

# God OF THE City

Thrive LA Church

FORGING *sacred space* IN THE CITY OF *Angels*

JULY-SEPTEMBER 2022

## How to Use This Guide

Over the next few weeks, we will be exploring what it looks like to partner with what God is doing in the city of Los Angeles and create rootedness in God's purposes here. This guide will be updated with further content over the coming weeks.

Our series title is "God of the City." Throughout this series we'll explore how to be rooted in faith and in community while living in an urban environment, as well as how to be rooted in the greater discipleship and justice movement of our city.

### Watch the Sermon

In Person on Sundays at 10am: 2234 W Temple St, Los Angeles, CA 90026  
Online Live on Sundays at 10am: [thriveLA.online.church](https://thriveLA.online.church)  
Archived: [thrivelachurch.com/media](https://thrivelachurch.com/media)

### Gather Weekly

We have multiple Thrive Groups throughout Los Angeles and Online. We encourage our groups meeting in person to share a meal together.

### Discussion

In your groups you will discuss the week's sermon and Bible readings with reflection/discussion questions designed to help you go deeper.

### Join or Start a Group

Go to [thrivelachurch.com/thrivegroups](https://thrivelachurch.com/thrivegroups) or Text "Groups" to 323-709-0711 to be placed in a group and to learn more.



# Looking Ahead

## First Steps

First Sundays of the month are for First Steps! When you invite your friends, the best place for them is coming to First Steps. Here they'll learn about Thrive, make some more friends, and have a chance to ask questions.

## Summer Reading

To complement the new God of the City series, we're inviting you to join us in reading through The Deeply Formed Life, by Rich Villodas. As we read together, we'll dive into five areas that help us develop deep roots in the ways of Jesus. We'll have books available to purchase on Sunday if that's helpful.

On September 20th, Stef Cosman will lead us in a book club discussion at Hey Hey Drinks in Echo Park. We'd love to hear your thoughts, so mark your calendar now!

## Summer Connection

Summer can be so fun, and we want to lean into this season and create easy opportunities for you to build friendships at Thrive this summer.

Through after church cool treats, park hangouts, service opportunities, and meals together, we hope you'll take the time to build friendships and have some fun. Stay tuned for more details!





## Week 1: Rooted over Rapid

There is something special about feeling “at home” somewhere. That might be your actual home, your parents’ house, at a party with friends, alone with a good book, or out in nature. A place where you feel a sense of belonging and stability. A place where you can act like your true self. A place where you don’t have to strive anymore, but instead you can slow down, rest, and feel a sense of security and stability.

Jesus teaches us that a place in His kingdom provides a stable home for us--a place where we can be secure and feel loved. Jesus desires to see churches live as a little piece of His Kingdom on Earth, providing hope and love for those who have none and a home for those who need one.

"In a commitment to stability, we withstand the disturbances and annoyances of others for the sake of union with God and union with each other." --Rich Villodas, *"The Deeply Formed Life"*

### Opening Question:

What is the best thing you’ve eaten this week?

### Bible Reading:

Read Psalm 1 together.

### Discussion:

- Thinking about the above overview, what is somewhere you feel “at home”?
- Do you feel more at peace when you are alone or with others, and why do you think that is the case for you?
- How would you describe the pace of your life recently? Are things moving fast or slow?
- Why do you think Jesus repeatedly told his disciples to rest (Mark 6:30-34) and that his Kingdom brings rest to those in it (Matthew 11:28)? What thoughts come up when thinking about your own life in relation to these verses?
- What is one step you could take to become more “rooted” in your neighborhood?

### Prayer:

Pray that you and your group would be more rooted in the city and with each other.

## Week 2: Sustainability Over Sizzle

We live in the city of dreams: Silicon Beach, DTLA, Hollywood--a city seemingly full of successful, beautiful, happy people who live without a care in the world. We are told to dream, and that we can achieve audacious goals in our financial, personal, and professional lives.

But dreams don't always come true. This city is full of the rich and the poor. We can't simply go from job to job, dream to dream, in hopes of making it forever. At a certain point, we need something that will last, otherwise we will simply burn out.

When deciding what to build and how to build something that will last, what will your foundation be? What will you hold on to? Who will you trust and depend on along the way? These are questions we all have to consider, whether we are chasing dreams or trying to succeed in our daily lives.

"What are the superficial changes we make if we neglect the deep work God wants to do inside us?... Instead of being deeply formed, we settle for being shallowly shaped." --Rich Villodas, *"The Deeply Formed Life"*

### Opening Question:

What's a good recommendation you received from a friend recently?

### Bible:

Read Matthew 21:23-32 together.

### Discussion:

- Can you tell us about a time you worked really hard for something over a long period of time? How did it feel when the season of work came to an end?
- What is something or someone you know you can depend on in your life?
- What are some aspects that make a foundation strong? What are some things that either weaken a foundation or actually showcase a weak foundation?
- Through this week's sermon and our Bible reading tonight, what are some ways Jesus provides a foundation that can be trusted for the long haul? If looking for another resource, check out Matthew 7:24-27 and Ephesians 2:11-20.

### Prayer:

Get into groups of 3 or 4. Ask each other how you can pray for one another.

## Week 3: Presence over Power

Often leaders in our society come to fame or authority through power and money, through knowing the right people, being born into the right family, or making enemies along the way. It is not often that a well-known leader is thought of for their kindness, patience, and calm presence. Is it possible for someone with these characteristics to be a leader? Could they make real change in the world or in the people around them?

Jesus provides us with an example of a leader who did not shy away from authorities or from speaking out against injustice. The way He did it was a way not seen before, and definitely not anticipated by those who expected God's son to be a powerful King. He showed us that it is actually possible to make an impact through love, kindness, and a relational presence.

"The practice of social bonding is about the forging of intimate friendships--to know and be known. This certainly requires risk, a tolerance for awkwardness, and commitment to others, but for the sake of our flourishing as human beings, it is unquestionably necessary." --Rich Villodas, "The Deeply Formed Life"

### Opening Question:

What was your favorite toy as a kid?

### Bible Reading:

Read Luke 8:40-56 together.

### Discussion:

- When you think about a leader, what characteristics come to mind?
- When we say a "relational presence," what does that mean to you? Does anyone in your life come to mind when you think about this description?
- Do you believe it is possible to have an impact through relationships instead of through power? In what ways would that look different?
- What is one way that Jesus is described that you would like to emulate?

### Prayer:

Consider having a member of your group read Psalm 139 before going into a time of prayer. Let's pray tonight and ask Jesus to help us become a more relational presence. Start by praying individually and nominate one person to lead the group in a closing prayer to end your time together.



## Week 4: Justice over Judgment

There has been a lot of social and political turmoil in America and in our personal lives over the last few years. In truth, this turmoil has been going on a long time, but we’ve all experienced it in our own ways of late. At the root of much of this strife is anger and fear, which therefore creates more anger and fear in those affected. Living in a place of such tumult, where can we turn to find a safe place?

Jesus says that he came to earth so that people may experience peace. His promised peace is greater than any peace one can experience from other source in this world--coping mechanisms, numbing out, etc. Rather, Jesus' peace is an everlasting and unconditional peace, that will be with you wherever you go and in whatever circumstances come your way.

### Opening Question:

What was your favorite class in high school and why?

### Bible Reading:

Read Matthew 23.

### Discussion:

- What comes to mind when we talk about injustices in your neighborhood?
- Are you someone who responds more in anger or in fear, when impacted by the injustices of the world?
- Have you experienced Jesus’ peace? How is it different from the peace the world offers?
- How can we continue to strive to make the church a safe place?

### Prayer:

We believe in the power of prayer, and that prayer is a form of action against injustices. Spend time praying as a group against the injustices you see in the world. Ask God to intervene and to establish His Kingdom “on Earth as it is in heaven.”