hope projects fail, battles are lost, people lose direction and purpose, and life seems meaningless. “Where there is no vision, the people perish,” (Prov. 29:18 KJV), and “hope deferred makes the heart sick” (Prov. 13:12 NIV). But even hope placed in the wrong things can bring disappointment, exhaustion, and failure in our lives. Hope placed anywhere else except in the person of Christ will, at some point, let you down. It’s also a sin. It’s idolatry and will not ultimately bring us joy, satisfaction or peace, but rather, emptiness, disappointment, and pain. Christ offers us life, freedom from the cares of the world, and satisfaction beyond our imaginations if we would put our hope in Him, making His desires our desires. Unfortunately, we, as frail human beings, fall into the trap of thinking that other things can satisfy or complete us. We chase after worldly success, status, financial security, the “perfect family” ideal, or pious religiosity. Many of these things may not be inherently wrong, but when placed before Christ in our lives, they can steer us off course and cause us pain and hopelessness.

We all understand the word “worship” in the context of a church service, but the meaning of the word worship is “to ascribe worth to” something. When we give more weight or more worth to other things than we give to God and when we seek things of earth for satisfaction over Him, we are worshipping that thing. Placing our hope in something above God, means that we are “worshipping” that thing as a “false idol” hoping that it will bring us satisfaction. It may please us for a time, but it will ultimately leave us feeling empty. Placing our affections in anything other than God is disobedience.

WEEK 1 CHALLENGE REVEAL

Ask the Holy Spirit to REVEAL to you the thing or things in which you place your hope other than God.

This week will revolve around placing ourselves in a posture of waiting on God and listening to Him, so that we can see more clearly what it is that might be standing in the way of a closer relationship with Him.

Ask God to help you identify something that you are placing before Him for your hope for the future, for stability, or for a sense that “every-

thing will be okay.”

We will call these things the “lesser things,” because they are all less-than our great God. Perhaps this “lesser thing,” “god,” or “idol” is very clear to you or perhaps you aren’t really sure and need to do a bit of soul-searching. We all have areas of sin in our lives called “iniquities” — sins that we aren’t even aware we are committing. These are not open acts of disobedience, but rather, things we don’t yet notice or see. God reveals to us over time the things that need to be removed from our lives. It’s like pruning a plant or peeling back layers of an onion. If you aren’t quite sure what is captivating your heart’s devotion more than Christ, use this week to ask God to reveal it to you.

DAY 1: STILLNESS & WAITING

Today we are going to experience stillness and quiet in God’s presence. Embrace the possible discomfort, and find a quiet spot today to sit (even if just for 5-10 minutes) and enjoy total silence followed by a prayer to God asking that He would reveal to you an area that needs to come to the surface. Ask God to help you call it what it is — a sin — one which has already been forgiven if you are a follower of Christ. If your thoughts drift away in the silence and other thoughts or your daily to-do list continue to bombard your mind, acknowledge the thoughts without feeling guilty, but refocus on enjoying a quiet few moments with God. Simply bring your awareness back to your intention for the stillness, and ask God to help you to be open to His leading this week.

Are you ready for an awesome journey toward living even more in the hope of Christ? Enjoy your quiet time in God’s presence today.

DAY 2: WORDS OF TRUTH AND PRAYER

Psalm 135:5, 15-18 — “I know that the Lord is great, that our Lord is greater than all gods. . . . The idols of the nations are made of silver and gold, made by the hands of men. They have mouths, but cannot speak, eyes, but cannot see; they have ears, but cannot hear, nor is there breath in their mouths. Those who make them will be like them, and so will all who trust in them.”

Idols were worshipped in biblical times by many other nations. They were pieces of wood and stone that could not act, and yet people placed their hope for life and provision in them. That may seem silly to us now,

but we do the same thing with “things” either made of perishable materials or with results that are fleeting — possessions, physical beauty, money, praise from man, position, and the list goes on and on. The passage says that those who make the idols will be like them — empty, powerless, lifeless — but when we trust in God we are given fullness of life.

Prayer

“Lord, help me this week to be aware of the “lesser” things or “idols” in this life in which I am placing my hope for security, purpose, or validation, for the present and future. Open my eyes to see something that I can release and surrender to You, so that I can live more freely and full of hope. Amen.”

DAY 3: DIGGING DEEPER

Follow the prompts in the handbook below to help you identify an area or areas to which you might be gripping too tightly for your sense of hope, purpose, fulfillment, or peace.

1. Is there something in your life that might have too much power over your emotional state or sense of well-being?
2. When _____ doesn't go how I would like for it to go, I suddenly feel like my world is falling apart or lose my sense of stability, purpose or worth.
3. Is there something/someone you tend to run toward to feel better when life gets difficult (other than God)? Do you grasp for this thing or person for a “pick-me-up” or quick fix when things seem to be falling apart?
4. Read through this list, and ask God to show you if you are holding too tightly to any of the following for your hope, sense of self-worth, or validation.

Financial security

A job or career

A relationship

People you care about acting or living their lives
as you think they should act or live

A substance

An ideal of what you think your life should be like

The praise and adoration of others

Popularity on social media

A polished outward image or seeming to “have it all together”
Government or political decisions aligning with your beliefs
and convictions
Personal health & well-being
Productivity or accomplishments
Popularity
Entertainment/distraction from boredom
Peace in your community or family
A sense of being needed or wanted by others
Materialism/having the latest and greatest THING

DAY 4: MID-WEEK ACCOUNTABILITY

How are you doing this week in identifying the area, thing, or person in your life (besides Christ) in which you place too much value for your hope and security?

If you are still unsure or would like to have the perspective of a trusted friend, talk with someone else today who knows you well, and give them permission to speak into your life. Someone looking from “the outside” may have a unique perspective and can help you identify this area of your life that might not be surrendered fully to the Lordship of Christ.

If you have identified the “lesser thing” in which you are placing your hope, write it below:

Prayer — *“Dear God, please continue to reveal to me the “lesser thing(s)” that I am not seeing — the areas in my life that need to be surrendered to You, so that I can live more fully in the hope of Christ and His resurrection. Amen.”*

DAY 5: WRITTEN PRAYER

Write out your prayer below asking God to continue to search you, know you, and reveal to you how to seek Him and worship Him more with every area of your life. Particularly offer up to him the area that you think you have been clinging tightly to for your security. Ask Him to forgive you for grasping for this “lesser thing” when He offers you true hope and the riches of heaven. Thank Him for the forgiveness that is already granted to you and strength to continue on.

DAY 6: MEDITATION

Find a place with as few distractions as possible — somewhere that allows you to be still and quiet. If you enjoy being outside, find a nice place to sit outside for a few minutes to meditate on truth and sit in God’s presence.

Restate and meditate (say over and over) **Psalm 135:5** —“**I know that the Lord is great, that our Lord is greater than all gods.**” You will probably have the verse memorized once you’ve spent some time meditating on it.

You can also meditate on one or more of the truth statements below during this time to feed your mind thoughts that are true, excellent and praiseworthy (Phil. 4:8).

TRUTH STATEMENTS FOR MEDITATION

I am God’s workmanship. He will continue to do a work in me.

Discipleship is not easy, but it is worth it.

The Holy Spirit is my counselor.

God delights in me.

I choose to make time each day to enjoy God's presence.

“Worship is my response to what I value most.” — Ron Edmondson

“The sorrows of those will increase who run after other gods” (Ps. 16:4).

“I will praise the Lord who counsels me; even at night my heart instructs me” (Ps. 16:7).

DAY 7: REFLECTION & THANKSGIVING

Reflect on this past week and the work God is doing in your life. Offer up a prayer of thanksgiving for how He is molding and shaping you to become more like Himself (more “holy” or “set apart”).

Fill in the blank below with the thing(s) or idol(s) to which you have been clinging for hope.

Prayer:

“Lord, thank you for revealing to me an area in my life in which I am placing too much faith and trust. I know that _____ can never truly satisfy me or give me what I need. Only you can fulfill my desires and my needs. Give me the courage to take action this coming week to release this weight, this other god in my life. Show me how to release the “lesser things,” so I can be filled up with more of You. Amen.”