

Gospel

Focused Discipleship



Year 1

GOSPEL FOCUSED DISCIPLESHIP

YEAR 1

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PREFACE

When Jesus called his first disciples, he said, “Follow Me.” Before he ascended into heaven, he told these disciples to go and make disciples of other nations. In other words, he told them to go help others follow him. This is the life of discipleship - following Jesus and helping others do the same.

Of course, a curriculum cannot do this for you. But I do believe it can help. I hope this curriculum does exactly that, helps guide you and others on your journey of following Jesus.

There are so many people who were a part of this project that deserve special thanks. First is my wife, Hillary, who was a listening ear for years as I developed this. Thank you for always listening to me and supporting me. More importantly, thank you for being a daily example of a gospel focused life to me. Second is Daniel Chen. I sought his advice throughout the journey of writing this curriculum and his advice always helped make it better. His experience in discipleship and heart for discipleship has guided me throughout this project and inspired me to live a life better dedicated to evangelism and discipleship myself. Finally, I have to thank all the discipleship groups that served as test groups for this material until it reached the state it is in now. Thank you for your patience!

I pray this book guides you and others in a life of discipleship - a life that follows Jesus and helps others do the same!

Grace and Peace,

Justin Ely, 2020

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STARTER GUIDE

WEEK 1

GROUP BONDING

Discipleship is about more than going through a study together, it is about journeying through the Christian life with a band of brothers and sisters. Part of that journey is getting to know the people in your discipleship group and developing deep friendships. One of the ways we will do that in this *Starter Guide* is to ask a few questions each week to help you get to know the personalities in your group better.

Questions from groupleaders.org/icebreakers

1. What is your favorite movie and why?
2. My favorite way to spend time is _____.
3. One of my biggest pet peeves is _____.

BOOK DISCUSSION

Throughout our journey in discipleship, we will read a series of Christian books together that will help us dive deeper into the gospel, community and mission. The first book we will read is one of the best summaries of the gospel, *Prodigal God* by Timothy Keller. Please read the Introduction, Chapter 1 and 2 this week. Come prepared to discuss what you learned and how it impacted you. Feel free to jot down some notes below.

BIBLE STUDY

An important part of discipleship is Bible study. Each week, your group will pick a passage to study together using the R.E.A.P. Inductive Bible study method. But before we begin to study the Bible, we need to spend a little time understanding the Bible. This week, we will look at whether or not the Bible can be trusted. Next week, we will look at an overview of the Bible and how the books were chosen. In weeks 2-6 of the Starter Guide, we will practice R.E.A.P. together.

Can We Trust The Bible?

Many people approach the Bible with a lot of skepticism. “Wasn’t all that stuff just made up hundreds of years later, kind of like legends?” they ask. But as we will see, that is far from the truth. There are many rational reasons to trust the Bible. This lesson will give three of them – the authenticity of the gospels, the unity of the Scriptures and the reliability of the translation of the Scriptures. Ultimately, however, we need God’s supernatural help to trust the Scriptures and see God’s glory in them.

The Authenticity of the Gospels

The Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) are the accounts of Jesus’ life, death and resurrection. There are three main reasons why someone should believe that the gospels are authentic accounts of Jesus’ life rather than legends that changed over time. First, as the chart below shows, the gospels were written too early to be fabricated.¹

Book	Date Likely Written
Matthew	Late 50s or early 60s
Mark	50s or 60s
Luke	62
John	Between 70 and 100

Most scholars believe Jesus died between 30-33 A.D. That means that the first accounts of his life were coming out less than twenty years later. And that’s not taking into account that some of the other books of the New Testament were written even earlier. 1 Corinthians 15:1-6 says that Jesus appeared to over 500 people after his resurrection. They would have been alive and ready to contradict the gospel accounts when they were written if they had been false. Furthermore, the gospel writers include many specific names of very minor characters. It’s as if the gospel writers are saying, “Go and ask them. They’ll confirm what I’ve said.” This leads Tim Keller to conclude:

For a highly altered, fictionalized account of an event to take hold in the public imagination it is necessary that the eyewitnesses (and their children and grand-

1 Dates taken from the introductions to each book in *The ESV Gospel Transformation Bible*.

children) all be long dead. They must be off the scene so they cannot contradict or debunk the embellishments and falsehoods of the story. The gospels were written far too soon for this to occur.²

Second, the gospels are too counterproductive to be fabricated. Some may try to claim that the disciples just made up the story to gain power. But if that were true, why did they make themselves look so foolish in the gospel accounts? The disciples are constantly misunderstanding Jesus. Peter, the leader of the disciples, denies Jesus three times in his most desperate hour. Furthermore, in all the gospel accounts, women were the first to see the risen Jesus. If a first century myth was being made up about the Messiah, they would not have allowed women to be the ones that discovered the risen Jesus first. That wouldn't have helped their case. The only logical reason that the gospels would have been written in this way is that these events actually happened. The gospels weren't just made up stories; they are true accounts of what really happened.

Third, the gospels are too detailed to fit the genre of ancient legend. It is important to know that the kind of fiction novels we enjoy did not exist in the first century. Tim Keller points out:

That is why if you are reading *Beowulf* or *The Iliad* you don't see characters noticing the rain or falling asleep with a sigh. In modern novels, details are added to create the aura of realism, but that was never the case in ancient fiction. The gospel accounts are not fiction. In Mark 4, we are told that Jesus was asleep on a cushion in the stern of a boat. In John 21 we are told that Peter was a hundred yards out in the water when he saw Jesus on the beach. He then jumped out of the boat and together they caught 153 fish. In John 8, as Jesus listened to the men who caught a woman in adultery, we are told he doodled with his finger in the dust. We are never told what he was writing or why he did it. None of these details are relevant to the plot or character development at all. If you or I were making up an exciting story about Jesus, we would include such remarks just to fill out the story's air of realism. But that kind of fictional writing was unknown in the first century. The only explanation for why an ancient writer would mention the cushion, the 153 fish, and the doodling in the dust is because the details had been retained in the eyewitnesses' memory.³

The Gospels Lead Us to the Rest

Once we come to grips with the authenticity of the gospels, we must take to heart the seriousness with which Jesus takes the Old Testament. Jesus had the same "Old Testament" in his time that we have today. Those were Jesus' Scriptures. He said that he wasn't coming to remove anything from them but to fulfill them (Matthew 5:17-18). Jesus also stated that all of the Scriptures pointed to him (Luke 24:27). If you believe the gospels are authentic, you believe they testify that Jesus Christ is the risen Son of God. And in the gospels, the risen Son of God takes the Old Testament as the authoritative Word of God. Furthermore, the New Testament was written by those apostles (or their associates) that Jesus personally

2 Tim Keller, *The Reason for God*, 105.

3 *Ibid.*, 110-111.

chose. So, if you believe in the authenticity of the gospels, you have to believe the Jesus of the gospels. Jesus affirms the Old Testament and picks the leaders who help write the New Testament.

This is a glorious reality. It is rational, but belief in it takes more than rational thinking. It takes God's intervention in our hearts. Paul makes this point in 2 Corinthians 4:4-6, "In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." Before God changed our hearts, we were blinded to God's glory. This includes how we viewed the Bible. But when God shone in our hearts, we saw the glory of Jesus. This includes how we see the Scriptures. Trusting in the Scriptures is rational, but it is ultimately a supernatural act.

Next week, we will take a look at the Bible's Storyline and how the books of the Bible were chosen.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS FOR GROUP:

1. How have you struggled with trusting the Bible?
2. Do you feel the Bible is more trustworthy after reading this lesson? If so, what helped you believe that? If not, what are you struggling with?
3. Do you think it matters if someone believes that the Bible is the inspired Word of God without error? Do you believe that it is?

“ABOUT ME” STORIES

Before we can grow together, we need to know each other. “About Me” Stories will help us do that. Your group leader will share today. Your “About Me” Story should be 7-10 minutes and is not meant to share everything about your life. Consider the following outline when sharing*:

1. Where you are from?
2. What is something few people know about you?
3. Describe your family.
4. Describe your faith background.
5. Describe a person or event that influenced who you are today.

While your leader is sharing, have one person set a timer for 7 minutes. After your leader is done, spend some time encouraging them with how you saw God at work in their story. Have one person pray and thank God for the person who shared. Then, have someone volunteer to share next week.

* Gratefully used from *Circle Up* by Andy Stanley

WEEK 2

GROUP BONDING

As we continue to get to know one another better, ask the following questions:

Questions from groupleaders.org/icebreakers

1. What day of your life would you most like to relive? Why?
2. Describe a teacher growing up that made a big impression on you (for good or ill).
3. I am most like my mom/dad in that I _____.

BOOK DISCUSSION

Read *Prodigal God* chapter 3. Come prepared to discuss what you learned and how it impacted you. Feel free to jot down some notes below.

BIBLE STUDY

Last week, we examined whether or not we can trust the Bible. This week, we will look at a broad overview of the Bible. The Bible was written over a span of over 1500 years. It contains 66 books written by over 40 authors in three different languages (Aramaic, Hebrew and Greek) on three continents (Asia, Europe and Africa), all with one theme – God’s restoration of all things through Jesus Christ. There are 39 books in the Old Testament and 27 in the New Testament. Here is an easy way to remember that. Old has 3 letters. Testament has 9 letters. 3 and 9 is 39. New has 3 letters. Testament has 9 letters. $3 \times 9 = 27$.

The Bible can broadly be broken into four “chapters” – creation, fall, redemption, and restoration. It may be more accurate to say that history itself is broken into these four chapters, and the Bible speaks to each. We see the chapters of creation and fall in the Old Testament with redemption and restoration being foreshadowed in the Old Testament but accomplished in the New Testament.

God created the world and all that is in it and it was very good. He created the universe to radiate His glory and mankind in his image both to rule creation and to have perfect relationship with Him, ourselves, others and creation. You can find the story of creation in Genesis 1 and 2. But God asked Adam and Eve not to eat out of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil in the center of the Garden. When they did, sin entered the world, and along with it, a curse from God for our disobedience. You can learn more about this in Genesis 3. Theologians call the moment Adam and Eve sinned “The Fall” because in that moment, mankind fell from the state of life and relationship we were in with God and fell into death itself. The Fall has impacted every part of our lives. But in the moment of The Fall, God also promised a deliverer (Genesis 3:15). The entire Old Testament foreshadows and anticipates this deliverer. God continues to forgive and extend grace, but the question of “how” constantly lingers throughout the Old Testament. How does this holy God extend grace and mercy to sinners? This redemption and restoration is foreshadowed all over the Old Testament. But it isn’t until we get to the New Testament that we see it clearly.

You could say that the New Testament contains the chapters of redemption and restoration. It centers on the New Testament (or covenant) that God inaugurates through the life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ. Jesus came and lived the life we couldn’t live, a life perfectly pleasing to God, and died the death we deserved to die, taking our place in judgment, and rose again to prove that the powers of sin, death and Satan had been defeated. The promise of the gospel is that anyone who repents of their sin and confesses Christ as Lord has their debt of sin paid at the cross and receives the perfect life of Christ as their own. This is how redemption was brought to the world.

So, we live in a world that is being redeemed. In other words, redemption has been taking place as people move from spiritual death to life through the power of the cross of Christ, but they are not fully redeemed. We still struggle with sin and disease and physical death. We live in the time of already but not yet. Those who have confessed Christ are already

saved, but not yet in the sense that they're not fully saved as they will be. We await the restoration of God's Kingdom, where Christ will return and destroy death, sin and Satan forever and inaugurate the New Heavens and the New Earth, with no pain, suffering, sadness or death.

THE OLD TESTAMENT

The Old Testament can be broken into 5 main divisions: Law, History, Poetry, Major Prophets and Minor Prophets.

Genesis – Deuteronomy	Law
Joshua – Esther	History
Job – Song of Songs	Poetry
Isaiah – Daniel	Major Prophets
Hosea – Malachi	Minor Prophets

The Law

The first five books of the Bible (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy) carry a few different names: The Law, The Books of Moses, The Torah and the Pentateuch. It is believed that Moses wrote these books. Genesis begins with the creation of the world. Out of the world, God chooses one family that He will bring a redeemer through. He chooses Abraham. Abraham's son is Isaac; Isaac's son is Jacob; Jacob is renamed Israel. From his sons come the 12 tribes of Israel.

This nation is the major focus of the Old Testament, not because they were special or obedient, but because God chose to show favor on them and bring a redeemer of all mankind through them. Genesis ends with the Israelites happily in Egypt. Exodus picks up a few hundred years later with the Israelites as slaves in Egypt. Exodus is about God's miraculous rescue of the Israelites out of bondage and into freedom. Leviticus details much of the new sacrificial system that takes place in the Old Testament. Numbers talks about a census of all Israel and how God provided for the people in the desert, while at the same time punishing them for their disobedience by making them wander in the desert for 40 years. Deuteronomy is an exposition and repeat of much of the Law found in the back part of Exodus. It is also Moses' farewell address to the people of Israel. They are going to enter the promise land, but he will not journey with them.⁴

The Law really shows us Christ. We see that Jesus is the fulfillment of the Abrahamic promise – through Christ all the nations are blessed. We see that Jesus provided an exodus for all believers by freeing them from the bondage of sin on the cross. We see that we need a spotless sacrifice to substitute himself for us, which is exactly what Christ did on the cross. And we see our inability to keep the Law on our own, but see that Christ is able. He is our perfect example of what it means to keep God's Law.

History

The 12 history books begin with Israel conquering the Promised Land in Joshua, Judges and Ruth. It then transitions into Israel ruling the land in Samuel, Kings and Chronicles. Israel is united under the rulership of Saul and then David and reaches its peak at the end of David's reign and the beginning of Solomon's reign. However, the Kingdom divides into north (Israel) and south (Judah) in 1 Kings 12 and 2 Chronicles 10. From then on, the nation is in decline.

Esther talks about the people in exile, while Ezra and Nehemiah talk about the restoration of the people of Israel to the land. Here the people return to the land to reside in it, but not to possess it.⁵

The books of history beg for a greater king. Even the great kings of Israel and Judah fall far short of our hopes. While reading, one cannot help but wonder how God is going to fulfill His promise to King David in 2 Samuel 7 – that David will have a descendant who sits on the throne forever. We find the King we long for in Jesus Christ, a descendant of David who is the One who sits on the throne not only of Judah but of heaven itself forever. The exile reminds us of the terrible consequences of disobedience, while the return to the land reminds us of God's glorious grace of restoring us when we fall.

Poetry

The books of Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and The Song of Solomon form the books of Poetry, which are sometimes called the Wisdom books. Much of these books fit the style of ancient Hebrew poetry. Job helps us understand how to view suffering. The Psalms help us understand how to view the realities of life. Proverbs helps us understand how to view wisdom and foolishness in life. Ecclesiastes helps us understand how to view God's purpose in life and the Song of Solomon helps us understand how to view God's desire in marriage.⁶

In each of these books, Christ is indirectly pointed to. He is true Wisdom, Purpose and Meaning and in Him we find the intimacy that marriage only points to.

Prophets

Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel and Daniel form the Major Prophets. Much of these books are spent explaining to the people of Israel why their history turned out the way it did. The main cause was their disobedience to God's Law. They also predict the future Messiah that is to come and reign as King but also suffer for their sins.

Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zech-

5 Ibid., 246.

6 Ibid., 562.

ariah and Malachi form the Minor Prophets. They are not called minor because they are less important than the majors, but because they are shorter in length. The Minor Prophets, like the Major Prophets explain to the people of Israel why their history turned out the way it did, predict the judgment of God and call for repentance. A noticeable condemnation in the Minor Prophets is Israel's lack of social justice, or care for the poor, oppressed and vulnerable of society.⁷

The Prophets remind us that we too have broken God's Law and must repent. We too are worthy of judgment. The difference is, we don't have to wonder when God will save us from our sins and make all things new. We can look back at the Messiah that the prophets pointed to, Jesus Christ, and rejoice in our King who reigns and our King who suffered in our place.

How Were the Books of the Old Testament Chosen?

Many historians are amazed by how detailed the Israelites kept their history. Many feel that the reason for this was that they believed God had divinely intervened in their history and was using them to accomplish His purposes throughout the earth. Because of this, the Jews carefully recorded their history in writing. In this time many prophets arose and wrote books, but there never seems to have been an argument as to which ones should be in the canon ("official" and inspired books of the Scriptures) and which ones should not. Books continued to be added until around a century after being led off into captivity and then they stopped.

By the time Jesus was born, everyone knew they had gone hundreds of years without a prophet. So, writing Scripture was clearly not a way that the Jewish people made themselves feel important. In fact, there were many books written in that time that no one counted as Scripture. In other words, there was no debate on what should and should not be included in the Old Testament Canon. Everyone agreed as they witnessed God speak through the prophets.⁸ Sometime before the destruction of the temple in AD 70, a group of Jewish Rabbis got together in the Council of Jamnia and simply reaffirmed the Jewish Scriptures that were already considered inspired by the Jewish People. This is what we call the Old Testament today.⁹

THE NEW TESTAMENT

The New Testament can be broken down as follows:

Gospels	4
History	1
Pauline Epistles	13
<u>General Epistles</u>	8

7 Ibid., 753-754.

8 Fuller, Daniel. *Unity of the Bible*, 31-38

9 McDowell, Joshua. *A Ready Defense*, 37

The Gospels

The Gospels are considered ancient biographies. Gospel means good news. The Gospels tell the good news of what Jesus has accomplished for us by telling us about his life, death and resurrection. Matthew, Mark and Luke are often called the Synoptic Gospels because of how similar they are in content and style. John was written later and is stylistically very different than the first three. Matthew portrays Jesus as the Jewish Messiah, and the physical embodiment of what the true Israel was always meant to be. Mark portrays Jesus as a suffering servant and Luke shows Jesus as the judging Son of Man. John highlights the deity of Jesus. He does this by highlighting many of Jesus' "I AM" statements, which was God's name for Himself in the Old Testament.¹⁰

History

The Acts of the Apostles is a book of history. It tells the story of the spread early church from Jerusalem (when Jesus ascended to heaven) to Rome (when Paul goes to trial). It is really part 2 of Luke. Luke was a physician and writes as a historian and scholar.¹¹

Pauline Epistles

Epistles are letters. The Pauline Epistles are letters from the Apostle Paul to various churches that he planted or was connected to. There are 13 of these in the New Testament. They offer instruction in Christian doctrine and Christian living and often address practical concerns that the church was facing. They are arranged from longest to shortest, starting with Romans and ending with Philemon.¹²

General Epistles

These were letters written by apostles, or those associated with the apostles, other than Paul. They include 2 letters from Peter, 3 letters from John, one letter from James, one letter from Jude and one from the unknown author of Hebrews.¹³

Apocalypse

The last book of the New Testament is the book of Revelation. It is considered apocalyptic literature. Apocalypse means "revelation, disclosure, unveiling." Revelation is an apocalypse in that it unveils God's plan for the End Times.¹⁴

10 John MacArthur. *The MacArthur Bible Commentary*, 1095-1096.

11 Ibid., 1429-1430.

12 Ibid., 1497

13 Ibid., 1497.

14 Ibid., 1989-1990.

How Were the Books of the New Testament Chosen?

Ever since the time of Jesus' apostles (those who had been called by Jesus and been with Jesus), local church elders were collecting, evaluating and deciding which of the many writings that were being published reflected an authentic representation of the life of Jesus and the teaching of his apostles. Geisler and Nix point out, "Canonicity is determined or fixed authoritatively by God; it is merely discovered by man."

First century Christians saw the words of Jesus and the writings of his apostles on par with Jewish Scripture. After the apostles died, they saw an even greater need to preserve what the apostles taught. After their death, many heretical writings began to come into circulation, which made believers more cautious of which books to consider inspired. They had to be written by an apostle or under the authority of one (i.e. Mark was written from the direct account of Peter and Luke worked with Paul on his gospel). Geisler and Nix record five principles that were used when evaluating the inspiration of books [quoted below]¹⁵ :

1. *Is it authoritative* – did it come from the hand of God? (Does this book come with a divine "thus saith the Lord"?)
2. *Is it prophetic* – what it written by a man of God?
3. *Is it authentic?* [The fathers had the policy, "If in doubt, throw it out." This enhanced the "validity of their discernment of canonical books."]
4. *Is it dynamic* - did it come with the life transforming power of God?
5. *Was it received, collected, read and used* - was it accepted by the people of God?

The chart on the next page lists the books of the New Testament as well as the date they were most likely written. We know Jesus was crucified between A.D. 30 and 33, which means eyewitnesses to the life of Jesus were still alive when all of the New Testament books were written.¹⁶

Book	Date Likely Written
Matthew	Late 50s or early 60s
Mark	50s or 60s
Luke	62
John	Between 70 and 100
Acts	62
Romans	57
1 Corinthians	53-55

15 Cited in McDowell, Joshua. *A Ready Defense*, 38.

16 Dates taken from the introductions to each book in *The ESV Gospel Transformation Bible*.

2 Corinthians	55-56
Galatians	Late 40s
Ephesians	62
Philippians	62
Colossians	62
1 Thessalonians	49-51
2 Thessalonians	49-51
1 Timothy	Mid-60s
2 Timothy	64-65
Titus	Mid-60s
Philemon	62
Hebrews	Before 70
James	40-45
1 Peter	62-63
2 Peter	64-67
1 John	Before 90
2 John	Before 90
3 John	Before 90
Jude	Mid-60s
Revelation	Mid-90s

So, the books of the New Testament were already widely used and accepted in the first and second centuries. The Muratorian Canon is a list of what the early church considered to be Scripture. It was written in A.D. 170 and lists of almost all of what we call today New Testament books today. This shows that the early church had virtually the same “New Testament” as we do today and considered these writings to be Scripture. Then, the church came together in A.D. 393 at the Synod of Hippo and simply formalized the 27 books of the New Testament as the official canon.¹⁷

REFLECTION QUESTIONS FOR GROUP:

1. What is something you learned about the Bible that surprised you?

17 McDowell, Joshua. *A Ready Defense*, 37- 39.

2. What is something you learned about the Bible that gives you greater confidence in it?
3. What is something you learned about the Bible that bothered you?

“ABOUT ME” STORIES

Have another person in the group share their ‘About Me’ Story. Consider the following outline when sharing:

1. Where you are from?
2. What is something few people know about you?
3. Describe your family.
4. Describe your faith background.
5. Describe a person or event that influenced who you are today.

While the person is sharing, have one person set a timer for 7 minutes. After they are done, spend some time encouraging them with how you saw God at work in their story. Have one person pray and thank God for the person who shared. Then, have someone volunteer to share next week.

WEEK 3

GROUP BONDING

As we continue to get to know one another better, ask the following questions:

Questions from groupleaders.org/icebreakers

1. What was the best gift you ever received as a child?
2. Who was one of the most interesting persons you or your family ever entertained?
3. What do you miss most about childhood?

BOOK DISCUSSION

Read *Prodigal God* chapter 4. Come prepared to discuss what you learned and how it impacted you. Feel free to jot down some notes below.

BIBLE STUDY

The past two weeks, we have looked at why we can trust the Bible and a general overview of the Bible. Now, we will begin to learn how to study the Bible. Discipleship Groups use an Inductive Bible study method called R.E.A.P. REAP stands for: Read, Examine, Apply, Pray. This week, we will look at how to Read the Bible. Before we get to the how-tos on Bible reading, it is important to start with the posture of our heart. We should read the Word of God:

1. **Expectantly.** This is the Word of God! There are multitudes who have never had God's very word in their own language. Being able to read God's Word is a gift that we should not take lightly. This is not another novel; this is God's Word and it should be treated as such.
2. **Prayerfully.** Approach your time with the Bible in prayer. In the Bible, God speaks to us. Ask the Holy Spirit to give you illumination and understanding. Ask Him to show you Jesus. Ask Him to convict you of sin and to show you how to walk in His ways. John Piper encourages us to pray "IOUS": Incline my heart to you, not to prideful gain or any false motive. (Psalm 119:36), Open my eyes to behold wonderful things in your Word. (Psalm 119:18), Unite my heart to fear your name. (Psalm 86:11), Satisfy me with your steadfast love. (Psalm 90:14)
3. **Obediently.** Read the Word ready to respond to it. If you approach the Bible by thinking, "If I like what I hear today, I'll keep it, but if not, I'll just ignore it," you are approaching the Bible in the wrong manner. Approach the Bible ready to submit to its instructions.

A heart that is reading the Bible expectantly, prayerfully and obediently is ready to practically dig in. Once we do, we must learn to read the Bible contextually and to read the Bible carefully.

READ THE BIBLE CONTEXTUALLY

The Bible is not a book that was written in our culture, language or time. Therefore, before we can understand what it means for us today, we have to understand what it meant to its original audience in its original context. This is no easy job, since the Bible was written over a span of 1,500 years by over 40 authors, scattered over three continents, in three different languages! To understand what we are reading, we must understand at least three different kinds of context:

1. *Historical Context* answers questions like: who is the author? When was this book written? What was the culture of the audience to which it was written like? For example, the book of Genesis was written by Moses around 1500 BC to the people of Israel wandering through the desert after the Exodus as an introduction to their God. The letter to the Corinthians, by contrast was written by the Apostle Paul in the AD 50s to a church in the middle of the large Greek city of Corinth.

2. *Literary Context* answers questions like: (if Old Testament) is this book law, history, prophecy, or poetry? (if New Testament) is this book a gospel, history, epistle or apocalypse? For example, the book of Genesis fits under the category of Old Testament 'Law' but we read it similar to how we would read history or narrative. It was written in Hebrew. Corinthians, on the other hand is an epistle (a letter) written to a group of Christians specifically addressing some issues that have bubbled up in their community.
3. *Biblical Context* answers questions like: which covenant does this book fit in? The Bible presents God actively engaged with the world through a series of covenants. We have Adamic, Noahic, Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic and New. Each covenant had different stipulations, requirements and signs. For example, Genesis shows us the Adamic, Noahic and Abrahamic Covenants. Corinthians, however, was written under the New Covenant.

READ THE BIBLE CAREFULLY

Once you have established the historical, literary and biblical context of the book you are reading, you can begin to actually read the book. As you do, you should read it carefully. Some would even call this a fourth kind of context - grammatical. Here, we are looking at the actual words and how they relate to one another to form the author's main point and argument. In his excellent book on Hermeneutics, *Living By The Book*, Howard Hendricks points out that there are six things we should be looking for as we read:

1. *Things that are Emphasized.* This can be found by looking at the amount of space given to a particular topic or person in a passage or a book as a whole. For example, chapters 12-21 of John are about the last week of Jesus' life. John must be emphasizing the importance of that last week of his life because so much content to be devoted to it. Emphasis can also be found when an author gives a stated purpose. For example, in John 20:21, John tells us that he wrote these things so that we might believe. He tells the readers the reason he wrote his gospel, and therefore reveals his emphasis. Emphasis can also be found by order. For example, in 2 Timothy 1:8-9, the Apostle Paul points out that God saved us and called us to a holy life. The order matters. Saved first. Called to a holy life second. We aren't holy and then God chooses to save us. Paul is emphasizing how we are saved by grace.
2. *Things that are Repeated.* An author will often repeat a term or phrase to show you that it matters. For example, if you read Hebrews 11, you will see the word faith repeated again and again throughout the chapter because the author wants to teach you about faith!
3. *Things that are Related.* This is found by looking at connector words like: since, then, therefore. For example, in Romans 12:1, Paul says, "I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship." What's the therefore there for? He is pointing back at all of the mercies of God he highlighted in chapters 1-11. Only when you under-

stand that can you understand his command to present your bodies as a living sacrifice.

4. *Things that are Alike.* This is found by looking for comparison, including similes (like/as) and metaphors. For example, Jesus often uses this in his parables when he says, “The kingdom of heaven is like ...” and then gives a comparison.
5. *Things that are Unlike.* This is found by looking for contrast. It can often be found by looking for the word ‘but.’ For example, in Galatians 5, Paul lists the works of the flesh and then says BUT, the fruit of the Spirit is ... You can also find this by looking at irony. For example, in the book of Jonah, the pagans are always more God honoring than the Jewish prophet, Jonah. This irony provides a stark contrast for readers to look at.
6. *Things that are True to Life.* This is found by looking at the text through a human lens and saying, “I/We (humans) would do something like that.” For example, John makes special effort in his gospel to let you know that he beat Peter in a foot race to the empty tomb. Peter cuts a guy’s ear off when they are trying to arrest Jesus. Noah gets drunk right after he gets off the ark. King David has an affair in a moment of weakness. The Bible is a real book filled with real people. We must take time to notice this.

After we have read our passage contextually and carefully, we should take some time to consider the main idea of the passage we are studying and then outline its divisions. This will help us see how the passage fits together and what the author is trying to tell us. Let’s learn how to ‘Read’ by looking at Galatians 1:1-5:

¹ Paul, an apostle—not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead— ² and all the brothers who are with me, To the churches of Galatia: ³ Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, ⁴ who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, ⁵ to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Since these are the first few verses of the book, we need to ask context questions first. I will use the introduction to Galatians in the *ESV Study Bible* to aid with this.

1. What is the historical context of Galatians?

The Apostle Paul wrote Galatians around 48 A.D. He wrote it to churches in the Galatian region (current Turkey) that he planted around 47/48AD.

2. What is the literary context of Galatians?

Galatians is an epistle.

3. What is the biblical context of Galatians?

Galatians fall in the New Covenant.

After this, we must look at the six things to carefully look for from Galatians 1:1-5.

1. Things that are emphasized

The initiating work of God (v. 1, 3, 4)

2. Things that are repeated

God the Father (3 xs)

Jesus Christ (2 xs)

3. Things that are related

God the Father and Jesus Christ are connected by 'and' showing their close relationship.

4. Things that are alike

The Father and the Son in their partnership in redemption

5. Things that are unlike

Jesus' deliverance and the present evil age.

6. Things that are true to life

Jesus really does deliver us

Main Idea & Outline:

Paul introduces himself to the Galatians and shares how Jesus delivered us.

1. Paul introduces himself (vv. 1-2)
2. Paul shares the gospel (vv. 3-4)

REFLECTION QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION:

Take time to read Ephesians 1:1-14 contextually and carefully.

First, use a Study Bible to answer the following questions about the book of Ephesians:

What is the historical context of Ephesians?

What is the literary context of Ephesians?

What is the Biblical Context of Ephesians?

Then, answer the following for Ephesians 1:1-14. Do you notice:

Things that are Emphasized?

Things that are Repeated?

Things that are Related?

Things that are Alike and Unlike?

Things that are True to Life?

Main Idea & Outline:

“ABOUT ME” STORIES

Have another person in the group share their ‘About Me’ Story. Consider the following outline when sharing:

1. Where you are from?
2. What is something few people know about you?
3. Describe your family.
4. Describe your faith background.
5. Describe a person or event that influenced who you are today.

While the person is sharing, have one person set a timer for 7 minutes. After they are done, spend some time encouraging them with how you saw God at work in their story. Have one person pray and thank God for the person who shared. Then, have someone volunteer to share next week.

WEEK 4

GROUP BONDING

As we continue to get to know one another better, ask the following questions:

Questions from groupleaders.org/icebreakers

1. If you could go to college (again), what would you study?
2. Who is one of your heroes and why?
3. When you were a child, what did you want to be when you grew up?

BOOK DISCUSSION

Read *Prodigal God* chapter 5. Come prepared to discuss what you learned and how it impacted you. Feel free to jot down some notes below.

BIBLE STUDY

The past three weeks, we have looked at why we can trust the Bible, a general overview of the Bible and the first step in R.E.A.P. - 'Read.' This week, we will look at the next step, "Examine."

If we have done our reading correctly, we understand the context of the book and passage we are reading and have asked six important questions of the text to better understand it. As we examine the text, we begin to look at the text through the lens of the gospel. We ask four main questions:

1. What does this passage teach me about the character and nature of God?
2. What does this passage teach me about the character and nature of mankind?
3. What does this passage teach me about the person and work of Jesus?
4. What does this passage teach me about the identity and mission of God's people?

These questions help us keep God and his gospel at the center of our study rather than our need for some good practical tips in the moment. And although it may seem boring to ask the same questions each week, it is helpful for two reasons. First, it will show you that each text really does teach you something different about God, mankind, Jesus and God's people. Secondly, it shows you that no one has to be an expert to study the Bible or lead a Bible study. You can use these four questions with a non-believer, new believer, or mature believer and have a great Bible study. Let's learn by looking at Galatians 1:1-5 as an example:

¹ Paul, an apostle—not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead— ² and all the brothers who are with me, To the churches of Galatia: ³ Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, ⁴ who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, ⁵ to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

1. What does this passage teach me about the character and nature of God?
 - God is Father (v. 1)
 - God raised Jesus from the dead (v. 1)
 - We receive grace and peace from God (v. 2)
 - Jesus' sacrifice was according to God's will (v. 4)
 - God will have glory forever and ever (v. 5)
2. What does this passage teach me about the character and nature of mankind?
 - We need grace and peace from God. We don't have it in ourselves (v. 2)
 - We are sinful (v. 4)
 - We need to be delivered from this present evil age (v. 4)

3. What does this passage teach me about the person and work of Jesus?
 - He called Paul to be an apostle (v. 1)
 - He is Christ (v. 1)
 - We receive grace and peace from him, along with God the Father (v. 3)

4. What does this passage teach me about the identity and mission of God's people?
 - Believers are brothers and sisters with each other (v. 2)
 - Churches follow Jesus together (v. 2)
 - There is a corporate dimension to redemption. Jesus gave himself for "our" sins to deliver "us" from the present evil age (v. 4)

We have already learned a lot about just a few verses by asking four questions. But we don't have to stop there. We need to look at our answers and ask good questions to dig even deeper into what the answers mean. We should ask good who, what, when, where, why, and how questions. Think about all the questions that could be used to dig deeper into these five verses:

1. Who is God?
2. Who is Paul?
3. Who is Jesus?
4. What is an apostle?
5. When did Paul write this?
6. Where is Galatia?
7. Why do we need grace and peace from God?
8. How did Jesus deliver us from the present evil age?

We don't have to answer all of these questions, but you can take one or two that you think will help you better understand the passage. For example, let's take question #8: how did Jesus deliver us from the present evil age?

First, we want to examine the immediate context. We get a little clue in verse 1 - Jesus was raised from the dead by the Father. We know that Jesus "gave himself" to deliver us. Maybe that giving was his death.

Second, we want to examine cross references. The *ESV Study Bible* gives three cross references - Matthew 20:28, Romans 4:25, 1 Corinthians 15:3. Matthew 20:28 mentions Jesus giving his life as a ransom for many. Romans 4:25 talks about the death of Jesus, being delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification. 1 Corinthians 15:3 talks about Christ dying for our sins according to the Scriptures. It seems that the evidence supports our theory. Jesus delivered us from the present evil age by giving himself for our sins. This giving was Jesus dying on the cross for the penalty of our sins.

Third, we want to examine study notes. The ESV Study Bible gives this study note for Galatians 1:4:

[G]ave himself for our sins. The saving work of Christ on the cross is in the forefront of Paul's mind and therefore shows up here at the very beginning of the letter. Jesus not only saves Christians from their sins but also sets them free from being slaves of this world. Paul will later explain that in wanting to be under the law, the Galatians are effectively wanting to stay anchored in this present evil age (3:22–26; 4:1–11), which is the state of the world apart from Christ until his return.” This confirms it. How did Jesus deliver us? He gave himself for our sins? What was this giving? It was the laying down of his life on the cross to pay the penalty of our sins.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION:

Now it's time to apply what we've learned. Look at Ephesians 1:1-14 and answer the same four questions. Then, make a list of who, what, where, when, why and how questions based on your answers. Finally, choose two to answer.

Ephesians 1:1-14

What does this passage teach you about the character and nature of God?

What does this passage teach you about the character and nature of mankind?

What does this passage teach you about the person and work of Jesus?

What does this passage teach me about the identity and mission of God's people?

Who/What/Where/When/Why/How Questions:

Answers:

“ABOUT ME” STORIES

Have another person in the group share their ‘About Me’ Story. Consider the following outline when sharing:

1. Where you are from?
2. What is something few people know about you?
3. Describe your family.
4. Describe your faith background.
5. Describe a person or event that influenced who you are today.

While the person is sharing, have one person set a timer for 7 minutes. After they are done, spend some time encouraging them with how you saw God at work in their story. Have one person pray and thank God for the person who shared. Then, have someone volunteer to share next week.

WEEK 5

GROUP BONDING

As we continue to get to know one another better, ask the following questions:

Questions from groupleaders.org/icebreakers

1. You have been given a year sabbatical from work. What would you do?
2. Who was the best boss you ever had? What made him or her so good?
3. An emotion I often feel but don't usually express is _____.

BOOK DISCUSSION

Read *Prodigal God* chapter 6. Come prepared to discuss what you learned and how it impacted you. Feel free to jot down some notes below.

BIBLE STUDY

The past few weeks, we have been learning the R.E.A.P. Inductive Bible study method. We have already learned how to ‘read’ and ‘examine.’ This week, we will learn to ‘apply.’

James 1:22 tells us to be doers of the Word, and not just hearers. Application is the bridge that takes us from hearing the Word and understanding it and actually putting it into practice in our lives.

There are several questions we can ask to help us apply a passage. In this curriculum, we will regularly use four: are there sins to avoid? are there promises to claim? are there examples to follow? are there commands to keep? Let’s look at Galatians 1:1-5 again using each of these questions:

¹ Paul, an apostle—not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead—² and all the brothers who are with me, To the churches of Galatia: ³ Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, ⁴ who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, ⁵ to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

1. Are there sins to avoid?

Of course, we want to avoid all sins! This question is meant to look at specific sins listed or inferred in the passage you are studying. In this passage, there aren’t any specific sins listed. But there may be some inferred. Since Jesus gave himself to deliver us from the present evil age, continuing to live according to that present age would be sinful. What does that look like? Well, it’s not in this immediate passage, but we can find some clues later in Galatians. For example, look at 5:19-21, *“¹⁹ Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, ²¹ envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.”* So we could say that the sins to avoid in this passage is ‘living according to the present evil age’ which would include living according to the works of the flesh listed in Galatians 5:19-21.

2. Are there promises to claim?

Promises to claim are promises that God gives his people that we can claim for our own lives. An example would be Deuteronomy 31:6, *“Be strong and courageous. Do not fear or be in dread of them, for it is the Lord your God who goes with you. He will not leave you or forsake you.”* This was directed to God’s people in Deuteronomy. But if we have faith in Christ, we are a part of his people now. The promise to claim here is that God will never leave or forsake me.

In this passage in Galatians, what do we have? We have at least two. First, we have received

grace and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Second, Jesus has delivered us from the present evil age.

Promises to claim often don't feel like application. But we apply them to our heads and hearts as we go through life. Think about the power of mentally dwelling on the truth that Jesus has delivered us from the present evil age in the midst of suffering or in the midst of being tempted to sin? You apply this passage as you claim this promise that God has given you in the midst of daily life.

3. Are there examples to follow?

This is found by looking at the characters in the passage to see if they give an example worth following (or not following). It may not seem like there are characters in our short passage in Galatians, but we actually have 5: Paul, Jesus Christ, God the Father, the brothers with Paul and the churches in Galatia. Do we have any examples to follow from these characters? Yes!

From Paul, we see the example of someone who is submitted to God's calling (to be an apostle) on his life. From God, we see the example of someone who gives grace to people who don't deserve it. From Jesus Christ, we see someone who laid down his life for the sake of other.

4. Are there commands to keep?

Commands to keep are commands we get in the Scriptures to do or not do something. For example: don't lie, give generously, don't commit sexual immorality, pray continuously.

Our passage in Galatians does not have any commands in it. And this is a good example for us - you won't have an answer for every application question in every passage. It's ok to leave it blank when it isn't there!

After we have answered these four application questions, we aren't yet done with application. The problem we often have in application is not making it personal enough. Claiming the promise that Jesus has delivered us from the present evil age is application, but it will be more powerful when we make it more personal.

Look through your answers to the application questions and then think about how you can personalize one or two of them into your life. For example

- Fight the temptation to lust by reminding myself that Jesus has delivered me from the present evil age.
- When I fight with my spouse and don't want to forgive her, think on Jesus' costly love for me and follow his example of forgiveness.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION:

Answer the following question based on your study from Ephesians 1:1-14:

Are there sins to avoid?

Are there promises to claim?

Are there examples to follow?

Are there commands to keep?

Personalize your applications by picking one or two and relating them directly to your life.

“ABOUT ME” STORIES

Have another person in the group share their ‘About Me’ Story. Consider the following outline when sharing*:

1. Where you are from?
2. What is something few people know about you?
3. Describe your family.
4. Describe your faith background.
5. Describe a person or event that influenced who you are today.

While the person is sharing, have one person set a timer for 7 minutes. After they are done,

spend some time encouraging them with how you saw God at work in their story. Have one person pray and thank God for the person who shared. Then, have someone volunteer to share next week.

WEEK 6

GROUP BONDING

As we continue to get to know one another better, ask the following questions:

Questions from groupleaders.org/icebreakers

1. If your house were on fire, what three items (not people) would you try to save?
2. People might be surprised to find out that I _____.
3. In general, I worry too much about _____.

BOOK DISCUSSION

Read *Prodigal God* chapter 7. Come prepared to discuss what you learned and how it impacted you. Feel free to jot down some notes below.

BIBLE STUDY

The past three weeks, we have looked at how to study the Bible using the R.E.A.P. inductive Bible study method. We have explored how to 'read' the Bible, how to 'examine' the Bible and how to 'apply' the Bible. This week, we will briefly look at how to 'pray' the Bible.

Learning to pray the Scriptures can be one of the most beneficial and encouraging spiritual practices a Christian can learn. Praying Scripture essentially requires us to meditate on it, allowing it to seep deeper into our hearts. It also informs our prayers. When we pray Scripture, we often pray things we wouldn't otherwise pray on our own. After you have prayerfully read, examined and applied a text, you should end your study with a time of prayer. As you pray, you will want to search the text for three categories:

1. Things to praise and thank God for
2. Things to confess to God
3. Things to ask God for

The things you praise and thank God for are often found under the 'Examine' questions: what does this text teach you about the character and nature of God? and what does this text teach you about the person and work of Jesus? The things we confess to God are often found under the 'Examine' question: what does this text teach you about the character and nature of mankind? Or the 'Apply' section: Are there any sins to avoid? Finally, all the questions in the 'Apply' section (are there sins to avoid? promises to claim? examples to follow? commands to keep?) can be used under things to ask God for.

Let's take the text we have been studying together from Galatians 1:1-5:

¹ Paul, an apostle—not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead— ² and all the brothers who are with me, To the churches of Galatia: ³ Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, ⁴ who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, ⁵ to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Things to praise and thank God for:

- He raised Jesus from the dead
- We receive grace and peace from him
- He is our Father
- Jesus died to deliver us from this present evil age
- It was God's will that we be delivered from this present evil age

Things to confess to God:

- A specific sin in this present evil age you continue to struggle with
- Your sin the necessitated Jesus' death

Things to ask God for:

- Help from God to be like Paul and submit to God's call on your life
- Deliverance from some particular sin

You can pray each section silently or out loud. Mixing Bible study like this is a great way to keep your prayer biblical and unique each day.

REFLECTION ACTIVITY FOR GROUP:

Use the method you learned above to pray through Ephesians 1:1-14 as a group.

“ABOUT ME” STORIES

Have another person in the group share their 'About Me' Story. Consider the following outline when sharing*:

1. Where you are from?
2. What is something few people know about you?
3. Describe your family.
4. Describe your faith background.
5. Describe a person or event that influenced who you are today.

While the person is sharing, have one person set a timer for 7 minutes. After they are done, spend some time encouraging them with how you saw God at work in their story. Have one person pray and thank God for the person who shared.

THE NEXT STEP

Over the past 6 weeks, you have grown together as a group. You've looked at the basics of the gospel through the book *The Prodigal God*. You've learned how to do an inductive Bible study through the R.E.A.P. method. And you've learned a little more about one another by sharing "About Me" stories. After all this, you may be wondering: what's next?

We're glad you asked.

The next step is to become a Discipleship Group. A Discipleship Group is a committed group of 3-6 people of the same gender that covenants together to meet regularly to study the Bible, hold one another accountable and apply the gospel to all of life. Groups meet for a total of 3 years with the hopes that they multiply at the end.

You will find the basic commitment to your group outlined on the following pages. You should not commit to your group if you are not able to commit to the expectations of the group. You will also find a fill in the blank page following that to plan out the remainder of your semester.

As you close your six-week Starter Group, talk about whether or not you want to become a Discipleship Group. If so, fill out the covenant on the next page and the Scripture and Reading Plan on the next and get started with 'Week 7' next week!

UNIT 1

DISCIPLESHIP GROUP COVENANT

I am joining a Discipleship Group with (list the names of those in your group):

We will go through *Gospel Focused Discipleship*. We will meet from _____ to _____ (time) on _____ (day of the week) starting on _____ (date).

I will attend at least ___ of the ___ meetings.

I will strive to have daily personal worship (Bible reading and prayer)

I will read assigned readings.

I will protect the transparency and confidentiality of my group.

I hope to multiply my life into the lives of others during and after this group.

Signature

SCRIPTURE AND READING PLAN

Week 1-6 Starter Group Guide

Week 7 Memory Verse: _____

Study Passage: _____

Assigned Reading: *Spiritual Assessment*

Week 8 Memory Verse: _____

Study Passage: _____

Assigned Reading: _____

Week 9 Memory Verse: _____

Study Passage: _____

Assigned Reading: _____

Week 10 Memory Verse: _____

Study Passage: _____

Assigned Reading: _____

Week 11 Memory Verse: _____

Study Passage: _____

Assigned Reading: _____

Week 12 Memory Verse: _____

Study Passage: _____

Assigned Reading: _____

Week 13 Memory Verse: _____

Study Passage: _____

Assigned Reading: _____

Week 14 Memory Verse: _____

Study Passage: _____

Assigned Reading: _____

Week 15 End of Unit Celebration

WEEK 7

Memory Verse: _____ **Study Passage:** _____

Assigned Reading: Spiritual Assessment

SCRIPTURE

Read the passage. Pray and ask the Holy Spirit to prepare your heart to receive and obey God's Word.

Write down your observations of the passage. (*Look for things that are emphasized, repeated, related, compared, contrasted, and/or true to life.*)

Main Idea & Outline:

Examine the passage. What does this passage teach you about...

Dig deeper with your answers by asking who, what, where, when, why and how questions and looking at context, cross references and study notes to help you answer those questions.

The character and nature of God?

The character and nature of mankind?

The person and work of Jesus?

The identity and mission of God's people?

Apply the passage. Consider how you should apply this passage through the power of the Holy Spirit. Ask the following questions:

Are there sins to avoid?

Are there promises to claim?

Are there examples to follow?

Are there commands to keep?

Personalize your applications by picking one or two and relating them directly to your life.

Pray through the passage with the following format:

Find something in the passage to *praise* and *thank* God for.

Find something in the passage to *confess* to God.

Find something in the passage to *ask* God for.

EQUIPPING

Fill out the Spiritual Assessment on page XX of the appendix. Come to group prepared to share how you hope to grow in the gospel, community and mission as a result of this discipleship group.

ACCOUNTABILITY

UPWARD

Fill out your [Personal Worship Plan](#) in the Appendix. Come prepared to share your plan with the group.

INWARD

1. What is a struggle you have experienced recently?
2. How might this struggle reveal a lie you are believing about God or about yourself?
3. What is the gospel? How does the truth of the gospel replace the lie you are believing?
4. How can you apply the truth of the gospel when you believe that lie this week?

OUTWARD

Have one person practice sharing the gospel with your group.

PRAYER

Pray for one another.

WEEK 8

Memory Verse: _____ Study Passage: _____

Assigned Reading: _____

SCRIPTURE

Read the passage. Pray and ask the Holy Spirit to prepare your heart to receive and obey God's Word.

Write down your observations of the passage. (*Look for things that are emphasized, repeated, related, compared, contrasted, and/or true to life.*)

Main Idea & Outline:

Examine the passage. What does this passage teach you about...

Dig deeper with your answers by asking who, what, where, when, why and how questions and looking at context, cross references and study notes to help you answer those questions.

The character and nature of God?

The character and nature of mankind?

The person and work of Jesus?

The identity and mission of God's people?

Apply the passage. Consider how you should apply this passage through the power of the Holy Spirit. Ask the following questions:

Are there sins to avoid?

Are there promises to claim?

Are there examples to follow?

Are there commands to keep?

Personalize your applications by picking one or two and relating them directly to your life.

Pray through the passage with the following format:

- Find something in the passage to praise and thank God for.
- Find something in the passage to *confess* to God.
- Find something in the passage to *ask* God for.

EQUIPPING

Read the assigned chapter from the book you are reading as a group. Discuss what most impacted you from this reading. Feel free to jot down some notes here.

ACCOUNTABILITY

UPWARD

How regular have you been in your daily time of personal worship this week? How has God comforted or challenged you through His Word?

INWARD

1. What have you worried about recently?
2. How might this reveal a root idol (power, approval, comfort, control)?
3. What is the gospel? How is the beauty of Christ displayed in the gospel better than the beauty you are looking for in your idol?
4. What is the next step you can take this week to fight that idol?

OUTWARD

Have one person practice sharing the gospel with your group.

PRAYER

Pray for one another.

WEEK 9

Memory Verse: _____ Study Passage: _____

Assigned Reading: _____

SCRIPTURE

Read the passage. Pray and ask the Holy Spirit to prepare your heart to receive and obey God's Word.

Write down your observations of the passage. (*Look for things that are emphasized, repeated, related, compared, contrasted, and/or true to life.*)

Main Idea & Outline:

Examine the passage. What does this passage teach you about...

Dig deeper with your answers by asking who, what, where, when, why and how questions and looking at context, cross references and study notes to help you answer those questions.

The character and nature of God?

The character and nature of mankind?

The person and work of Jesus?

The identity and mission of God's people?

Apply the passage. Consider how you should apply this passage through the power of the Holy Spirit. Ask the following questions:

Are there sins to avoid?

Are there promises to claim?

Are there examples to follow?

Are there commands to keep?

Personalize your applications by picking one or two and relating them directly to your life.

Pray through the passage with the following format:

Find something in the passage to *praise* and *thank* God for.

Find something in the passage to *confess* to God.

Find something in the passage to *ask* God for.

EQUIPPING

Read the assigned chapter from the book you are reading as a group. Discuss what most impacted you from this reading. Feel free to jot down some notes here.

ACCOUNTABILITY

UPWARD

How regular have you been in your daily time of personal worship this week? How has God comforted or challenged you through His Word?

INWARD

1. What consumes your daydreams (i.e. what do you find yourself thinking about/wishing for)?
2. How might this reveal a root idol (power, approval, comfort, control)?
3. What is the gospel? How is the beauty of Christ displayed in the gospel better than the beauty you are looking for in your idol?
4. What is the next step you can take this week to fight that idol?

OUTWARD

Have one person practice sharing the gospel with your group.

PRAYER

Pray for one another.

WEEK 10

Memory Verse: _____ Study Passage: _____

Assigned Reading: _____

SCRIPTURE

Read the passage. Pray and ask the Holy Spirit to prepare your heart to receive and obey God's Word.

Write down your observations of the passage. (*Look for things that are emphasized, repeated, related, compared, contrasted, and/or true to life.*)

Main Idea & Outline:

Examine the passage. What does this passage teach you about...

Dig deeper with your answers by asking who, what, where, when, why and how questions and looking at context, cross references and study notes to help you answer those questions.

The character and nature of God?

The character and nature of mankind?

The person and work of Jesus?

The identity and mission of God's people?

Apply the passage. Consider how you should apply this passage through the power of the Holy Spirit. Ask the following questions:

Are there sins to avoid?

Are there promises to claim?

Are there examples to follow?

Are there commands to keep?

Personalize your applications by picking one or two and relating them directly to your life.

Pray through the passage with the following format:

Find something in the passage to *praise* and *thank* God for.

Find something in the passage to *confess* to God.

Find something in the passage to *ask* God for.

EQUIPPING

Read the assigned chapter from the book you are reading as a group. Discuss what most impacted you from this reading. Feel free to jot down some notes here.

ACCOUNTABILITY

UPWARD

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INWARD

1. How have you loved money in the past month (through spending, saving, or things you wanted to spend/save on)?
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OUTWARD

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PRAYER

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WEEK 11

Memory Verse: _____ Study Passage: _____

Assigned Reading: _____

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Read the passage. Pray and ask the Holy Spirit to prepare your heart to receive and obey God's Word.

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ACCOUNTABILITY

UPWARD

How regular have you been in your daily time of personal worship this week? How has God comforted or challenged you through His Word?

INWARD

1. What are your unanswered prayers and frustrated hopes? How are you responding to them?
2. How might this reveal a root idol (power, approval, comfort, control)?
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PRAYER

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WEEK 12

Memory Verse: _____ Study Passage: _____

Assigned Reading: _____

SCRIPTURE

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ACCOUNTABILITY

UPWARD

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1. What are your uncontrollable emotions?
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3. What is the gospel? How is the beauty of Christ displayed in the gospel better than the beauty you are looking for in your idol?
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OUTWARD

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PRAYER

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WEEK 13

Memory Verse: _____ Study Passage: _____

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UPWARD

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INWARD

1. What is a struggle you have experienced recently?
2. How might this struggle reveal a lie you are believing about God or about yourself?
3. What is the gospel? How does the truth of the gospel replace the lie you are believing?
4. How can you apply the truth of the gospel when you believe that lie this week?

OUTWARD

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PRAYER

Pray for one another.

WEEK 14

Memory Verse: _____ Study Passage: _____

Assigned Reading: _____

SCRIPTURE

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4. What is the next step you can take this week to fight that idol?

OUTWARD

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PRAYER

Pray for one another.

WEEK 15

CELEBRATION

This week, we will remember all that God has done in us this past unit of Discipleship and celebrate this with one another. In the space below, jot down some ways you feel you have grown in the last 15 weeks. Then, plan a special way to share these things, celebrate with one another and pray for one another.

UNIT 2

SCRIPTURE AND READING PLAN

Week 1 Memory Verse: _____

Study Passage: _____

Assigned Reading: _____

Week 2 Memory Verse: _____

Study Passage: _____

Assigned Reading: _____

Week 3 Memory Verse: _____

Study Passage: _____

Assigned Reading: _____

Week 4 Memory Verse: _____

Study Passage: _____

Assigned Reading: _____

Week 5 Memory Verse: _____

Study Passage: _____

Assigned Reading: _____

Week 6 Memory Verse: _____

Study Passage: _____

Assigned Reading: _____

Week 7 Memory Verse: _____
Study Passage: _____
Assigned Reading: _____

Week 8 Prayer Time

Week 9 Memory Verse: _____
Study Passage: _____
Assigned Reading: _____

Week 10 Memory Verse: _____
Study Passage: _____
Assigned Reading: _____

Week 11 Memory Verse: _____
Study Passage: _____
Assigned Reading: _____

Week 12 Memory Verse: _____
Study Passage: _____
Assigned Reading: _____

Week 13 Memory Verse: _____
Study Passage: _____
Assigned Reading: _____

Week 14 Memory Verse: _____

Study Passage: _____

Assigned Reading: _____

Week 15 End of Unit Celebration

WEEK 1

Memory Verse: _____ Study Passage: _____

Assigned Reading: _____

SCRIPTURE

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EQUIPPING

Read the assigned chapter from the book you are reading as a group. Discuss what most impacted you from this reading. Feel free to jot down some notes here.

ACCOUNTABILITY

UPWARD

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INWARD

1. What is a struggle you have experienced recently?
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OUTWARD

Have one person practice sharing the gospel with your group.

PRAYER

Pray for one another.

WEEK 2

Memory Verse: _____ Study Passage: _____

Assigned Reading: _____

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4. What is the next step you can take this week to fight that idol?

OUTWARD

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PRAYER

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WEEK 3

Memory Verse: _____ Study Passage: _____

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UPWARD

How regular have you been in your daily time of personal worship this week? How has God comforted or challenged you through His Word?

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OUTWARD

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PRAYER

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WEEK 4

Memory Verse: _____ Study Passage: _____

Assigned Reading: _____

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Read the assigned chapter from the book you are reading as a group. Discuss what most impacted you from this reading. Feel free to jot down some notes here.

ACCOUNTABILITY

UPWARD

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OUTWARD

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WEEK 5

Memory Verse: _____ Study Passage: _____

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Main Idea & Outline:

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ACCOUNTABILITY

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OUTWARD

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WEEK 6

Memory Verse: _____ Study Passage: _____

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ACCOUNTABILITY

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1. What are your uncontrollable emotions?
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OUTWARD

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PRAYER

Pray for one another.

WEEK 7

Memory Verse: _____ Study Passage: _____

Assigned Reading: _____

SCRIPTURE

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4. How can you apply the truth of the gospel when you believe that lie this week?

OUTWARD

Have one person practice sharing the gospel with your group.

PRAYER

Pray for one another.

WEEK 8

PRAYER

This week, we will pause and pray with one another. Use this as a guide to help you structure a meaningful time of prayer as a group.

GOSPEL

Look back at the **SCRIPTURE AND EQUIPPING** sections from the past several weeks. Jot down truths you have learned about God from the Scripture you've studied and memorized and the book you've read. In your group time, spend time praising and thanking God for these truths, confessing to God sin you learned about yourself and asking for His help to grow in these truths.

COMMUNITY

Share how others in the group can be praying for you personally. Then, spend time praying for one another.

MISSION

Create a [Missional Prayer List](#) in the Appendix. Jot down the names of those on your missional prayer list below. Pray for them by name.

WEEK 9

Memory Verse: _____ Study Passage: _____

Assigned Reading: _____

SCRIPTURE

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OUTWARD

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PRAYER

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WEEK 10

Memory Verse: _____ Study Passage: _____

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PRAYER

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WEEK 11

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Assigned Reading: _____

SCRIPTURE

Read the passage. Pray and ask the Holy Spirit to prepare your heart to receive and obey God's Word.

Write down your observations of the passage. (*Look for things that are emphasized, repeated, related, compared, contrasted, and/or true to life.*)

Main Idea & Outline:

Examine the passage. What does this passage teach you about...

Dig deeper with your answers by asking who, what, where, when, why and how questions and looking at context, cross references and study notes to help you answer those questions.

The character and nature of God?

The character and nature of mankind?

The person and work of Jesus?

The identity and mission of God's people?

Apply the passage. Consider how you should apply this passage through the power of the Holy Spirit. Ask the following questions:

Are there sins to avoid?

Are there promises to claim?

Are there examples to follow?

Are there commands to keep?

Personalize your applications by picking one or two and relating them directly to your life.

Pray through the passage with the following format:

Find something in the passage to *praise* and *thank* God for.

Find something in the passage to *confess* to God.

Find something in the passage to *ask* God for.

EQUIPPING

Read the assigned chapter from the book you are reading as a group. Discuss what most impacted you from this reading. Feel free to jot down some notes here.

ACCOUNTABILITY

UPWARD

How regular have you been in your daily time of personal worship this week? How has God comforted or challenged you through His Word?

INWARD

1. How have you loved money in the past month (through spending, saving, or things you wanted to spend/save on)?
2. How might this reveal a root idol (power, approval, comfort, control)?
3. What is the gospel? How is the beauty of Christ displayed in the gospel better than the beauty you are looking for in your idol?
4. What is the next step you can take this week to fight that idol?

OUTWARD

Have one person practice sharing the gospel with your group.

PRAYER

Pray for one another.

WEEK 12

Memory Verse: _____ Study Passage: _____

Assigned Reading: _____

SCRIPTURE

Read the passage. Pray and ask the Holy Spirit to prepare your heart to receive and obey God's Word.

Write down your observations of the passage. (*Look for things that are emphasized, repeated, related, compared, contrasted, and/or true to life.*)

Main Idea & Outline:

Examine the passage. What does this passage teach you about...

Dig deeper with your answers by asking who, what, where, when, why and how questions and looking at context, cross references and study notes to help you answer those questions.

The character and nature of God?

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Apply the passage. Consider how you should apply this passage through the power of the Holy Spirit. Ask the following questions:

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Personalize your applications by picking one or two and relating them directly to your life.

Pray through the passage with the following format:

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Find something in the passage to *ask* God for.

EQUIPPING

Read the assigned chapter from the book you are reading as a group. Discuss what most impacted you from this reading. Feel free to jot down some notes here.

ACCOUNTABILITY

UPWARD

How regular have you been in your daily time of personal worship this week? How has God comforted or challenged you through His Word?

INWARD

1. What are your unanswered prayers and frustrated hopes? How are you responding to them?
2. How might this reveal a root idol (power, approval, comfort, control)?
3. What is the gospel? How is the beauty of Christ displayed in the gospel better than the beauty you are looking for in your idol?
4. What is the next step you can take this week to fight that idol?

OUTWARD

Have one person practice sharing the gospel with your group.

PRAYER

Pray for one another.

WEEK 13

Memory Verse: _____ Study Passage: _____

Assigned Reading: _____

SCRIPTURE

Read the passage. Pray and ask the Holy Spirit to prepare your heart to receive and obey God's Word.

Write down your observations of the passage. (*Look for things that are emphasized, repeated, related, compared, contrasted, and/or true to life.*)

Main Idea & Outline:

Examine the passage. What does this passage teach you about...

Dig deeper with your answers by asking who, what, where, when, why and how questions and looking at context, cross references and study notes to help you answer those questions.

The character and nature of God?

The character and nature of mankind?

The person and work of Jesus?

The identity and mission of God's people?

Apply the passage. Consider how you should apply this passage through the power of the Holy Spirit. Ask the following questions:

Are there sins to avoid?

Are there promises to claim?

Are there examples to follow?

Are there commands to keep?

Personalize your applications by picking one or two and relating them directly to your life.

Pray through the passage with the following format:

Find something in the passage to *praise* and *thank* God for.

Find something in the passage to *confess* to God.

Find something in the passage to *ask* God for.

EQUIPPING

Read the assigned chapter from the book you are reading as a group. Discuss what most impacted you from this reading. Feel free to jot down some notes here.

ACCOUNTABILITY

UPWARD

How regular have you been in your daily time of personal worship this week? How has God comforted or challenged you through His Word?

INWARD

1. What are your uncontrollable emotions?
2. How might this reveal a root idol (power, approval, comfort, control)?
3. What is the gospel? How is the beauty of Christ displayed in the gospel better than the beauty you are looking for in your idol?
4. What is the next step you can take this week to fight that idol?

OUTWARD

Have one person practice sharing the gospel with your group.

PRAYER

Pray for one another.

WEEK 14

Memory Verse: _____ Study Passage: _____

Assigned Reading: _____

SCRIPTURE

Read the passage. Pray and ask the Holy Spirit to prepare your heart to receive and obey God's Word.

Write down your observations of the passage. (*Look for things that are emphasized, repeated, related, compared, contrasted, and/or true to life.*)

Main Idea & Outline:

Examine the passage. What does this passage teach you about...

Dig deeper with your answers by asking who, what, where, when, why and how questions and looking at context, cross references and study notes to help you answer those questions.

The character and nature of God?

The character and nature of mankind?

The person and work of Jesus?

The identity and mission of God's people?

Apply the passage. Consider how you should apply this passage through the power of the Holy Spirit. Ask the following questions:

Are there sins to avoid?

Are there promises to claim?

Are there examples to follow?

Are there commands to keep?

Personalize your applications by picking one or two and relating them directly to your life.

Pray through the passage with the following format:

Find something in the passage to *praise* and *thank* God for.

Find something in the passage to *confess* to God.

Find something in the passage to *ask* God for.

EQUIPPING

Read the assigned chapter from the book you are reading as a group. Discuss what most impacted you from this reading. Feel free to jot down some notes here.

ACCOUNTABILITY

UPWARD

How regular have you been in your daily time of personal worship this week? How has God comforted or challenged you through His Word?

INWARD

1. What is a struggle you have experienced recently?
2. How might this struggle reveal a lie you are believing about God or about yourself?
3. What is the gospel? How does the truth of the gospel replace the lie you are believing?
4. How can you apply the truth of the gospel when you believe that lie this week?

OUTWARD

Have one person practice sharing the gospel with your group.

PRAYER

Pray for one another.

WEEK 15

CELEBRATION

This week, we will remember all that God has done in us this past year of Discipleship and celebrate this with one another. In the space below, jot down some ways you feel you have grown in the last year. If you are in year 2 or 3 of Discipleship, consider how God has grown you in the last two or three years. Then, plan a special way to share these things, celebrate with one another and pray for one another.

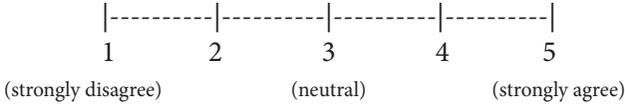
APPENDIX

SPIRITUAL ASSESSMENT

GOSPEL

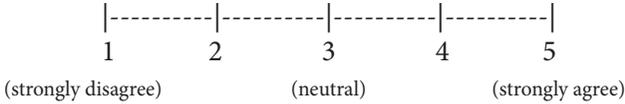
Fruit of the Spirit

I notice a growing disposition of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control in my life.



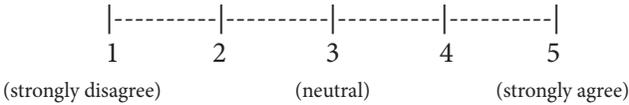
Personal Worship

I daily prioritize reading and studying the Bible and prayer.



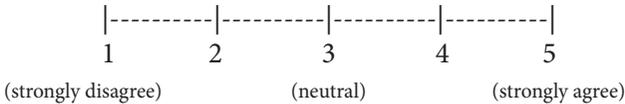
Spiritual Disciplines

I seek to incorporate other spiritual disciplines like fasting, meditation, giving, serving and resting into the rhythm my life.



Theology

I can accurately explain doctrines in the Bible (systematic theology) as well as the overarching story of the Bible (biblical theology).



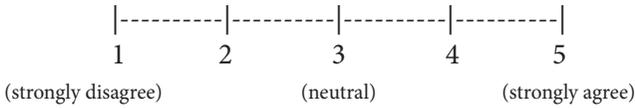
Total Gospel Score:

I would like to grow in the gospel by:

COMMUNITY

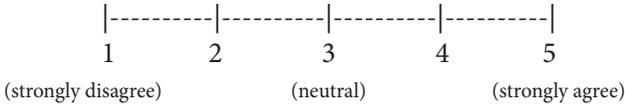
Corporate Worship

I consider gathering with my church family for corporate worship to be an integral and at least weekly part of my life.



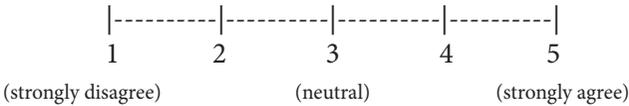
Church Membership

I have submitted myself to the authority and care of a local church through membership. As a part of this membership, I cheerfully and generously give of my time, spiritual gifts and financial resources for the good of my local church.



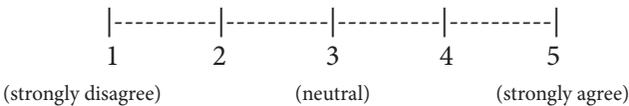
Community Formation

I value the people and relationships in my local church. I regularly seek to spend time with other church members outside of weekly corporate worship.



Family Worship

I seek to foster spiritual community within my home through regular prayer and Bible reading together.



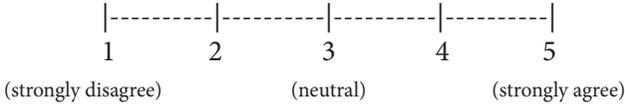
Total Community Score:

I would like to grow in community by:

MISSION

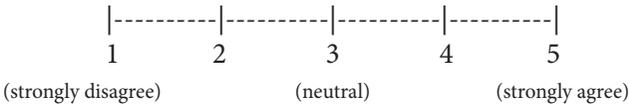
Evangelism

I regularly build relationships with, pray for and share the gospel with non-Christians.



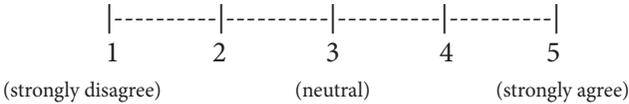
Discipling

I seek to disciple others either in a one on one setting or a discipleship group.



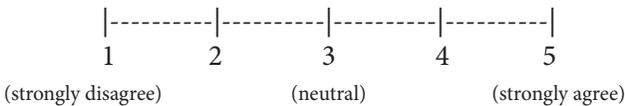
Mercy Ministries

I seek to leverage my time, talents and resources to care for the poor and marginalized in my community and around the world.



Faith and Work

I view my job as a vocation and a means to further human flourishing. I also view it as a vehicle to share my faith in Christ.



Total Mission Score:

I would like to grow in mission by:

SUGGESTED READING PLAN (OVERVIEW)

Our Suggested Reading Plan is meant to equip group members to go deeper in the gospel, community and mission over a three year group experience.

YEAR 1

GOSPEL

The Prodigal God by Timothy Keller

Counterfeit Gods by Timothy Keller

COMMUNITY

What Is A Healthy Church Member? by Thabiti Anyabwile

MISSION

Sharing Jesus Without Freaking Out by Alvin Reid

Summer Reading: *Habits of Grace* by David Mathis

YEAR 2

GOSPEL

How People Change by Paul Tripp

COMMUNITY

Designed for Joy: How The Gospel Impacts Men and Women, Identity and Practice Eds. Jonathan Parnell and Owen Strachan

MISSION

The Treasure Principle by Randy Alcorn

Radical by David Platt

Summer Reading: Pick a book as a group

YEAR 3

GOSPEL

The Pleasures of God by John Piper

COMMUNITY

Stage of Life book

MISSION

Discipling: How To Help Others Follow Jesus by Mark Dever

SUGGESTED READING PLAN (SPECIFIC)

YEAR 1

STARTER GUIDE

GOSPEL

1. *Prodigal God* Intro - Ch. 1-2
2. *Prodigal God* Ch. 3
3. *Prodigal God* Ch. 4
4. *Prodigal God* Ch. 5
5. *Prodigal God* Ch. 6
6. *Prodigal God* Ch. 7

UNIT 1

7. *Spiritual Assessment*
8. *Counterfeit Gods* Intro & Ch. 1
9. *Counterfeit Gods* Ch. 2
10. *Counterfeit Gods* Ch. 3
11. *Counterfeit Gods* Ch. 4
12. *Counterfeit Gods* Ch. 5
13. *Counterfeit Gods* Ch. 6
14. *Counterfeit Gods* Ch. 7 & Epilogue
15. End of Unit Celebration

UNIT 2

COMMUNITY

1. *What is a Healthy Church Member?* Introduction, Ch. 1 & 2
2. *What is a Healthy Church Member?* Ch. 3 & 4
3. *What is a Healthy Church Member?* Ch. 5 & 6
4. *What is a Healthy Church Member?* Ch. 7 & 8
5. *What is a Healthy Church Member?* Ch. 9 & 10
6. *Sharing Jesus Without Freaking Out* Ch. 1
7. *Sharing Jesus Without Freaking Out* Ch. 2
8. Prayer

MISSION

9. *Sharing Jesus Without Freaking Out* Ch. 3
10. *Sharing Jesus Without Freaking Out* Ch. 4
11. *Sharing Jesus Without Freaking Out* Ch. 5
12. *Sharing Jesus Without Freaking Out* Ch. 6
13. *Sharing Jesus Without Freaking Out* Ch. 7
14. *Sharing Jesus Without Freaking Out* Ch. 8
15. End of Year Celebration

Summer Reading: *Habits of Grace* by David Mathis

YEAR 2

UNIT 1

GOSPEL

1. Review Summer Reading
2. *How People Change* Ch. 1
3. *How People Change* Ch. 2
4. *How People Change* Ch. 3
5. *How People Change* Ch. 4
6. *How People Change* Ch. 5
7. *How People Change* Ch. 6
8. Prayer
9. *How People Change* Ch. 7-8
10. *How People Change* Ch. 9
11. *How People Change* Ch. 10
12. *How People Change* Ch. 11-12
13. *How People Change* Ch. 13-14
14. *How People Change* Ch. 15-16
15. End of Unit Celebration

UNIT 2

COMMUNITY

1. *Designed for Joy: How The Gospel Impacts Men and Women, Identity and Practice* Introduction
2. *Designed for Joy* (Men: Ch. 1 / Women: Ch. 4)
3. *Designed for Joy* (Men: Ch. 2 / Women: Ch. 5)
4. *Designed for Joy* (Men: Ch. 3 / Women: Ch. 6)

MISSION

5. *The Treasure Principle* Ch. 1-2
6. *The Treasure Principle* Ch. 3-4
7. *The Treasure Principle* Ch. 5-7
8. Prayer
9. *Radical* Ch. 1
10. *Radical* Ch. 2-3
11. *Radical* Ch. 4-5
12. *Radical* Ch. 6-7
13. *Radical* Ch. 8
14. *Radical* Ch. 9
15. End of Group Celebration

Summer Reading: Pick a book as a group

YEAR 3

UNIT 1

GOSPEL

1. Review Summer Reading
2. *The Pleasures of God* Ch. 1
3. *The Pleasures of God* Ch. 2
4. *The Pleasures of God* Ch. 3
5. *The Pleasures of God* Ch. 4
6. *The Pleasures of God* Ch. 5 (first half)
7. *The Pleasures of God* Ch. 5 (second half)
8. Prayer
9. *The Pleasures of God* Ch. 6
10. *The Pleasures of God* Ch. 7
11. *The Pleasures of God* Ch. 8 part 1
12. *The Pleasures of God* Ch. 8 part 2
13. *The Pleasures of God* Ch. 9
14. *The Pleasures of God* Epilogue
15. End of Unit Celebration

UNIT 2

COMMUNITY

1. Stage of Life Book*
2. Stage of Life Book
3. Stage of Life Book
4. Stage of Life Book
5. Stage of Life Book
6. Stage of Life Book
7. Stage of Life Book
8. Stage of Life Book
9. Prayer

MISSION

10. *Discipling: How To Help Others Follow Jesus* Introduction - Ch. 2
11. *Discipling: How To Help Others Follow Jesus* - Ch. 3-4
12. *Discipling: How To Help Others Follow Jesus* - Ch. 5-6
13. *Discipling: How To Help Others Follow Jesus* - Ch. 7-8
14. *Discipling: How To Help Others Follow Jesus* - Ch. 9-Conclusion
15. End of Year Celebration

* For book ideas, go to christfellowshipga.org/discipleship.

WHY WE PICKED THESE BOOKS

We begin Year 1 with *The Prodigal God* and *Counterfeit Gods* by Tim Keller because they explain the gospel in a unique way - the former from the perspective of the Younger Brother and Elder Brother in Jesus' Parable of the Prodigal Son, and the latter from the perspective of idolatry. After that, we move to a focus on community through *What Is A Healthy Church Member?* by Thabiti Anyabwile because the most important community a Christian can be a part of is the local church. There really is no such thing as a healthy growing Christian that isn't a healthy, committed church member. Finally, we focus on mission by reading *Sharing Jesus Without Freaking Out* by Alvin Reid. This is an enormously practical and helpful book on evangelism. It is a great starting point for new Christians, a great inspiration to timid Christians and a great refresher for Christians that do actively share their faith. Summer reading after Year 1 is *Habits of Grace* by David Mathis. We chose this because if people are going to grow in their spiritual walks, the spiritual disciplines are key.

We begin Year 2 with *How People Change* by Paul Tripp. This book will help us apply the gospel to the various hurts and struggles of our lives. Next, we focus on community by reading *Designed for Joy: How The Gospel Impacts Men and Women, Identity and Practice* edited by Jonathan Parnell and Owen Strachan. We were made to live in community as men and women. There has never been a time in the history of the world where we have been more confused about that, which is why it is so important to address that in discipleship. Finally, we focus on mission by reading *The Treasure Principle* by Randy Alcorn and *Radical* by David Platt. *The Treasure Principle* will get the group thinking about joyfully multiplying their finances for the mission of God throughout their lives. *Radical* will get the group thinking about how to reorient everything in life around the mission of God. Summer reading for Year 2 is left up to the group. We figured that by now, certain topics of need have probably risen within the group that would be helpful to address.

Year 3 begins with a focus on the gospel through *The Pleasures of God* by John Piper. Simply put, this book is breathtaking and was chosen because of its God-centeredness. The focus on community is a stage of life book that is up to the group. Topics may include marriage, singlehood, parenting, retirement, faith and work, etc. Essentially, we want groups to pick a book that would most help a specific stage most members of the group find themselves in. If it is a really diverse group in terms of stage of life, you could even have half read one book and half read another. The third year ends with a focus on mission with the book *Discipling: How To Help Others Follow Jesus* by Mark Dever. This book will focus on the importance of discipling others just before the group multiplies and will give a solid understanding for what it looks like to disciple others.

PERSONAL WORSHIP PLAN

Part of growing in Christ is establishing a daily routine of personal worship. Personal worship is a time when you get alone with God, listen to Him through His Word and respond to Him in prayer.

When will I have my daily personal worship?

Pick a time of day

How long do I hope to spend in daily personal worship?

If you are new to this, try something doable like 10-15 minutes. If you've been doing it for a while, aim for longer, like 30 minutes - an hour.

Where do I plan to do daily personal worship?

Pick an exact place, like: 'the swing on my back porch.'

What Scripture will I read in my daily personal worship?

You could start by picking one book of the Bible (if you're new to this, Mark or John would be a great place to start) or you could pick a plan to read the whole Bible. The app YouVersion offers a lot of plans. You can also just google 'Bible Reading Plans' and find a lot of good ideas.

What will I do during my personal worship?

Consider the R.E.A.P. Method in your personal worship. You may choose to add in a time of singing too.

MISSIONAL PRAYER LIST

One of the rhythms we want to develop in our Discipleship Group is prayer for the people God has placed in our lives who do not know Christ. First, we will discuss who to pray for and then we will discuss how to pray for them.

WHO TO PRAY FOR

You can probably break your life down into three categories:

1. Live (neighbors)
2. Work (co-workers)
3. Play (family and friends)

Spend some time asking God to show you five people who are probably not Christians in each category. If you can't come up with five, that's ok. Write down who you can below.

Live:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Work:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Play:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

HOW TO PRAY

A great way to pray for non-Christians is to add what Alvin Reid calls the “threefold prayer” to your daily prayer time in the morning. The prayer is something like this, “God, give me opportunities to share the gospel today with people who do not know You. Give me wisdom to see those opportunities and give me boldness to take those opportunities.” Start with that each day. Then, also incorporate a way to pray through lost people by name. Maybe you don’t do everyone every day, maybe you pick a few people to rotate through each day to pray for. It is important to pray Scripture for these people. Here are a few you can use to help you pray for the lost people on your list.

1. Pray for God to draw them

No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day. John 6:44

Potential Prayer: Father, please draw Jim to yourself. I know he cannot come to You on his own.

2. Pray for God to open their eyes

In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. 5 For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus’ sake. For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. 2 Corinthians 4:4-6

Potential Prayer: Father, would you remove Satan’s blinding influence and shine light into Jim’s heart so that he will see Jesus as glorious?

3. Pray for them to know Jesus

Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. John 14:6

Potential Prayer: Father, would Jim come to Christ so he can know you?

4. Pray for God to grant them a heart of repentance

God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will. 2 Timothy 2:25-26

Potential Prayer: God, would you grant Jim a heart of repentance?

5. Pray for God to open their heart

*The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul.
Acts 16:14*

Potential Prayer: God, would you open Jim's heart to believe in the gospel?

'INWARD' ACCOUNTABILITY QUESTIONS

(From Jeff Vanderstelt in *Gospel Fluency*, Timothy Keller in *Counterfeit Gods*, Justin Ely and Daniel Chen)

First question:

- What have you worried about recently?
- What consumes your daydreams (i.e. what do you find yourself thinking about/wishing for)?
- How have you loved money in the past month (through spending, saving, or things you wanted to spend/save on)?
- What are your unanswered prayers and frustrated hopes? How are you responding to them?
- What are your uncontrollable emotions?

Follow Up Questions:

- How might this reveal a root idol (power, approval, comfort, control)?
- What is the gospel? How is the beauty of Christ displayed in the gospel better than the beauty you are looking for in your idol?
- What is the next step you can take this week to fight that idol?

Additional set of questions:

- What is a struggle you have experienced recently?
- How might this struggle reveal a lie you are believing about God or about yourself?
- What is the gospel? How does the truth of the gospel replace the lie you are believing?
- How can you apply the truth of the gospel when you believe that lie this week?

When Jesus called his disciples, he said, "Follow Me." Before he ascended into heaven, he told these disciples to go and make disciples of other nations. In other words, he told them to go help others follow him. This is the life of discipleship - following Jesus and helping others do the same. Curriculums don't disciple people; people disciple people. But we hope this three-year curriculum will help you take people deeper in the gospel, community and mission.

Justin Ely is the Lead Pastor at Christ Fellowship Church. He is married to Hillary. Together, they have two daughters and make their home in Roswell, Georgia.

You can find out more about Justin and Christ Fellowship Church by visiting christfellowshipga.org



This is the first year of a three-year curriculum.