

Week One Identity
Small Group Discussion Guide
Vision Cast

OPEN IN PRAYER

Open your group in a time of prayer asking God to reveal a deeper awareness of where we are placing our focus and the power of focus in our lives.

ENCOURAGE SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

Encourage your group to take a few minutes each day this week to meditate on our text for the "Identity" series, 1 John 4:15-19. One of the key areas that we all must keep in focus, to be growing in and becoming more like Christ, is our daily time to focus on our vertical relationship with Christ. Keep that in mind as you have your time together and as you send your group off after being together. Seek to build accountability around this key spiritual discipline. **This week as we wrestle with the notion that our identities are affected by what we meditate on and give our attention to. We want to encourage everyone in our group to daily begin to focus their thoughts and meditation on who God says we are instead of being swept up in who the world says we are.** Give the members of your group the opportunity to quote the "I am Loved" statement and/or 1 John 4:15-19.

CAST VISION

Take a few minutes to remind your group about the lifestyle of being "On Mission". (What I have found as I ask this question each week is that it helps the group to begin to understand and embrace this value. "Every person in a group and every group on Mission." It has been helpful for the group to be reminded of the 6 ways to "Be on Mission":

- 1) Keep our group open to newcomers-Anyone can Invite a new person to join
- 2) Be open to serve on a team using my spiritual gifts
- 3) Be open to love my neighbor in some practical way
- 4) Be open to meet the need of someone in crisis
- 5) Be open as a group to serve our community
- 6) Be open for opportunities to be financially generous.

SERMON DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- In the introduction of this week's message Pastor Jeff gave a principle, "What you Focus on Forms you." He gave two other pithy ways of saying the same thing: "What you contemplate you emulate" and, "What you see the most, you'll be the most." Share if, and how you have seen this principle at work in someone's life.**
- Looking over the notes below, from the first point in the message, how important is having vision for the future and what happens when someone has no vision? Have you ever struggled with a loss of vision, if so, how did it affect you?**

**Identity Intro
Vision Cast**

I. Why Focus on our Identity

1. It empowers you to know **why** you exist; why you are here.

Our MISSION:

“Meeting people where they are and loving them to where Christ wants them to be.”

2. It empowers you to know **where** you are going, and **who** you are becoming.

John 4:23 (MSG) *“It’s who you are and the way you live that count before God. Your worship must engage your spirit in the pursuit of truth. That’s the kind of people the Father is out looking for: those who are simply and honestly themselves before him in their worship.”*

Our VISION:

A Vision is a picture on the screen of your mind that compels you to move forward despite obstacles. It is a preferred view of the future.

Proverbs 29:18 (KJV) *“Where there is no vision the people perish.”*

Jeremiah 29:11 *“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”*

This is our corporate Vision

“We are becoming a loving community of growing disciples, mentoring the next generation to live the mission of Jesus through the power of the Gospel.”

- Of the 5 “I am” statements below which one do you think you currently embrace the most and live out well?**

This is the personal application of our Vision, our “I am” statements:

I am Loved

“I will focus on and celebrate that I am God’s beloved child. That he loved me when I was unlovely, unworthy and undeserving, that I might begin to see myself through his eyes. That I am a child of God; deeply loved, completely forgiven, fully pleasing, totally accepted by God, chosen by him to reflect his love and grace.”

I am Loving

I am a Disciple

I am a Mentor

I am a Missionary

- Looking over the notes below, answer each of the following and see if you can give an example of each:**
- How does one’s identity affect how we see ourselves?**
 - How does one’s identity affect how we behave ourselves?**
 - How does one’s identity affect how we might reproduce ourselves?**

- From the notes below, under point 2, share what kind of disciplines you are learning to do, (what kind of training), and how they might assist you to become more like Christ?

II. What will Focusing on our Identity Accomplish, (if we are intentional)?

IT WILL CHANGE:

1. How you **see** yourself.

1 John 3:1 “How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God.”

- Learn to embrace a new **identity**- Who you are in Christ.

2 Corinthians 5:17 “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ he is a new creation, the old has gone, the new has come.”

- **Result:** You’ll get better and better at being a spiritual **representative** of Christ.

2 Corinthians 5:20 (MSG) “We’re Christ’s **representatives**. God uses us to persuade men and women to drop their differences and enter into God’s work of making things right...”

2. How you **behave** yourself.

2 Timothy 4:7-8 “Do not waste time arguing over godless ideas and old wives’ tales. Instead, train yourself to be godly. **8** “Physical training is good, but training for godliness is much better, promising benefits in this life and in the life to come.”

- Learn to embrace new **disciplines**-How you become more like Christ.

A spiritual discipline is something I do now that will enable me in the future, to be able to do what I otherwise could not do.”

–Pastor Jeff

Proverbs 12:1 (MSG) “If you love learning you love the **discipline** that goes with it.”

Hebrews 12:11 (MSG) “It’s the well **trained** who find themselves mature in their relationship with Christ.”

“We do not do spiritual disciplines so God will like us, he already likes us. We do them so we will become more like him.”

–Pastor Jeff

“In short, disciplines are not about trying to get God’s attention but training ourselves to pay attention to him.”

–Stacy Patrick

- **Result: You’ll get better and better at being spiritually responsive to Christ.**

3. How you reproduce yourself.

Matthew 28:19-20 *“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”*

- **Learn to embrace a new Mission/Vision- What we do for Christ.**

Acts 20:24 (MSG) *“What matters most to me is to finish what God started. The job the Master Jesus gave me of letting everyone I meet know all about the incredibly extravagant generosity of God.”*

- **Result: You’ll get better and better at becoming spiritually reproductive for Christ.**

2 Timothy 2:2 (MSG) *“Pass on what you heard from me...to reliable leaders who are competent to teach others.”*

- Before closing your time in prayer, ask each member of your group what it would look like for them to intentionally focus on the “I am” statements and scriptures that define who we are as children of God; our spiritual identity.**
- Be sure your group knows how to access the I am statements on the YC app.**
- Pair up your group and ask them to pray for each other (in pairs) to intentionally focus on these statements and scriptures on a daily basis.**

Soaping Suggestions:

- **Philippians 1:6**
- **John 1:12**
- **2 Corinthians 5:17**
- **Hebrews 12:11**
- **1 John 4:15-16**

Week 2 Identity
Small Group Discussion Guide
I am Loved

OPEN IN PRAYER

Open your group in a time of prayer asking God to reveal a deeper awareness of our true identity as a children of God

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CAST VISION

Remind your group about the lifestyle of being "On Mission". When we say "Lifestyle" we are seeking to reinforce that it is who you are, your identity to Be On Mission. (What I have found as I ask this question each week is that it helps the group to begin to understand and embrace this value. "Every person in a group and every group on Mission." It has been helpful for the group to be reminded of the 6 ways to "Be on Mission":

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- 5) Be open as a group to serve our community
- 6) Be open to opportunities to be financially generous.

SERMON DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- In the introduction of this week's message Pastor Jeff gave a principle, "You can't give away what you don't have." Have you ever tried to give something that you knew you really didn't have it to give? How does that feel when you are in that place?**

I am Loved
Luke 15:11-24 (NIV84)

Principle: "You can't give away what you don't have."

Our Vision

"We are becoming a loving community of growing disciples, mentoring the next generation, to live the mission of Jesus, through the power of the gospel."

"I will focus on and celebrate that I am God's Beloved child. That he loved me when I was unlovely, unworthy and undeserving, that I might begin to see myself through his eyes. That I am a child of God: deeply loved, completely forgiven, fully pleasing, totally accepted, chosen by him to reflect his love and grace."

- From the statement above, which of the negative types of identities do you most identify with? Unlovely, unworthy or undeserving? How has that affected your behavior?**
- From the scriptures and notes below how could you better celebrate being God's beloved child?**
- Which of the following do you struggle trusting to be true? Deeply loved, completely forgiven, fully pleasing or totally accepted? Why?**

- **Our Good News is THE GOSPEL**

Romans 1:16 *"I am not ashamed of the Gospel because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes."*

"The gospel is the good news that God, who is more holy than we can imagine, looked upon with compassion, people, who are more sinful than we could possibly admit, and sent Jesus into history to establish his kingdom and reconcile people and the world to himself. Jesus, whose love is more extravagant than we can measure, came to sacrificially die for us so that, by his death and resurrection, we might gain through his grace what the Bible defines as new and eternal life."

— Ed Stetzer

- **"I will focus on"**
- What have you spent most of your time focusing on and how has that affected what you do with your time?**

Proverbs 23:7 *"As a man thinketh in his heart so is he."*

"As we think, we change the physical nature of our brain. As we consciously direct our thinking, we can wire out toxic patterns of thinking and replace them with healthy thoughts."

— Dr Caroline Leaf

Romans 12:2 “Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.”

“No life ever grows great until it is focused, dedicated, and disciplined.”

— Harry Fosdick

- “I will focus on and **celebrate** that I am God's Beloved Child.”

Psalm 36:5 & 6 “Your love, Lord, reaches to the heavens, your faithfulness to the skies....How priceless is your unfailing love, O God!”

1 John 3:1 “See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! (MSG) “That’s who we really are.”

Ephesians 5:1-2 “Follow God’s example, therefore, as dearly loved children and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.”

II. Our Good **Fortune** is GOD’S GRACE

- “That he loved me when I was unlovely, unworthy, and undeserving, that I might begin to see myself through his eyes.”

“The church is the only fellowship in the world where the one requirement for membership is the unworthiness of the candidate.”

— Robert Munger

Romans 5:6-8 “You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

III. Our Good **Standing** is GOD’S RIGHTEOUSNESS

Romans 1:17 “For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, “But the righteous man shall live by faith.”

Colossians 1:22 “(God) He has reconciled you by Christ’s physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation...”

- “That I am a child of God, deeply loved, completely forgiven, fully pleasing, totally accepted by God, chosen by him to reflect his love and grace.”

- “Deeply **loved**”

Ephesians 3:17 “And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord’s holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and **deep** is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge...”

- “Completely **forgiven**”

Psalms 103:12 “He has removed our sins as far away from us as the east is from the west.”

Micah 7:19 “You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea.”

Hebrews 8:12 (LB) “And I will be merciful to them... and I will remember their sins no more.”

- “Fully **pleasing**”

Matthew 3:17 “And a voice from heaven said, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.”

Zephaniah 3:17 (MEV) “He will rejoice over you with gladness... He will rejoice over you with singing.”

- **Totally accepted**

Eph. 2:8-10 “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— **9** not by works, so that no one can boast. **10** For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Rom. 15:7 Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God.

IV. Our Good **Works** flow out of our New **Identity**

- “Chosen by him to reflect his **love** and grace.”

Colossians 3:12-14 “Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.”

- What are a few practical ways that you can reflect God's love and grace this week?**

- Before closing your time in prayer, ask each member of your group what it would look like for them to intentionally focus on the "I am" statements and scriptures that define who we are as children of God; our spiritual identity.**

- Be sure your group knows how to access the I am statements on the YC app.**

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Soaping Suggestions:

- **Proverbs 23:7**
- **Romans 12:2**
- **Collosians 1:22**
- **Ephesians 3:17-18**
- **1 John 4:16**

Week 3 Identity
Small group study guide
How to Live in Love / How to Practice His Presence

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ENCOURAGE SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

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Our Vision

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I am Loved

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1 John 4:15-19 *“If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in them and they in God. And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. **Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them.** This is how love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment: In this world we are like Jesus. There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love. We love because he first loved us.”*

TO LIVE (abide) IN LOVE (agape = Unconditional love) WE MUST:

- I. **Recognize** and accept Jesus as the Source of Love that invites us into His (God's) Presence.

(We Embrace a Sacred Relationship-I am His Child).

1 John 4:15 *“If anyone **acknowledges** that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in them and they in God.”*

“**Acknowledge**” in the Greek is “homologeō” Often translated as “**confess**”, means to agree with, to say the same thing.

- In this first point we “acknowledge” that Jesus is the Son of God. Which also acknowledges that God now lives in you. If you truly believe that God is in you how does that begin to change how you see yourself?**
- How are you learning to cultivate a deeper, more consistent awareness of Christ's presence, His Spirit, being in you?**

Two critical confessions:

1. **We Confess (agree with God) about who Jesus is; the Son of God, the adequate Savior.**

1 Corinthians 15:14 *“And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith.”*

1 John 4:15 (NASB) *“Whoever **confesses** that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.”*

Matthew 16:13-16 *“Jesus ... asked his disciples, “Who do people say the Son of Man is?” They replied, “Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” “But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?” Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.”*

Romans 10:9 (NIV84) *“If you **confess** with your mouth that, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.”*

2. We Confess (agree with God) about who we are, sinners in need of a savior; inadequate to save ourselves.

1 John 1:8-9 *“If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we **confess** our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”*

The dual confession described above, why is it important to make both of these confessions?

II. Receive God’s Forgiveness (His Love & Grace) as the experience of His Loving Presence.

(A Sacred Friendship-I am His Companion)

1 John 4:16 *“And so we **know** and **rely** on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God and God in them.”*

1 John 2:1-2 *“My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. **2** He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.”*

1 John 2:12-14 *“I am writing to you, dear children, because your sins have been forgiven on account of his name. I am writing to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I write to you, dear children, because you know the Father. I write to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God lives in you, and you have overcome the evil one.”*

1 John 3:16 *“This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters.”*

The quote below by David Seamonds, do you agree or disagree and why?

Many years ago I was driven to the conclusion that the two major causes of the most emotional problems among evangelical Christians are these: the failure to understand, receive, and live out God’s grace and forgiveness; and the failure to give out that unconditional love, forgiveness, and grace to other people...We read, we hear, we believe a good theology of grace. But that’s not the way we live. The good news of the gospel of grace has not yet penetrated the level of our emotions.

- David Seamonds

“**Know**” in the greek is “Ginosko”, To know intimately (sexually) or experientially. “Know” can also be “Gnosis”, To know about and to understand.

- **Knowing this love is intimate.**

1 John 4:16 (MSG) “Everyone who confesses that Jesus is God’s Son participates continuously in an **intimate** relationship with God.”

Genesis 4:1 (NKJV) “Now Adam **knew** Eve, his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain.”

(NIV) “Adam made love to his wife Eve, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Cain.”

To be loved but not known is comforting but superficial. To be known and not loved is our greatest fear. But to be fully known and truly loved is, well, a lot like being loved by God. It is what we need more than anything. It liberates us from pretense, humbles us out of our self-righteousness, and fortifies us for any difficulty life can throw at us.

- Timothy Keller

- **Look over the Timothy Keller quote above, how do you relate to the need for being fully known to be fully loved, and conversely do you ever feel only partially known and therefore question how deeply you are loved?**

1 John 4:16b “God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God and God in them.”

- **Knowing this love is permanent.**

John 14:15-20 & 23 (NIV84) “If you love me you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another counselor to be with you forever— **17** the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. **18** I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. **19** Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. **20** On that day you will realize that I am in the Father, and you are in me, and I am in you...My Father will love him and we will come to him and make our home with him.”

John 15:9-16 “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. **10** If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commands and remain in his love. **11** I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. **12** My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. **13** Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. **14** You are my friends if you do what I command. **15** I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have

called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. **16** You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last...”

- In a world that is so quick to end relationships when they get difficult or people just “fall out of love”, is it difficult for you to accept God's love as permanent?**

III. **Rely** on God’s Presence (God’s Spirit of Love) to increase our Confidence. (A Sacred Partnership-I am His **Confidence**)

1 John 4:17 **“This is how** love is made complete among us so that we will have **confidence** on the day of judgment; in this world we are like Jesus.”

HOW?

1 John 4:16 *“Know (Ginosko) and Rely on the love God has for us.”*

“**Rely**” in the Greek is pistueo, and means to have faith in, to have confidence in, to trust and put one’s full dependence on.

- Have you ever been in a relationship where you found yourself relying on someone's love to make you feel complete and yet never felt complete? Or even worse been hurt by someone who was “supposed to” love you? How did that affect the way you saw both love and yourself?**
- If you began relying on God’s love how do you think that would change how you viewed love?**

The growing disciple (Christ follower) has made a fundamental shift in how they **see** themselves and where they intuitively put their **trust**.

Psalms 118:8 (NKJ) *“It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man.”*

Hebrews 13:5-6 (NIV84) *“Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.” So we say with confidence, “The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?”*

Jeremiah 17:7-8 *“But blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord, whose confidence is in him. They will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit.”*

- Do you trust God in all aspects of your life? Are there areas in your life that you have difficulty trusting God fully in? What are some of those areas and how would knowing that He sees you as his child help you trust him more?
- This new confidence, and fruitfulness rises out of our new identity as His children; we belong to him!
- What are a few practical ways that you can reflect God's love and grace this week?
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SOAPing Suggestions:

1 John 4:17

1 John 3:16

John 15:9-11

John 15:12-13

Jeremiah 17:7-8

Pastor Jake
March 27, 2022

Identity #4 Study guide
I am Loved
The Power and Promises of His Love

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I will focus on and Celebrate that I am God's beloved child. That he loved me when I was unlovely, unworthy, and undeserving. That I might begin to see myself through his eyes.

That I am a child of God deeply loved, completely forgiven, fully pleasing, and totally accepted by God chosen by him to reflect his love and grace.

1 John 4:15-19 If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in them and they in God. And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God and God in them. This is how love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment. In this world, we are like Jesus. There is no fear in love, but perfect love drives out fear because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears has not been made perfect in love. We love because He first loved us.

I. The Predicament

A. We all have sin

Romans 3:23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God

B. We all have to answer for our sin

Matthew 12:34-37 (MSG) "You have minds like a snake pit! How do you suppose what you say is worth anything when you are so foul-minded? It's your heart, not the dictionary, that gives meaning to your words. A good person produces good deeds and words season after season. An evil person is a blight on the orchard. Let me tell you something: Every one of these careless words is going to come back to haunt you. There will be a time of Reckoning. Words are powerful; take them seriously. Words can be your salvation. Words can also be your damnation."

2 Corinthians 5:10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.

C. We all need a savior from sin

Romans 5: 6-8 You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

1 Timothy 1:15-16 This is a trustworthy saying, and everyone should accept it: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners"—and I am the worst of them all. 16 But God had mercy on me so that Christ Jesus could use me as a prime example of his great patience with even the worst sinners. Then others will realize that they, too, can believe in him and receive eternal life.

II. The Prerequisite

A. Acknowledge that Jesus is who He says He is.

1 John 4:15 If anyone **acknowledges** that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in them and they in God.

This acknowledgment is 2 fold:

1. By mouth

Romans 10:9 If you **confess** with your mouth that, "Jesus is Lord"

2. By heart

Romans 10:9 ...and believe in your **heart**...

B. Know & Rely on the Creator more than Creation

1 John 4:16 And so we **know** and **rely** on the love God has for us.

Psalms 118:8 (NKJ) "It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man."

III. The Promise of God's love:

A. To complete us

1 John 4:17 This is how love has been made complete among us...

The benefit: Growing Maturity

Philippians 1:6 being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

James 2:3-5 (MSG) Consider it a sheer gift, friends, when tests and challenges come at you from all sides. You know that under pressure, your faith-life is forced into the open and shows its true colors. So don't try to get out of anything prematurely. Let it do its work so you become mature and well-developed, not deficient in any way.

The benefit: Changed Identity.

1 John 4:17 In this world we are like Jesus.

- Would those around you say that you reflect Jesus or something else? How can you do a better job of reflecting him?**

B. To stand in confidence on the day of Judgment:

1 John 4:17 ...so that we can have confidence on the day of judgment: In this world we are like Jesus.

Jeremiah 17:7-8 "But blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord, whose confidence is in him. They will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit."

- Besides God, what are some of the things that you have put confidence in? Have those ever let you down? What would standing with confidence look like to you?

The Benefit: The guarantee of His Love

Ephesians 1:13 And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession- to the praise of his glory.

IV. The Power of God's Love:

A. The Power to drive out fear

1 John 4:18 There is no fear in love, but perfect love drives out fear because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears has not been made perfect in love.

- Human love can be riddled with fear ie fear of rejection, fear of judgment, fear of not being enough. Have you ever experienced that type of fear to love? Has that made the idea of God's love harder to grasp?

Romans 8:15 The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father."

2 Timothy 1:7 (NLT) For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline.

B. The Power to love fearlessly

1 John 4:19 We love because He first loved us...

- How would loving fearlessly change who you are? How would that change your relationships?

Luke 6:22,27 *Blessed are you when people hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man... But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you.*

- In the above scripture Jesus is saying love those who are the most difficult to love. Your new identity in Christ should not just be apparent to those who like you. How hard is this scripture to live out?**
- Before closing your time in prayer, ask each member of your group what it would look like for them to intentionally focus on the “I am” statements and scriptures that define who we are as children of God; our spiritual identity.**
- Be sure your group knows how to access the I am statements on the YC app.**
- Pair up your group and ask them to pray for each other (in pairs) to intentionally focus on these statements and scriptures on a daily basis**

Soaping suggestions

- **1 John 4:18**
- **Romans 5:6**
- **Romans 8:15**
- **Luke 6:27**
- **James 1:23-24**

Identity Week 5
Study Guide
A New Way Of Being

OPEN IN PRAYER

Open your group in a time of prayer asking God to reveal a deeper awareness of our true identity as a children of God

ENCOURAGE SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

Encourage your group to take a few minutes each day this week to meditate on our text for the "Identity" series, 1 Corinthians 13. One of the key areas that we all must keep in focus, to be growing in and becoming more like Christ, is our daily time to focus on our vertical relationship with Christ. Keep that in mind as you have your time together and as you send your group off after being together. Seek to build accountability around this key spiritual discipline of focus and meditation. **This week as we wrestle with the idea of what it means to be truly loving. There is a clear difference between the world's definition of love and the type of love God wants us to display.** Give the members of your group the opportunity to quote the "I am Loving" statement and/or 1 Corinthians 13 as a way to reinforce this key statement of who we are in Christ.

CAST VISION

Remind your group about the lifestyle of being "On Mission". When we say "Lifestyle" we are seeking to reinforce that it is who you are, your identity to Be On Mission.

(What I have found as I ask this question each week is that it helps the group to begin to understand and embrace this value. "Every person in a group and every group on Mission." It has been helpful for the group to be reminded of the 6 ways to "Be on Mission":

- 1) Keep our group open to newcomers-Anyone can Invite a new person to join
- 2) Be open to serve on a team using my spiritual gifts
- 3) Be open to love my neighbor in some practical way
- 4) Be open to meet the need of someone in crisis
- 5) Be open as a group to serve our community
- 6) Be open to opportunities to be financially generous.

Our Vision

We are becoming a loving community of growing disciples, mentoring the next generation, to live the mission of Jesus, through the power of the Gospel.

I am Loving

I will work to eliminate whatever distractions are in my life and schedule that interfere with me living and loving like Jesus. I will memorize and meditate on 1 Corinthians 13 to help me stay focused on this goal."

- What are some of the ways you find yourself distracted that can keep you from being loving?**

A New way of Being 1 Corinthians 13

If I speak in the tongues ^[1] of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. 2 If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. 3 If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, ^[2] but have not love, I gain nothing. 4 Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. 5 It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. 7 It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. 9 For we know in part and we prophesy in part, 10 but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears. 11 When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me. 12 Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. 13 And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

The Dominant Message that flows out of CHRISTianity is **LOVE**

Matthew 22:36-40 “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” Jesus replied: “**Love** the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘**Love** your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

John 13:34-35 (NIV-84) “‘A new command I give you: **Love** one another. As I have **loved** you, so you must **love** one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

- Last month we learned that we can only love like Jesus when we truly understand how much he loves us. Even with that understanding do you find it difficult to love others in that way? Share in your group what could hinder you loving like Jesus.

1 Timothy 1:5 “The goal of this command is **love**, which comes from a pure heart, a good conscience and a sincere faith.”

Galatians 5:6 “The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through **love**.”

Principle: For something new to become intuitive it must first be intentional.

1 Timothy 4:7-8 (NLT) “Do not waste time arguing over godless ideas and old wives’ tales. Instead, train yourself to be godly. ‘Physical training is good, but training for godliness is much better, promising benefits in this life and in the life to come.’”

- In this week's sermon Pastor Jeff said that we have been trained by the world to be many things (busy, skeptical, cynical, critical, lustful, greedy, defensive etc...). Do any of those match your experience or could you add to his list?

To BE Loving (to be trained to be loving) we must become:

I. Intentional about self-examination. 1 Cor. 12:27 (MSG) & 31-13:3 (84)

1 Corinthians 12:27, 31 *"You are Christ's body—that's who you are! You must never forget this.... And now I will show you the most excellent way."*

1 Corinthians 13:1-3 *"If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames but have not love, I gain nothing."*

1. Love can purify what I say.

1 Corinthians 13:1 *"If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal."*

2. Love can purify what I know.

1 Corinthians 13:2 *"If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing."*

1 Corinthians 8:1 *"Knowledge puffs up but love builds up. The man who thinks he knows something does not yet know as he ought to know..."*

3. Love can purify what I do.

1 Corinthians 13:3 *"If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames but have not love, I gain nothing."*

- To intentionally do self-examination requires a slow, honest look at our motives; why we do, say, or behave in certain ways. Have you been able to observe yourself, maybe after doing or saying something, and recognize that your motivation was something other than love (the desire for the other's best interest)?
- Do you practice any kind, or level of regular self-examination, if so describe how you do so?
- Paul is saying that it doesn't matter what we do, if there is no love involved then it means nothing. Discuss in your group if there has been a time when you did something for

someone else but did not feel very loving while doing it. How did that make you feel?
How was that received?

II. Intentional about self-discipline.

2 Timothy 1:7 (NIV-84) “*God did not give us a Spirit of timidity (fear) but a Spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.*”

Self-discipline (Training) empowers me to be as attentive to the things that distract me from love/Jesus, as I am of the things that attract me to love/Jesus.”

1 Corinthians 13:4-7 (NIV-84) “*Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails....*”

- Below you will find the attributes that love is as well as those that love is not. Honestly evaluate yourself. There are 8 positive attributes and 8 negative. Thinking back to our “I am Loving” statement, how can you “work to eliminate whatever distracts you from living and loving like Jesus?”

- | | |
|----------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Patient | 1. Envy |
| 2. Kind | 2. Boast |
| 3. Rejoices in truth | 3. Pride |
| 4. Protects | 4. Rude |
| 5. Trusts | 5. Self-seeking |
| 6. Hopes | 6. Easily angered |
| 7. Persevere | 7. Keep a record of wrongs |
| 8. Doesn't fail | 8. Delights in evil |

- Talk about different ways you can train yourself to be more loving in this upcoming week
- Before closing your time in prayer, ask each member of your group what it would look like for them to intentionally focus on the “I am” statements and scriptures that define who we are as children of God; our spiritual identity.**
- Be sure your group knows how to access the I am statements on the YC app.**
- Pair up your group and ask them to pray for each other (in pairs) to intentionally focus on these statements and scriptures on a daily basis**

Soaping Suggestions

- 1 Corinthians 13:1-3
- John 13:34-35
- 1 Timothy 4:7-8
- 1 Timothy 1:5

- Mathew 22:37-40

Identity Week 6
I am Loving
Study Guide

OPEN IN PRAYER

Open your group in a time of prayer asking God to reveal a deeper awareness of our true identity as a children of God

ENCOURAGE SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

Encourage your group to take a few minutes each day this week to meditate on our text for the "Identity" series, 1 Corinthians 13. One of the key areas that we all must keep in focus, to be growing in and becoming more like Christ, is our daily time to focus on our vertical relationship with Christ. Keep that in mind as you have your time together and as you send your group off after being together. Seek to build accountability around this key spiritual discipline of focus and meditation. **This week as we wrestle with being intentional in our self evaluation into what is distracting us from being loving.** Give the members of your group the opportunity to quote the "I am Loving" statement and/or 1 Corinthians 13 as a way to reinforce this key statement of who we are in Christ.

CAST VISION

Remind your group about the lifestyle of being "On Mission". When we say "Lifestyle" we are seeking to reinforce that it is who you are, your identity to Be On Mission. (What I have found as I ask this question each week is that it helps the group to begin to understand and embrace this value. "Every person in a group and every group on Mission." It has been helpful for the group to be reminded of the 6 ways to "Be on Mission":

- 1) Keep our group open to newcomers-Anyone can Invite a new person to join
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- 5) Be open as a group to serve our community
- 6) Be open to opportunities to be financially generous.

Our Vision

We are becoming a loving community of growing disciples, mentoring the next generation, to live the mission of Jesus, through the power of the Gospel.

I am Loving

I will work to eliminate whatever **distractions** are in my life and schedule that interfere with me living and loving like Jesus. I will memorize and meditate on 1 Cor. 13 to help me stay focused on this GOAL.”

THE GOAL OF LOVE

1 Corinthians 13

If you have the wrong goal you will accomplish the wrong thing.
Most of our fleshly (selfish driven) goals have huge unintended consequences.

Last week’s Principle: For something new to become intuitive it must first become intentional.

Last week’s main points: Becoming Intentional about self-examination and self-discipline.

From Jesus:

Luke 6:40 (NLT) *“The student who is fully trained will become like the teacher.”*

Matthew 11:29 (MSG) *“Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace.”*

John 8:31-32 (MSG) *“If you stick with this, living out what I tell you, you are my disciples for sure. Then you will experience for yourselves the truth, and the truth will free you.”*

FREE FROM WHAT? Your **DISTRACTIONS!**

Scott Peck *“What does a life of total dedication to the truth mean? It means, first of all, a life of continuous and never ending stringent self-examination.”*

This week’s Principle: You cannot eliminate a distraction you are unwilling to **acknowledge**, through self-awareness.

From Jesus:

Luke 6:42 *“How can you say to your brother, ‘Brother, let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when you yourself fail to see the plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.*

(TPT) *“You must **acknowledge** your own blind spots and deal with them before you will be able to deal with the blind spots of your friend.”*

Matthew 22:36-40 *“Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” Jesus replied: **“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all***

your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

To BE Loving (to be trained to be loving) we must become:

I. Intentional about self-examination. Vs. 1-3

Charles Swindoll

“An inner restlessness grows within us when we refuse to get alone and examine our hearts, including our motives...We train ourselves to go right on, to stay active, to be busy... Unless we discipline ourselves to pull back, to get alone for the hard work of self-examination in times of solitude, serenity will remain only a distant dream.”

- Last week Pastor Jeff said that in order for something to be intuitive it first needs to be intentional. When do you make time for honest self-evaluation?**

II. Intentional about self-discipline. Vs. 4-8

2 Timothy 1:7 (NIV-84) *“God did not give us a Spirit of timidity (fear) but a Spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.”*

Self-discipline (Training) empowers me to be as attentive to the things that distract me from love/Jesus, as I am of the things that attract me to love/Jesus.”

1 Corinthians 13:4-7 (NIV-84) *“Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails....”*

- Below you will find the attributes that love is as well as those that love is not. Honestly evaluate yourself. There are 8 positive attributes and 8 negative. Thinking back to our “I am Loving” statement, how can you “work to eliminate whatever distracts you from living and loving like Jesus?” Share in your group how did you score? Did you score more attractions or distractions? What would it look like to choose one or more positive attributes and intentionally begin to love that way?**

ATTRACTIONS

1. Patient

DISTRACTIONS

1. Envy

- | | |
|----------------------|----------------------------|
| 2. Kind | 2. Boast |
| 3. Rejoices in truth | 3. Pride |
| 4. Always Protects | 4. Rude |
| 5. Always Trusts | 5. Self-seeking |
| 6. Always Hopes | 6. Easily angered |
| 7. Always Persevere | 7. Keep a record of wrongs |
| 8. Never fails | 8. Delights in evil |

III. Intentional about focusing on the **Big-picture**.
 The BIG picture is, how am I doing at living and loving like Jesus, to bring others to Jesus.

John 13:34-35 (NIV-84) “A new command I give you: **Love** one another. As I have **loved** you, so you must **love** one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

In the above scripture, Jesus is telling his disciples to love the way he loves us. How was the way Jesus loved and continues to love so radically different?

1. We are distracted by our love of temporary **talent** (giftedness) but are called to the goal of living and loving like Jesus (the perfect man/savior).

1 Corinthians 13:8-9 “Love never fails (TPT-Love never stops loving.) But where there are **prophecies** they will cease; where there are **tongues** they will be stilled; where there is **knowledge**, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears.”

NOTICE: How verses 8-9 repeat the emphasis of verses 1-2.

1 Corinthians 13:1-2 “If I speak in the **tongues** of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of **prophecy** and can fathom all mysteries and all **knowledge**, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.”

1 Corinthians 13:8-9 “Love never fails (TPT-Love never stops loving.) But where there are **prophecies** they will cease; where there are **tongues** they will be stilled; where there is **knowledge**, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears.”

1 John 3:2 “Dear friends, now we are the children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known but we know that **when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.**”

“I long to do great and noble tasks, but it is my chief duty to do small tasks as if they are great and noble.”

–Hellen Keller

“It’s not how much you do, but how much love you put into what you do that counts.”

–Mother Teresa

- **Acknowledging this distraction (toward talent) can move us to focus more on the goal of love.**

2. We are distracted by the immature but are called to maturity.

1 Corinthians 13:11 “When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me.”

- Being immature is not relegated to being a child. In your self evaluation time have you been made aware of where you still act or have acted childish in your behaviors toward others? Share with group**

Hebrews 5:13-14 “Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil”

- **Acknowledging this distraction (of being immature) can move us to focus more on the goal of maturity.**

3. We are distracted by not knowing (insecurity) but are called to trust the one who knows us fully.

1 Corinthians 13:12 “Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror, then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part, then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.”

1 Corinthians 8:2-3 “ Knowledge puffs up while love builds up. **2** Those who think they know something do not yet know as they ought to know. **3** But whoever loves God is known by God.

(MSG) *“Sometimes our humble hearts can help us more than our proud minds. We never really know enough until we recognize that God alone knows it all.*

Humility doesn't have to know it all because it trusts the one who does.

Acknowledging this distraction (of insecurity) can move us to focus more on the goal of humility.

- 4. We are distracted by things that matter to us but are called to what matters most.**

1 Corinthians 13:13 *“And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.”*

Acknowledging this distraction (of what matters to us) can move us to focus more on the goal of what matters most.

Acts 20:24 (MSG) *“What matters most to me is to finish what God started: the job the Master Jesus gave me of letting everyone I meet know all about this incredibly extravagant generosity of God.”*

- Doing only what matters to ourselves is called selfishness, doing what matters most which is loving like Jesus takes selflessness. How are you moving towards a life of selflessness. What disciplines are you practicing to get there?**
- Before closing your time in prayer, ask each member of your group what it would look like for them to intentionally focus on the “I am” statements and scriptures that define who we are as children of God; our spiritual identity.**
- Be sure your group knows how to access the I am statements on the YC app.**
- Pair up your group and ask them to pray for each other (in pairs) to intentionally focus on these statements and scriptures on a daily basis**

Soaping Suggestions

- Hebrews 5:13-14
- 1 Corinthians 13:11
- Psalm 139:23-24
- John 13:34-35
- 1 Corinthians 13:13

Identity Week 7
Small group guide
An Easter Identity
2 Cor. 5:14-21

OPEN IN PRAYER

Open your group in a time of prayer asking God to reveal a deeper awareness of our true identity as a children of God

ENCOURAGE SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

Encourage your group to take a few minutes each day this week to meditate on our text for the "Identity" series, 1 Corinthians 13. One of the key areas that we all must keep in focus, to be growing in and becoming more like Christ, is our daily time to focus on our vertical relationship with Christ. Keep that in mind as you have your time together and as you send your group off after being together. Seek to build accountability around this key spiritual discipline of focus and meditation. **This week as we wrestle with how our identity should be shaped by Christ's resurrection.** Give the members of your group the opportunity to quote the "I am Loving" statement and/or 1 Corinthians 13 as a way to reinforce this key statement of who we are in Christ.

CAST VISION

Remind your group about the lifestyle of being "On Mission". When we say "Lifestyle" we are seeking to reinforce that it is who you are, your identity to Be On Mission. (What I have found as I ask this question each week is that it helps the group to begin to understand and embrace this value. "Every person in a group and every group on Mission." It has been helpful for the group to be reminded of the 6 ways to "Be on Mission":

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Introduction

Identity defined: Your identity is what you **identify** with the most; it is the story you tell yourself about yourself. Unfortunately our identities seldom match who God says we are.

We all have multiple identities based on our life story; formed from the path we have walked.

- "I have identified myself with many of the bad choices that I have made in my life. I have told myself stories about myself that definitely affected my behavior and the**

way I projected myself to others” -Pastor Rueben What are some of the identities you have allowed to shape your life?

How has the way you have identified yourself changed over time?

Our desired identity is one that will produce some measure of stability, purpose, meaning and esteem. Sooner or later our identity will collide with the reality of a broken, flawed and sinful world. When this happens we begin to experience an identity **crisis**.

2 Corinthians 5:14-21 “14For Christ’s love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. 15 And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again. 16 So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. 17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! 18 All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: 19 that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. 20 We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God. 21 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

An Easter Identity is when we identify with Jesus because of Reconciliation.

Reconciliation (Greek Katalasso) means: to come and exchange, change or transform something; to return to favor.

Examples:

When what was broken is repaired it’s been reconciled.

When what was wrong has been made right it’s been reconciled.

When what was a problem has been corrected it’s been reconciled.

Three Effects (or changes) from Jesus’ work of Reconciliation

1. A New Motivation vs 14-15 - Your Motivation Is why you do anything.

2 Corinthians 5:14 “For Christ’s love **compels** us....”

2. A New Observation vs. 16 - Your Observation is how you see everything.

2 Corinthians 5:16 “So from now on we regard no one from a worldly **point of view**...”

3. A New Identification vs 17 - Your Identification is what’s your most important thing.

2 Corinthians 5:17 “Therefore if anyone is **in Christ** he is a new creation...”

I. A New Identification; A New Identity

Your identification is what you think is the most important thing in life (By your behavior).

2 Corinthians 5:17 "Therefore, if anyone is **in Christ**, he is **a new creation**; the old has gone, the new has come."

"**In Christ**" (other than Disciple) is the dominant term in scripture to describe a Christ follower's identity. It is used 164 times.

- How does the idea of being "in" Christ change your idea of what it means to have a relationship with Christ?**
- Paul says once we are in Christ we have a new identity, our old self is gone. How would truly believing that change the story you tell about yourself or the story of others?**

Jesus identified with us so we would identify with Him.

1 Peter 2:24 "He himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness."

1 Peter 3:18 "For Christ died for sins, once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous to bring you to God."

He died the death He did not deserve, that we might gain the life we did not earn.

- **We face our true selves by looking to the cross.**

Galatians 2:20 "For I have been crucified with Christ, and I no longer live but Christ lives in me."

- **We embrace our new selves by looking to the resurrection.**

2 Corinthians 5:17 "If anyone is **IN CHRIST** he is a **NEW CREATION**...."

Colossians 3:1-3 (MSG) "So if you're serious about living this new resurrection life with Christ, act like it. Pursue the things over which Christ presides. ... See things from his perspective."

II. A New **Observation**

Your Observation is how you see everything in life.

2 Corinthians 5:16 "So from now on we regard no one from **a worldly point of view**. Though we once regarded Christ in this way we do so no longer."

- When it comes to the way we view others, share some of the differences between a worldly point of view and a Jesus point of view.**

When we change how we see Jesus it changes how we see ourselves and others.

Examples: If I see myself (the story I tell myself) from an identification with people...things...activities.

Examples: When my identity is tied to what I do...achieve...or how I look...

III. A New **Motivation**

Your Motivation is why you do anything in life.

2 Corinthians 5:14-15 *“For Christ’s love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all. Therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer **live for themselves** but **live for him** who died for them and was raised again.”*

Your motivation is driven by who you live for: self at center or Christ at center. Jesus changes your center.

- Jesus was motivated by love and it's his love that should motivate us. How would changing what motivates you to being motivated by love change you?**

If you don't examine the path you are on, you'll never discover the path where you belong.

- Before closing your time in prayer, ask each member of your group what it would look like for them to intentionally focus on the “I am” statements and scriptures that define who we are as children of God; our spiritual identity.**
- Be sure your group knows how to access the I am statements on the YC app.**
- Pair up your group and ask them to pray for each other (in pairs) to intentionally focus on these statements and scriptures on a daily basis**

Soaping suggestions

Romans 8:11

2 Corinthians 5:14-15

2 Corinthians 5:17

Galatians 2:20

1 Corinthians 5:13-14

Identity week 7
Small group study guide
The journey to a Christ Centered Identity

OPEN IN PRAYER

Open your group in a time of prayer asking God to reveal a deeper awareness of our true identity as a children of God

ENCOURAGE SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

Encourage your group to take a few minutes each day this week to meditate on our text for the "Identity" series, 1 Corinthians 13. One of the key areas that we all must keep in focus, to be growing in and becoming more like Christ, is our daily time to focus on our vertical relationship with Christ. Keep that in mind as you have your time together and as you send your group off after being together. Seek to build accountability around this key spiritual discipline of focus and meditation. **This week we will look at what is necessary in order to grow into our new identity in Christ.**

CAST VISION

Remind your group about the lifestyle of being "On Mission". When we say "Lifestyle" we are seeking to reinforce that it is who you are, your identity to Be On Mission. (What I have found as I ask this question each week is that it helps the group to begin to understand and embrace this value. "Every person in a group and every group on Mission." It has been helpful for the group to be reminded of the 6 ways to "Be on Mission":

- 1) Keep our group open to newcomers-Anyone can Invite a new person to join
- 2) Be open to serve on a team using my spiritual gifts
- 3) Be open to love my neighbor in some practical way
- 4) Be open to meet the need of someone in crisis
- 5) Be open as a group to serve our community
- 6) Be open to opportunities to be financially generous.

Your Identity is the story you tell yourself about yourself; it is what you identify with the most and what defines who you are.

Last week: A new identification-A new Observation-A new Motivation

Principle: You can't just go there, you've got to grow there.

This Growth Requires:

- I. A **Vision** of what a Christ centered Identity is. - We need inspiration
 In your own words, how would you articulate what a Christ centered identity looks like? What makes it difficult to live a Christ centered life?

Jeremiah 7:9-10 (NIV84) "But blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, whose confidence is in him. He will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit."

John 15:5 (NIV84) "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing."

Our Vision corporately: “We are a loving community of growing disciples mentoring the next generation to live the mission of Jesus through the power of the gospel.”

Our Vision Individually: I am Loved, I am Loving, I am a Disciple, I am a Mentor, and I am a Missionary.

I am Loved

I will focus on and celebrate that I am God’s beloved child. That he loved me when I was unlovely, unworthy and undeserving, that I might begin to see myself through his eyes. That I am a child of God: deeply loved, completely forgiven, fully pleasing, totally accepted by God, chosen by him to reflect his love and grace.

I am Loving

I will work to eliminate whatever distractions are in my life and schedule that interfere with me living and loving like Jesus. I will memorize and meditate on 1 Cor. 13 to help me stay focused on this goal.

- Have you been working to eliminate distractions in your life? If so, what are they?
- If you were to take a self assessment of whether you have noticed a change in your ability to be loving since the beginning of this sermon series how would you rate yourself?
- The outcome: There’s a better **tomorrow**-better future.

II. A **Map** that shows how to get there - We need clarification

EXPLORE-DISCOVER-RELY-SURRENDER

1. **EXPLORE**

Jeremiah 29:13 (MSG) “When you come looking for me you will find me. Yes when you get serious about finding me and want it more than anything else”

2. **DISCOVER**

John 3:33 (NLT) “Those who believe him (Jesus) **discover** that God is a fountain of truth.”

John 8:31-32 (MSG) “If you stick with this, living out what I tell you, you are my disciples for sure. Then you will **experience** the truth and the truth will free you.”

3. **RELY**

Proverbs 3:5-6 (TPT) “Trust in the Lord completely, and do not **rely** on your own opinions. With all your heart rely on him to guide you...”

4. **SURRENDER**

Galatians 2:20 (MSG) *“I **identified** myself completely with him. Indeed, I have been crucified with Christ. My ego is no longer central. ...Christ lives in me. The life you see me living is not “mine,” but it is lived by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”*

- **The outcome: It shows me the way.**
 - In the above list consisting of explore, discover, rely and surrender all have to do with where you are in your relationship with Christ. Share of times when you were in each of those spaces and have there been times where you found yourself repeating the cycle.**

III. A **Guide** to coach your growth - We need consultation

John 10:27 *“My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and **they follow me.**”*

1 Corinthians 11:1 *“Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.”*

- The apostle Paul is saying that he is following Christ so closely that if you follow his actions you would be following Christ. Would you be able to say the same? Why or why not?**

Philippians 3:17 (TPT) *“My beloved friends, imitate my walk with God and follow all those who walk according to the way of life we modeled before you.”*

- **The outcome: I have someone to **help** me.**

IV. A **Community** to support your growth - We need relational application.

Hebrews 10:24-26 *“Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.”*

- How would you describe your relationship within your group? Is your group encouraging your spiritual growth?**
 - **The outcome: My relationships are **better**.**
- Before closing your time in prayer, ask each member of your group what it would look like for them to intentionally focus on the “I am” statements and scriptures that define who we are as children of God; our spiritual identity.**
- Be sure your group knows how to access the I am statements on the YC app.**
- Pair up your group and ask them to pray for each other (in pairs) to intentionally focus on these statements and scriptures on a daily basis**

Soaping suggestions

- Jeremiah 29:13
- Hebrews 10:24
- Philippians 3:17
- John 15:5
- Jeremiah 7:9-10

Identity #8
I am a Disciple
(Chapter One)

I will concentrate on the spiritual habits and disciplines that Jesus practiced so I can truly be more like him in my daily life. I will make connecting with God daily through prayer and Bible engagement, growing with others in community, through faithful participation in a small group, and serving with others through the use of my talent, time and tithe a top priority in my life. I will memorize and meditate on mark 8:34-36 and 1 Tim. 4:7-8 to help me stay focused on this goal.

A Spiritual Discipline (which creates spiritual habits): is something that I do now that will enable me in the future to be able to do what I otherwise could not do.

All 5 of our “I am” statements end with the same phrase:

”I will memorize and meditate on...to help me stay **focused** on this goal.

- I am Loved
- I am Loving
- I am a Disciple
- I am a Mentor
- I am a Missionary

Why? Because you FOCUS on what you value, and what you value shapes your identity.

Identity definition: The story you tell yourself about yourself; it’s what you identify with the most; it’s what defines you.

Quote

“Psychologist Alexander Mitslerlich said about men, ‘Society has torn the soul of a male, and into that tear, the demons have fled—the demons of insecurity, selfishness, and despair. Consequently, men do not know who they are as men. Rather they define themselves by what they do, who they know, or by what they possess.’”

Disciple is **mathētēs** in the Greek and means, a learner, a pupil, or a student. It is used 269 times and was the primary term for those who chose to follow Jesus.

Quote

“A disciple is a learner under discipline who has voluntarily submitted him or herself to be taught. Discipleship is not to bring people into legalism but in liberty. It’s not to manipulate people but to mature them spiritually. Discipleship is not to dominate, but to develop them for their full potential for God. It’s not to restrict people but to release them

to their own ministry. A disciple is one who has learned to submit to authority and therefore ready to exercise authority.”

—John Maxwell

YOUR FOCUS SHAPES YOUR IDENTITY:

Matthew 22:36-40 “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. 39 And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

I. Focus on being **Christ**-centered not **self**-centered .

Mark 8:34-36 “Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. 35 For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it. 36 What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul?”

- This is the **priority** of discipleship - Knowing Jesus (the pattern of His life).

Genesis 2:9 & 3:6-8 “In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil... She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. 7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves. Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God...”

2 Corinthians 5:14-15 “For Christ’s love compels us because we are convinced the one died for all...so that those who live **should no longer live for themselves**, but live for him who died for them and was raised again.”

Philippians 2:3 (84) “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility (consider) value others (better than) above yourselves...In your relationships with one another, have the same **mindset** as Christ Jesus:...”

Matthew 6:33 “But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”

Quote

C. S. Lewis “You can’t get second things by putting them first; you can get second things only by putting first things first.”

II. Focus on **training**, not trying.

You can try to be loving or you can train to be loving (to be like Jesus).

1 Timothy 4:7-8 *“Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives’ tales; rather, **train** yourself to be godly. **8** For **physical training** is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.”*

Luke 6:40 (NLT) *“Students are not greater than their teacher. But the student who is fully **trained** will become like the teacher.”*

- This is the **Place** of discipleship - The mind, Knowing **ourselves** (the pattern of our **thoughts**-the stories we tell ourselves).

We have to train our brain!

“The ultimate power we have as individuals is the power to select what we will allow or require our minds to dwell upon or think about. By think we mean all the ways we are aware of things, including memories, perceptions (stories) and beliefs. The focus of your thoughts significantly affects everything else that happens in your life and evokes the feelings that frame your world and motivate your actions.”

—Dallas Willard

Discipleship is about training our brain to think like Jesus. To let his truth rule over our thought patterns in order to defeat the distraction and deception that abound around us.

- Pastor Jeff

We are flooded with distractions that submerge our thoughts into spiritual oblivion.

- Pastor Jeff

There is no deep knowing of God without a deep knowing of self and no deep knowing of self without a deep knowing of God.”

—John Calvin

“Grant, Lord, that I may know myself that I may know thee.”

—Augustine

EXPLORE-DISCOVER-RELY-SURRENDER

EXPLORE:

This is the intentional self-examination we’ve been talking about.

It is where we are seeking to bring what is unconscious to our consciousness.

In scripture the heart and mind are the place we encounter God.

Proverbs 23:7(AMP) *“For as (a man) **thinks** in his **heart**, so is he.”*

Psalm 139:23 *“Search me, O God, and know my **heart**; test me and know my anxious **thoughts**.”*

Jeremiah 17:9-10 *“The **heart** is deceitful and beyond cure. Who can understand it? I the Lord search the **heart** and examine the **mind**...”*

Quote:

“What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us.”

—Oliver Wendell Holmes

“Most of man's miseries derive from not being able to sit quietly in a room alone.”

—Blaise Pascal

We have to explore what we are thinking, the stories we tell!

Quote:

‘Narrative is the ‘central function... of the human mind.’ We turn everything into a story in order to make sense of life. We ‘dream in narrative, day-dream in narrative, remember, anticipate, hope, despair, believe, doubt, plan, criticize, construct, gossip, learn, hate, and love by narrative.’ In fact, we cannot avoid it. We are storied creatures.’

—James Bryant Smith, *Good and Beautiful God*

DISCOVER:

This is when the unconscious becomes conscious.

When what was unknown becomes known. When we face the facts about our struggle to find meaning and purpose apart from God. It is when we can begin to hear and catch what we are telling ourselves.

Romans 7:18-25 (TPT) *“The longings to do what is right are within me, but will power is not enough to accomplish it...Through my experience of this principle I discover that even when I want to do good, evil is ready to sabotage me...Within my true identity I love to do what pleases God. But I discern another power operating in my humanity...who has the power to rescue this miserable man from this unwelcome intruder of sin...thanks to God through our Lord Jesus Christ...now my renewed mind is fixed on and submitted to God...”*

You **cannot** move to the discover, rely on, and surrender stage of your true identity when you are unconsciously being driven by (an old (or false) identity.

RELY:

You have to train your brain (what you tell yourself) to rely on, and trust Jesus.

Proverbs 3:5-6 (TPT) *“Trust in the Lord completely, and do not **rely** on your own opinions. With all your heart rely on him to guide you...”*

2 Corinthians 10:3 *“Take every **thought** captive to make it obedient to Christ.”*

SURRENDER:

Romans 12:2 *“Do not conform to the **pattern** of this world, but be **transformed by the renewing of your mind**. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.”*

You make space for what you value.

I'll be shifting these points to next week.

III. Focus on walking, not running.

Lev. 26:12 "I will also walk among you and be your God, and you shall be My people.

Matt. 4:18 "Now as Jesus was walking by the Sea of Galilee, He saw two brothers, Simon who was called Peter, and Andrew his brother,... "Come, follow me,"(D) Jesus said,

Matt. 11:28-29 (MSG) "Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace.

- THIS IS The Pace of discipleship.

The more fragile one's identity is, the more hurried their pace, or distracted their mind.

Gen.3:8 "They heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day..."

Matt. 6:33 (MSG) "What I'm trying to do here is to get you to relax, to not be so preoccupied with *getting*, so you can respond to God's *giving*. People who don't know God and the way he works fuss over these things, but you know both God and how he works. Steep your life in God-reality, God-initiative, God-provisions. Don't worry about missing out. You'll find all your everyday human concerns will be met."

I'll use the below material for next week or

Quote

Hans Minenger,

“Our stories affect what we think of ourselves and what we imagine others think of us; our identity, our sense of self. Our narratives are affected and influenced by many things—the first being our family narrative or what I call our born identity. It’s the narrative we inherited from our family. Our narratives, our born or broken stories, often generate fears and insecurities that plague us, so we gravitate toward an artificial story—something that will make us feel valuable, loved, or special in the hope to find relief or cope with our struggles, hurts, and fears. All of which will never get the job done because it’s left God out of the equation; out of the story. We’ve left the garden and God isn’t our center.”

“Wow! Okay, I think I’ll get that,” says Robert. “But how can we recognize or identify our false identity?”

“If I could put the idea of an identity in a single phrase I’d say that one’s identity is the story we tell ourselves about ourselves. We need to learn to recognize what we are constantly telling ourselves. For example, for years I would tell myself a story that if someone saw that I was inadequate or could see my anxiety (my fear of rejection), they would think less of me. So I told myself I had to project confidence and conceal my fears or inadequacies. This kind of personal messaging concludes that I have to put on a mask, something artificial, to be accepted. Another way I falsely messaged myself was out of my brokenness. Because of my learning disorder I would constantly battle an internal story that said, ‘you are going to fail, screw up and when you do, people will reject you.’ Those were the stories I was telling myself about myself. Until we can catch these internal scripts that are running on autopilot, our efforts for improvement or growth will be mostly futile, with little or no internal transformation. Does that make sense?”

“It does make sense, but it all sounds a bit tiring!” Robert muses.

“Yes, it is!” Hans exclaims. “It’s exhausting. And we do it all the time. We are anxiously trying to get others to like us, respect us, or see us as important or special through gaining things or positions that take God out of the center. When God loses first place in our lives, a hundred different things begin to compete for first place, all of which should never earn more than second place at best. It’s mostly an unconscious operating system that is constantly running under the surface. What has to happen, sooner or later, is a deep determination to replace the old dysfunctional system. If it isn’t replaced, we’ll continue to end up exhausted, or even demoralized or cynical, and ultimately unfulfilled because we are using a broken system.

Acknowledge the power of your thoughts

Catch your thoughts and your stories.

Blaise Pascal“Most of man’s miseries derive from not being able to sit quietly in a room alone.”

Quote:

James Bryant Smith, Good and Beautiful God

‘Narrative is the ‘central function... of the human mind.’ We turn everything into a story in order to make sense of life. We ‘dream in narrative, day-dream in narrative, remember, anticipate, hope, despair, believe, doubt, plan, criticize, construct, gossip, learn, hate, and love by narrative.’ In fact, we cannot avoid it. We are storied creatures.’

Your thoughts shape who you are - your identity.

Discover:

2 Cor. 10:3 “Take every thought captive to make it obedient to Christ.”

Romans 12:2 “ Do not conform(A) to the **pattern** of this world,(B) but be **transformed by the renewing of your mind.**(C) Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is(D)—his good, pleasing(E) and perfect will.”

Use under point #1

Quote

Hans Minenger,

“Our stories affect what we think of ourselves and what we imagine others think of us; our identity, our sense of self. Our narratives are affected and influenced by many things—the first being our family narrative or what I call our born identity. It’s the narrative we inherited from our family. Our narratives, our born or broken stories, often generate fears and insecurities that plague us, so we gravitate toward an artificial story—something that will make us feel valuable, loved, or special in the hope to find relief or cope with our struggles, hurts, and fears. All of which will never get the job done because it’s left God out of the equation; out of the story. We’ve left the garden and God isn’t our center.”

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IV. Focus on receiving more than achieving.

Scripture tells us repeatedly that the relationship we have with Jesus (being “In Christ”; Being His disciples, is where we RECEIVE:

His love - Rom. 5:8

His grace - Eph. 2:8

His forgiveness - Eph. 1:7

His Mercy - Rom. 12:1

His blessing - 2 Cor. 9:8

His strength - 2 Cor. 12:9-10

His rest - Matt. 11:28-29

This is the practice of being with Jesus.

Matt. 11:28-29 “Come to me,(A) all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.(B) 29 Take my yoke upon you and learn from me,(C) for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.”

Maybe devotional thoughts:

Your spiritual identity has to be built from the ground up, from the inside out.

Jesus talking about foundation-rock versus sand, Luke 12???

The woman at the well....?

Your values from your identity, if you value athletics that will affect the story you tell yourself about yourself. THAT'S NOT BAD, just inadiquit. I'm an awesome athlete! Golfer, pitcher, batter, thrower, putter, hitter, center, forward, guard, tackle, boxer, fighter, kicker

Identity Wk 9
I am a Disciple - The Pace of Discipleship
(Chapter Two)
Small group study guide

CAST VISION

Remind your group about the lifestyle of being “On Mission”. When we say “Lifestyle” we are seeking to reinforce that it is who you are, your identity to Be On Mission. (What I have found as I ask this question each week is that it helps the group to begin to understand and embrace this value. “Every person in a group and every group on Mission.” It has been helpful for the group to be reminded of the 6 ways to “Be on Mission”:

- 1) Keep our group open to newcomers-Anyone can Invite a new person to join
- 2) Be open to serve on a team using my spiritual gifts
- 3) Be open to love my neighbor in some practical way
- 4) Be open to meet the need of someone in crisis
- 5) Be open as a group to serve our community
- 6) Be open to opportunities to be financially generous.

This years Stretch Challenge:

Commit to memory & to life, All of the “I am” statements and scriptures. Memorizing scripture is one of the primary tools to help rewrite that internal messaging system that we all have. The purpose of memorization is not just to be knowledgeable but more importantly to transform your very wiring. We hope you will accept this challenge that has the ability to change your life.

I am Loved

“I will focus on and celebrate that I am God’s beloved Child. That he loved me when I was unlovely, unworthy and undeserving, that I might begin to see myself through his eyes. That I am a child of God. Deeply loved, completely forgiven, fully pleasing and totally accepted by God. Chosen by him to reflect his love and grace.

I am Loving

I will work to eliminate whatever distractions are in my life and schedule that interfere with me living and loving like Jesus.

I am a Disciple

I will concentrate on the spiritual habits and discipline that Jesus practiced, so I can truly be more like him in my daily life. I will make connecting with God daily, through prayer and Bible engagement; growing with others in community, through faithful participation in a small group, and serving with others through the use of my talent, time and tithe a top priority of my life.

I am a Mentor

I will seek to be an example that anyone can follow. An observational mentor to all of the youth in my sphere of influence and an intentional mentor to a few.

I am a Missionary

I will obey the great commission as an expression of my love for Christ. I will grow in my ability and commitment to spread the message of Christ's love to those around me and around the world. I will do what I can do and support those who can do more than I can do through my generous giving."

I will memorize and meditate on 1 John 4:15-19, 1 Cor. 13, Mark 8:34-36, 1 Tim. 4:7-8, Deut. 6:6-9, Phil. 4:9, Matt. 28:19-20 and 1 Peter 3:15 to help me stay focused on these Goals.

Identity definition: The story you tell yourself about yourself; it's what you identify with the most; it's what defines you.

A disciple's FOCUS is on:

- The Priority of Discipleship - Being Christ-centered instead of Self-centered
- The Place of Discipleship - Being in training instead of trying
- The Pace of Discipleship - Walking instead of running
- The Practice of Discipleship - Receiving instead of achieving

The Pace of Discipleship
Focus on walking, not running.

Quote:

Kosuke Koyoma, The 3 mile an hour God, "Love has its speed. It is a spiritual speed. It is a different kind of speed from the technological speed to which we are accustomed. It goes on in the depth of our life, whether we notice or not, at three miles an hour. It is the speed we walk and therefore the speed the love of God walks."

I. The Pace of Discipleship is the pace of God and the presence of God/love.

1 John 4:17 "God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them."

Genesis 3:8 "They heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day..."

Leviticus 26:12 "I will walk among you and be your God, and you shall be My people."

2 Corinthians 6:16 "For we are the temple of the living God. As God said: "I will live in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they will be my people."

Matthew 4:18 “Now as Jesus was walking by the Sea of Galilee, He saw two brothers, Simon who was called Peter, and Andrew his brother,... “Come, follow me,”

The more fragile one’s identity is, the more hurried their pace, or distracted their mind.

- How would you describe the pace of your life right now? What challenges does your pace come with? Would slowing down benefit you in your discipleship and how?**

II. The Pace of Discipleship makes space for:

Matthew 22:36-40 “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” Jesus replied: “**Love the Lord your God** with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. 39 And the second is like it: **‘Love your neighbor // as yourself.’** All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

1. Knowing and loving **God**

1 John 4:15-16a “If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in them and they in God. 16 And so we **know and rely** on the love God has for us.”

Matthew 11:28-29 (MSG) “Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace.” (This is Jesus calling us to train!)

- Shows you **Who** to follow - recognizing spiritual **direction**.

1 Peter 2:21 (CEB) “He (Jesus) left you an example so that you might follow in his steps.”

Romans 12:2 (NLT) “Let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God’s will for you...”

- Empowers you to see that your **primary** identity flows out of your relationship with God.

1 John 4:16b-17 “God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them. 17 This is how love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment.”

Robert Dillon tells his students, “I am not a teacher who is a Christian, I am a Christian who is a teacher.”

- How do you describe yourself? Share if/how you integrate Jesus in your daily life and professional life. If you find it difficult please share some of the challenges.**

2. Knowing and loving yourself

James 2:8 *“If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, “Love your neighbor as yourself,” you are doing right.”*

Proverbs 19:8 *“To acquire wisdom is to love yourself...”*

- **Showing you How to follow - responding to spiritual correction.**

Proverbs 3:12 *“For the LORD corrects those he loves, just as a father corrects a child in whom he delights.”*

Isaiah 30:21 (LB) *“If you leave God’s paths and go astray, you will hear a voice behind you say, “No, this is the way; walk here.”*

Hebrews 12:6-8 (MSG) *“This trouble you’re in isn’t punishment; it’s training... God is doing what is best for us, training us to live God’s holy best. At the time, discipline isn’t much fun. It always feels like it’s going against the grain. Later, of course, it pays off big-time, for it’s the well-trained who find themselves mature in their relationship with God.”*

- How well do you respond to correction? Do you find yourself resistant to being corrected? How does that translate to your ability to allow God to correct you?**
- **Empowers you to see and adjust your motivation (Focus) when an abrupt message rises within you.**

Discernment is learning to be attentive to these subtle movements and counter movements toward and away from God. Attending to the feelings that predictably correspond to each heart direction can help us discern God’s will. By learning to recognize the markers of having turned away from God, we can learn to more quickly and fully turn toward God. The self-focus that is a part of discernment is the means to the end, but not the end. The point of developing a discerning heart is to focus on God. It is a tool to help us learn to choose God.
—David Benner

3. Knowing and loving others

1 John 1:7 *“If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.”*

1 Peter 4:10 “Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins.”

- Showing you how to help others to experience spiritual **protection**.

Galatians 6:2 “Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.”

- Empowers you to be **present** when distractions rise around you.

Colossians 3:12-14 “Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. **13** Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. **14** And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.”

- Last month we learned about the distractions in our lives that keep us from living and loving like Jesus. If you did remove them how have you been at keeping those distractions from coming back?**

Journal and Soap Suggestions-

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Monday- Pastor Jeff has a 1-5 scale, 1 being “ I have never heard that” 2- I might have heard that but I am not sure what that means. 3 I can articulate that , 4 I am practicing that and 5 It is second nature- Journal where you are as far as implementing I am Statements

Tuesday- Soap I am a disciple statement

Wednesday- Soap Mark 8:34-35

Thursday- Soap a portion of 1 John 4:15-19

Friday- Identity Book question- Journal answer to question 2 from chapter 2

Identity Week 10
I am a disciple
Small Group Study Guide
Chapter 3 Identity Control

Principle: “To name what is false is the first step to be freed by what is true.”

Identity definition: The story you tell yourself about yourself; it’s what you identify with the most; it’s what defines you.

As we follow Jesus we discover our true Identity but if we cannot identify our false identities (the stories we tell ourselves) we will invariably return to our old way of seeing ourselves.

If you don’t learn to live it (your true identity) you’ll forget it.

CAST VISION

Remind your group about the lifestyle of being “On Mission”. When we say “Lifestyle” we are seeking to reinforce that it is who you are, your identity to Be On Mission. (What I have found as I ask this question each week is that it helps the group to begin to understand and embrace this value. “Every person in a group and every group on Mission.” It has been helpful for the group to be reminded of the 6 ways to “Be on Mission”:

- 1) Keep our group open to newcomers-Anyone can Invite a new person to join
- 2) Be open to serve on a team using my spiritual gifts
- 3) Be open to love my neighbor in some practical way
- 4) Be open to meet the need of someone in crisis
- 5) Be open as a group to serve our community
- 6) Be open to opportunities to be financially generous.

This years Stretch Challenge:

Commit to memory & to life, All of the “I am” statements and scriptures. Memorizing scripture is one of the primary tools to help rewrite that internal messaging system that we all have. The purpose of memorization is not just to be knowledgeable but more importantly to transform your very wiring. Think of our “ I am’s” as a Rule of Life-a trellis for building your true identity that when used well, bears much fruit. We hope you will accept this challenge that has the ability to change your life.

I am Loved

“I will focus on and celebrate that I am God’s beloved Child. That he loved me when I was unlovely, unworthy and undeserving, that I might begin to see myself through his eyes. That I am a child of God. Deeply loved, completely forgiven, fully pleasing and totally accepted by God. Chosen by him to reflect his love and grace.

I am Loving

I will work to eliminate whatever distractions are in my life and schedule that interfere with me living and loving like Jesus.

I am a Disciple

I will concentrate on the spiritual habits and discipline that Jesus practiced, so I can truly be more like him in my daily life. I will make connecting with God daily, through prayer and Bible engagement; growing with others in community, through faithful participation in a small group, and serving with others through the use of my talent, time and tithe a top priority of my life.

I am a Mentor

I will seek to be an example that anyone can follow. An observational mentor to all of the youth in my sphere of influence and an intentional mentor to a few.

I am a Missionary

I will obey the great commission as an expression of my love for Christ. I will grow in my ability and commitment to spread the message of Christ's love to those around me and around the world. I will do what I can do and support those who can do more than I can do through my generous giving."

I will memorize and meditate on 1 John 4:15-19, 1 Cor. 13, Mark 8:34-36, 1 Tim. 4:7-8, Deut. 6:6-9, Phil. 4:9, Matt. 28:19-20 and 1 Peter 3:15 to help me stay focused on these Goals.

A disciple FOCUS' (and competence) on:

- The **Priority** of Discipleship - Being Christ-centered instead of Self-centered (Breaking free from a me centered identity)
- The **Place** of Discipleship - Training (Our brain & body) instead of trying -white knuckling it)
- The **Pace** of Discipleship - Walking (with Jesus) instead of running (ourselves ragged - or in circles)
- The **Practice** of Discipleship - Receiving instead of achieving

The Practice of Discipleship

Receiving more than achieving

*Mark 1:9-12 & 35-37 "At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. **10** Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. **11** And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased." At once the Spirit sent him out into the wilderness, **13** and he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed. **36** Simon and his companions went to look for him, **37** and when they found him, they exclaimed: "Everyone is looking for you!" **38** Jesus replied, "Let us go somewhere else..."*

“I will concentrate on the spiritual habits and disciplines that Jesus practiced so I can truly be more like him in my daily life.”

A Spiritual discipline is: Something that I do now that will enable me in the future to be able to do what I otherwise could not do.”

The practice of Solitude

“Connecting to God daily through Prayer and Bible (truth) engagement...”

Solitude is an undercurrent of the Jesus movement right from the start. In Mark 1 the greek word “Eremos” is used 6 times...and can be translated as solitary, lonely, desolate, uninhabited, desert, and wilderness.

This was the primary practice of Jesus that we are seeking to emulate.

Blaise Pascal

“Most of man’s miseries are derived from not being able to sit in a quiet room alone.”

“Solitude is a terrible trial, it serves to crack open and burst apart our superficial securities.”

- The quotes above talk about the difficulties we have at times being alone with ourselves. We hide our true identity so deeply that it is possible we don’t really know our true selves and are afraid to just sit with ourselves and find out who we are. Share amongst your group why solitude can be so difficult.**

Henry Nouwen

“Without solitude it is almost impossible to live a spiritual life.”

Dallas Willard

“Solitude is the practice of being absent from people and things to attend to God.”

1. In solitude we learn the value of training

1 Timothy 4:7-8 *“Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives tales; rather train yourself **to be godly**. For physical training is of some **value** but godliness has **value** for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.”*

Luke 6:40 (Jesus) *“The student is not above his teacher but the student who is fully trained will be **like his teacher**.”*

Proverbs 12:11 (MSG) *“If you love learning you love the discipline that goes with it.”*

Hebrew 12:11 (MSG) *“At the time discipline isn’t much fun. It always feels like it’s going against the grain. Later, of course, it pays off handsomely, for it’s the well trained who find themselves **mature in their relationship with God**.”*

- **And receive greater discipline & competence.**

2 Timothy 1:7 “For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but of **power**, of **love** and of **self-discipline**.”

Why would Paul associate self discipline with power and love?

- The developmental process is a movement from:

Unconsciously incompetent, (we don't know what we don't know) to
Consciously incompetent, (knowing that I don't know something) to
Consciously competent, (can now do, with concentration, what I previously didn't know) to
Unconsciously competent (know and do without even thinking).

“It costs much to obtain the power of the spirit. It cost self-surrender...and a yielding up of our most precious things to God. But when we are really in that power we shall find this difference, that whereas before, it was hard to do the easiest things, now it is easy to do the hard things.”

A.J. Gordon

2. In solitude we learn to be with (and more conscious of) Jesus/God.

Mark 1:35-36 “Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a **solitary place**, where he **prayed**.”

Luke 5:16 (MSG) “As often as possible Jesus withdrew to out-of-the-way places for prayer.”

Matthew 6:6 (MSG) “Here's what I want you to do: Find a quiet, secluded place so you won't be tempted to **role-play** before God. Just be there as simply and honestly as you can manage. The **focus will shift from you to God**, and you will begin to sense his **grace**.”

- Pastor Jeff says that if we don't schedule a specific place and time for solitude, it will not happen at all. Where have you scheduled a time and where is your favorite place of solitude?**
- Mathew 6:6 (MSG) talks about role playing with God and says we should be simple and honest. Even Though God already knows everything about you, do you find it still difficult to be truly transparent with God?**
- **And receive a greater sense of his grace, a rhythm of receiving from God.**

Matthew 11:29 (MSG) “Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace.”

Matthew 6:33 (MSG) “What I'm trying to do here is to get you to relax, to not be so preoccupied with **getting**, so you can respond to God's **giving**.”

- Share with the group what you would give to Jesus that has burdened you? Share what it might feel like to have real rest for your soul.**

3. In solitude we learn to leave good things behind for what is **best**.

Mark 1:35-36 “Jesus got up, **left the house** and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.”

Philippians 1:9 “And this is my prayer that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to **discern what is best...**”

If Satan can't make you bad he'll just keep you busy.

Luke 10:41-42 (CEV) “The Lord answered, “Martha, Martha! You are worried and upset about so many things, **42** but only one thing is necessary. Mary has **chosen what is best...**”

- And receive greater **discernment**, how to make better choices.

4. In solitude we learn to be **authentic** with God.

Mark 1:35-37 “Jesus got up, left the house and **went off to a solitary place**, where he **prayed**. Simon and his companions went to look for him, **37** and when they found him, they exclaimed: “**Everyone is looking for you!** Jesus replied, “**Let us go somewhere else...**”

Identity Control

The Born Identity

The Artificial Identity

The Broken Identity

The Fantasy Identity

John 4:23-24 (MSG) “It’s who you are and the way you live that count before God. Your worship must engage your spirit in the pursuit of truth. That’s the kind of people the Father is out looking for: those who are simply and honestly themselves before him in their worship.”

Psalms 139:23-24 “Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”

- And receive greater self-**awareness**, to let go of our false identities.

- Before closing in prayer give group members opportunity to share any I am statement or corresponding verse that they have memorized**
- Share any opportunities to be on mission**
- Close in prayer**

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We believe that there will be discovery in this process. Start each day by reading all the I am statements and scripture along with the daily journal as follows

- Monday- Self Evaluation Journal- Last week Pastor Jeff preached about the pace of discipleship. Have you become aware of the pace of your life and schedule? Has that self-awareness caused you to re-evaluate your priorities? Journal what has risen to your awareness.
- Tuesday- Soap a portion of 1 Corinthians 13
- Wednesday- Soap Mark 8:36
- Thursday- Identity Book- Question 5 from Chapter 3
- Friday- Identity Book- Question 6 from Chapter 3

Identity #11
I am a disciple
Chapter 4 Identity Amalgamation
Small Group Study Guide

- Open group in prayer. Spend a moment in a posture of gratitude. What has God done in your life this week that you are truly grateful for?**

Principle: “You will never accept your true identity if you are more concerned with maintaining your artificial one”

Key Verse: Mark 8:34 *“Then he called the crowd to himself along with his disciples and said, “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me”*

Identity definition: The story you tell yourself about yourself; it’s what you identify with the most; it’s what defines you.

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- The **Practice** of Discipleship - Receiving instead of achieving
- The **Process** of Discipleship- Transforming instead of conforming

Mark highlights the audience that Jesus is speaking to

Mark 8:34 *“Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples.”*

- **The Skeptics (the doubters):** People who were looking to disprove the authenticity of Jesus. (Pharisees, Sadducees, religious leaders, Pagan worshippers.)
- **The Groupies (Roadshow warriors):** People who were starstruck with the new buzz and talk of the town. (Jewish people and non-jewish people looking to follow the newest trend)

- **The New Converts**: People changed from pagan and Gentile ways and now accept Jesus as the Messiah
- **The Disciples**: Followers of Jesus. Fully committed to being lifelong learners of Jesus.

The type of people in the crowd varied, but the process Jesus calls everyone to is the same.

The Process of Discipleship

1. **“Come after me”**

Mark 8:34 *“If anyone would come after me...”*

- In the above scripture there is a moment where we as individuals have a choice to make. Jesus starts with an “if” statement. Share in your group whether you have answered the if question and how? Where were you in life when you did answer the question. If you have yet to answer, why?

- This is a call to **be made new**

2 Cor 5:17 *“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!”*

- This is a call for the **lost to be saved**

Luke 19:10 *“For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”*

- This is a call for the saved to be **radically transformed**

Romans 12:2 *“Do not conform to the patterns of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.”*

2. **“Deny himself”**

Mark 8:34 *“...He must deny himself...”*

- The Greek word for “deny” in this verse is “aparnéomai”. It means to forget one's self, lose sight of one's self and one's own interests (the same word used when Peter *denied* Jesus)
- **The very first step to follow Jesus is the requirement of self denial. We cannot get to steps 2 and 3 before doing this. If this is the same**

type of denial that Peter had with Jesus, how would you describe what Jesus is requiring here?

This is a call to **die to self**

Ephesians 4:22-24 “You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; 23 to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.”

Colossians 3:3-5 (MSG) “Your old life is dead. Your new life, which is your real life—even though invisible to spectators—is with Christ in God. He is your life. When Christ (your real life, remember) shows up again on this earth, you’ll show up, too—the real you, the glorious you. Meanwhile, be content with obscurity, like Christ. And that means killing off everything connected with that way of death.”

- Stop **listening** to our own **voice** (our born identities, broken identities, artificial identities/ who we say we are) and we start listening to **God’s voice** (who he says we are)
- **There is always a struggle grasping this idea of dying to self. Scripture doesn’t say to die partly and keep part of yourself and mix in a little Jesus. Yet that’s what many do. Share with the group what are some of the difficulties some may face while trying to fully understand this concept.**

Ephesians 2:10 (NLT) “For you are God’s Masterpiece...”

Isaiah 43:1 “But now, this is what the Lord says- he who created you, Jacob, he who formed you, Israel: “Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine.”

- Stop **leaning** on our own **power** and start leaning on the power of the **Holy Spirit**

Galatians 5:16 (NLT) “So I say, let the Holy Spirit guide your lives. Then you won’t be doing what your sinful nature craves.”

- Stop **living** for ourselves and start living for **Jesus Christ**

1 Peter 4:2 “As a result, they do not live the rest of their earthly lives for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God.”

3. **‘Take up your cross’**

Mark 8:34 “...and take up your cross..”

Historians estimate that over 30,000 people were crucified by the Romans during the life span of Jesus.

- To this is a call to live a **life of sacrifice**

Romans 12:1 “Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God.”

- What is Paul talking about here? How do we offer our bodies as a living sacrifice?

- To be **commitment** focused not **comfort** focused

1 Peter 4:19 “So then, those who suffer according to God’s will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good.”

4. **“And follow me”**

Mark 8:34 “...and follow me.”

- This is a call to live a **life of obedience**

John 14:23-24 “Jesus replied, “Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. Anyone who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me.”

- When Jesus told the disciples to follow there it was in a literal and figurative sense. The disciples actually followed him everywhere he went and they observed and learned from him. The disciples interacted with Jesus asking him for clarification on anything they did not understand. Their lives changed tremendously. I picture Jesus walking, stopping and turning around to see his followers. Where would you be? Following closely or maybe have fallen behind quite a ways. Talk about what it would take to follow Jesus even more closely. Have you ever prayed to Jesus to clarify what might be difficult to understand? How has your life been transformed by following Jesus?

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Monday- Self evaluation- How have you grown as a disciple this month? Have you been able to connect with God daily through journaling and soaping? Write about your experience.

Tuesday- Soap 1 Timothy 4:7

Wednesday - Soap 1 Timothy 4:8

Thursday - Identity Book Chapter 4- Answer question 5

Friday- Identity Book Chapter 4- Answer question 6

Identity #12
I am a disciple
Chapter 5 Broken Pieces
Small Group Study Guide

- Open in prayer. Spend a couple of moments practicing the PRAY acrostic (pause, rejoice, ask and yield). As you pause, what are you noticing coming up in your thoughts? Simply rejoice in the splendor of God. What would you ask of God? What are areas of your life that you need to yield to God's control?**

Principle: At the core of our spiritual (true, God given) identity is trust.

Principle: Not everything faced can be changed but nothing can be changed until it is faced.

Identity definition: The story you tell yourself about yourself; it's what you identify with the most; it's what defines you.

As we follow Jesus we discover our true Identity but if we cannot identify our false identities (the stories we tell ourselves) we will invariably return to our old way of seeing ourselves.

Because we are all looking for a way of being, a way of seeing ourselves that will produce some measure of stability. An Identity crisis is when that way (that we have been relying on) is threatened-and therefore unstable.

Disciples come out of denial and face their false identities.

You have a:

- Born Identity
- Artificial Identity
- Broken Identity
- Fantasy Identity

- In your group, try to define what each of the identities listed above consist of and share some examples of each. Can you see where you have created your identity out of a combination of these identities?**

Dr David Benner

“Genuinely transformational knowing of self always involves encountering and embracing previously unwelcomed parts of self. While we tend to think of ourselves as a single unified self, what we call “I”, is really a family of many part selves...Many of us refuse to face our feelings of shame; they make us feel too vulnerable. So we pretend they do not exist and hope they will go away, for it may be our broken and wounded self that we try to deny. When we do so, however, these unwanted parts of self do not go away, they simply go into hiding.”²

If you don't learn to live it (your true identity) you'll forget it.

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The Practice of Discipleship

Is Receiving not achieving

**The Discipline of Prayer
(within Solitude)**

Matthew 6:6 (MSG) *"Here's what I want you to do: Find a quiet, secluded place so you won't be tempted to role-play before God. Just be there as simply and honestly as you can manage. The focus will shift from you to God, and you will begin to sense his grace."*

Matthew 6:9 *"Our Father in heaven..."*

17 times in the sermon on the Mount Jesus refers to the Father

I. Prayer (and Solitude) addresses our core problem of a fragile identity.

Matthew 6:25-26 *"I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?"*

C.S. Lewis

"God designed the human machine to run on Himself. He Himself is the fuel our spirits were designed, or the food our spirits were to designed to feed on. There is no other. That is why it is just no good asking God to make us happy in our own way without about religion. God cannot give us a happiness and a peace apart from Himself because it is not there. There is no such thing.

Jan Johnson, The virtue of surrender

"As we relinquish control and admit weaknesses, we remember who we are and why we are here. The sun does not rise and set on our achievements, but on the love of God, not achieving or gaining others approval.... Letting go is both too simple and too

difficult. It looks like weakness instead of strength, like losing instead of gaining, and it is....Responding to God's call to surrender forces me to value my brokenness, as well as my strength."

- The above quote beautifully articulates how it is in our strength that we are able to admit our weakness. We do not have to always be stoic and strong. Take a moment to show true strength to your group and share where you are currently weak.**

1 John 2:15-16 (MSG) *"Love of the world squeezes out love for the Father. Practically everything that goes on in the world—wanting your own way, wanting everything for yourself, wanting to appear important—has nothing to do with the Father. It just isolates you from him."*

Matthew 5:48 (MSG) *"In a word, what I am saying is, Grow up...Live out your God created identity."*

II. Prayer (within solitude) meets our core need to know who we are.

Romans 8:15-16 (MSG) *"The Spirit you received brought about your adoption.... And by him we cry Abba Father. God's Spirit touches our spirits and confirms who we really are. We know who he is, and we know who we are: Father and children."*

John 1:12 *"Yet to all who received him, to those who believe in his name, he gave the right to become children of God."*

1. Jesus shows us the Fathers extravagant love in our brokenness.

213 times throughout the gospels and Acts Jesus speaks to or about the Father.

Luke 15:11-32 Prodigal Son

Two sons, one with a broken identity and one with an artificial identity.

- Read the Parable of the Prodigal Son, which son do you most identify with and why?**

Accepting what is wrong is the first step to move into what is right.

Accepting what is false is the first step to being freed by what is true.

- To reveal our true identity.

2. Jesus helps us to address our father woundedness.

- Neglectful – Disingaged - I am unimportant
- Absence – Divorce, separation, death - I am at fault, or don't matter.

- Abusive – Mental, physical, sexual, spiritual - I am unwanted.
- Controlling – Oppressive domination - I am flawed or not good enough.
- Withholding - I am unlovable or disapproved of.

John 5:19 *“The Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does.”*

John 14:8-9 & 21 *“Philip said, “Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us.” Jesus answered: “Don’t you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father....The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them.”*

- What type of example was your father? Was he any of the above descriptions? How has that formed who you are? Do you find yourself to have a propensity to fall into the same behaviors?**

Brennan Manning

“It is always true to some extent that we make our image of God. It is even truer that our image of God makes us.... One of the most beautiful fruits of knowing the God of Jesus is a compassionate attitude toward ourselves...This is why scripture attaches such importance to knowing God. Healing our image of God heals our image of ourselves.”

- What are some of the stories you have told yourself about who God is that you are beginning to understand as false? Have you ever felt God was punishing you for something? Have you then created a story that God does not love you? How has your vision of God formed your identity both your true identity and false identity?**

1 Peter 2:25 (MSG) *“His wounds became your healing. You were lost sheep with no idea who you were or where you were going. Now you’re named and kept for good by the Shepherd of your souls.”*

- To **heal** our broken identity.

3. Jesus model of prayer reconnects us to the Father’s **goodness**

Matthew 7:11(TPT) *“If you, imperfect as you are, know how to lovingly take care of your children and give them what’s best, how much more ready is your heavenly Father to give wonderful gifts to those who ask him.”*

Romans 8:31 *“What then shall we say in response to this, If God is for us, who can be against us?”*

John 10:10 *“I have come that they may have life and have it to the full.”*

Psalm 16:11 (TPT) *“Because of you I know the path of life, as I taste the fullness of joy in your presence.”*

Romans 5:5 *“God has poured out his love into our heart by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.”*

- To **fill** our empty identity.

CAST VISION

Remind your group about the lifestyle of being “On Mission”. When we say “Lifestyle” we are seeking to reinforce that it is who you are, your identity to Be On Mission. (What I have found as I ask this question each week is that it helps the group to begin to understand and embrace this value. “Every person in a group and every group on Mission.” It has been helpful for the group to be reminded of the 6 ways to “Be on Mission”:

- 1) Keep our group open to newcomers-Anyone can Invite a new person to join
- 2) Be open to serve on a team using my spiritual gifts
- 3) Be open to love my neighbor in some practical way
- 4) Be open to meet the need of someone in crisis
- 5) Be open as a group to serve our community
- 6) Be open to opportunities to be financially generous.

- Before closing in prayer give group members opportunity to share any I am statement or corresponding verse that they have memorized**
- Share any opportunities to be on mission in the coming week or a story of being on mission**
- Close in prayer**

Soaping or journal suggestions:

- **Monday**- As we are wrapping up the I am a disciple statement, are you noticing a change in your daily walk with Christ? What are some clear differences in your outlook on discipleship from where you started until now?
- **Tuesday**- Soap Romans 12:1-2, What does this scripture have to do with our identity?
- **Wednesday**- Soap one of the I am Statements and how your identity has changed or where you see your brokenness.
- **Thursday** - Identity book question- Pick a question from chapter 5 on page 72.
- **Friday**- Identity book question- Journal question 8 from chapter 5 on page 73.

Identity #13
Mentoring & The Fantasy ID
Chapter 6
Small Group Study Guide

- Open in prayer. Spend a couple of moments practicing the PRAY acronym (pause, rejoice, ask and yield). As you pause, what are you noticing coming up in your thoughts? Simply rejoice in the splendor of God. What would you ask of God? What are areas of your life that you need to yield to God's control? Pray for whatever is on your heart.**

The disciple of Self-Examination

Principle: Undetected self-talk and fear (the stories we tell ourselves) drive our false identities.

2 Corinthians 10:4 *"Take every thought captive to make it obedient to Christ."*

Psalms 139:23-24 *"Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."*

This year's Stretch Challenge:

Commit to memory & to life, All of the "I am" statements and scriptures. Memorizing scripture is one of the primary tools to help rewrite that internal messaging system that we all have. The purpose of memorization is not just to be knowledgeable but more importantly to transform your very wiring. Think of our "I am's" as a Rule of Life-a trellis for building your true identity that when used well, bears much fruit. We hope you will accept this challenge that has the ability to change your life.

A LITTLE REVIEW
OUR IDENTITY IN CHRIST

In March - I am Loved

"I will focus on and celebrate that I am God's beloved Child. That he loved me when I was unlovely, unworthy and undeserving, that I might begin to see myself through his eyes. That I am a child of God. Deeply loved, completely forgiven, fully pleasing and totally accepted by God. Chosen by him to reflect his love and grace."

1 John 4:18-19 *"There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, (A) because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love. We love because he first loved us."*

Richard Rohr “Because God loves us unconditionally - along with our dark side - we don’t have to dodge ourselves. In the light of his love the pain of self knowledge can be at the same time the beginning of our healing.”

- Until we are willing to face our true selves dark side and all we will never truly heal. What are some of the parts of yourself that you have always tried to keep hidden that you are now willing to face? Share if appropriate.**

In April - I am Loving

I will work to eliminate whatever distractions are in my life and schedule that interfere with me living and loving like Jesus.

In May - I am a Disciple

“I will concentrate on the spiritual habits and discipline that Jesus practiced, so I can truly be more like him in my daily life. I will make connecting with God daily, through prayer and Bible engagement; growing with others in community, through faithful participation in a small group, and serving with others through the use of my talent, time and tithe a top priority of my life.”

In June - I am a Mentor

“I will seek to be an example that anyone can follow, an observational mentor to all the youth in my sphere of influence, and an intentional mentor to a few.”

- Could you say that right now you are an example that anyone could follow and find their way to Jesus through you? Are there things about you that you wouldn't want someone to follow?**

I will memorize and meditate on 1 John 4:15-19, 1 Cor. 13, Mark 8:34-36, and 1 Tim. 4:7-8, Deut. 6:6-9 and Phil. 4:9 to help me stay focused on these Goals.

WHAT ARE THE FALSE IDENTITIES?

If an Identity is the story I tell myself about myself; what I identify with the most or what defines me, then:

A Born Identity comes from the stories I’ve been telling myself for as long as I can remember (from my family of origin) and therefore, what I identify with, and often what defines me.

An Artificial Identity comes from things that are not me but I use to accentuate the stories I tell myself and seek to identify with, so they will raise and accentuate my sense of value and worth.

A Broken Identity comes from the collection of messages and experiences that I carry, that take away my sense of value, and worth and often plague my thoughts and often drive me toward addictive and compulsive behavior.

A Fantasy Identity comes from the time I spend imagining, meditating on and thinking about something that breaks from what is real, often as an escape, or distraction from reality.

- Although most of us have all of the above identities in one form or another, which do you most identify with? Share why.**

THE FANTASY IDENTITY CAN BE:

- 1. An escape or distraction from reality (especially when reality is stressful, boring or painful).**

Jeremiah 17:9 (MSG) *“The heart is hopelessly dark and deceitful, a puzzle that no one can figure out. But I, God, search the heart and examine the mind. I get to the heart of the human. I get to the root of things. I treat them as they really are, not as they pretend to be.”*

- When someone answers the question “how are you doing”, with “better than I deserve”, what do you think is truly meant by that? Does our broken identity make us believe we are unworthy of God’s blessing on our lives?**

Identity Book Chap. 6

“All of our false identities are either a conscious, or more often, an unconscious, effort to make sense of, accentuate, or to escape who we are, as in the Fantasy Identity. It’s when we are spending time imagining, meditating, and thinking about something that breaks from what is real. All of us have imagined that we are someone we are not; we have stepped out of our world of stress and pressure into a world where we are in control of the people and events around us. Or, the opposite, we are so bored with the life we have that some foray into a more exciting existence is tantalizing.”...

“...Turning toward Hans he (Robert) asks, “What are your thoughts about how technology is affecting this idea of a Fantasy Identity?”

“Good question. I think it exacerbates the whole thing in a very negative way. The Internet isn’t evil, it’s just a tool, but that tool can be used for either evil or good. I don’t know if you’ve ever heard of the three A’s to the Internet; Affordability, Anonymity, and Accessibility. Because of those, the vulnerability of anyone on the Internet is heightened. Examples of that would be pornography, sexualized chat rooms, dating sites, gambling, and even the gaming world. They all offer an escape from the pressures we have in life; our relationships, work, and lack of healthy personal management. With the click of a few keys we enter into a virtual world that can easily become a distraction at best, and an obsession, addiction, or maybe worse.”

2. A desire or an urge to be **more** than we are (to be noticed, seen or special)
This follows from the myth, “You can be anything you want to be.”

Fun question- When you were a child what did you want to be when you grew up?

Poem By Pastor Jeff

I wonder what people see when they look at me.

I know what I'd like to be if I didn't have to be me, I could be a tiny little bird way up in the tree. Just think of all the things I could see if I were a tiny little bird way up in a tree.

I know what I'd like to be if I didn't have to be me, I could be a lion, or a tiger or a bear, ROAR!! Just think of all the people I could scare. If I didn't have to be me I could be one of those three.

I know what I'd like to be if I didn't have to be me, I could be someone else with more toys, joys and everything else, if I just didn't have to be me.

The problem you see with trying to be someone other than me is I'll never discover the me God intends me to be. If I don't stop comparing myself with everyone else trying to be somebody else, I will never become the me God intends me to be.

Galatians 6:4-5 (MSG) “Make a careful exploration of who you are and the work you have been given, and then sink yourself into that. Don't be impressed with yourself. Don't compare yourself with others. Each of you must take responsibility for doing the creative best you can with your own life.”

Has there been a time in your life when you did not feel that you were good enough? What did that do to you mentally, physically and emotionally? Was it yourself that you felt you were disappointing or someone else?

3. A desire for **power** or control (especially when feeling weak or out of control).

Identity Book Chap. 6

“I read an article about this in the Huffington Post that made a good point. They reminded us of the 2013 Ben Stiller film, *The Secret Life of Walter Mitty*, which is a remake of a 1947 Danny Kaye movie with the same name, and based on the popular James Thurber story first published in *The New Yorker* in 1939. The enduring appeal of this tale reflects the human urge to try on another identity; to be someone else for a time; to play-act. Walter Mitty is an ordinary, boring fellow going about his very ordinary day, but in his rich heroic daydreams (Fantasy Identity), he is everything from an assassin to a fighter pilot to an ER surgeon extraordinaire.”

4. An innocuous distraction or entertainment that turns **toxic**.

Ephesians 4:22-24 *"You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God..."*

Ronald Rolheiser " Today a number of historical circumstances are blindly flowing together...to produce a climate within which it is difficult to not just think about God or to pray, but to have any interior depth whatsoever.

We, for every kind of reason, good and bad, are distracting ourselves into spiritual oblivion.

It is not that we have anything against God, depth, and spirit, we would like this, it is just that we are habitually too preoccupied to have any of these show up on our radar screens, We are more busy than bad, more distracted than nonspiritual, more interested in the movie theater, the sports stadium, and the shopping mall and the FANTASY life they produce in us than we are in the church. Pathological busyness, distraction and restlessness are major blocks to today within our spiritual lives."

Share what you believe the above quote is trying to convey?

Identity Book Chap. 6

"... Fantasy in many contexts has been and will continue to be, great fun and wonderful entertainment. It is perfectly innocuous for a 4-year-old girl to dress up in her favorite Disney costume and fantasize that she is a princess. This expression of the Fantasy Identity is sweet, innocent, and a wonderful distraction for a child. But when a seventeen or thirty-seven-year-old is distracted by the notion that she is a princess and can only be satisfied in a relationship if she has the perfect prince—or shouldn't have to work and needs the most expensive wardrobe, complete with an assortment of glass slippers to be happy—now that childhood fantasy may be on the brink of becoming an adult nightmare. Unsatisfied with real-world issues of an imperfect partner and limited funds for her wardrobe has now hijacked a healthier mindset that could bring life and joy to the ordinary."

5. A step toward actualizing a destructive fantasy.

The school shooting at Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, Texas.

Galatians 5:19-21 *"The acts of the sinful nature are obvious...." (MSG) "It is obvious what kind of life develops out of trying to get your own way all the time: repetitive, loveless, cheap sex; a stinking accumulation of mental and emotional garbage; frenzied and joyless grabs for happiness; trinket gods; magic-show religion; paranoid loneliness; cutthroat competition; all-consuming-yet-never-satisfied wants; a brutal temper; an impotence to love or be loved; divided homes and divided lives; small-minded and*

lopsided pursuits; the vicious habit of depersonalizing everyone into a rival; uncontrolled and uncontrollable addictions; ugly parodies of community. I could go on."

Identity Book Chap. 6

Much of what we fantasize about has the potential to become toxic to our healthy growth. The greater our brokenness, abuse, trauma, and victimization, the greater our vulnerability to get lost in a Fantasy Identity. Or, we actually begin to obsess over trying to manipulate or fabricate a way to make the fantasy a reality. A person who fantasizes as a way to medicate or ruminate on their pain can easily get pulled into sexual addiction, grandiose thinking, or toxic unforgiveness. This is when fantasy crosses over into reality and people seek to manipulate others for selfish gain, or even to hurt or injure others."

"Didn't you say that your student did video gaming with the boy who was the shooter last spring?"

Robert clarifies, "No she didn't have interaction with Dylan, it was her brothers who did. But yes, I can see how Dylan transposed his fantasy and the virtual world into reality. His toxic, false identity eventually intruded into the real world."

"That is exactly right," David agrees. "The whole point here is that we have to educate and train our youth, really all of us, to know what is going on in our heads—the stories we are telling ourselves about ourselves and the world around us. When someone takes the law into their own hands or stands in judgment of others and then seeks to inflict punishment on someone or some group, I guarantee you, they have been fantasizing about it long before they acted on those aberrant thoughts."

"Pornography becomes rape or adultery; hatred and bitterness become murder; envy and greed become theft. Or the person who pushes back and says they would never take their fantasy to such a destructive end is still imprisoned by their illusions. Truth, and the freedom Christ offers us in our new identity, is the only way to discover the freedom to fully embrace and enjoy God's presence and grace."

"Fantasy is a part of life, and again I want to say, it can be innocuous and even enjoyable entertainment, but when unchecked and fueled by our sinful nature, or even a demonic influence, it ends in destruction."

6. A destructive pattern of thought and behavior that gets passed on to the next generation (our children).

2 Corinthians 10:3-6 (NIV-84 & MSG) *"For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments*

and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. Our tools are ready at hand for clearing the ground of every obstruction and building lives of obedience into maturity.”

- **Paul is saying that in order to win the spiritual battle this world is facing we must utilize weapons the world does not have. If that is the case, how can we begin to make a difference in the world for the next generation? What are some of the weapons of this world that we are fighting against?**

Identity Book Chap. 6

David adds, “When Paul talks to the Corinthian church about spiritual warfare in 2 Corinthians 10, there was no Internet but there was a need to ‘take every thought captive and make it obedient to Christ.’ It’s the same battle, just a different landscape. If no one is equipping us, or our kids, to see the tactics of the enemy and the vulnerability of our own flesh, we are simply going to lose more battles than we win. When we fail to set healthy boundaries around the Internet and the use of cell phones or iPads, we are abdicating our responsibility as parents. If we cannot see this issue, and respond to this new battlefield, how will our kids? When our thoughts get hijacked, our kids are abducted.”

“Hold on!” Robert interrupts “Say that again and unpack it for me.”

“Say what again?”

“The hijack thing.”

“OK, when our brain gets hijacked, our kids are abducted. In other words, when we have our heads in the sand, ignoring how this virtual world, which feeds our Fantasy Identity, isn’t confronted or addressed with healthy discussion and boundaries, our kids’ brains are kidnapped. They don’t know who they are, and randomly explore a world that is offering polluted options.”

“Wow, that is good, Pastor. I like that. What I like even more is that I get to be on the front line of the new battlefield helping to get their attention and empowering them to see the fight going on for their thoughts, habits, and their sense of who they are.”

.... (a few paragraphs later)

Robert ... presses Hans with one more question.

“If the Fantasy Identity thing is about over-engagement in what isn’t real, what about healthy, out-of-reach goals? Isn’t there a place for us to imagine the achievement of what is yet to be accomplished that isn’t reality?”

“Boy, are you a critical thinker. There is no stone unturned at this man’s house. Are you saying I have to answer one more question before I can go home? Or, if I answer it well, can I sleep on your couch?”

They all laugh and Hans rolls right into answering Robert’s question. “I call this ‘Fantasy versus Vision.’ Yes, is the quick answer to having healthy, out-of-reach goals. Vision is an expression of our being created in God’s image to dream of big things that propel goodness. That is what vision should do. Remember Proverbs 29:18? ‘Without vision the people perish.’ Vision is looking forward to something that is not yet a reality, that is healthy, good, true, and God-honoring, in order to make it a reality. Fantasy is wanting, pretending, and obsessing over what isn’t healthy, good, or true; at best it’s a selfish desire and distraction and at its worst, evil and destructive. Vision produces traction and healthy motivation; fantasy produces stagnation and obsession. Vision fuels healthy focus; fantasy distracts us from a healthy focus.”

- Before closing in prayer give group members opportunity to share any I am statement or corresponding verse that they have memorized**
- Share any opportunities to be on mission in the coming week or a story of being on mission**
- Close in prayer**

Soaping or journal suggestions:

- **Monday-** If you could pick any person living or not (besides Jesus) to be your mentor, who would that person be and why? What would you hope to learn from him/her
- **Tuesday-** Soap the I am a Mentor statement
- **Wednesday-** Soap Deuteronomy 6:6-9
- **Thursday-** Identity book question- pick from questions 1-8 on page 89- journal answer
- **Friday-** Identity book question- journal question 9 on pages 90-91

Identity Week 14
I am a Mentor
Chapter 7
Small Group Study Guide

Introduction

Being a Mentor is a part of our Spiritual Identity/our new God-Story that we are learning to tell ourselves.

Woodrow Wilson “Absolute identity with one’s cause is the first and great condition of successful leadership.”

When your identity begins to change, the story you tell yourself, moves from your false identities to your true (God given) identity, and you start to:

See yourself differently

I am Loved

“I will focus on and celebrate that I am God’s beloved Child. That he loved me when I was unlovely, unworthy and undeserving, that I might begin to see myself through his eyes. That I am a child of God. Deeply loved, completely forgiven, fully pleasing and totally accepted by God. Chosen by him to reflect his love and grace.”

Behave yourself differently, and

I am Loving

I will work to eliminate whatever distractions are in my life and schedule that interfere with me living and loving like Jesus.

I am a Disciple

“I will concentrate on the spiritual habits and discipline that Jesus practiced, so I can truly be more like him in my daily life. I will make connecting with God daily, through prayer and Bible engagement; growing with others in community, through faithful participation in a small group, and serving with others through the use of my talent, time and tithe a top priority of my life.”

Reproduce yourself differently.

I am a Mentor

“I will seek to be an example that anyone can follow, an observational mentor to all the youth in my sphere of influence, and an intentional mentor to a few.”

- How is knowing that you have influence and are an example to somebody changing your behaviors?**

Explore > Discover > Rely > Surrender to God Purpose of Mentoring (Make Disciples)

TO BECOME MENTORS WE NEED TO:

I. Understand what it is. (What is Mentoring?)

Definition: "To help or assist another, to discover, establish and refine their spiritual identity."

- In the above statement, there are 3 stages of spiritual identity. How would you articulate each stage? If you have either been a mentor or had a mentor work with you on your spiritual identity, how would you move from one stage to another?**

Matthew 28:19 "... go and make disciples of all nations...."

II. Be honest about why we don't Mentor? (Because of the story we tell ourselves)

"It's not my job." - We abdicate responsibility.

"I don't know how." - We fear failure, or are unmotivated to learn.

"I am too busy." - We are distracted.

- If you have not become a mentor, do you relate to the above reasoning? What are some reasons you can share that would cause you to be hesitant to mentor?**

III. Embrace Mentoring as a part of our Identity?

Ephesians 1:11-12 (MSG) *"It's in Christ that we find out who we are and what we are living for..."*

1. We have to see the **need**.

Matthew 9:36-37 *"When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."*

- Could you honestly look around in our present society and say that we do not need people mentoring others to follow Jesus? What is your role in the "harvest"?**

2. We have to accept the **call**.

Jesus called His first disciples

Mark 1:16-17 *"Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will send you out to fish for people."*

Jesus calls more disciples.

Mark 8:34 *"Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me."*

Jesus told his disciple to Make disciples more disciples

Matthew 28:16 & 19 "Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus told them to go...Therefore go and make disciples..."

Jesus disciples called for making more disciples

2 Timothy 2:2 (MSG) "Throw yourself into this work for Christ. Pass on what you heard from me...to reliable leaders who are competent to teach others."

- As a disciple of Jesus, have you truly answered his call to make more disciples? If so, share how. If not, what is the reason?**

3. We have to want the fruit.

Jesus often said

Matthew 7:16 "You will know them by their fruits."

John 13:35 "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

Galatians 5:22 "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control."

1 Corinthians 13:4 "Love is patient, love is kind..."

- Have you noticed the "fruit" in your life begin to change? What are some of the examples of good fruit you have begun to see? If you are experiencing bad fruit in your life, what are some of the causes you have become aware of?**

4. We have to make the time.

1 Corinthians 4:14-15 (MSG) "I'm writing as a father to you, my children. I love you and want you to grow up well, not spoiled. There are a lot of people around who can't wait to tell you what you've done wrong, but there aren't many fathers willing to take the time and effort to help you grow up."

GROWTH Acrostic

G- Get to know them better

R- Reach for their heart/ remember what's important to them

O- Open the bible with them

W- Work on their goals with them

T- Take time to pray with them

H- Hold them accountable

Above is a set of tools that will help you in your mentoring relationship and are some practical steps in the discipleship making process. Share in your group your understanding of how this would be beneficial.

This years Stretch Challenge:

Commit to memory & to life, All of the “I am” statements and scriptures. Memorizing scripture is one of the primary tools to help rewrite that internal messaging system that we all have. The purpose of memorization is not just to be knowledgeable but more importantly to transform your very wiring. Think of our “ I am’s” as a Rule of Life-a trellis for building your true identity that when used well, bears much fruit. We hope you will accept this challenge that has the ability to change your life.

I will memorize and meditate on 1 John 4:15-19, 1 Cor. 13, Mark 8:34-36, and 1 Tim. 4:7-8, Deut. 6:6-9 and Phil. 4:9 to help me stay focused on these Goals.

CAST VISION

Remind your group about the lifestyle of being “On Mission”. When we say “Lifestyle” we are seeking to reinforce that it is who you are, your identity to Be On Mission. (What I have found as I ask this question each week is that it helps the group to begin to understand and embrace this value. “Every person in a group and every group on Mission.” It has been helpful for the group to be reminded of the 6 ways to “Be on Mission”:

- 1) Keep our group open to newcomers-Anyone can Invite a new person to join
- 2) Be open to serve on a team using my spiritual gifts
- 3) Be open to love my neighbor in some practical way
- 4) Be open to meet the need of someone in crisis
- 5) Be open as a group to serve our community
- 6) Be open to opportunities to be financially generous.

- Before closing in prayer give group members opportunity to share any I am statement or corresponding verse that they have memorized**
- Share any opportunities to be on mission in the coming week or a story of being on mission**
- Close in prayer**

Mission Opportunity- Would your group be willing to serve as greeters for a Sunday morning service. This is an amazing opportunity to our Sunday morning experience even better for those coming on to our campus. If your group is willing to commit at any level please reach out to Bunny Pasking at bunny@yosemitechurch.com.

Soaping/ Journal weekly suggestions

- **Monday-** Who would you say has mentored you? Choose an observational mentor and an intentional mentor and journal how they impacted your life.
- **Tuesday-** Soap Phillipians 4:9
- **Wednesday-** Soap Romans 12:3. How does this scripture relate to your identity
- **Thursday-** Identity Book question- Choose from question 1-6 on pages 113-114
- **Friday-** Identity Book Question- Journal question 7 on page 114

Identity #15
Chapter 8
Being an Intentional Mentor
Small Group Study Guide

Principle: “More time with a fewer number of people, equals greater kingdom impact.” Timothy Elmore

Woodrow Wilson “Absolute identity with one’s cause is the first and great condition of successful leadership.”

When your identity begins to change, the story you tell yourself, moves from your false identities to your true (God given) identity, and you start to:

See yourself differently

I am Loved

“I will focus on and celebrate that I am God’s beloved Child. That he loved me when I was unlovely, unworthy and undeserving, that I might begin to see myself through his eyes. That I am a child of God. Deeply loved, completely forgiven, fully pleasing and totally accepted by God. Chosen by him to reflect his love and grace.”

Behave yourself differently, and

I am Loving

I will work to eliminate whatever distractions are in my life and schedule that interfere with me living and loving like Jesus.

I am a Disciple

“I will concentrate on the spiritual habits and discipline that Jesus practiced, so I can truly be more like him in my daily life. I will make connecting with God daily, through prayer and Bible engagement; growing with others in community, through faithful participation in a small group, and serving with others through the use of my talent, time and tithing a top priority of my life.”

Reproduce yourself differently.

I am a Mentor

“I will seek to be an example that anyone can follow, an observational mentor to all the youth in my sphere of influence, and an intentional mentor to a few. I will memorize and meditate on Deut. 6:6-9 and Philippians 4:9 to help me stay focused on this goal.”

Deuteronomy 6:6-9 *“These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols*

on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on your doorframes of your houses and on your gates.”

- The above scripture starts with God's word being on our heart first and then a part of every aspect of our day. Share how that concept has or has not yet become a part of your identity? Have you integrated Jesus into all your activities?**

This years Stretch Challenge:

Commit to memory & to life, All of the “I am” statements and scriptures. Memorizing scripture is one of the primary tools to help rewrite that internal messaging system that we all have. The purpose of memorization is not just to be knowledgeable but more importantly to transform your very wiring. Think of our “ I am’s” as a Rule of Life-a trellis for building your true identity that when used well, bears much fruit. We hope you will accept this challenge that has the ability to change your life.

I will memorize and meditate on 1 John 4:15-19, 1 Cor. 13, Mark 8:34-36, and 1 Tim. 4:7-8, Deut. 6:6-9 and Phil. 4:9 to help me stay focused on these Goals.

When God changes us it starts in the heart. This idea of HEART change is connected to the whole notion of IDENTITY; it is about our being before it affects our doing. Both are critical pieces of a believer's life. We are first His children, we belong to him and because we are His it affects our core (heart) motivation and changes our doing. If you don't weave your DOING into your BEING your faith will unravel.

THREE LEVELS OF MENTORING

- I. **Unintentional Mentoring** - We recognize and own the fact that we are a model and an example.

1 Corinthians 10:6 *“Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our heart on evil things as they did.”*

1 Timothy 4:12 *“Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith, and in purity.”*

- I will commit to setting an **example** of what a loving, growing disciple looks like.
- II. **Observational Mentoring** - We are taking responsibility to notice and nurture the youth in our sphere of influence.
- If you were to think about how many youth are in your sphere of influence, how many would that be? Was that number surprising to you? Why/Why not?**

Matthew 19:13-14 (MSG) *“Then little children were brought to Jesus for him to place his hands on them and pray for them. But the disciples rebuked those who brought them. Jesus said, ‘Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.’ ”*

Psalms 78:4 & 6 *“...we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord, his power, and the wonders he has done...so the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would teach their children.”*

- I will commit to becoming **more aware** of the youth around me and to speak into their lives Christ’s love.

- If you were to honestly share how available you have made yourself to mentoring youth what would you say?
- Mathew 19:13-14** talks about how Jesus wanted the children to come to him. As we are Christ’s ambassadors that would mean that children should come to us and find Jesus. How does that change the way we should be behaving?

III. Intentional Mentoring - We are engaging a few (1-3) of those within our sphere of influence to intentionally disciple/train to know and live out their spiritual identity.

Proverbs 22:6 *“Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.”*

1. Focuses on a specific person or persons.

Luke 6:12-13 *“One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying...when morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he designated apostles.”*

1 Timothy 1:18 *“Timothy, my son, I give you this instruction...that by following them you may fight the good fight.”*

- Is there a name or couple names that immediately pop up when you think of a young person you could intentionally mentor? What steps could you take to facilitate that relationship?**

2. Focuses more time on a smaller number of people.

Mark 9:30-31 (NLT) *“Leaving that region, they traveled through Galilee. Jesus didn’t want anyone to know he was there, for he wanted to spend more time with his disciples ...”*

- Are there things in your schedule that you would be willing to remove for the purpose of intentionally mentoring someone?

3. Focuses on a specific plan or pattern.

2 Timothy 1:13 "What you heard from me keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ."

Philippians 4:9 "Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me - put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you."

- I commit to intentionally pursue a mentoring relationship, for the purpose of living and loving like Jesus.

- What tools would you need to make you feel confident and comfortable mentoring someone?

If you need help working on tools to make mentoring a positive experience please feel free to contact me at Rueben@yc.church

Mentoring Tools

GROWTH Acrostic

G- Get to know them better

R- Reach for their heart/ remember what's important to them

O- Open the bible with them

W- Work on their goals with them

T- Take time to pray with them

H- Hold them accountable

H- Hear and validate them

E- Encourage and challenge them

A- Accept them and allow for success and failure

R- Remember what's important to them

T- Tell them they matter

CAST VISION

Remind your group about the lifestyle of being "On Mission". When we say "Lifestyle" we are seeking to reinforce that it is who you are, your identity to Be On Mission. (What I have found as I ask this question each week is that it helps the group to begin to understand and embrace this value. "Every person in a group and every group on Mission." It has been helpful for the group to be reminded of the 6 ways to "Be on Mission":

- 1) Keep our group open to newcomers-Anyone can Invite a new person to join
- 2) Be open to serve on a team using my spiritual gifts
- 3) Be open to love my neighbor in some practical way
- 4) Be open to meet the need of someone in crisis

- 5) Be open as a group to serve our community
- 6) Be open to opportunities to be financially generous.

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Would you and your group like to live out the mentoring the next generation portion of our vision statement? There is a need for volunteers in student ministry. There are opportunities for Thursday nights or Sunday mornings. If you are interested contact Kyle Lee at Kylelee@yosemitechurch.com

- Before closing in prayer give group members opportunity to share any I am statement or corresponding verse that they have memorized**
- Close in prayer**

Soaping/Journal Suggestions

- **Monday-** Journal how the I am loving statement relates to mentoring
- **Tuesday-** Soap 1 John 4:12
- **Wednesday-** Soap Luke 11:1 How does this scripture relate to mentoring
- **Thursday-** Identity book- follow the soap and soak exercise on pages 137-140
- **Friday-** Identity book- follow the soap and soak exercise on pages 137-140

Identity Week 16
Chapter 9
Tools for Intentional Mentoring
Small Group Study Guide

Mentor Definition: To help or assist another to discover, establish, and refine their spiritual identity

- **Discover:**
 - **Discovering a relationship with Christ; a one-on-one acceptance of Christ, being saved, being born again, coming into salvation.**

- **Establish:**
 - **“Anchoring” and building a biblical foundation for our faith and establishing the disciplines that help us stay focused on our faith.**

- **Refine:**
 - **Fine-tuning our spiritual disciplines within community.**

For Intentional Mentoring to take place there must be:

I. A servant leader; Someone who drives mentoring

“Leadership is the act of influencing/serving others out of Christ’s interests in their lives so they accomplish God’s purposes for and through them,”- Bill Lawrence, president of Leader Formation International, at Bible.org.

Matthew 20:25-28 “Jesus called them together and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. 26 Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, 27 and whoever wants to be first must be your slave— 28 just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

II. A vision; why we need to mentor

Proverbs 28:19 (KJV) “Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he.”

Proverbs 11:14 “Without wise leadership, a nation falls; there is safety in having many advisers.”

- A few weeks ago Pastor Jeff shared that he believes the reason for school shootings and other problems is due to the lack of people willing to mentor the next generation. Do you agree with that statement? Discuss how you would begin a mentoring relationship.

III. A structure; how we mentor

IV. G. Get to know them

1 Corinthians 9 22-23 "...I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some. 23 I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings."

We do this by practicing good listening skills

5 Levels of Listening:

The first 3 are not where we want to be:

1. Not listening
2. Pretending to listen
3. Selective listening

Proverbs 18:2 "Fools have no interest in understanding; they only want to air their own opinions."

- Looking at the world around us, what are some obvious examples of the above scripture?

This is where we want to be:

4. Active listening
5. Empathetic listening

- David Augsburger- "Being heard is so close to being loved that for the average person, they are almost indistinguishable."
Discuss why the idea of being heard and being loved is almost synonymous. Has there ever been a time where you felt you went unheard? How did that make you feel?

James 1:19 “My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak...”

- Many of us have a natural tendency to “hijack” or take over a conversation. Have you noticed the desire to do that in your conversations? Has anyone ever hijacked you? Discuss ways to help mitigate that desire.**

6. R. Reach for their H.E.A.R.T.

We do this by entering into their world

- A common story at YC is how people are just amazed when Pastor Jeff remembered their name. As a matter of fact Lily and I (Pastor Rueben) also experienced this and it was a factor in us coming back to YC. Share in your group why this step is of so much importance when starting with a mentee?**

7. O. Open the Bible with them

We do this to help them become more familiar with God's voice

Joshua 1:8 “Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.”

2 Timothy 3:15-17 “...and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. 16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17 so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

8. W. Work on their goals

People don't plan to fail, they just fail to plan

Proverbs 15:22 “Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisors they succeed.”

9. I. Take time to pray with them

Matthew 6:9-13 *“This, then, is how you should pray: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, 10 your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. 11 Give us today our daily bread. 12 And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. 13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.”*

1. **P. Pause (be still; center your heart and mind on the presence of God)**
2. **R. Rejoice (tell God how amazing He is)**
 - a. **Gratitude**
 - b. **Adoration**
3. **A. Ask (let your request be known to the Lord)**
 - a. **Petition**
 - b. **Intercession**
 - c. **Confession**
4. **Y. Yield (accept God’s will over your own)**
5. **H. Hold them accountable**

We do this based on their best interest and not our own

Galatians 6:1-2 *“Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted. 2 Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.”*

To believe that we can make disciples or develop true maturity in others without some form of accountability is like believing you can raise a child without discipline, or run a company without rules, or lead an army without authority. Accountability is to the Great Commission what tracks are to the train. -Bill Hull

- Although there is no time table for completing the first 2 steps of getting to know them and reaching for their heart, we must have a plan when moving on as we are doing important work. Read the following scripture in your group and discuss its message.**
- 1 Corinthians 3:10-15 10By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as a wise builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should build with care. 11For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. 12If anyone builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, 13their work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed**

with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each person's work. 14If what has been built survives, the builder will receive a reward. 15If it is burned up, the builder will suffer loss but yet will be saved—even though only as one escaping through the flames.

- Discuss in your group an example of a mentoring plan for someone who has asked you to mentor them.**

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I am Loved

"I will focus on and celebrate that I am God's beloved Child. That he loved me when I was unlovely, unworthy and undeserving, that I might begin to see myself through his eyes. That I am a child of God. Deeply loved, completely forgiven, fully pleasing and totally accepted by God. Chosen by him to reflect his love and grace."

I am Loving

I will work to eliminate whatever distractions are in my life and schedule that interfere with me living and loving like Jesus.

I am a Disciple

"I will concentrate on the spiritual habits and discipline that Jesus practiced, so I can truly be more like him in my daily life. I will make connecting with God daily, through prayer and Bible engagement; growing with others in community, through faithful participation in a small group, and serving with others through the use of my talent, time and treasure a top priority of my life."

I am a Mentor

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(What I have found as I ask this question each week is that it helps the group to begin to understand and embrace this value. "Every person in a group and every group on Mission." It has been helpful for the group to be reminded of the 6 ways to "Be on Mission":

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- Close in prayer**

Soaping/Journal Suggestions

- Monday- Journal how this identity series has made you aware of how God sees you. How has that changed your self-talk?
- Tuesday- Read/Soap Matthew 18:2-5
- Wednesday- Soap Proverbs 22:6 and consider if this is only a parents job?
- Thursday-Identity Book Chapter 9- Answer any of questions 1-6
- Friday-Identity Book Chapter 9- Spend some time on question 7

Identity Chapter 10
Week 17
I am a Missionary
Small Group Study Guide
Matthew 28:16-20

Matthew 28:16-20 (NIV84) *16 Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. 17 When they saw him they worshiped him; but some doubted. 18 Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."*

How to be a GO TO/ CAN DO Jesus follower

Charles Swindoll

"The longer I live, the more I realize the impact of attitude on life. Attitude, to me, is more important than facts. It is more important than the past, the education, the money, than circumstances, than failure, than successes, than what other people think or say or do. It is more important than appearance, giftedness or skill. It will make or break a company... a church... a home. The remarkable thing is we have a choice everyday regarding the attitude we will embrace for that day. We cannot change our past... we cannot change the fact that people will act in a certain way. We cannot change the inevitable. The only thing we can do is play on the one string we have, and that is our attitude. I am convinced that life is 10% what happens to me and 90% of how I react to it. And so it is with you... we are in charge of our Attitudes."

- Talk in your group about how our attitudes have changed or maybe have not changed as we are stepping into our new identity in Christ. Talk about how attitude can help heal our society.**

The story you tell yourself about yourself affects your attitude more than anything else. When your identity begins to change, the story you tell yourself, moves from your false identities to your true (God given) identity, and you start to:

See yourself differently

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“I will seek to be an example that anyone can follow, an observational mentor to all the youth in my sphere of influence, and an intentional mentor to a few. I will memorize and meditate on Deut. 6:6-9 and Philippians 4:9 to help me stay focused on this goal.”

I am a Missionary

I will obey the great commandment as an expression of my love for Christ. I will grow in my ability and commitment to spread the message of Christ’s love to those who are around me and around the world. I will do what I can do and support those who can do more than I can do (through my generous giving).

I will memorize and meditate on John 20:21, Matthew 28:19-20 and 1 Peter 3:15 to help me stay focused on this goal.

- Talk in your group or meditate on how the I am statements build on each other. How has this idea of needing to be loved before loving and so on is so important.**

I. What keeps us from being a “GO-TO/CAN-DO” kind of disciple?

- 1. It’s not my job - a lack of clarity.**

Matt. 28:16 *“Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go.”*

- This is not a comfortable call - it is a clear command.**

Matt. 28:19 *“Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit...”*

John 14:15 *“If you love me, you will obey what I command.”*

Do you feel Jesus is calling you to a deeper level of commitment? Explain in your group.

- **Think of our Vision statement (and the I am statements) as your personal mission statement (or job description).**

If our identity is the story we tell ourselves about ourselves, and we want a Christ centered identity, then what Jesus (God) has said has to become a central piece of our identity (our story).

- He tells us that we are loved, our **Inspiration** to go
- He tells us to be loving, our **Motivation** to go.
- He calls us to be His Disciples, our **Preparation** to go.
- He calls us to disciple (mentor) others, Preparation for someone else to go.
- He calls us to be on Mission (to be missionaries), our **realization** as we go.

Aristotle

“For the things we have to learn before we can do them we learn by doing them.”

John 20:21 “Jesus said...’As the father has sent me, I am sending you.’”

2. I don’t know how - a lack of training.

Matt. 11:28-29 “Are you tired ? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you’ll discover your life. I’ll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me - watch how I do. **Learn** the unforced rhythms of grace.”

3. I am too busy - a lack of availability.

Of the above reasons not to be a missionary for Jesus, which would you say you would be most likely to say and why?

II. How to be a “GO-TO” kind of disciple - missionary.

1. They “Show up” despite their doubts and fears.

Matt. 28:16-17 “Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus told them to go. When they saw him, they worshiped him, but some doubted.”

- Moses - Exodus 3:11 But Moses said to God, "Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?"
- Joshua - Joshua 1:9 "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go."

- Gideon - Judges 6:13-15 "But sir, "Gideon replied, "if the Lord is with us, why . has all this happened to us? Where are all his wonders that our fathers told us about when they said, 'Did not the Lord bring us up out of Egypt? But now the Lord has abandoned us and put us into the hand of Midian.'" 14 The Lord turned to him and said, 'Go in the strength you have and save Israel out of Midian's hand. Am I not sending you?" 15 "But Lord,' Gideon asked, "how can I save Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my family."
- Isaiah - Isaiah 6:5 & 8 "Woe to me!" I cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have not seen the King, the Lord Almighty...Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Who shall I send? And who will go for us?" and I said, "Here am I. Send me!"

- Have you ever prayed to God letting him know you are willing but feel ill equipped? What would a prayer for equipping sound like?**
- Have you ever stopped to think of how many if not all of the people God uses all felt unusable? Share how that makes you look at yourself in God's plan.**

5 ways we learn something (to become unconsciously competent):

1. Listening - I record
2. Watching - I research
3. Dialoguing - I reason
4. Memorizing - I remember
5. Participating - I realize

- What type of learner are you? Do you believe that you could only teach someone who learns the same way you do?**

2. They show up and learn to practice **authority** the way Jesus did.

Matt. 28:20 "Then Jesus came to them and said. "All authority has been given to me, therefore go and make disciples of all nations...baptizing them...teaching them"

Mark 10:43-45 "Not so with you. Instead whoever wants to become great among you must be your **servant**, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of man did not come to be served but to **serve**, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Phil. 2:5-7 (NIV84) "Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus, who being in very nature God did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing taking the very nature of a **servant**"

- Do you or do you not have the same attitude as Jesus when you are with people who disagree with you? What are some examples of having a servants heart.**

- A **servant** attitude expedites our ability to learn.

1 Peter 3:15 "But in your heart sets apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give a reason for the hope that is in you. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander."

- **In order to show up we must stand up and say I am available. Would you in your group maybe for the first time together or individually audibly look up to God and say " I am available." You are now an ambassador for Christ. What will you do in your daily life to show Christ to those around you?**

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- 5) Be open as a group to serve our community
- 6) Be open to opportunities to be financially generous.

July 2022 Mission opportunities

1. **Would your group be willing to volunteer to help with Vacation Bible School? If so please reach out to smoe@yosemitechurch.com for more information**
2. **Do you have extra jeans? As part of the shower ministry that LOVE INC provides is a clean pair of denim jeans. Check your closet for both mens and womens jeans. If you have any please reach out to rueben@yc.church for instructions as to drop off location.**
3. **We still need volunteers in both student ministry and first impressions. If your group would like to participate in either of these please contact bre@yosemitechurch.com**

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- Close in prayer**

Soaping/Journal Suggestions

Monday- As today is 4th of July and we celebrate independence, journal how you are becoming more dependent on Jesus.

Tuesday- Which of the 4 previous I am statements was the most eye opening for you and why?

Wednesday- Soap the I am a missionary statement

Thursday- Identity Book question- Choose any question from 1-7 on pages 176/177

Friday- Identity Book question- Answer question 8 on page 177

NationalOneHiHiShirts
Identity Week 18
Chapter 11
I am a Missionary
Small Group Study Guide

“I will obey the great commission as an expression of my love for Christ. I will grow in my ability and commitment to spread the message of Christ’s love to those who are around me and around the world. I will do what I can do and support those who can do more than I can do through my generous giving.”

To Live the Mission of Jesus

I must prepare to share - to be on Mission

“We are a loving community of growing disciples, mentoring the next generation to live the mission of Jesus through the power of the gospel.”

Matthew 28:16-20 (NIV84) *16 Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. 17 When they saw him they worshiped him; but some doubted. 18 Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”*

I. The disciples heard the vision for the great commission from the get-go.

Mark 1:17-18 *Come follow me Jesus said, ‘and I will make you fishers of men’. At once they left their nets and followed him.”*

Can you recall when Jesus first called you? What was your reaction? If you have not heard the call, are you prepared to follow if you did?

- **Do you see it?**

II. The disciples were being prepared for the great commission long before it was given.

Matthew 9:35-38, 10:5a&7 *“And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages...proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom...When he saw the crowds he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, ‘the harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore to send out workers into his harvest field. ...These*

twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions...As you go, preach this message: the kingdom of heaven is near.”

- What a beautiful picture of Jesus having compassion while we were running around just lost and helpless. If appropriate, share a time in your life when you were clearly without a shepherd.**

1. They were committed.

Matthew 26:35 “But Peter declared, ‘Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you. And all the other disciples said the same.’”

2. They became competent.

Acts 4:33 (RSV) “And with great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord, and great grace was upon them all.”

5 ways we learn something

Listening - I record

Watching - I research

Dialoguing - I reason

Memoring - I remember

Participating - I realize

3. They were confident.

Acts 4:13 (MSG) “They couldn’t take their eyes off them -Peter and John standing there so confident,... They recognized them as companions of Jesus.”

- Self evaluation- Would anyone recognize you as a follower of Jesus? Where would you find your confidence? How can you be both confident and still have a sense of humility?**

III. The disciples became competent & confident in three critical areas.

1. Getting to know others story - The measure of the gospel

Leviticus 19:18 “Forget about the wrong things people do to you. Don’t try to get even. Love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord.”

Galatians 5:14 “For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.”

- What does Paul mean when he says “the entire law is fulfilled”.. By loving your neighbor?**

1 Corinthians 9:22 (LB) *“Whatever a person is like, I try to find common ground with him so that he will let me tell him about Christ and let Christ save him.”*

James 1:19 *“Be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry.”*

Proverbs 18:2 (NLT) *“The fool has no interest in understanding, he only wants to air his own opinions.”*

- Share in your group how utilizing the GROWTH acrostic has been working as you mentor and begin sharing the gospel.**

2. Joining God's story.

Matthew 9:36-38 *“...he had compassion on them...he said to his disciples, ‘The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few, ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore to send out workers into his harvest field.’”*

Through Compassion & prayer.

Colossians 4:3-4 *“And pray for us, too, that God will open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of the gospel, for which I am in chains. Pray that I may proclaim it clearly as I should.”*

- Take a minute and pray with your group that God would open doors for you to share the gospel this week.**
- If God has opened doors for the gospel, share in your group how and where you shared.**

3. Telling God's story - the message of the gospel.

1 Corinthians 9:22 (LB) *“Whatever a person is like, I try to find common ground with him so that he will let me tell him about Christ and let Christ save him.”*

Acts 20:24 (MSG) *“What matters most to me is to finish what God started: the job the Master Jesus gave me of letting everyone I meet know all about this incredibly extravagant generosity of God.”*

4. Telling your story.

Mark 5:19 *“(Jesus) said to him, “Go home to your friends and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you.”*

1 Peter 3:15 *“But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. **Always be prepared** to give an answer to anyone who asks you to give a reason for the hope that you have, but do*

this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.”

- Have you ever shared your testimony? What would you say are some reasons one might acknowledge would keep them from sharing their testimony?**
- If you are prepared to share your 3 minute testimony with your group, please share.**

This years Stretch Challenge:

Commit to memory & to life, All of the “I am” statements and scriptures. Memorizing scripture is one of the primary tools to help rewrite that internal messaging system that we all have. The purpose of memorization is not just to be knowledgeable but more importantly to transform your very wiring. Think of our “ I am’s” as a Rule of Life-a trellis for building your true identity that when used well, bears much fruit. We hope you will accept this challenge that has the ability to change your life.

I will memorize and meditate on 1 John 4:15-19, 1 Cor. 13, Mark 8:34-36, and 1 Tim. 4:7-8, Deut. 6:6-9 and Phil. 4:9 to help me stay focused on these Goals.

I am Loved

“I will focus on and celebrate that I am God’s beloved Child. That he loved me when I was unlovely, unworthy and undeserving, that I might begin to see myself through his eyes. That I am a child of God. Deeply loved, completely forgiven, fully pleasing and totally accepted by God. Chosen by him to reflect his love and grace.”

I am Loving

I will work to eliminate whatever distractions are in my life and schedule that interfere with me living and loving like Jesus.

I am a Disciple

“I will concentrate on the spiritual habits and discipline that Jesus practiced, so I can truly be more like him in my daily life. I will make connecting with God daily, through prayer and Bible engagement; growing with others in community, through faithful participation in a small group, and serving with others through the use of my talent, time and tithe a top priority of my life.”

I am a Mentor

“I will seek to be an example that anyone can follow, an observational mentor to all the youth in my sphere of influence, and an intentional mentor to a few. I will memorize and meditate on Deut. 6:6-9 and Philippians 4:9 to help me stay focused on this goal.”

I am a Missionary

I will obey the great commandment as an expression of my love for Christ. I will grow in my ability and commitment to spread the message of Christ’s love to those who are

around me and around the world. I will do what I can do and support those who can do more than I can do (through my generous giving).

I will memorize and meditate on John 20:21, Matthew 28:19-20 and 1 Peter 3:15 to help me stay focused on this goal.

- Before closing in prayer give group members opportunity to share any I am statement or corresponding verse that they have memorized**
- Close in prayer**

Soap/ journal suggestions

- Monday- Journal whether or not you would define yourself as a missionary and where has God given you a mission field?
- Tuesday- Write your three minute testimony/ how has Jesus changed your life
- Wednesday- Soap John 20:21
- Thursday- Identity Book Question- Choose from questions 1-6 pg 192
- Friday- Identity Book Question- choose from questions 7 or 8 on pg 193

Identity #19
Chapter 12
I am a Missionary
Small Group Study Guide

- After opening your group in prayer ask your group if anyone can recite for memory the “I am a Missionary” statement, or any of the I am statements.**

“I will obey the great commission as an expression of my love for Christ. I will grow in my ability and commitment to spread the message of Christ’s love to those who are around me and around the world. I will do what I can do and support those who can do more than I can do through my generous giving.”

Becoming Spiritually Responsive

Being spiritually responsive is my ability to respond to Christ’s presence in me - my ability to “walk in the spirit”, as described in Galatians 5:16, allowing me to stay in step with what God wants to do in and through me.”.

Galatians 5:16 “So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh (sinful nature).”

Galatians 5:22-24 “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness and self-control... Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ... Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.”

ACTUALIZATION

When an individual is unconsciously competent in spiritual responsiveness they can automatically sense and respond to what God wants in any given situation. The fruit of the Spirit (the evidence of God) flows out of them.

- Ask a few people to see if they can describe what being spiritually responsive is in their own words.**
- Have your group wrestle with where they are on the “Unconsciously Incompetent” scale when it comes to being spiritually responsive. You can do this on the fly or even better take 15 minutes and have everyone journal their thoughts.**

“EVERYONE IN A GROUP AND EVERY GROUP (every person) ON MISSION.”

This mantra is one way we seek to remind one another to be on mission. It has been helpful for groups to be reminded of the 8 ways to “Be on Mission”:

- 1. Keep our group open to newcomers-Anyone can Invite a new person to join.**

2. Be open to serve on a team using my spiritual gifts.
3. Be open to love my neighbor in some practical way.
4. Be open to meet the needs of someone in crisis.
5. Be open as a group to serve our community.
6. Be open to opportunities to be financially generous.
7. Be a person whose work opens doors for others to see God.
8. Be willing to walk through open doors to share the gospel.

Ask your group to weigh in on the 8 ways to be “On Mission”. Does your group feel that these are action items that they would be willing to engage in?

Matthew 28:16-20 (NIV84) *16 Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. 17 When they saw him they worshiped him; but some doubted. 18 Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”*

4 P’s To Become Spiritually Responsive (Missional Awareness)

I. PRACTICING HIS PRESENCE - A Missionary is simply someone who lives out God’s presence.

John 14:15 (NIV84) *“If you love me, obey my commands. 16 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another counselor) to be with you forever— 17 the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. 18 I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. 19 Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. 20 On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you.*

- **A person who is “On Mission” is aware of God’s presence in them and by being present, allows God’s presence to flow through them.**
- **Being present is what Jesus did through a gentle and humble posture that allowed the fruit of his presence (the Spirit) to be present.**

Matthew 11:28-29 *“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.”*

Ephesians 4:1-2 *“I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.”*

Philippians 4:4 *“Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near.”*

- Mr Dillon “The simple act of hearing (listening) will often open the door to loving well.”
- “Being heard is so close to being loved that the average person can hardly tell the difference.” David Augsburger

As a group process the idea of being “present”. Brainstorm as a group what the opposite of being present might look like.

II. PRACTICING **PRAYER** - A Missionary maintains their awareness of God’s presence through Prayer.

- **Mr. D coaches the students on having a missional presence in the hospital...**

1 Timothy 2:1-5 (MSG) *“The first thing I want you to do is pray. Pray every way you know how, for everyone you know...He wants not only us but everyone saved, you know, everyone to get to know the truth we’ve learned: that there’s one God and only one, and one Priest-Mediator between God and us—Jesus, who offered himself in exchange for everyone held captive by sin, to set them all free.”*

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 *“Rejoice always, 17 pray continually, 18 give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.”*

How does the passage above, in 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, fit into the notion of being unconsciously competent?

III. PRACTICING **PRAISE** & WORSHIP - A Missionary strengthens their awareness of God’s presence through worship.

John 4:23-24 (MSG) *“But the time is coming—it has, in fact, come—when what you’re called will not matter and where you go to worship will not matter. It’s who you are and the way you live that count before God. Your worship must engage your spirit in the pursuit of truth. That’s the kind of people the Father is out looking for: those who are simply and honestly themselves before him in their worship.”*

- **Mr D. Coaches the student about how worship strengthens our awareness of his presence and purposes.**
- **Mr D.** “When I worship I am expressing something about who God is, more than how I feel. Reverend White (Laticia’s dad) really said it well. When I am most worried I am in the greatest need for worship.”

He continues, “Worship can be one of the most powerful places where my spirit connects with God’s Spirit to defeat my own preoccupation with self; my flesh, my fears and certainly my anxiety. It’s how we align our spirit with God’s Spirit, it’s where we submit our earthly perspective to His eternal perspective.

- If you have an identity book have someone read the larger context of the conversation about worship that the above quote is taken from. How has worship empowered you to be more aware of God’s presence?**
- Would you say you worship out of your emotions or out of your values? Describe the difference.**

IV. PRACTICING HIS PERSPECTIVE - A Missionary learns to submit to God’s presence & perspective in order to change theirs.

Galatians 5:16 “*So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh (sinful nature).*”

Romans 12:1-2 (MSG) “*So here’s what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him. Don’t become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it **without even thinking**. Instead, fix your attention on God. You’ll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognize what he wants from you, and quickly **respond** to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed maturity in you.*”

- **Mr D Introduces the students to a fundamental change in perspective that changes everything else, being aware of, and surrendering their attachments.**
- Next week the topic of “Attachments will be Pastor Jeff’s focus. He says it’s a perspective change that could change everything else. Have you ever had that significant of a perspective change, if so describe how it took place.**
- Close your time in prayer and encourage one another to be on Mission.**

Identity Week 20
Chapter 12&13
Small Group Study Guide

CAST VISION

Remind your group about the lifestyle of being “On Mission”. When we say “Lifestyle” we are seeking to reinforce that it is who you are, your identity to Be On Mission. (What I have found as I ask this question each week is that it helps the group to begin to understand and embrace this value. “Every person in a group and every group on Mission.” It has been helpful for the group to be reminded of the 6 ways to “Be on Mission”:

- 1) Keep our group open to newcomers-Anyone can Invite a new person to join
- 2) Be open to serve on a team using my spiritual gifts
- 3) Be open to love my neighbor in some practical way
- 4) Be open to meet the need of someone in crisis
- 5) Be open as a group to serve our community
- 6) Be open to opportunities to be financially generous.

July 2022 Mission opportunities

1. **Do you have extra jeans? As part of the shower ministry that LOVE INC provides is a clean pair of denim jeans. Check your closet for both mens and womens jeans. If you have any please reach out to rueben@yc.church for instructions as to drop off location.**
2. **We still need volunteers in both student ministry and first impressions. If your group would like to participate in either of these please contact bre@yosemitechurch.com**
3. **Love INC is looking for mentors to help participants for their Love Plus program which is held on Tuesday evenings at Yosemite Church in Merced from 6:30-8:30 pm. We will also have a required Mentor Training on Saturday, July 30 2022 from 9:00 am-12:00 pm at the Love INC office at 800 W. 20 th Street, Suite A in Merced. Contact Annette Macias at annette@loveincmerced.com if interested.**

I am a Missionary

I will obey the great commandment as an expression of my love for Christ. I will grow in my ability and commitment to spread the message of Christ’s love to those who are around me and around the world. I will do what I can do and support those who can do more than I can do (through my generous giving).

I will memorize and meditate on John 20:21, Matthew 28:19-20 and 1 Peter 3:15 to help me stay focused on this goal.

Being a Missionary is not:

Going two by two to canvas a neighborhood trying to convince people to convert to Christianity.

Someone who rides a bike wearing a white shirt and black tie.

Going across the globe to live in a mud hut to convert an aborigany.
Doing open air preaching, yelling, “You must turn, or you shall burn!”
Mustering up the courage to ask the person in front of you at Costco, “Do you know where you would go if you died tonight?”

- Would you say that you agreed that the above descriptions of missionaries is one that you agreed with? Is that what you pictured when the word missionary is used?

Being Spiritually responsive - Practicing His Perspective

Romans 12:1-2 (MSG) “So here’s what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him. Don’t become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it **without even thinking**. Instead, fix your attention on God. You’ll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognize what he wants from you, and quickly **respond** to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed maturity in you.”

Defeating our **Attachments** that distract us from who we are in Christ.

Definition of an attachment: “Attachments are the things that matter to us but are at the same time a complete distraction from what matters most.”

- Share in your group or take a few minutes to list the things that you would call “attachments” according to the above definition.

Two kinds of attachments:

1. Acceptable but **inadequate** attachments ie. Born & Artificial Identity
2. Unacceptable aberrant attachments ie. Broken & Fantasy Identity

Being a Missionary is simply accepting that you are a child of God who does God’s work. A child of God who does the Father business. I am a child of God and I work in the family business.

- Does this definition of missionary make it easier to see yourself as one? Why or why not?

- I. Being Missional is who we are (Our Identity).
 1. We all **search** for an identity (an emotional equilibrium)

Our identities are tied to our innate (and often unconscious) search for (Desire and need for) stability, meaning and purpose. All of our false and inferior

identities leave God out of the equation. We are all at some level attached to our identities-the story we tell ourselves.

Your search may have led you to academics, sports, medicine, possessions, position, accomplishments or achievements, association, clubs, clicks, the prettiest chicks. If in your search, you find yourself sabotaged, rejected, abused, at a dead end, or simply feeling the deficiency of what you've landed on for an identity then you will be compelled to fill the gap with some abrant attachment.

Accepting, knowing, and following Jesus is the new equation. It is where we discover who we really are.

2. Only in Jesus do we find our true identity

Ephesians 1:11 (MSG) *"It's in Christ that we find out who we are and what we are living for."*

Jesus was constantly calling his followers to a spiritual solidarity around himself and his work.

Matthew 6:33 "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."

- Have you noticed times when you seeked anything before God's kingdom? What were those things? Share how God has provided for you if you are seeking His kingdom above all else.**

John 10:9 *"I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved..."*

John 14:6 *"Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."*

Matthew 11:28 *"Come to me all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest...."*

"God designed the human machine to run on Himself. He Himself is the fuel our spirits were designed to burn, or the food our spirits were designed to feed on. There is no other. That is why it is just no good asking God to make us happy in our own way without bothering about religion. God cannot give us a happiness and peace apart from Himself, because it is not there. There is no such thing."

— C.S.Lewis

II. Being Missional is what we do (Being spiritually responsive)
I am a child of God committed to the family business.

Luke 2:49 (KJV) “(Jesus) said to them,... “Did you not know that I must be about My Father’s business?”

John 5:17 & 19 “Jesus said to them, “My Father(A) is always at his work(B) to this very day, and I too am working.”... I tell you, the Son can do nothing by himself;(E) he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does.”

Acts 20:24 (MSG) “What matters most to me is to finish what God started: the job the Master Jesus gave me of letting everyone I meet know all about this incredibly extravagant generosity of God.”

What are some ways you and your group have shared the Gospel? If you have not yet begun to serve together what would motivate you?

Ephesians 2:10 “For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”

1 Corinthians 7:30-31(LB) “Happiness or sadness or wealth should not keep anyone from doing God’s work. Those in frequent contact with the things of this world should make good use of them without becoming attached to them. For this world and all it contains will pass away.”

III. Being distracted (by our attachments) is what Satan wants, and what interferes with a Christ centered identity.

Jesus was consistently drawing people into discipleship and challenged would-be followers to let go of whatever attachment stood between them and surrendering to Him (Jesus).

Mark 8:34-36 “34 Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. 35 For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it. What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? What good would it do to get everything you want and lose you, the real you? What could you ever trade your soul for?”

“It is as though Jesus were saying to each of us: 'Give me All. I don't want so much of your time and so much of your money and so much of your work: I want You. I have not come to torment your natural self (flesh), but to kill it... Hand over the whole natural self. . . . I will give you a new self instead. In fact, I will give you Myself: my own will shall become yours.”

— C.S.Lewis

- The above quote by C.S.Lewis shows us that Jesus just wants us, not just parts of us, all of us. Have you given all of yourself or just pieces such as some time, some money, some work? What would it really look like to give Jesus all of you and accept a completely new self?**

1. By the desires of our flesh (Sinful nature/deceitful desires)

Galatians 5:19-21 (MSG) *“It is obvious what kind of life develops out of trying to get your own way all the time: repetitive, loveless, cheap sex; a stinking accumulation of mental and emotional garbage; frenzied and joyless grabs for happiness; trinket gods; magic-show religion; paranoid loneliness; cutthroat competition; all-consuming-yet-never-satisfied wants; a brutal temper; an impotence to love or be loved; divided homes and divided lives; small-minded and lopsided pursuits; the vicious habit of depersonalizing everyone into a rival; uncontrolled and uncontrollable addictions; ugly parodies of community. I could go on.”*

2. By the things of this world (Possessions, positions, pleasures)

1 John 2:15-16 (TPT) *“For all that the world can offer us—the gratification of our flesh, the allurements of the things of the world, and the obsession with status and importance—none of these things come from the Father but from the world.”*

- Take a moment and consider how the last two points are in direct contradiction to the fruits of the spirit which are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control.**
- What are some of the lies and distractions Satan has used that are keeping you from fully stepping into the identity that God has for you? How can we (your group or Yosemite church staff) help you discover your true identity?**

- Close in Prayer**

Soaping / Journal Suggestions

- **Monday -soap 1 Peter 3:15**
- **Tuesday- Soap Galatians 5:19-21**
- **Wednesday- Journal how you have experienced a shift in your identity from a false identity to a Christ-like new identity.**
- **Thursday Identity Book chapter 12 answer question 9**
- **Friday- Identity Book chapter 13 answer/discuss question 8**

Identity #21
Chapter 13
I am a Missionary
Small Group Study Guide

CAST VISION

Remind your group about the lifestyle of being “On Mission”. When we say “Lifestyle” we are seeking to reinforce that it is who you are, your identity to Be On Mission. (What I have found as I ask this question each week is that it helps the group to begin to understand and embrace this value. “Every person in a group and every group on Mission.” It has been helpful for the group to be reminded of the 6 ways to “Be on Mission”:

- 1) Keep our group open to newcomers-Anyone can Invite a new person to join
- 2) Be open to serve on a team using my spiritual gifts
- 3) Be open to love my neighbor in some practical way
- 4) Be open to meet the need of someone in crisis
- 5) Be open as a group to serve our community
- 6) Be open to opportunities to be financially generous.

August 2022 Mission opportunities

1. **Do you have extra jeans? As part of the shower ministry that LOVE INC provides is a clean pair of denim jeans. Check your closet for both mens and womens jeans. If you have any please reach out to rueben@yc.church for instructions as to drop off location.**
2. **We still need volunteers in both student ministry and first impressions. If your group would like to participate in either of these please contact bre@yosemitechurch.com**
3. **Would your group like to volunteer for our family fun day? We are planning to have a blast on August 6th from 11-3pm, if you would like to help reach out to bre@yosemitechurch.com.**

- Stretch Challenge/ Take a moment to share with your group or alone and try to recite the I am statements.**

I am a Missionary

I will obey the great commandment as an expression of my love for Christ. I will grow in my ability and commitment to spread the message of Christ’s love to those who are around me and around the world. I will do what I can do and support those who can do more than I can do (through my generous giving).

I will memorize and meditate on John 20:21, Matthew 28:19-20 and 1 Peter 3:15 to help me stay focused on this goal.

1. Every Christian should be on mission & on some are sent on mission

John 17:15-18 15 My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. 16 They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. 17 Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. 18 As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world.

- a. A Christian on mission shares their testimony with those around them in whatever environment they are in.
- b. A Christian sent on mission shares their testimony with people around the world; more commonly in the areas of the world where the testimony of Jesus has gone unreached.

Acts 8:4 But the believers who were scattered preached the Good News about Jesus wherever they went.

“Every Christian is a missionary or an imposter.” - Charles Spurgeon

2. Top 5 Barriers that stop us from sharing our faith

- a. I worry about what people will think of me
 - b. I worry about being rejected
 - c. I don't know enough about the Bible
 - d. I never know if it's the right time or not
 - e. I'm scared of messing up/embarrassing myself
- From the above list of reasons not to share our faith, which would you admit may be stopping you. What can we do to get past those barriers.

3. Top 5 Reasons every Christian should be on mission by sharing their faith

- a. The Lord **commands** us to

Matthew 28:19-20 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.

b. It's our job

John 20:21 Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you."

- Jesus is offering his peace as you go into the world. Sharing the gospel should not bring anxiety as we are sharing good news. Have you stopped and prayed that Jesus would give you his peace?**

c. It deepens our understanding of the gospel

Acts 10:34-35 34 Then Peter began to speak: "I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism 35 but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right.

d. It requires us to lean on God

Matthew 10:19-20 do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say, 20 for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.

- Talk about a time when God gave you just the right words for someone, or when someone spoke to you and you know it was from God.**

e. It causes us to examine ourselves

Galatians 6:4-5 (MSG) Make a careful exploration of who you are and the work you have been given, and then sink yourself into that. Don't be impressed with yourself. Don't compare yourself with others. Each of you must take responsibility for doing the creative best you can with your own life.

4. The 5 things our testimony (sharing of our faith) should include

a. Your life before Jesus

- i. Do this without bragging about your prior life
- b. How you came to Jesus
 - i. Where were you? What were you doing?
- c. Your prayer to receive Jesus as your Lord and savior
- d. Your life now that you've accepted Jesus
- e. The closing:
 - i. Favorite scripture that ties into your story or a statement that ties it all together
 - In your group, share your testimony if you have been preparing it.
 - Before closing in prayer, talk to your group about how your identity has changed due to this sermon series.
 - Close in prayer

Soaping/ journal suggestions

Monday: journal how you have seen your identity change over the past 5 months

Tuesday: journal how you have recognized the attachments in your life that may be keeping you from fully stepping into the calling Jesus has for you.

Wednesday: Soap Hebrews 12:1

Thursday: Soap 1 Corinthians 7:30-31

Friday: Soap John 17:15-18

Identity
Small Group Study Guide
ON TARGET
VALUES
JOSHUA 24:1-15

You Must:

I. Identify your values

Joshua 24:15a (NIV) *“If serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then **choose** for yourselves this day whom you will serve...”*

1. **Because your values shape your identity and motivate your behavior.**
 - Your values drive the **stories** you tell yourself
 - Your values drive what, or who you **serve**.
 - Without identification, you have **abdication**
 - No values, wrong values, accidental values

- Have you ever taken the time to identify your values?**
- Take a few moments to think about your life before Christ. Discuss in your group what were some of the things that you valued and how that shaped your identity.**

2. **Choosing On Target Values will help you to have a God-centered/Christ-center identity.**

II. Clarify your values

Joshua 24:15b (Amp) *“...whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you live.”*

- Without clarification, you have **fragmentation**

CLARIFICATION requires:

1. **Remembering (learns from) the past, and**

Joshua 24:2-13 “This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says, “Long ago your fathers... worshiped other gods....”

George Santayana “If you do not remember the past you are doomed to repeat it.

- Hopefully you are beginning to have a change of identity from a worldly broken identity to one anchored in what God says about you. How are your former values and Christ centered values co-existing? Are there values you once held that you are now questioning?**

2. Focusing the present

Joshua 24:14 (Amp) “Now, therefore, fear the Lord and serve Him in sincerity and in truth...”

Clarification is never a one-time event but an ongoing focus.

III. **Fortify** your values

Joshua 24:15 (Amp) “... but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”

- In an ever changing world, why would it be important to fortify your values?**
- Without fortification, you have poor **implementation**

FORTIFICATION requires:

Building habits that reinforce who you are and what you are called to do.

1. Enlisting support. Get the leadership on the same page (the influencers)

Joshua 24:1 “Then Joshua assembled all the tribes of Israel at Shechem. He summoned the elders, leaders, judges and officials of Israel...”

2. A crucial conversation (to accomplish clarification) V 2-13

3. Commitment to:

- **Elimination**

Joshua 24:14 “remove the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the [Euphrates] River...”

- A couple weeks ago Pastor Jeff taught us about attachments which could become gods in our lives. In order to create new habits we need to be aware of what is taking up our bandwidth or time. What are some of the things that you need to or have eliminated?**

- **Concentration**

Joshua 24:24 “The people answered, “Far be it from us to abandon (reject) the Lord to serve other gods...“We will serve the Lord our God and we will listen to and obey His voice.”

- Where and when are you concentrating on God’s word? In order to become a new way of life you have to make it a way of life. Remember Pastor Jeff says “ Aim at nothing and you will hit it every time”**

4. An example to follow

Joshua 24:15 “ ...but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”

Joshua 1:8 “Don’t for a minute let this Book of The Revelation be out of mind. Ponder and meditate on it day and night, making sure you practice everything written in it. Then you’ll get where you’re going; then you’ll succeed.”

- Who is someone that you can connect with to help you begin to implement a new value system?**
- Before closing in Prayer take a few minutes in your group and review the I Am statements. Knowing who God says you are should always be something you can articulate and emulate.**
- Close in Prayer and ask that God might help you begin to focus on aligning your values with His.**

Soaping Schedule

Monday- Journal how your values have shaped your life either in a positive or negative way.

Tuesday- Journal the importance of both clarifying and fortifying your values

Wednesday-Soap Joshua 24-15

Thursday- Soap Isaiah 55:7-8 consider how this verse speaks to values

Friday- Read Mark 10:17-31 and soap how Jesus spoke of values

CAST VISION

Remind your group about the lifestyle of being “On Mission”. When we say “Lifestyle” we are seeking to reinforce that it is who you are, your identity to Be On Mission. (What I have found as I ask this question each week is that it helps the group to begin to understand and embrace this value. “Every person in a group and every group on Mission.” It has been helpful for the group to be reminded of the 6 ways to “Be on Mission”:

- 1) Keep our group open to newcomers-Anyone can Invite a new person to join
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- 4) Be open to meet the need of someone in crisis
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- 6) Be open to opportunities to be financially generous.

August 2022 Mission opportunities

1. **Do you have extra jeans? As part of the shower ministry that LOVE INC provides is a clean pair of denim jeans. Check your closet for both mens and womens jeans. If you have any please reach out to Rueben at rueben@yc.church for instructions as to drop off location.**
2. **We still need volunteers in both student ministry and first impressions. If your group would like to participate in either of these please contact Bre at bre@yosemitechurch.com**
3. **Would your group be interested in helping keep Half-Dome beautiful? Our facilities team would love to have your group commit to helping clean once a month in order to have a beautiful, clean experience for everyone who steps into our building. If you are interested please contact Dave at dave@yosemitechurch.com**

Value #1 Inspired Word of God
God's word guides us back
2 Timothy 3:16-17
Small Group Study Guide

1. God always has a direction

Proverbs 3:5-7 *“Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.”*

Jeremiah 29:11 *“For I know the plans I have for you declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”*

2. God always has a way back to him

2 Timothy 3:16- 17(NIV) *“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”*

(King James) *“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.”*

(MSG) *“Every part of Scripture is God-breathed and useful one way or another-showing us truth,exposing our rebellion, correcting our mistakes, training us to live God’s way. Through the Word we are put together and shaped up for the tasks God has for us.”*

I. How does God call us back onto the path?

a. Teaches us about the path.

Matthew 7:13-14 *“Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.”*

- Share in your group the path your life was on before encountering Jesus. Was that life going to lead to life or destruction.**

St Augustine *“If you believe what you like in the gospels, and reject what you don’t like, it is not the gospel you believe, but yourself.”*

b. Teaches us how to correctly share about the path

Christian Doctrine: The attempt to state in intellectually responsible terms the message of the gospel and the content of faith it elicits.- Encyclopedia Britannica

Ecclesiastes 12:9-10 “Not only was the Teacher wise, but he also imparted knowledge to the people. He pondered and searched out and set in order many proverbs. The Teacher searched to find just the right words and what he wrote was upright and true.”

Psalms 119:160 (MSG) “Your words all add up to the sum total: Truth. Your righteous decisions are eternal.”

- Share a time when you have received and followed bad advice. What was the outcome?**
- Share a time when you received Godly advice and followed. What was the outcome?**

c. Call us out when we are **off** the path

- **To rebuke is to expose our rebellion to reprimand.**

Hebrews 12:10-11 “They disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, in order that we may share in his holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on however it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.”

Proverbs 3:11-12 “My son, do not despise the Lord’s discipline and do not resent his rebuke, because the Lord disciplines those he loves, as a father the son he delights in.”

- How would you differentiate discipline from abuse? What would you say God’s heart is when he disciplines?**

d. Let’s us know how to let **others** know they are off the path

Ephesians 4:15 “Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ.”

- What does Paul mean when he says to “speak the truth in love”**

Proverbs 27:5-6 (NKJ) “Open rebuke is better than love carefully concealed. Faithful are the wounds of a friend, But the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.”

- Process the above scripture in your group or on your own. What is the author saying about friends?**

Mathew 18:15 “If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you...”

1 Timothy 4:6 “If you point these things out to the brothers and sisters, you will be a good minister of Christ Jesus, nourished on the truths of the faith and of the good teaching that you have followed.”

Pastor Steven Cole- “We desperately need to know the living God and to know ourselves as revealed in His Word of truth. To do this you must expose yourself to Scripture from every source so that you can grasp its principles and understand how to apply it to your life. Obviously it is not a one-page instruction sheet. You don’t catch it by reading a few favorite texts now and then. You need to hear it taught by faithful expositors. You need to read it over and over, comparing Scripture with Scripture so you have the balance of the whole counsel of God. You need to study it in more depth. You need to memorize key verses. And you need to meditate on God’s Word.”

CS Lewis, The Case for Christianity- “We all want progress. But progress means getting nearer to the place where you want to be. And if you have taken a wrong turn then to go forward does not get you any nearer. If you are on the wrong road progress means doing an about-turn and walking back to the right road and in that case the man who turns back soonest is the most progressive man.”

II. How do I walk this new path

a. **Illuminate** the path

Psalm 109-105 “Your Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.”

John 8:12 “Again Jesus spoke to them, saying. ‘I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.’”

CS Lewis “I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen: not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else.”

b. **Recognize** you are not alone

John 14:6 “I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the father except through me.”

c. Be **intentional** with your guide.

- When we become complacent in our relationships, the relationship often suffers. How do you keep your relationship with Christ thriving?**

d. **Practice** spiritual disciplines

- Share what spiritual disciplines you are applying to your life.**

e. **Allow** Jesus to lead

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4. **Part of being on mission is using your God given talents and gifts. Please take some time to complete our Shape assessment in order to identify your spiritual gifts click on link below**

http://www.pointsnorthsys.com/SHAPE_Yosemite/Logon/Logon.aspx

Close in Prayer

Soaping/ Journal Suggestions

- Monday- List the things that you value and then take time to journal if how you are spending your time and energy reflects those values.
- Tuesday- Soap 2 Timothy 3:16
- Wednesday- Soap Hebrews 12:10-11
- Thursday- Journal where your spiritual disciplines are manifesting themselves in your identity.
- Friday- Soap John 3:16 and focus on the idea of a path back to God

Identity
VALUES
Inspired Word of God
2 Timothy 3:16
Small Group Study Guide

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- Open in prayer and take a few minutes to share some gratitude. Where have you seen God working in your life?**

2 Timothy 3:16 *“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness.”*

Principal: You will never live out your new (God-given) Identity if you are still holding on to old (world-given) values

“Show me your checkbook and I will show you your values”- Unknown

“Give me five minutes with a person's checkbook and I will tell you where their heart is”- Billy Graham

- If you took an honest look at where your resources go, what would your spending say about your values?

2 Corinthians 5:17 “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!”

Holding on to new values requires holding on to God's Truth

John 8:31-32 “To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

Matthew 4:4 “Jesus answered by quoting Deuteronomy, ‘It is written: ‘Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’”

1. God's Truth corrects our misbeliefs

1 Corinthians 6:9-11 (MSG) “Don't you realize that this is not the way to live? Unjust people who don't care about God will not be joining in his kingdom. Those who use and abuse each other, use and abuse sex, use and abuse the earth and everything in it, don't qualify as citizens in God's kingdom. A number of you know from experience what I'm talking about, for not so long ago you were on that list. Since then, you've been cleaned up and given a fresh start by Jesus, our Master, our Messiah, and by our God present in us, the Spirit.”

- If appropriate please share where God has transformed your thinking. What are some of the things that you once believed as true that God has corrected?

2. God's Truth corrects our misbehavior

Ephesians 4:17-19 (MSG) 20-24 (NIV) “And so I insist—and God backs me up on this—that there be no going along with the crowd, the empty-headed, mindless crowd. They've refused for so long to deal with God that they've lost touch not only with God

but with reality itself. They can't think straight anymore. Feeling no pain, they let themselves go in sexual obsession, addicted to every sort of perversion. That, however, is not the way of life you learned when you heard about Christ and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness."

a. Not reading the Word to be informed but to be transformed

Romans 12:2 (NLT) *"Don't copy the behavior of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think."*

The correction of God's Word moves us from trying to training

Galatians 2:19-20 (MSG) *"What actually took place is this: I tried keeping rules and working my head off to please God, and it didn't work. So I quit being a "law man" so that I could be God's man. Christ's life showed me how, and enabled me to do it. I identified myself completely with him. Indeed, I have been crucified with Christ. My ego is no longer central. It is no longer important that I appear righteous before you or have your good opinion, and I am no longer driven to impress God. Christ lives in me. The life you see me living is not "mine," but it is lived by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I am not going to go back on that."*

3. Trying leads to self-righteousness

Luke 18:9-14 (NIV) *"To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everyone else, Jesus told this parable: 10 "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. 11 The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other people—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. 12 I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.' 13 "But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.' 14 "I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted."*

"The greatest enemy to human souls is the self-righteous spirit which makes men look to themselves for salvation." - Charles Spurgeon

4. Training leads to Christ-like righteousness

1 Timothy 4:7 "Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives' tales, but rather train yourself to be godly."

- Talk in your group about the difference between training and trying. Share which of the two you find yourself at right now. Training or trying?

Luke 6:40 "The student is not above the teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like their teacher."

How to train for Righteousness:

1. **Consecrate** (set apart) ourselves for Christ by making the **Word** a priority

Mark 1:35 "Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed."

a. Set a daily pace

b. Set the daily place

- "The secret of your success is found in your daily routine. You will never change your life without changing part of that routine." Darren Hardy (former publisher of Success magazine) Where have you added time for spiritual disciplines?

2. **Concentrate** on the spiritual disciplines/habits Jesus practiced by making our **walk** with God a priority

Galatians 5:21 "Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit."

Mark 8:35 "If anyone would come after me he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me."

a. Practice self-denial (die to flesh)

b. Practice self-sacrifice (willing to lose for Jesus' gain)

c. Practice selflessness (HE>i)

- Take a moment right now either alone or in your group to stop and ask yourselves if your walk with God has ever been a priority. If it has not been one, be honest with God and commit to that right now.

3. **Congregate** with other believers in Christ (and people not like us) by making our **witnesses** a priority

Hebrews 10:24-25 (MSG) *“So let’s do it—full of belief, confident that we’re presentable inside and out. Let’s keep a firm grip on the promises that keep us going. He always keeps his word. Let’s see how inventive we can be in encouraging love and helping out, not avoiding worshiping together as some do but spurring each other on, especially as we see the big Day approaching.”*

- If you are not currently in a small group what would it take for you to join one? If you are discussing this in your small group ask if anyone has actually asked anyone new to the group.

Romans 12:16 *“Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.”*

- Close in prayer

Soaping/ Journal suggestions

Monday- Journal where your value system derives from ie. family values, learned values or values that you picked up along the way. How have those values shaped your life and decisions?

Tuesday- Soap John 8:21-22

Wednesday- 2Timothy 3:16 says scripture is useful for training in righteousness. What does righteousness God desires look like?

Thursday-If you have yet to do so, write your testimony and share with someone. If you have shared your testimony journal how that was received and how it made you feel to share.

Friday- Soap 1 Timothy 4:7

Identity
VALUES
Inspired Word of God PT. 2
2 Timothy 3:17
Small Group Study Guide

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- 6) Be open to opportunities to be financially generous.
- 7) Share your testimony

August/ September 2022 Mission opportunities

1. **Do you love to bake cakes? Alpha Pregnancy Help Center is holding their annual Gala and has a need for cakes. If you would be interested in helping by either baking or purchasing a cake, please contact Lily at lily@alphaphc.com for more information**
2. **We still need volunteers in both student ministry and first impressions. If your group would like to participate in either of these please contact Bre at bre@yosemitechurch.com**
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2 Timothy 3:17 “So that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

The desired **rewards** of God’s Word

2 Timothy 3:15-16 “...and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness...”

- Why would Paul use the words “wise for salvation”, rather than use “knowledgeable regarding salvation”

1. **Saves** us by grace

Ephesians 2:8 “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God.”

Romans 1:16 “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes...”

2. **Teaches** us what is right

Acts 17:11-12 “Now the Berean Jews were of more noble character than those in Thessalonica, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true. As a result, many of them believed, as did also a number of prominent Greek women and many Greek men.”

3. **Rebukes** us for what is wrong

Revelations 3:19-20 “Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest and repent. Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me.”

4. **Corrects** us on how to get right

Jeremiah 10:24 (NASB) *“Correct me, O Lord, but with justice; Not with Your anger, or You will bring me to nothing.”*

5. **Trains** us on how to stay right

1 Timothy 4:7-8 *“Have nothing to do with godless myths or old wives’ tales; rather, train yourself to be godly. For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.”*

- Share some training tips with each other. What have you begun to do that you have seen progress in your spiritual maturity?**

The desired **results** of God’s Word

2 Timothy 3:17 *“...so that the man of God will be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”*

That the Man of God (Servant of God) will be:

1. **Thorough** (Adequate)

Philippians 1:6 *“And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion until the day of Jesus Christ.”*

- Take a few minutes to talk in your group what the scripture is telling us about the process of growth.**

2. **Equipped** (Prepared)

Ephesians 4:11-12 *“So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up...”*

- If police officers are given a belt which holds their “equipment” to do the job they need to do, what are some of the things you can see yourself needing to do “works of service”?**

3. For every good work (Servant Living)

Philippians 2:5-8 *“In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death— even death on a cross!”*

- Being honest, where do you find yourself not having the same mindset as Jesus? How can you be better?**
- Discuss in your group what a life of humility means. Would you call yourself humble? Or better yet would anyone else call you humble?**

1 Peter 4:10-11 *“Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen.”*

1. Do good work by serving in your home

- a. By how we love our family
- b. By how you host other families

2. Do good work by serving in your church

- a. By how we use our:
 - i. Talent and Spiritual Gifts

(Join the S.H.A.P.E.’s Class to discover what your spiritual Gifts are. September 18th @ 1:30 pm)

- ii. Time
- iii. Tithe’s

3. Do good work by serving in your job/career
a. By being a reflection of Jesus

Colossians 3:23 *“Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters...”*

- Besides your job, what other things could you include in the above scripture?**
- Close in prayer**

Soap/ Journal Suggestions

Monday- Journal about a time when you were not thoroughly equipped for a task. What was that experience like for you? What were you missing and how would you have performed better with properly equipped?

Tuesday-Soap Ephesians 2:8

Wednesday- Journal how you have a servant's heart in your home.

Thursday- Journal where you have utilized your spiritual gifting. If you do not know your spiritual gifts take the time to do our Shapes assesment

http://www.pointsnorthsys.com/SHAPE_Yosemite/Logon/Logon.aspx

Friday- Soap Colossians 3:23 and journal how your work would differ if you worked as if for the Lord.

Identity
ON TARGET
VALUES
Small Group Study Guide

Remind your group about the lifestyle of being “On Mission”. When we say “Lifestyle” we are seeking to reinforce that it is who you are, your identity to Be On Mission.

(What I have found as I ask this question each week is that it helps the group to begin to understand and embrace this value. “Every person in a group and every group on Mission.” It has been helpful for the group to be reminded of the 7 ways to “Be on Mission”:

- 1) Keep our group open to newcomers-Anyone can Invite a new person to join
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- 6) Be open to opportunities to be financially generous.
- 7) Share your testimony

August/ September 2022 Mission opportunities

1. Do you love to bake cakes? Alpha Pregnancy Help Center is holding their annual Gala and has a need for cakes. If you would be interested in helping by either baking or purchasing a cake, please contact Lily at lily@alphahpc.com for more information
2. We still need volunteers in both student ministry and first impressions. If your group would like to participate in either of these please contact Bre at bre@yosemitechurch.com
3. Would your group be interested in helping keep Half-Dome beautiful? Our facilities team would love to have your group commit to helping clean once a month in order to have a beautiful, clean experience for everyone who steps into our building. If you are interested please contact Dave at dave@yosemitechurch.com

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- Open your group time in prayer. Take a moment to share gratitude to God for all that He has done for you.

INTRINSIC WORTH

- Ask someone in your group to recite 2 Timothy 3:16-17 by memory

WE VALUE THE INSPIRED WORD OF GOD—memory verse:

*2 Timothy 3:16-17 “All scripture is God-breathed and is useful for **teaching**, **rebuking**, **correcting** and **training** in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”*

WE VALUE THE INTRINSIC WORTH OF EVERY PERSON—memory verses:

Genesis 1:27 “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.”

Psalms 139:13-14 “For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.”

I. Everyone has value (TEACHING)

Matthew 10:29-31 “Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don’t be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.”

John 3:16 “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”

Romans 5:8 “But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

- Share in your group whether or not you understand how important you are to God. What are some things that make you sure of it or unsure of it.

II. Every Culture has value criteria (REBUKING)

Mark 2:17b “...those who think they are already good enough.” (NLT)

◆ **RELIGIOUS CULTURE:** Mark 2:16 “What kind of example is this, acting cozy with the riffraff?” (MSG)

- Some people were unacceptable

◆ **SOCIAL CULTURE:** Leviticus 13:45 “If you ever have leprosy, you must tear your clothes, leave your hair uncombed, cover the lower part of your face, and go around shouting, “I’m unclean! I’m unclean!” (CEV)

- Some people were untouchable

◆ **LEARNING CULTURE:** Matthew 19:13 “Then little children were brought to Jesus for him to place his hands on them and pray for them. But the disciples rebuked those who brought them.”

- Some people were unimportant

- Talk in your group about our current culture and list some groups that might fall under each of the bullet points (unacceptable, untouchable and unimportant). Share if you have ever felt as though you were treated as someone culture didn’t accept.

III. Every culture needs value correction. (CORRECTING)

Mark 2:17 “When Jesus heard this, he told them, ‘Healthy people don’t need a doctor—sick people do. I have come to call sinners, not those who think they are already good enough.’” (NLT)

Matthew 1:40-41 “A man with leprosy came to him and begged him on his knees, ‘If you are willing, you can make me clean.’ Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. ‘I am willing,’ he said. ‘Be clean!’”

Matthew 19:14 “Jesus said, ‘Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.’”

IV. Every person needs value training. (TRAINING)

Mark 2:14 “As he walked along, he saw Levi son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax collector’s booth. ‘Follow me,’ Jesus told him, and Levi got up and followed him.”

“Follow me” means: to walk the same road.

Luke 6:40 “Everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher.”

- Share in your group the above scripture regarding being like Jesus when we become fully trained. For each of you, would being like Jesus include the way you treat those others would avoid? Could you be more Christlike with people?**

1 Timothy 4:7b-8 “Spend your time and energy in training yourself for spiritual fitness. Physical exercise has some value, but spiritual exercise is much more important, for it promises a reward in both this life and the next.” (NLT)

“Until we solve the human equation called man and get him straightened out we’ll never have a peaceful world. You have to build a better man before you can build a better society.”

- Billy Graham

- Talk about the Billy Graham quote. What do you think Billy Graham would say about our current society? How do we begin to become better men/women?**

Soaping/ Journal suggestions

- Monday-Journal how last month's sermon's regarding Inspired Word of God has made you look at the bible. What part of which sermon really stood out to you?
- Tuesday-Read Mark 2:14-17 and journal how you would have responded to the Pharisees
- Wednesday-Soap Genesis 1:27
- Thursday- Soap Mark 2:17
- Friday- Journal about a person in your past that you could have shown more compassion for. Did you at the time consider that they have intrinsic value? What might have you done differently?

IDENTITY

Intrinsic Worth - Week 2

Small Group Study Guide

- Open your group by praying for someone in your sphere of influence.**
- Each person share for a minute or two something that God spoke to you through your soaping and journaling last week.**

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The Implications

Jesus followers are supposed to show the world how to follow Jesus so they will want to follow Jesus.

When we value the Intrinsic Worth of every person it changes how we see and treat others, especially those different from us.

I. Our (Christ-centered) values **differentiate** us from culture

Romans 12:2 “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.”

“Don’t become so well adjusted to culture that you fit into it without even thinking.”
(MSG)

- We are supposed to be different from culture, so we can **affect** culture.

Matthew 5:14-16 “You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.” (NIV84)

1. We have values (Beliefs) about what is right and true (Value criteria).
2. Culture has values and beliefs about what is right and true (Value criteria).
3. The difference between the two leaves a GAP between us and culture.
4. How we see and treat people (their intrinsic worth) on the other side of this GAP will determine if we reach people for Jesus or put Jesus out of reach for people.

Our job as believers (Jesus followers) is to put Jesus within reach-so nonbelievers can grasp and take hold of Jesus.

- Really stop here for a minute and share honestly whether your treatment of non-believers would put Jesus in reach for them? Why or why not?**

II. How do we handle this **GAP**?

We tend to pull away from or separate from the parts of culture we do not like, understand or are different from.

We move towards the parts of culture we like, and enjoy.

We engage culture that we want to influence.

- ❑ Spend a minute and talk about how you have been handling this gap. Have you pulled away? Have you engaged?
- ❑ What are some places or events that have made you experience this?
- We don't value what we perceive as **disgusting**.

Examples: Food, Illness, Blood, Death, something Dirty or people we deem offensive...

FOLLOW THE LOGIC

1. We are programmed (psychologically) to pull away from things that are disgusting.

Example: children often do things that we think are disgusting because they are under-programmed.

2. We set boundaries to keep at a distance what we perceive as disgusting.
3. Disgust becomes a problem when we project it onto people.

Example of Peter

Acts 10:10-16 *“Peter went out on the balcony to pray. It was about noon. Peter got hungry and started thinking about lunch. While lunch was being prepared, he fell into a trance. He saw the skies open up. Something that looked like a huge blanket lowered by ropes at its four corners settled on the ground. Every kind of animal and reptile and bird you could think of was on it. Then a voice came: ‘Go to it, Peter—kill and eat.’*

Peter said, ‘Oh, no, Lord. I’ve never so much as tasted food that was not kosher.’

The voice came a second time: ‘If God says it’s okay, it’s okay.’

This happened three times, and then the blanket was pulled back up into the skies.”
(MSG)

III. How does Jesus’ **value** of people (Their Intrinsic worth) show us how to navigate this GAP?

Mark 2:15-16 *“Levi invited Jesus and his disciples to be his dinner guests, along with his fellow tax collectors and many other notorious sinners. (There were many people of this kind among the crowds that followed Jesus.) But when some of the teachers of religious law who were Pharisees saw him eating with people like that, they said to his disciples, ‘Why does he eat with such scum?’ ”* (NLT)

- The Pharisees pushed away from “sinners” because they were “disgusting scum;” they were offensive because they disregarded Jewish laws and standards (The Value Criteria of Judaism).

- Has anyone in your group ever avoided a situation because they thought the people who were present were “sinners”? Would you handle that differently?**

Matthew 9:12-13 “On hearing this, Jesus said, ‘It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. But go and learn what this means: **“I desire mercy, not sacrifice.”**’ **For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.’ ”**

SACRIFICE is made to move toward purity-getting away from what would make us unclean (so we can be righteous).

MERCY is intentionally moving toward relationships, not counting a person's impurity against them.

- **Jesus moves toward these same people because he sees their intrinsic worth; Jesus fills the GAP with mercy.**
- **This is what the apostle Paul defined as the ministry of Reconciliation.**

2 Corinthians 5:18-19 “All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: 19 that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God.”

Reconciliation (Katallasso) = to exchange (as in coins), to return to favor, to receive one into favor. It was generally used in the New Testament as changing someone from an enemy to a friend.

Kata = Carries the idea of movement-Moving down, towards something or someone; down to or upon or into.

Lasso = the change, exchange or transform.

The way most Cultures operate:

The way Jesus Culture operates:

CHANGE
BELIEVE
ACCEPTED

ACCEPTED
BELIEVE
CHANGED

If we are not moving toward a broken world (that can be disgusting) we are offering nothing to a broken world.

Light shines the brightest when it is the darkest.

- Where does your value criteria come from? Would you say that it is cultural values, Jesus values or a mixture of the two? What should we be basing our value criteria from?**
- Close your group in prayer and encourage everyone to bring a soap to share with the next group.**

Soaping/ Journaling Suggestions

Monday- Journal how God is changing the way you value people? Are there areas where you still need growth?

Tuesday- Soap Matthew 9:12-13

Wednesday- Soap 2 Corinthians 5:18-19

Thursday- Read Micah 6:8 and soap The Message version

Friday- Soap Matthew 5:14-16

IDENTITY
Intrinsic Worth #3
John 15:13-16
Small Group Study Guide

- Open with prayer. Pray that this season of small groups connects men to Jesus like never before.**
- Share how to be on mission and ask your group how they have been on mission this summer**

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- The last two weeks have been focused on recognizing that everyone you meet has intrinsic worth, take a minute and talk about how you see yourself. Where have you based your self worth on?**
- As uncomfortable as it can be I would like for each of you in your group to think about yourselves when discussing questions this week. How do you see God addressing your self worth in the life of Jesus?**

1. Our Intrinsic Worth is seen in Jesus' sacrifice

- The 5 love languages are: Words of affirmation, Acts of service, Receiving gifts, Quality time and Physical touch. What is yours?**

John 15:13 "Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends."

- a. It was voluntary

John 10:17-18 "The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord."

- From the list above, what love language does John 15:13 and John 10:17-18 speak to?**

- b. It was vicarious

The word *vicarious* means "performed or suffered by one as a substitute for another or to the benefit or advantage of another." -Merriam-Webster

Isaiah 53:4-6 "Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all."

c. It was vicious

- Betrayed by Judas and deserted by the disciples - Matthew 26:47-56
- Beaten by the Temple guards - Luke 22:63-64
- Rejected by the very people He came to save - Matthew 27:17-25; John 1:11
- Scourged - Matthew 27:26 (Ill. Furrows - Psalms 129:3)
- Mocked by the soldiers and crowned with thorns - Matthew 27:26-29
- Beard plucked from His face - Isaiah 50:6
- Stripped Naked - Matthew 27:35
- Crucified - Nailed to a cross and hung up to die - Matthew 27:35
- Absolutely marred beyond belief - Isaiah 50:14

Share a time when someone stepped up for you in a time of need because they loved you? What was that experience like? As amazing as it was does it compare to what Jesus has done for you?

d. It was victorious

John 19:30 “When he had received the drink, Jesus said, “It is finished.” With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.”

2. Our Intrinsic Worth is seen in how Jesus shares

John 15:14-15 “You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.”

How would your time with Jesus be different if you truly understood him to be your friend? Would that change the amount of time you spend with him? Would you think differently about yourself knowing that Jesus considers you his friend?

a. He shares his love

Romans 8:37-39 “No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

God loves you and there is nothing you can do about it. Think and talk about what that means to you.

b. He shares his life

Galatians 2:20 “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”

c. He shares his lessons

John 15:15 “...everything that I have learned from my Father I have made known to you.”

3. Our Intrinsic Worth is seen in His salvation

John 15:16 “You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you.”

a. He chose us

Ephesians 1:4-5 “For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will.”

b. He calls us

Ephesians 2:10 (NLT) “For we are God’s masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.”

c. He comforts us

Hebrews 4:16 “*Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.*”

- This entire week I would like to focus on your worth to God. You have value. God sent Jesus to die for you!!! Here is the I am Loved statement to help you begin your Soaping/Journaling week. Say the I am Loved statement together.**

I will focus on and celebrate that I am God’s beloved child. That He loved me when I was unlovely, unworthy, and undeserving, that I might begin to see myself through His eyes. That I am a child of God; deeply loved, completely forgiven, fully pleasing and totally accepted by God, chosen by Him to reflect His love and grace.

- Close in Prayer**

Soaping/ Journal Suggestions

Monday- Soap Matthew 6:26

Tuesday- Soap Psalm 139:14-15

Wednesday- Soap Psalm 139:16

Thursday- Soap Isaiah 53:5

Friday- Spend some time and journal how knowing how valuable you are to God should change your life and how you see yourself.

Identity
On Target Values
Intrinsic Worth #4
Small Group Study Guide
Matthew 5:14-16, & 38-48

- Open your small group with prayer. Pray that God would reveal something to every person in your group.**

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Your behavior is the strongest indicator of your REAL values.

IF, “Actions speak louder than words”

THEN,

Reactions speak a **lot louder** than words AND reveal your deepest, most real values.

- Share a time when your reaction to something could have/ should have been better.**
- Share if you are able to recognize that there are some things you have difficulty reconciling because of your values rather than what Christ values.**

“You cannot talk your way out of a problem you have behaved yourself into.”

- Stephen Covey

Premise: Christ centered values (On Target Values), when practiced, can affect the world (Culture) around us, but they have to affect us first.

Our greatest opportunity to affect the world (culture around us) for Good is when things go **BAD.**

- I. **Our Values should define us as God’s Children and drive our behavior/actions.**

One of the first things Jesus said was,

Matthew 5:14-16 (NIV84) “You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven”.

One of the last things Jesus said was,

John 13:34-35 “A new command I give you: Love one another As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

The Problem: What we say we value and what we really value are two different things. We have ASPIRATIONAL Values (That sound great on our Sunday’s but don’t make it into our Mondays). Because they have not yet become our REAL Values. There’s a GAP.

Your behavior doesn’t lie.

We can’t expect our children to listen to our advice and ignore our example.

Because values are caught more than taught.

It’s not how many times you mention them, it’s how well you model them.

Real values drive behavior.

For example:

If I say I value God but what drives me is people pleasing there's a Gap.

If I say I value family but what drives my behavior (fills my free time) is social media and my personal hobbies, there's a Gap

If I say I value truth and honesty but what drives my behavior is secrecy and layers of deception, there's a Gap.

If I say I value spiritual exercise, but I'll run to the gym more than I run to Jesus, there's a Gap.

If I say I value people but my politics drive a critical and condescending response to others, there's a Gap.

- Find someone brave enough in your group or share what you would define as your aspirational values. (things that you say you value but behavior is not quite matching)**

How do you know if your aspirational values are your real values?

They drive your behavior and make you recognizable as God's children.

You'll value pleasing God over people and your priorities show it.

You'll value being possessed by God over getting more possessions, and your generosity will show it.

You'll value truth over comfort and your perseverance will show it.

You'll value spiritual exercise over physical exercise and your character will show it.

You'll value people over politics and your compassion and kindness will show it.

You'll react in times of difficulty with grace and mercy and your love will show it.

- What do you notice about the two different lists above? The first list of behaviors and gaps and the second list of values and behaviors.**

II. Our Values (when in practice) refine us and put Jesus on display (seen by others) when our reactions reflect God's presence in our lives.

What Jesus says will differentiate us from culture is how we act (behave) and how we react to the people around us, (especially those who are difficult for us and different from us) not our moral superiority.

Jesus is saying that our best time (opportunity) to influence others is when things DON'T go our way. When the high value of others (their intrinsic worth) drive an uncommon response from us.

- How do you normally behave when things don't go your way? Would you say you are graceful in those moments? Or something else?**

Jesus is addressing what was known as the “Lex Talionis” The law of retaliation.

Notice the contrast in values that affect behavior

38 “You have heard that it was said, ‘Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.’ 39 But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also.

40 And if anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, hand over your coat as well.

41 If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles.

42 Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.

Notice again the contrast that affects behavior

43 “You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy. 44 But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,

45 that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

44-45 (MSG) I’m telling you to love your enemies. Let them bring out the best in you, not the worst. When someone gives you a hard time, respond with the supple moves of prayer, for then you are working out of your true selves, your God-created selves. This is what God does. He gives his best—the sun to warm and the rain to nourish—to everyone, regardless: the good and bad, the nice and nasty.

46 If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? 47 And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that?

48 Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

48(MSG) “In a word, what I’m saying is, *Grow up*. You’re kingdom subjects. Now live like it. Live out your God-created identity. Live generously and graciously toward others, the way God lives toward you.”

- Give everyone in your group a chance to sum up in their own words what was Jesus trying to say about our responses to difficult situations?

APPLICATION

Try this at home: this week when you feel the compulsion to be reactive in the natural (negative) way, ask what would be the **generous opposite of what I normally do? What would be surprisingly different?**

Romans 12:17-19(MSG) “ Don’t hit back; **discover beauty in everyone**... get along with everybody. Don’t insist on getting even; that’s not for you to do. “I’ll do the judging,” says God. “I’ll take care of it.”

20-21 Our Scriptures tell us that if you see your enemy hungry, go buy that person lunch, or if he’s thirsty, get him a drink. **Your generosity will surprise** him with goodness.

- Ask what each of us can practice this week when confronted with difficulties.**
- Close you group in prayer**
- Challenge your group to soap/ journal every day this week**

Soaping/ Journal Suggestions

Monday- As we are at the end of the Intrinsic Worth of every person value, journal how knowing everyone has value to God has changed the way you deal with or feel about people who hold different values than yourself.

Tuesday-Soap John 13:34-35

Wednesday- Journal where God is prompting you to be more understanding and less reactive?

Thursday- Soap Romans 12:17:18

Friday- Soap Romans 12:20-21

IDENTITY
INTIMATE WALK WITH GOD Wk 1
KNOWN FOR
SMALL GROUP STUDY GUIDE

- Open your small group with prayer. Pray that God would reveal something to every person in your group.**

Remind your group about the lifestyle of being “On Mission”. When we say “Lifestyle” we are seeking to reinforce that it is who you are, your identity to Be On Mission. (What I have found as I ask this question each week is that it helps the group to begin to understand and embrace this value. “Every person in a group and every group on Mission.” It has been helpful for the group to be reminded of the 7 ways to “Be on Mission:”

- 1) Keep our group open to newcomers-Anyone can Invite a new person to join
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Review of Identify, Clarify, & Fortify

- I. Identify your values because your values shape your identity and motivate your behavior.
 - Your values drive the stories you tell yourself
 - Your values drive what, or who you serve.
 - Without identification, you have abdication
 - No values, wrong values, accidental values
- II. Clarify your values
 - Without clarification, you have fragmentation
- III. Fortify your values
 - Without fortification, you have poor implementation

FORTIFICATION requires:

Building habits that reinforce who you are and what you are called to do.

John 5:19 “I tell you, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does.”

John 10:30 “I and the Father are one.”

We all want to be known for something...

What do you do when you fall short of what you want to be known for?

Before Christ, what were the top 2 things you wanted to be known for?

We PRETEND

We fill the GAP between what we want to be known for and what we are with pretending and image management.

Premise: When we pretend or fake it to try and look our best even when we know we are not at our best, it blocks our intimacy with God and others.

Share in your group if you have ever pretended to be something you are not. How far would you go to be seen a certain way?

I. **What you should know about this issue that creates this GAP:**

1. It is a HUMAN thing.

We are all at some point tempted to fake it, pretend, hide or even lie to not have this GAP exposed.

We tend to believe (Tell ourselves a story) that we will be more lovable, acceptable, and impressive, **IF** we can be known for something admirable.

2. It is **NOT** a **HEALTHY** thing.

RESULTS:

When we start pretending we stop improving.

We adopt a fake-it until you make-it mentality.

We get older but not better.

We are more tired more often, because it is exhausting to put on airs-to where a mask-to not be authentic.

We feel like a fraud or an imposter.

We question if we are really loved.

What are some of the negative things that happen to us when we are living this unhealthy lifestyle?

3. It blocks intimacy with God and others.

“How can people love you for who you are if you become someone else to be with them?”

- Steven Pauls

We are not the FaceBook or the Instagram version of ourselves.

II. What is Healthy for all of us great pretenders is to

Find a place where we don't have to PRETEND.

When you find a group of people or even just one person that doesn't have to pretend,

YOU LIKE IT.

IT'S REFRESHING

THESE PEOPLE ARE FOR REAL!

If you are working on this study guide it is safe to say you are in a group. Take a minute and share whether or not your group feels “real.” What are some of the characteristics of a “real” group?

1. **HONEST** with Ourselves

Author Steven Covey **“Until a person can say deeply and honestly, ‘I am what I am today because of the choices I made yesterday,’ that person cannot say, ‘I choose otherwise.’”**

Reformer John Calvin (In 1553) said in The Institutes of the Christian Religion: **“There is no deep knowing of God without a deep knowing of self and no deep knowing of self without a deep knowing of God.”**

Thomas a Kempis (in the 1420’s) The Imitation of Christ and said, **“A humble self-knowledge is a surer way to God than a search after deep learning.”**

Augustine prayed **“Lord grant that I may know myself that I may know thee.”**

Psa. 51:5-6 (MSG) I’ve been out of step with you for a long time...What you’re after is truth from the inside out. Enter me then, conceive a new true life.”

Until you can embrace who you really are and where you really are you’ll never get to where you long to be.

David Benner “Self-transformation is always preceded by self-acceptance. And the self that you need to accept, is the self that you actually and truly are before you can start your self-improvement projects.

Any hope that you can know yourself without accepting the things about you that you wish were not true is an illusion. Reality must be embraced before it can be changed, our knowing of ourselves will remain superficial until we are willing to accept ourselves as God accepts us, fully and completely just as we are.

Until we are prepared to accept the self we actually are, we block God’s transforming work of making us into our true self, that is hidden in God. We must befriend the self we seek to know. We must receive it with hospitality not hostility. No one, not even your own self, can be known apart from such a welcome.”

“You cannot become what you need to be by remaining what you are”

- Max De Pree

“If you always do what you’ve always done you’ll always be who you’ve always been.”

- Josh McDowell

- Share a time where you had to be completely honest with yourself about yourself. What were some of the feelings associated with that? What was the outcome of being honest with yourself?**

2. HONEST with God

Psalms 139:23 “Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me and lead me in the way everlasting.”

Timothy Keller “To be loved but not known is comforting but superficial. To be known and not loved is our greatest fear. But to be fully known and truly loved is, well, a lot like being loved by God. It is what we need more than anything. It liberates us from pretense, humbles us out of our self-righteousness, and fortifies us for any difficulty life can throw at us.”

What is more important than what you’re known for is **who you’re known by.**

3. HONEST with others

James 5:16 (MSG) “Make this your common practice: Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you can live together whole and healed.”

- Why would the above scripture (James 5:16) be important in relationships whether they are friendships or working relationships.**

The 12 Steps:

Step 1 “Admitted that we were powerless over _____, and that our lives had become unmanagable.”

Step 5 “Admitted to God, to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.”

Romans 15:7 “Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God.”

Galatians 6:2 “Carry each other's burdens and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.”

THIS IS WHAT JESUS SAID WE (HIS FOLLOWERS) WILL BE KNOWN FOR.

John 13:34-35 “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this **everyone will know** that you are **my disciples**, if you **love** one another.”

- What would be the evidence in your life that you are loving others as Christ loves you?**

If you want something different you’ve got to do something different.

- Challenge each other to soap every day this week**
- Close your group in prayer**

Soaping/ Journal suggestions

Monday- Journal about what makes a relationship an intimate relationship.

Tuesday- Read Genesis 3:8 and journal what that scripture tells you about God's desire to be in relationship with us.

Wednesday-Soap 1 John 4:15-16

Thursday- Soap 1 Corinthians 6:19

Friday- Journal How you will practice more intimacy with God

Identity
Known For
We Value an Intimate Walk with God Week 2
John 15:1-17 (NIV84)
Small Group Study Guide

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- 7) Share your testimony

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- Open your group in prayer. Pray that God would just overwhelm your group with the desire to know Him at a more intimate level.**

Review:

I. **Identify** your Values

- Without identification, you have **abdication**

II. **Clarify** your values

- Without clarification, you have **fragmentation**

III. **Fortify** your values

- Without fortification, you have poor **implementation**

Quotes regarding our need for God-

Man needs to be alone with God. Without this, God cannot have the opportunity to shine into his heart, to transform his nature by His divine working, to take possession and to fill him with the fullness of God.

—Andrew Murray

Dear child of God, let us never say, "I have no time for God." Let the Holy Spirit teach us that the most important, the most blessed, the most profitable time of the whole day is the time we spend alone with God. Pray to the Lord Jesus, who in His earthly life, experienced the need of prayer; pray to the Holy Spirit, who will impress us with this divine truth. As indispensable to me as the bread I eat, and the air I breathe, is communion with God through His Word and prayer. Whatever else is left undone, God has the first and chief right to my time. Then only will my surrender to God's will be full and unreserved.

—Andrew Murray

"God designed the human machine to run on Himself. He Himself is the fuel our spirits were designed to burn, or the food our spirits were designed to feed on. There is no other. That is why it is just no good asking God to make us happy in our own way without bothering about religion. God cannot give us a happiness and peace apart from

Himself, because it is not there. There is no such thing.”
—C.S. Lewis

- **Take a few minutes and discuss what you noticed about the above quotes. What are each of the authors trying to convey about our relationship with God.**

This weeks core scripture

John 15:1-17 "1 I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. 2 He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. 3 You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. 4 Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

5 "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. 6 If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. 7 If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given to you. 8 This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

9 "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. 10 If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love. 11 I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. 12 My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. 13 Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. 14 You are my friends if you do what I command. 15 I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. 16 You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit--fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. 17 This is my command: Love each other."

Two Phases to an Intimate Walk with God

1st The Connection Phase

- Starts with an Intimate Encounter.

John 15:1-3 "I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he **prunes** so that it will be even more fruitful. You are already **clean** because of the word I have spoken to you."

- Key word: Greek "Kathairo" means to "Prune" & "Cleanse"
- BUT, must lead to an **honest confession** to produce **union** with Christ - Our Intimate Connection with God/Jesus.

1 John 1:9 "If we **confess** our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and **purify** us from all unrighteousness."

Romans 10:9 "If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is LORD and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead you will be saved."

1 John 4:15 (MSG) "Everyone who **confesses** that Jesus is God's Son participates...in an intimate relationship with God."

Romans 6:23 (TEV) "...God's free gift is eternal life in **union** with Christ Jesus our Lord."

- Define confess in your own words.**
- Why would it be important to God that we confess our sins and also confess that Jesus is Lord?**
- Ask if anyone would like to confess that Jesus is Lord. If they don't know how, this would be an opportunity to pray with them.**

1 Corinthians 6:17 "But whoever is united with the Lord is one with him in spirit."

- What would your group say are some differences between knowing someone and being intimate with someone?**
- What might you say are some of the things that are or would keep you from having intimacy with God.**

2nd The Communion Phase

- Sticks with - an Intimate Walk.

John 15: 5, 7-8 "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you **remains** in me and I in you, you will bear much **fruit**; apart from me you can do nothing... If you **remain** in me and my words **remain** in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much **fruit**, showing yourselves to be my disciples."

- Key word: Greek “Meno” means to “Remain”, “Abide” or “Continue.”
- The Continued Connection is what produces communion with Christ

Share two or three practical examples of how someone can remain or continue in Christ in order to be in the type of constant connection Christ wants with us.

2 John 1:9 (MSG) “Anyone who...does not **continue** in the teaching of Christ does not have God; whoever **continues** in the teaching has both the Father and the Son.”

1 John 1:3 “We saw it, we heard it, and now we're telling you so you can experience it along with us, this experience of **communion** with the Father and his Son, Jesus Christ.”

Do you remember the GAP between Aspirational values and Real Values?

Fill the GAP with PRACTICE

ASPIRATIONAL VALUES

PRACTICE

REAL VALUES

Two critical practices for an intimate walk with God

1. Practice relational dependence on God

1 John 2:5-6 (MSG) “But the one who keeps God's word is the person in whom we see God's mature love. anyone who claims to be intimate with God ought to live the same kind of life Jesus lived.”

John 5:19 “**The Son can do nothing by himself;** he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does.”

John 15:4-5 “**No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine.** Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me....**apart from me you can do nothing.**”

- **Prayerful** dependence deepens our awareness of His presence.

John 15:7-8 “If you remain in me and my words remain in you, **ask** whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.”

- Another word for this dependence is **trust**.

1 Peter 2:23 “When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he **entrusted** himself to him who judges justly.”

Proverbs 3:5-6 “**Trust** in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him and He will make your path straight.”

Jeremiah 17:7-8 “But blessed is the one who **trusts** in the Lord, whose confidence is in him. They will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear **fruit**.”

Philippians 4:6-7 “Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

- What are some observations that you have witnessed of someone who trusts in the Lord? How is that person's reactions or behaviors different from someone who does not have trust in Jesus?**

2. Practicing relational **obedience** to God.

John 15:9-10 (NIV 84) “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you **obey** my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have **obeyed** my Father's commands and remain in his love.”

- Share an example of where you have obeyed the Lord. What did it take for you to obey Him?**

- Another way of saying this is, Obedience is doing the **next right thing**.
- The combination of Relational Trust and Obedience will produces greater fruitfulness.

Matthew 7:16

(NAS) "You will know them by their fruits

(NLT) You can identify them by their fruit, that is, by the way they act. .

(GW) You will know them by what they produce.

- If appropriate, share what your life produced before Christ. What is the evidence of a connection with Christ now?**
- Close your group with prayer.**

Soaping/ Journaling Suggestions

Monday- Soap John 15:4

Tuesday-Soap John 15:8

Wednesday-Soap Proverbs 3:5-6

Thursday-Soap Jeremiah 17:9

Friday- Journal how God has shown you His love for you this week.

Identity
Intimate Walk with God Week 3
Communion
EVIDENCE & EFFORT
Small Group Study Guide
John 15:1-17

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- 7) Share your testimony

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2. YC supports D St shelter by serving dinner to the homeless on the 4th Wednesday of every month. How awesome would it be for your group to serve our vulnerable? Jesus said in Matthew 23:5, “For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat.” If interested Contact Bre for more information at bre@yosemitechurch.com
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- Open your group in prayer. Allow everyone in the group to just pray a prayer of gratitude. What are you grateful to God for?**

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Last week

1. Starts with an intimate encounter
2. Must lead to an honest confession
3. Produces an intimate union
4. Union does not guarantee communion

What are the practical things that you have each employed this week to experience a higher level of intimacy with God?

An Intimate Walk with God is realized as we continue to strengthen our connection and communion with God.

Definition of Communion: is the sharing or exchange of intimate thoughts and feelings, especially when the exchange is on a mental or spiritual level.

I. The Evidence of Intimacy (Notice the progression of fruit in verses 2, 5/8, &16)
The ultimate evidence is a maturing love; living & loving like Jesus.

1 John 2:5-6 (MSG) *"The one who keeps God's word is the person in whom we see God's mature love. anyone who claims to be intimate with God ought to live the same kind of life Jesus lived."*

John 15:15 *"...For everything that I have learned from my father I have made known to you."*

- On a scale of 1-5 with 1 being not at all and 5 being loving like Jesus, how would you rate yourself based on 1 John 2:5-6? What would it take to increase that score?

Four Markers that Your Love is Maturing

1. His Love - (Intimate priority)

John 15:9 *"As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love."*

Matthew 22:36-37 *"Teacher which is the greatest command in the law? Jesus answered, 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might. This is the first and greatest command."*

2. His Joy - (Intimate perspective)

John 15:11 *"I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete (Full)."*

Galatians 5:22 *"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy..."*

3. His Friendship - (Intimate presence)

John 15:15 *"I no longer call you servants...Instead I have called you friends."*

4. His Business - (Intimate purpose)

John 15:15 *"I no longer call you servants because a servant does not know his father's business..."*

- We are called to live and love like Jesus. How do you see the four above points of Priority, Perspective, Presence and Purpose translating into your relationships?

II. The Effort for intimacy (Remember trust and obedience?)

Obedience and trust flow out of your TIME with Jesus.

- I think we would all agree that relationships take effort. Would you agree with that statement? If you do, what amount of effort would you say you are putting into your relationship with Jesus? Are you putting more effort into your earthly relationships that you are with Jesus? What do you think would be the outcome of a more intentional time with Jesus?

ASPIRATIONAL VALUES (What we want to be known for)

PRETENDING

REAL VALUES (What we really are)

ASPIRATIONAL VALUES

PRACTICING

REAL VALUES

“Man needs to be alone with God. Without this, God cannot have the opportunity to shine into his heart, to transform his nature by His divine working, to take possession and to fill him with the fullness of God.”

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—Andrew Murray

Relational obedience - obeying like Jesus comes by:

John 15: 9-10 “As the Father has loved me so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you obey my commands you will remain in my love just as I have obeyed my Father’s commands and remain in His love.”

- Practice His Presence - **Receiving** His acceptance & forgiveness

John 15:9 “As the Father has loved me so have I loved you. Now **remain in my love.**”

You can't give away what you don't have.

1 John 4:19 “We love because he first loved us.”

- Practice doing the **next right thing** to others- **Giving** His acceptance & forgiveness (practicing **kindness**).

“Many years ago I was driven to the conclusion that the two major causes of most emotional problems among evangelical Christians are these: the failure to understand, receive, and live into God's unconditional grace and forgiveness; and the failure to give out that unconditional love, forgiveness, and grace to other people. We read, we hear, we believe a good theology of grace. But that's not the way we live. The good news of the Gospel of grace has not penetrated the level of our emotions.”

- David Seamonds

- The above quote is so powerful. Speak in your group where you are at and why. Do you have a bigger issue with receiving God's unconditional grace and forgiveness or giving that same grace and forgiveness to others? How can we begin to live in alignment with what we say we believe?**

John 15:10 “If you obey my commands you will remain in my love just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in His love.”

John 15:13 “Greater love has no one than this, that he **lay down** his life for his friend.”

John 14:15 “If you love me, you will obey what I command...this is my command: Love each other.”

1 Timothy 1:5 “The goal of our command is love. Which comes from a pure heart, a good conscience and a sincere faith.”

- What God truly wants of us is to love like He does. What can you do this week to love better?**
- Close your group in prayer and encourage each other to soap this week**

Soaping/ Journaling suggestions

Monday- Soap John 15:9-10

Tuesday- Soap John 15:12-13

Wednesday- Journal what it is in each of us that makes it difficult to love like Jesus.

Thursday- Soap 1 Timothy 1:5

Friday- Journal about someone you are seeing become more Christlike. What characteristics is that person displaying?

Identity
We Value an Intimate Walk with God
Week 4 Small Group Study Guide
John 15:1-17

OBEDIENCE as LAYING DOWN

Remind your group about the lifestyle of being “On Mission”. When we say “Lifestyle” we are seeking to reinforce that it is who you are, your identity to Be On Mission.

(What I have found as I ask this question each week is that it helps the group to begin to understand and embrace this value. “Every person in a group and every group on Mission.” It has been helpful for the group to be reminded of the 7 ways to “Be on Mission:”

- 1) Keep our group open to newcomers-Anyone can Invite a new person to join**
- 2) Be open to serve on a team using my spiritual gifts**
- 3) Be open to love my neighbor in some practical way**
- 4) Be open to meet the need of someone in crisis**
- 5) Be open as a group to serve our community**
- 6) Be open to opportunities to be financially generous.**
- 7) Share your testimony**

October/ November 2022 Mission opportunities

1. Are you good with your hands? Do you love to build and see projects get completed? Our facilities team could use your group's help finishing some projects for our youth rooms. If your group is interested in getting involved please reach out to Dave Weaver at dave@yosemitechurch.com
2. We need weekend greeters. Would your group be willing to serve one weekend a month for 1 or 2 services? We want to make the very first impression on our guest as warm and welcoming as possible and we need you! If your group is willing please contact Bre at bre@yosemitechurch.com
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http://www.pointsnorthsys.com/SHAPE_Yosemite/Logon/Logon.aspx

- Open your group in prayer. Allow everyone to share how grateful they are that God wants an intimate relationship with each of us.**

This week's core scripture:

John 15:1-17 "1 I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. 2 He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. 3 You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. 4 Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

5 "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. 6 If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. 7 If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given to you. 8 This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

9 "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. 10 If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love. 11 I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. 12 My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. 13 Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. 14 You are my friends if you do what I command. 15 I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. 16 You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit--fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. 17 This is my command: Love each other."

Practicing His Presence (Greek-Meno) makes Jesus an Intimate Priority

Key word: "Meno," in Greek means to remain, abide or continue

Intimacy is contingent upon trust (Learning to depend on) Jesus.

The Evidence of Intimacy is contingent upon the effort for Intimacy.

In other words,

If you want the evidence of Intimacy, you have to make the effort for Intimacy.

**Where would you rate your effort for intimacy with God on a scale of 1-5?
What would it take to score higher?**

"The space for what you want is already filled with what you have settled for instead."

- Stephen Pauls

Last Week, we talked about:

Four Markers (Points of Evidence) that Your Love is Maturing

- I. His Love - (Intimate priority)
- II. His Joy - (Intimate perspective)
- III. His Friendship - (Intimate presence)
- IV. His Business - (Intimate purpose)

Growing (maturing) believers go from union to communion by learning to depend (abide/remain/trust) in their intimacy with Christ

John 15:5-8 (MSG) *"I am the Vine, you are the branches. When you're joined with me and I with you, the relation intimate and organic, the harvest is sure to be abundant.... if you make yourselves at home with me and my words are at home in you, you can be sure that whatever you ask will be listened to and acted upon. This is how my Father shows who he is—when you produce grapes (Bear fruit), when you mature as my Disciples."*

1 John 2:5-6 (MSG) *"The one who keeps God's word is the person in whom we see God's mature love. anyone who claims to be intimate with God ought to live the same kind of life Jesus lived."*

The ultimate evidence of Intimacy with God is a maturing love.

THE EFFORT OF OBEDIENCE

- I. Make His Love your daily Intimate Priority

John 15:9-10 *"As the Father has loved me so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you obey my commands you will remain in my love just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in His love."*

The evidence of His Love, comes from the effort of Relational obedience - to obey like Jesus

- Is not Legislation from God - What the Law had become, but
- An Invitation from God - into a trusting relationship.

John 15:15 *"I no longer call you servant...Instead I have called you friends."*

John 14:15 *"If you love me, you will obey what I command."*

Why is obedience so IMPORTANT?

Obedience to Jesus is the consummate expression of my trust in Jesus.

1. Obedience grows as we practice spending time with Jesus.
 - Trust in, grows out of Time with.

- Name two characteristics that you see in someone who's life shows obedience to Christ.**
- Share what you need to do in your life to be more obedient to Christ.**

“Man needs to be alone with God. Without this, God cannot have the opportunity to shine into his heart, to transform his nature by His divine working, to take possession and to fill him with the fullness of God.”

—Andrew Murray

“Dear child of God, let us never say, ‘I have no time for God.’ Let the Holy Spirit teach us that the most important, the most blessed, the most profitable time of the whole day is the time we spend alone with God. Pray to the Lord Jesus, who in His earthly life, experienced the need of prayer; pray to the Holy Spirit, who will impress us with this divine truth. As indispensable to me as the bread I eat, and the air I breathe, is communion with God through His Word and prayer. Whatever else is left undone, God has the first and chief right to my time. Then only will my surrender to God's will be full and unreserved.”

—Andrew Murray

- Nail it down, **how and when** will you connect with Jesus

Nothing becomes dynamic until it becomes specific.

- Everyone in your group commit to spending time with Jesus every day. Each group member tell when and where that will be this week.**

2. Obedience Grows as we practice **laying down** what gets in the way of trusting Jesus.

John 15:13 & 14 “Greater love has no one than this, that he **lay down** his life for his friend. You are my friends if you do what I command.”

- We hold on to what we want to control.
- You cannot lay down what you're unwilling to let go of.
- Share a time when you tried to control something that you should let go of instead? What was the determining factor in why you should have let go?

Matthew 6:33 “Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”

- Lay down your kingdom.

- What are the things that God has added to your life since you put Him first?
Share with each other How you are seeking Him first.

Luke 14:33 “So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.”

- Lay down your stuff (distractions).

Luke 9:23 “And he said to all, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.”

- Lay down your preoccupation with self.

Matthew 26:39 “And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, saying, “My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will.”

- Lay down your willfulness.

Matthew 6:12 “Forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven those who sin against us.”

- Lay down your unforgiveness and resentments.

Luke 23:34 “Father, forgive them, for they don’t know what they are doing.” - Jesus, at the cross

Philippians 2:5-8 (NIV-84) “Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus. Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death - even death on a cross!”

Nail it down, every time you are making **space** to be with Jesus **practice laying down** what is getting **in the way** of trusting, loving, and obeying Him.

- Talk about how your group can serve together in this season of giving. Review serve opportunities and consider choosing one together.**
- If time permits have group member share a soap they have completed**

Close your group in prayer

Soaping/ Journal suggestions

Monday- What is God asking you to lay down in order to fully obey Him.

Tuesday-Soap Luke 14:33

Wednesday-Soap Hebrews 12:1

Thursday- Soap Luke 9:23

Friday- Soap John 15:15

Identity
We value an Intimate Walk with God Week 5
John 15:1-17
Small Group Study Guide
His Joy, Our Intimate Perspective

Remind your group about the lifestyle of being “On Mission”. When we say “Lifestyle” we are seeking to reinforce that it is who you are, your identity to Be On Mission. (What I have found as I ask this question each week is that it helps the group to begin to understand and embrace this value. “Every person in a group and every group on Mission.” It has been helpful for the group to be reminded of the 7 ways to “Be on Mission:”

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- 7) Share your testimony

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Practicing His presence (Trusting/depending on Jesus) empowers an Intimate Perspective

Key word: “Meno” in Greek means to remain, abide, or continue

Intimacy is contingent upon trust (Learning to depend on) Jesus.
The evidence of intimacy is contingent on the effort for intimacy.

In review

Four Markers (Points of Evidence) that Your Love is Maturing

- I. His Love - (Intimate priority)
- II. His Joy - (Intimate perspective)
- III. His Friendship - (Intimate presence)
- IV. His Business - (Intimate purpose)

A Perspective change is contingent on a thought change.

Your perspectives are driven by your dominant thoughts.

Your perspectives are driven by the stories you tell yourself.

“The perspective (story) you want, is already filled with the perspective (story) you have settled for instead.”

Make His Joy your Intimate Perspective

John 15:11 “I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete (Full).”

- In each of our lives I would bet that we have felt a sense of joy at one time or another. Take a moment to reflect on John 15:1. Explain in your own words what Jesus is conveying.**

What has Jesus “told” them?

John 15:9-10 “As the Father has loved me so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you obey my commands you will remain in my love just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in His love.”

The evidence of His Joy (Joyful Trust), comes from the effort to adjust your perspective - to trust and obey like Jesus.

You cannot adjust your perspective without adjusting your thoughts.

We can adjust our perspective as Jesus adjusted His perspective; Jesus entrusted Himself (and all of His suffering) to the Father's purposes (His will).

1 Peter 2:23 (CEB) *“When he was insulted, he did not reply with insults. When he suffered, he did not threaten revenge. Instead, he entrusted himself to the one who judges justly.”*

Hebrews 12:2 *“Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of God. Consider him who endured such opposition so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.”*

James 1:2-3 *“Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.”*

- Share a time that you persevered through a tough situation. How did you mature through that process?**
- How big of a change of perspective is considering trials as joy? What is our natural tendency to do when we face problems?**
- What are a couple examples of how Jesus faced trials? How can we learn from his example?**

“Consider” hēgéomai in Greek means “to lead”; in this case, to lead one’s thoughts to a new perspective.

Your mind is a muscle that can build a strong perspective by exercising (Practicing) trusting obedience. (Spiritual CPR)

I. HOW TO CHANGE YOUR PERSPECTIVE: (The effort to get the evidence).

1st practice Catching your Perspective & Releasing it.

2 Corinthians 10:3-6 *“For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. 4 The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. 5 We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.”*

2nd practice Changing your Perspective & Replacing it.

II. HOW TO PRACTICE AN INTIMATE PERSPECTIVE:

1. Catch your Perspective (thoughts & stories) around loss (pruning).

John 15:2 *“..every branch that bears fruit he prunes so that it will be more fruitful.”*

Definition of grooming: the practice of preparing or training someone for a particular purpose or activity.

- What are some examples of the things God has pruned from you in order that you be more fruitful? Was it a person, a job, a possession or a habit? Share how God worked on your perspective during that time.**

Romans 8:28 “And we know that in **all things** God works for **the good** of those who love him, who have been called according to **his purpose.**”

Change & Replace by:

- Seeing **pruning** (Every loss) as God grooming your life for **purpose**.
2. Catch your Perspective (thoughts & stories) around pain (problems).

James 1:2&4 “Consider it pure joy...because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. 4 Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be **mature...**”

2 Corinthians 10:5-6 (NIV & MSG) “We take captive **every thought** to make it obedient to Christ. Our tools are ready at hand for clearing the ground of every obstruction and building lives of **obedience into maturity...**”

- Share a time that you persevered through a tough situation. How did you mature through that process?**

Change & Replace by:

- Seeing **pain** (or problems) as God’s tools to make you **mature**.

“The problem you are facing is the tool he is using to make you more like him.”

- Pastor Jeff

3. Catch your Perspective (thoughts & stories) around weakness.

2 Corinthians 12:9-10 “But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for **my power** is made perfect in **weakness.**” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my **weaknesses**, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in **weaknesses**, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.”

- The above scripture is so powerful but requires a major change in our normal perspective. How would you explain this scripture in your own words?**

Change & Replace by:

- Seeing your **weakness** as God’s invitation to trust His **strength**.

“In times of trouble say, ‘First he brought me here. In that I will rest.’ Next, ‘He will keep me here in his love, and give me grace in this trial to behave as his child.’ Then say, ‘He will make the trial a blessing, teaching me lessons he intends me to learn, and working

in me the grace he means to bestow.' And lastly say, 'In his good time he can bring me out again.' How and when he knows. Therefore, say, 'I am here by God's appointment, in his keeping, under his training, for his time.'"

- Andrew Murray

- Take a moment to consider the above Andrew Murray quote. What jumps out at you? Does it change how you would view a time of trouble and how?**

- Encourage your group to consider serving together in one of the serve opportunities**
- Encourage or share a soaping entry from last week**
- Close your group in prayer**

Soaping/ Journaling suggestions

Monday- Soap James 1:2-4

Tuesday- Journal how God has used a trial to help you Grow. How did it feel at the time? What changed your perspective on trials?

Wednesday-Soap 2Corinthians 12:9

Thursday- Soap Romans 8:28

Friday- Journal where you feel your intimacy with God has grown and what made the difference?

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IDENTITY

VALUE # 4 Week 1 Small Group Study Guide

“Investment Work of Discipleship”

Matthew 28:19-20

Requires a commitment

Review from John 15

Four Markers (Points of Evidence) that Your Love is Maturing

- I. His Love - (Intimate priority)
- II. His Joy - (Intimate perspective)

John 15:14-16 “You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his **master's business**. Instead, I have called you **friends**, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to **go and bear fruit—fruit that will last.**”

- III. His Friendship - (Intimate presence)
- IV. His Business - (Intimate purpose)

Matthew 28:19-20 “Therefore **go and make disciples** of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely **I am with you always**, to the very end of the age.”

When we practice His Presence we experience:

1. A growing awareness of his presence
2. A growing commitment to be about his business

What is the Investment Work of Discipleship?

Definition of terms:

1. “Investment”: An investment is a contribution of time, talent or treasure, with the anticipation of increasing something of value or worth.
 - Talk about a time you made an investment decision. Whether that was a monetary investment or an investment of time, what was the determining factor for your willingness to invest?**
 - What are some of the factors that would keep you from investing in something? For example, I might say I have nothing to invest or too much risk.**

Matthew 6:33 “Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”

Matthew 25:23 *“Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!”*

Jesus is saying there are dividends that come to those who invest in His kingdom, who are committed to the Masters business.

- Jesus is saying there is a promised outcome of your investment. If you knew you could not lose, what would you invest in right now?**
- We invest in what we value. Where are you currently investing your time?**

2. “Work”: the exertion or effort directed to produce or accomplish something

- We do not work for our salvation.

Ephesians 2:8-9 *“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— **not by works**, so that no one can boast.”*

- This above scripture is one that is so powerful because of what? What is Paul saying about work and salvation? Why is that so different from what religion says?**

We do no work FOR salvation (redemption), we do all work BECAUSE of redemption.

We never have to work so Jesus will like us. He already likes us. We work so we will become more like him.

- We do work out our salvation

Philippians 2:12 *“My dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to **work out** your salvation with fear and trembling...”*

- We do work so others can come to salvation and learn to work out their salvation.

Luke 10:2 *“The harvest is plentiful, but the **workers** are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out **workers** into his harvest field.”*

3. “Discipleship”: from “Disciple,” in Greek, is “mathetes” means a “learner” or “pupil” - one who learns by following and emulating.

“Christian” is used 3 times in the New Testament.

“Disciple” is used 269 times.

- Is there a difference between a believer in Christ and a disciple? What are those differences? Based on your answer, which would you say you are? Which do you believe Christ wants us all to be?**

The New Testament was written by disciples, about disciples, for disciples.

Matthew 4:19 (NLT) *“Come, follow me, and I will show you how to fish for people!”*

Matthew 28:19 *“Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations...teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you...”*

- **Discipleship is the master’s Business**

“The Church exists for nothing else but to draw men into Christ, to make them little Christs. If they are not doing that, all the cathedrals, clergy, missions, sermons, even the Bible itself, are simply a waste of time.” C S Lewis, Mere Christianity

The purpose of discipleship is spiritual formation:

“The process of being formed in the image of Christ for the sake of others.”

- M. Robert Mulholland Jr.

- The above quote by M. Robert Mulholland Jr. should begin to make you question your understanding of why we are formed in the image of Christ. How would truly understanding that through discipleship we become more like Christ for others change your opinion on the value of investing in discipleship? Is it more or less valuable to you and why?**

Let’s review:

If we value an Intimate Walk with God, we will answer Jesus’ call (in John 15) to be disciples who are committed to relational obedience.

If we value the Investment work of Discipleship, we will answer Jesus’ call (in Matthew 28) to make more disciples who will relationally obey.

John 15:9-10 *“As the Father has loved me so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. **If you obey** my commands you will remain in my love...”*

Matthew 28:20 *“...teaching them to **obey** everything I have commanded...”*

I cannot effectively teach others to “obey” if I am unwilling to obey.

I cannot expect to experience spiritual dividends if I do not invest in spiritual disciplines (Practices).

I cannot experience the evidence of spiritual fruit if I make no effort for fruit.

I cannot help make disciples if I am not being a disciple.

Therefore, this Value is the commitment to do whatever is necessary to be involved in, and support obedience to, the Great Commission (Mt. 28:19-20); the making of disciples, people being transformed by relational obedience.

This starts with me; this starts with you.

- Share in your group whether or not you are willing to commit to investing in discipleship? What are the steps you are going to take this week to begin learning from Christ?**
- Encourage your group to participate in one of the serve opportunities listed in this weeks study guide**
- Close your group in prayer**

Soaping/ Journaling suggestions

Monday- Jesus is asking us to follow Him. Journal how following Jesus would be different than simply believing in Him. Mathew 4:19

Tuesday-Soap Matthew 6:33

Wednesday-Soap Matthew 28:19-20

Thursday- Journal what you would tell a non-believer is the purpose of being a disciple of Jesus.

Friday- Soap Luke 6:40

IDENTITY - Small Group Study Guide
Investment Work of Discipleship Wk. 2
Matthew 28:16-20

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3. Thanksgiving is right around the corner and we have many families in need. This year with prices on everything being so high we will have more families who will need help providing a meal to their family. Would your group be willing to participate? For more information on how you can help please contact Bre at bre@yosemitechurch.com
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“A disciple is a learner under discipline who has voluntarily submitted him or herself to be taught. Discipleship is not to bring people into legalism but in liberty. It’s not to manipulate people but to mature them spiritually. Discipleship is not to dominate, but to develop them for their full potential for God. It’s not to restrict people but to release them to their own ministry. A disciple is one who has learned to submit to authority and therefore ready to exercise authority.” —John Maxwell

I. **Identify** your Values

- Without identification, you have **abdication**

II. **Clarify** your values

- Without clarification, you have **fragmentation**

III. **Fortify** your values

- Without fortification, you have **disintegration**

Your Identity is the story you tell yourself about yourself; it’s your sense of self; it is what you look to (or seek to create) for a sense of stability.

- **How are you growing in your Spiritual Identity? Have you seen any changes (Over the last few months) in the stories you tell yourself about yourself and your sense of being?**

Last week I said that The IWD can solve the Conundrum of Love & your Identity formation.

When it comes to Love most of us are generally trying to figure out how to GET love, more than we are thinking about how to GIVE love. So we tend to be preoccupied in our thinking about how to be lovable, successful, effective, talented etc... We tend to believe that if I have a good combination of these things I can GET or receive love (admiration, affection, & respect) from others.

Last week we defined the Investment Work of Discipleship as the primary objective of the Church, and the process by which we experience spiritual formation; the process of being formed in the image of Christ, for the sake of others.

- **Last week Pastor Jeff shared a quote by CS Lewis, ““The Church exists for nothing else but to draw men into Christ, to make them little Christs. If they**

are not doing that, all the cathedrals, clergy, missions, sermons, even the Bible itself, are simply a waste of time.” Do you see this call for discipleship as the primary function of the Church’s mission, why or why not?]

Matthew 28:16-20 “Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

What keeps us from the investment work of discipleship?

I still have doubts - a lack of identification

Matthew 28:17 “When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted.”

It’s not my job - a lack of clarification

Matthew 28:16 “Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go.”

They showed up!

I don’t know how - a lack of Fortification / training

Luke 6:40 (ESV) “A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher.”

1Timothy 4:7-8 (NLT) “Do not waste time.... Instead, train yourself to be godly. ‘Physical training is good, but training for godliness is much better, promising benefits in this life and in the life to come.’”

They stepped up!

- **How have you seen any of the above three reasons for not being engaged in Discipleship distract you or others from this calling or effort? Is there another reason that you can pinpoint that has distracted you from obedience to this value?**

II. How to invest in the work of discipleship

1. Keep showing up despite your doubts and fears

Matthew 28:16-17 “Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted.”

Examples throughout scripture: Moses - Exodus 3:11; Joshua - Joshua 1:9; Gideon - Judges 6:13-15; Isaiah - Isaiah 6:5&8

- **How do these Old Testament stories inspire and motivate you in your spiritual engagement to “Show up”? Is there an area where you have neglected “Showing up”? If so, what can you do to address this neglect?**

Disciples have learned that showing up can help defeat doubt and fear.

2. Keep showing up despite the size of the task

Matthew 28:18 “Then Jesus came to them and said, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations...”

1 John 1:3 “We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.”

Disciples have learned that showing up helps you to grow up to the next level of maturity; enlarging your faith.

3. Keep stepping up to the next opportunity of relational obedience.

Matthew 28:19-20 “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always...”

John 14:16 “If you love me you will obey what I command...”

John 15:10&14-17 “If you obey my commands you will remain in my love. Just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love.... You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. This is my command: ‘Love each other.’”

Disciples have learned that stepping up and into opportunities to relationally obey changes hearts, opens doors, moves mountains, brings healing and writes redemptive stories.

- **What would some “Next steps” look like to exercise greater relational obedience to Jesus and his Great Commission, and are you willing to take any of those steps? Please share.**

Soaping/ Journaling suggestions

Monday - Jesus calls us to bring others closer to Him. Journal what you can offer someone looking for or needing Jesus. Acts 1:8

Tuesday - Soap Matthew 25:23

Wednesday - Journal what doubts you identify as a struggle in your discipleship. Mark 2:17

Thursday - Soap Mark 16:15-16

Friday- Soap Isaiah 61:1-3

Remind your group about the lifestyle of being “On Mission”. When we say “Lifestyle” we are seeking to reinforce that it is who you are, your identity to Be On Mission.

(What I have found as I ask this question each week is that it helps the group to begin to understand and embrace this value. “Every person in a group and every group on Mission.” It has been helpful for the group to be reminded of the 7 ways to “Be on Mission:”

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IDENTITY
THE INVESTMENT WORK OF DISCIPLESHIP
Week 3
Small Group Study Guide

“To disciple (or Mentor), is to help or assist another to discover, establish and refine their spiritual identity; it is the process of being formed in the image of Christ, for the sake of others.”

If you do not effectively change your patterns of thought you cannot change your pattern for life.

Romans 12:2 “Do not conform any longer to the **pattern** of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your **mind...**”

- The idea of being transformed means that I am not merely trying not to conform to something I previously would be influenced by. It means that I have a completely new mindset about everything. Share an appropriate story of something you previously believed that was a worldly view that you no longer believe due to a godly renewing of your mind.**

1 Timothy 4:7-8 (NLT) “Do not waste time.... Instead, train yourself to be godly. ‘Physical training is good, but training for godliness is much better, promising benefits in this life and in the life to come.’”

- Would you get in the boxing ring with a professional fighter without training first? Talk in your group about why we try to fight spiritual battles without training? What would be some of the things that spiritual training would include?**

Before I can effectively invest in another I must learn to invest in myself.

“Until we solve the human equation called man and get him straightened out we’ll never have a peaceful world; you’ve got to build a better man before you can build a better society.”

- Billy Graham

- Do you agree with Billy Graham's statement? If not why and if so what would be a few characteristics of the better man?**

Invest daily in how:

I. I see myself

Colossians 1:21 “Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your **minds** because of your evil behavior. But now he has reconciled you by Christ’s physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation...”

- This is called **positional** righteousness-God has put you in a place where he never has to reject you.

1 John 3:1a “How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God!”

- Learn to embrace my new **identity** — who I am “in Christ”

2 Corinthians 5:17 “Therefore, if anyone is **in Christ**, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!”

- Once a caterpillar becomes a butterfly it can never go back to being a caterpillar. Once we are in Christ we too are a “new creation”. If that is true, share why we hold onto the old self so tightly? What would it look like to embrace the “new creation” that God has made you?

“The ultimate freedom we have as individuals is the power to select what we will allow or require our minds to dwell upon or think about. By think we mean all the ways we are aware of things, including memories, perceptions, and beliefs. The focus of your thoughts significantly affects everything else in your life and evokes the feelings that frame your world.”

- Dallas Willard

- My **meditation** has to change - what I tell myself

“As we think, we change the physical nature of the brain. As we consciously direct our thinking we can wire out toxic patterns of thinking and replace them with healthy thoughts.”

- Dr Caroline Leaf

II. I **behave** myself

Colossians 1:21 “Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your **minds** because of your evil **behavior**.”

- Learn to embrace new **habits** (or PRACTICES) - how I stay connected to Christ

Aristotle, the Greek philosopher, said: *“For the things we have to learn before we can do them, we learn by doing them.”*

Hebrews 12:11 (MSG) “At the time, discipline isn’t much fun. It always feels like it’s going against the grain. Later, of course, it pays off handsomely, for **it’s the well-trained who find themselves mature** in their relationship with God.”

Hebrews 5:14 (ESV) *“But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained **by constant practice** to distinguish good from evil.”*

Sometimes it's easier to behave yourself into a new way of thinking than it is to think yourself into a new way of behaving.

- My **participation** has to change - how I conduct myself
- Share a time when you conducted yourself poorly. Now share how that instance would have been different if you had conducted yourself in a godly manner.**

III. I **reproduce** myself

True disciples become spiritually reproductive.

Matthew 28:19-20 *“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.”*

- Learn to embrace a new **mission** — what I do **for** Christ - His business
- My **multiplication** has to change - how I give myself away

2 Timothy 2:2 *“Throw yourself into this work for Christ. Pass on what you heard from me...to reliable leaders who are competent to teach others.”*

John 12:24 (Jesus) *“I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.”*

- If you had just made the best investment and the return on that investment was amazing, would you share that information with others? Why or why not? Do you realize that our investment to learn from Jesus is one he wants you to share with others? How are you doing that? How are you being spiritually reproductive? Share a story with your group of who you are investing in discipleship with.**

Soap/ Journal Suggestions

Monday- What changes have you had to make in your life in order to invest more in your relationship/discipleship with Jesus?

Tuesday-Soap Hebrews 5:14

Wednesday- What are you meditating on that is helping you reinforce your identity? How is that changing how you see yourself, behave yourself and reproduce yourself?

Thursday- Think about who you are doing life with? Are you being intentional with them? How can you share Jesus with them?

Friday-Soap Acts 20:24

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Small Group Study Guide: Gratitude

I pray that you have all had a wonderful Thanksgiving holiday. As followers of Christ, we have so much to be thankful for and should be full of gratitude. There are two types of gratitude that I want to share with you; **elementary gratitude** and **graduate gratitude**.

Elementary Gratitude is what we share when we are praying for the weather or for the food we are about to eat. The simple things in our life that we are grateful for.

Graduate Gratitude on the other hand is finding things to be grateful for when times are difficult or you are going through a trial. Remember when James (brother of Jesus) said “consider it pure joy when you face trials of many kinds because we know that the testing of your faith produces endurance.” Finding things to be grateful for in trials takes a deeper awareness of God’s goodness. What is He teaching you in these moments?

I would love for you to take this week and share in your group where God is growing you in your maturity around Gratitude. I pray you enjoyed this weekend's service and look forward to continuing this journey with each of you.

Pastor Rueben

Soap/Journal suggestions:

Monday - Soap James 1:2-4

Tuesday - Journal a time when you did not think you would make it through a trial, how did God see you through?

Wednesday- Soap Philipians 4:4-7

Thursday - Soap John 16:33

Friday - Journal how your discipleship disciplines are helping you become more like Jesus

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THE INTENTIONAL WITNESS OF U.N.I.T.Y.
Where we will be going as we examine our fifth Value

Understand my part in unity
Nurture others in unity
Invite others into unity
Tensions within unity
Yielding for unity

Understand my part in unity

John 17:20-21

(Jesus) *“My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.”*

- Ask your group, From our theme verse for this value what stands out about what Jesus prayed?**

UNIFICATION

Is the process of building unity; to know, love, and work with other believers (different from ourselves) to accomplish what we cannot achieve by ourselves; God’s purposes.

- Encourage your group to read (or even to soap and memorize) Romans 12 over the month of December.**

Romans 12 (NIV84)

Key verse:

Romans 12:4-5 *“Just as each of us has one **body** with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many, form one **body**, and each member **belongs to all the others.**”*

- Read together the first 5 verses of Romans 12 then follow the question through the sermon notes.**
- Question, What stands out to you about “the term “Body” in these verses? How is this term being used in these verses?**

I. DEDICATION

Dedicate myself to God (My relationship with God)

Romans 12:1 *“Therefore I urge you brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to **offer** your **bodies** as living **sacrifices**, holy and pleasing to God-this is your spiritual act of worship.”*

Dedication is my response to God for His great mercy; my sacrifice is never for salvation but always because of salvation.

- **Offer your body (your whole self) to God is the process of being formed in the image of Jesus for the sake of others.**

It is laying down your independence for dependence on God and interdependence on others.

It is fundamental to the way of Jesus and completely antithetical to the way of the world.

- Without dedication of your body there's no edification of His body.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 (84) "Do you not know that your body is temple(A) of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own;(B) 20 you were bought with a price.(C) Therefore honor God with your body."

- Notice that when **WE** do this, it's called **WORSHIP**

Romans 12:1 "Therefore I urge you brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship."

- Following Jesus is built on a daily rhythm of **Rededication**

- After reading through pastor Jeff's notes about "Dedicating ourselves to God" what stands out to you as important or critical in what the author Paul is urging believers to do?

II. **ELIMINATION**

1. Eliminate my **external** distractions (My relationship to the world)

Romans 12:2 "Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will."

- Without elimination there is no transformation.

I am loving

"I will work to eliminate whatever distractions are in my life and schedule that interfere with me living and loving like Jesus."

- When your heart or mind is divided you can't be **united**.

Matthew 6:21 Jesus: "Where your treasure is there your heart will be also."

Luke 12:25 "Every... household divided against itself will not stand."

Luke 16:13 "No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money."

- What have you experienced or realized in your own walk with God that is strengthened or weakened by practicing or neglecting "elimination"? What "patterns" of the world do you find most problematic for you or others?

- Example of addictive behavior or personality - Distortion of Attention

- Notice that when our distractions are **eliminated** God's will is **illuminated**.

Romans 12:2 “Do not conform to the pattern of **this world**, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. **Then** you will be able to test and approve what **God’s will is**—his good, pleasing and perfect will.”

- Have you ever experienced an increased awareness of God’s will or purposes after you have successfully eliminated some problem behavior or worldly patterns in your own life?**

2. Eliminate my internal distractions. (My relationship with myself)

Romans 12:3 “For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not **think** of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather **think** of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you.”

Nothing will sabotage unity faster than pride.

- **When the story you tell yourself about yourself elevates yourself above someone else, unity is **compromised**.**
- **Notice how you cannot change your thinking without renewing your mind.**
- **Following Jesus is bolstered by a daily rhythm of Renewing your mind.**
- Pastor Jeff emphasized ‘Pride’ as a more toxic internal distraction that can sabotage unity. Have you seen this to be true in your own life? Please share.**
- What are you learning to do that empowers you to not “think of yourself more highly than you ought?”**
- What are some useful practices that helped you to “renew” your mind?”**

- **SOAP CHALLENGE: Try soaping one verse of Romans 12 each day over this month.**

Close your time together by asking several people to pray out loud a prayer of Rededication. Give everyone the opportunity to pray silently while a few express themselves openly.

OR, ask everyone to pray along with the attached prayer.

Lord Jesus, thank you for your saving grace and the mercies that I have received. As much as I know how, I rededicate myself to you today. I lay by body, all that I am, before you and ask that you take all of me; I belong to you. Empower me, by your Spirit, to eliminate anything that distracts me from living and loving like Jesus. I commit today to the ongoing process of renewing my mind. Help me to see AND understand more clearly how I can do my part in building unity within your church; the people of God.

AMEN

Reuben, I left the material in case it’s helpful for your questions for groups.

Assignment:

Inviting others into unity. If we are going to follow Jesus, we cannot ignore His mission set before us. It is not God's mission that we have a two car garage, drive a new car, have 2.6 children and a job that guarantees us financial comfort and fulfillment. Those things are nice but not necessary for us to either be fulfilled or experience true meaning and satisfaction. In fact, if we pursue those things and turn a blind eye to God's calling, fulfillment and true joy will elude us.

The book of Proverbs reminds us often that Unity, or peace, is better than many of the things we perceive will satisfy.

Pr 17:1 *"Better a dry crust with peace and quiet than a house full of feasting, with strife."*

Pr 21:9 *"Better to live on a corner of the roof than share a house with a quarrelsome wife."*

Pr 15:17 *"Better a small serving of vegetables with love than a fattened calf with hatred."*

C.S. Lewis said: *"God cannot give a happiness and a peace apart from himself because it is not there, there is no such thing."*

Thomas Merton says: *"Man is not at peace with his fellow man because man is not at peace with himself. Man is not at peace with himself because he is not at peace with God."* We'll never have a peaceful world until we help humankind to be at peace with God. We've got to build a better man before we can build a better society, church or family.

Understand God's invitation.

The message of the Bible is that mankind is at odds with God even though God has made things right with man. The good news of the Gospel is that we can reconstruct our hearts and minds but not without turning toward Him and away from ourselves. The Biblical word for putting things right, or reconstructing unity out of disunity is "reconciliation" - *katallasso*, in Greek, means to restore one into favor, or to reestablish a broken or severed relationship.

Jesus came to reconcile mankind and the world to Himself. And all who enter into this reconciled relationship He calls to be ambassadors of reconciliation to the rest of mankind. This is our mission from Christ. 2Cor 5:14-21 is where this term is used to describe God's act on our behalf and what He wants us to do for one another.

Our motivation is directed by the very motivation of God Himself: love. If we are to reconcile a broken marriage, friendship, or parental connection, it will happen when we understand more fully how God has reconciled us to Himself.

I often say: *"You cannot give away what you do not possess."* Therefore, to give love I must first receive love. To restore relationship, I must first experience the restoration of relationship. This is why our YC Vision of mentoring is so critical. We all need mentoring so we can mentor. The good news is that we don't have to be completely put together in order for God to use us to help others put things together. God has always used people in process to help people process. As soon as we begin to be mended, we can begin to mend. Certainly, the more we have experienced God's reconciliation, the better equipped we will be to extend His reconciliation.

There is an interesting translation to the Greek *katallasso* that gives insight to Christ's sacrifice on the cross. William Tyndale, in his 1525 New Testament translation from the Greek text, attempted to discover an English word that could express the true meaning of the Greek *katallage* as well as the Latin reconciliation. Unable to find the word, he coined one. The word he coined was *atonement* (at-one-ment), and he used it in Ro 5:11. "At-one-ment" means that in a single moment we can be reconciled to God. That's amazing grace! We don't have to jump through a bunch of hoops to be reconciled to God. We don't have to say a prescribed number of Hail Marys to be reconciled to God. We don't have to make amends to everyone we've ever injured to be reconciled to God. The second Jesus died for us, at that very moment, God exchanged His Son for the penalty of our sin. And at the moment we confess our sin and profess Him as our Savior, we are reconciled.

Now, working out and working in that reconciliation with others will take time. There may be hoops to jump through, prayers to offer, and amends to make. But the energy to do so comes from the Spirit of Christ that we received in the blink of an eye. He immediately wiped our slate clean so we could learn to put ourselves second. He freely

forgave all our sins so we could freely forgive the sins of others. He chose to love us unconditionally so we could learn to release the conditions of our love.

Notice how 2 Corinthians 5:14-15 helps us to understand God's invitation to reconciliation.

MIXER. Ask your group (or your child, grandchild or mentee): What does the idea of being compelled mean? (To be compelled is to feel like one must act upon, or do something). Give one another some examples of things you have been compelled to do:

“I was compelled to scream at the football game when our team made a touchdown.”

“I was compelled to eat everything at the potluck.”

“I was compelled to

What does Paul say should compel us?

Share with one another some examples of things that “love” has compelled you to do?

How does being “*convinced that one died for all*” (vs.14) influence someone to be a part of God's plan for reconciliation?

What does Paul say in verse 15 that we (believers) should be willing to do because of Christ's love and death?

Extending God's invitation.

Looking over the sermon notes, consider how each step would assist you to become an “ambassador” of reconciliation.

1. Changing our view of others
2. Caring for others
3. Communicating God's invitation to others

How do steps 1-3 augment one another?

How effective would ambassadors be if they did any one or two of the steps but not all three?

Which of the steps do you feel equipped for, and which are you unprepared for?

If you only had a month left to live, who would you feel compelled to invite into reconciliation? Take some time and ask God to empower you to be a committed ambassador.

In His love,
Pastor Jeff

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- 7) Share your testimony

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THE INTENTIONAL WITNESS OF U.N.I.T.Y.
Week 2 Study Guide

Understand my part in unity
Nurture others in unity
Invite others into unity
Tensions within unity
Yielding for unity

Nurturing others within unity
Romans 12:4-16

John 17:20-21 *“My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.”*

Definition of UNITY: Choosing to know, love, and work with other believers (different from ourselves) to accomplish what we cannot achieve by ourselves for God’s glory.

1. **Cooperate** with others

Romans 12:4-5 *“For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and **each member belongs to all the others.**”*

- Why do you think Paul chooses to use a body as an analogy of the Church of Christ? What are the similarities between our natural body and the body of believers?**
 - **Recognize** our interdependence

Interdependency: the state of being dependent upon one another

Example: Anthropic Constants- gravity, atmospheric transparency, oxygen at 21% plus 119 more constants must all be present for life to be sustainable on earth.

Codependency: an emotional and behavioral condition affecting an individual's ability to have a healthy, mutually satisfying relationship.

Example: Inability to establish, maintain or sustain healthy relational boundaries resulting in toxic or harmful relationships

- In your group talk about the differences between interdependence and codependency. Share if you have been in either of these types of relationships.**

- No part in the body tries to take the office that belongs to another. Each part simply does its intended duty and as a result, the entire body is able to live, function, and enjoy life.

Grace is used 155 times in the New Testament- 100 times in Paul's letters- 24 times in the book of Romans- 2 times in Romans 12.

The phrase "One another" is used 58 in the New Testament

What's this tell us?

Not only have we been saved by grace, but we have also been called to serve by grace

2. **Activate** my giftedness

Romans 12:6-8 "We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. **If** your gift is prophesying, **then** prophesy in accordance with your faith; **if** it is serving, **then** serve; **if** it is teaching, **then** teach; **if** it is to encourage, **then** give encouragement; **if** it is giving, **then** give generously; **if** it is to lead, do it diligently; **if** it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully."

- Romans tells us that if we recognize our gifting, "then" we are to step into and act on our gifting. What would be some of the things that would hinder us from activating our gifting? What can we do to remove those hindrances?**

- **Respond** with grace towards one another

a. To **equip** one another

Ephesians 4:7-8, 11-12 "But to each one of grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. This is why it says, 'When he ascended on high, He took many captives and gave gifts to His people...' So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelist, the pastors and teachers **to equip** His people for works of service so that the body of Christ may be built up."

b. To **serve** one another

1 Peter 4:10-11 "Each of you should use **whatever gift you have** received to **serve others**, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. 11 If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen."

“If a man is called to be a street sweeper, he should sweep streets even as Michelangelo painted, or Beethoven composed music, or Shakespeare wrote poetry. He should sweep streets so well that all the hosts of heaven and earth will pause to say, ‘Here lived a great street sweeper who did his job well.’” -Martin Luther King Jr.

- 1 Peter 4:10 uses the term faithful stewards of God’s grace when serving others. What is Paul saying to us about our gifting?**
- Share a job that you could have done better if you really utilized MLK’s description of how one should work.**

c. To **build up** one another

Ephesians 4:16 *From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and **builds itself up in love**, as each part does its work.*

3. **Cultivate** a culture of unity

Romans 12:9-16 *“Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with the Lord’s people who are in need. Practice hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.”*

- Based on Romans 12: 9-16 what are the characteristics of someone who is cultivating or nurturing unity? What are characteristics of someone who is not cultivating unity? Currently which are you?**

There is no spelling “Unity” without “U” & “I”

- **Reinforce** real love

Hebrews 10:24-25 *“And let us consider how we may spur one another on **toward love** and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.”*

- Encourage your group to soap each day in order to create a new discipline.**
- Close your group in prayer**

Journal/ Soaping Suggestions

Monday-Soap John 17: 20-21

Tuesday- Soap our definition of Unity/ what stands out to you the most?

Wednesday- Soap Ephesians 4:16

Thursday-Soap Hebrews 10:24-25

Friday- Journal What are you going to do today to better nurture Unity?

Remind your group about the lifestyle of being “On Mission”. When we say “Lifestyle” we are seeking to reinforce that it is who you are, your identity to Be On Mission.

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Identity
INVITING OTHERS INTO U.N.I.T.Y.
2 Corinthians 5:14-21
Small Group Study Guide

Key word: Reconciliation (*katallassō*) = To restore one into favor, or the reestablishment of an interrupted or broken relationship.

I. Understanding God's Invitation

1. We are compelled by His love

2 Corinthians 5:14-15 "For Christ's love **compels** us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again."

John 3:16 "For God so **loved** the world that **he gave** his one and only Son, so that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."

1John 3:1 "See what **great love** the Father has **lavished** on us, that we should be called **children of God!** And that is what we are!"

2. We are convinced by His death

2 Corinthians 5:14-15 "For Christ's love **compels** us, because we are **convinced** that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again."

Romans 5:8 "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this; while we were still sinners Christ **died** for us."

1 Peter 3:18 "For Christ **died** for sins once for all the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God."

3. We are committed to His cause

2 Corinthians 5:14-15 "For Christ's love **compels** us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should **no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.**"

II. Extending God's Invitation

2 Corinthians 5:16-17 “So from now on **we regard no one from a worldly point of view**. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone the new has come!”

1. By **Changing** our view of others

2 Corinthians 5: 18-19 “All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, **not counting men’s sins against them.**”

John 3:17-18 “For God did not send his son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.”

2. By **Caring** for others

2 Corinthians 5:20 “**We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors**... (MSG) We’re Christ’s representatives. God uses us...”

3. By **Communicating** God’s invitation to others

2 Corinthians 5:20-21 (MSG) “God uses us to persuade men and women to drop their differences and **enter into God’s work** of making things right between them. We’re speaking for Christ himself now: **Become friends with God; he’s already a friend with you.**”

- What does Paul say should compel us?
- Share with one another some examples of things that “love” has compelled you to do?
- How does being “*convinced that one died for all*” (vs.14) influence someone to be a part of God’s plan for reconciliation?
- What does Paul say in verse 15 that we (believers) should be willing to do because of Christ’s love and death?

Extending God’s invitation.

- Looking over the sermon notes, consider how each step would assist you to become an “ambassador” of reconciliation.
 1. Changing our view of others
 2. Caring for others
 3. Communicating God’s invitation to others

How do steps 1-3 augment one another?

- How effective would ambassadors be if they did any one or two of the steps but not all three?
- Which of the steps do you feel equipped for, and which are you unprepared for?

- If you only had a month left to live, who would you feel compelled to invite into reconciliation? Take some time and ask God to empower you to be a committed ambassador.**

Soap/ Journal Suggestions

Monday-Soap 2 Corinthians 5:14-15

Tuesday- Soap 2 Corinthians 5:17. Think about how this scripture calls you to view not only yourself but others as well.

Wednesday- Soap 1 Peter 3:18

Thursday- How would you describe the characteristics of an ambassador? What would you rate yourself as an ambassador for Christ?

Friday- Journal how you and your group have been on mission this past year. How can you be more missionally minded?

Remind your group about the lifestyle of being “On Mission”. When we say “Lifestyle” we are seeking to reinforce that it is who you are, your identity to Be On Mission. (What I have found as I ask this question each week is that it helps the group to begin to understand and embrace this value. “Every person in a group and every group on Mission.” It has been helpful for the group to be reminded of the 7 ways to “Be on Mission:”

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THE INTENTIONAL WITNESS OF U.N.I.T.Y.

Tension within unity
Small Group Study Guide

[Understand](#) my part in unity

[Nurture](#) others in unity

[Invite](#) others into unity

[Tensions](#) within unity

[Yielding](#) for unity

UNIFICATION

Is the process of building unity; to know, love, and work with other believers (different from ourselves) to accomplish what we cannot achieve by ourselves; God's purposes.

John 17:20-25 "My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one—I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. 'Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world. Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me.'"

The problem is until the body of Christ comes to a place of unity, the world will not know Christ.

"I like your Christ, but not your Christianity....I believe in the teachings of Christ, but you on the other side of the world do not, I read the bible faithfully and see little in Christendom that those who profess faith pretend to see" - Mahatma Gandhi, *The Harvard Crimson*, 1927

James 4:1-3 ESV "What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions."

1 Corinthians 3:3 *“For you are still controlled by your sinful nature. You are jealous of one another and quarrel with each other. Doesn’t that prove you are controlled by your sinful nature? Aren’t you living like people of the world?”*

Dangers within the Tension of Unity

1. Danger of **Misplaced Passion**

Romans 14:1-3 *“Accept the one whose faith is weak, without quarreling over disputable matters. One person’s faith allows them to eat anything, but another, whose faith is weak, eats only vegetables. The one who eats everything must not treat with contempt the one who does not, and the one who does not eat everything must not judge the one who does, for God has accepted them.”*

Romans 14:22 *“So whatever you believe about these things keep between yourself and God. Blessed is the one who does not condemn himself by what he approves.”*

Essentials vs. Non Essentials

Romans 15:18 *“I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me in leading the Gentiles to obey God by what I have said and done.”*

“In essentials- unity, in non essentials- liberty, in all things charity.” - St. Augustine

2. Danger of **Envy**

James 4:20 *“You covet what you cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel.”*

1 Corinthians 12:15-20 *“Now if the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body.”*

1 Corinthians 3:3 *“...For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere humans?”*

3. Danger of Pride

Proverbs 13:10 *“Where there is strife, there is pride.”*

1 Corinthians 12:21 *“The eye cannot say to the hand, “I don’t need you!” And the head cannot say to the feet, “I don’t need you!”*

1 Corinthians 3:4-9 *“For when one says, “I follow Paul,” and another, “I follow Apollos,” are you not mere human beings? What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe—as the Lord has assigned to each his task. I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow. So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. The one who plants and the one who waters have one purpose, and they will each be rewarded according to their own labor. For we are co-workers in God’s service; you are God’s field, God’s building.”*

Pride can cause us to focus on the differences between each other whereas unity leads us to acknowledge and embrace them. Pride can cause us to lose focus on what we have been called to do whereas unity will accomplish it- PR

Galatians 3:28 *“There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”*

Romans 5:12 *“May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had, so that with one mind and one voice you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God.”*

Small Group Time:

- Open your group in prayer. Share any challenges you have faced this week?**
- Using the sermon notes answer the following questions.**
 - 1. Which of the first three letters of unity have you found yourself practicing? Understanding your part, Nurturing others or inviting into unity? Which part has been challenging for you and why?**
 - 2. The Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 3 that it is our sinful nature that causes us to quarrel. Why would it be our nature to argue with someone?**
 - 3. Of the 3 dangers within unity, which are you most susceptible to? Share a time when you found yourself acting from one of these places.**

4. Romans 5:12 speaks of a God who gives endurance. What would you say endurance has to do with Unity?

- Encourage your group to consider using their gifts to serve on a team**
- Pray for someone that you have in your life that is currently far from God**
- Close group in prayer**

Soaping/Journal Schedule

Monday- What are the topics that bring you tension in your current relationships? What would be some steps to creating a unity in that relationship?

Tuesday- Soap John 17:22-23

Wednesday-Soap 1 Corinthians 12:8

Thursday-Soap 1 Corinthians 3:3

Friday- What are some characteristics of someone who is practicing unity? Why are they important?

Here at YC we believe that the strategy for spiritual growth is to follow the Connect, Grow and Serve model. When you connect with God daily, Grow with others in community and serve with the use of your talent time and tithe you will experience growth at a deeper level. This year I ask that you pray with your group about being on mission in the way we serve. There are many ways to be on mission and we here at YC will do our best to provide a few ways and places to serve. God Bless your group this year.

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The Intentional Witness of U.N.I.T.Y.
Yielding for Unity
Philippians 2:1-8
Small Group Guide

Definition of UNITY: Choosing to know, love, and work with other believers (different from ourselves) to accomplish what we cannot achieve by ourselves for God's glory

Y. Yield to God's desire over our differences

John 17:20-21 *"My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me."*

If pride is what causes tensions in unity then its antonym being humility must be what affords us the ability to Y.I.E.L.D. for the sake of unity

I. Imitate the Humility of Jesus for the sake of others

He was humble in His birth

Luke 2:7 (NLT) *"She gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped him snugly in strips of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no lodging available for them."*

The "Manger" we sing about during Christmas is literally a feeding trough for livestock

He was humble in how he lived His life

Luke 15:1-2 *"Now all the tax collectors and the sinners were coming near Him to listen to Him. Both the Pharisees and the scribes began to grumble, saying, 'This man receives sinners and eats with them.'"*

He was humble in His death

Philippians 2:8 (NLT) *"he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on a cross."*

Isaiah 50:6-7 “I gave My back to those who strike Me, and My cheeks to those who pluck out the beard; I did not cover My face from humiliation and spitting. He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He did not open His mouth; like a lamb that is led to slaughter, and like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, so He did not open His mouth.”

He was humble in His resurrection

(The following verses are paraphrased from the text)

John 20:15 Mary thought Jesus was the gardener

John 20:19-20 The first thing Jesus says to his disciples who are hiding in fear is “Peace be with you”

John 20:26-27 A week later Jesus is patient with Thomas the doubter by allowing him to touch his pierced hands and side

Humility is made possible when we move from the inquiring thoughts of “what’s in it for me” to ones of “what’s in it for others”. Of course, that would require the discipline to be selfless. One in which you think of yourself less. Not less in terms of your self-worth or value, but in terms of the amount of time you spend thinking about yourself. The goal of humility is to have a person rid themselves of self-centeredness. When humility accomplishes its goal a person's motives move from self-preservation to self-sacrifice for the sake of others which, in turn, reflects Christ-centeredness. - Pastor Jake

E. Elevate the value of others above ourselves

Philippians 2:3 “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves”

Romans 12:10 “Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves.”

It takes “U” n “I” in order for Unity to be spelled properly, but it takes “U” before “I” in order for Unity to work properly. - Pastor Jake

L. Look for ways to serve others rather than being served

Philippians 2:4 “*not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.*”

Matthew 20:28 “*just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.*”

“Lord, make me an instrument of your peace:
where there is hatred, let me sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
where there is sadness, joy.

O divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek
to be consoled as to console,
to be understood as to understand,
to be loved as to love.
For it is in giving that we receive,
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.
Amen.” - St. Francis Assisi

D. Decide to have the same attitude as Christ toward others

Philippians 2:5-8 “*In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset (Attitude in NLT) as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death— even death on a cross!*”

“The longer I live, the more I realize the impact of attitude on life. Attitude, to me, is more important than facts. It is more important than the past, than education, than money, than circumstances, than failures, than successes, than what other people think or say or do. It is more important than appearance, giftedness, or skill. It will make or break a company... a church... a home. The remarkable thing is we have a choice every day regarding the attitude we will embrace for that day. We cannot change the inevitable. The only thing we can do is play on the one string we have, and that is our

attitude... I am convinced that life is 10% what happens to me, and 90% of how I react to it. And so it is with you... we are in charge of our attitudes” - Charles Swindoll

Small Group discussion:

- 1. Review the acronym U.N.I.T.Y. Can you remember what each letter stands for?**
- 2. Why does pride make it impossible to yield to unity?**
- 3. Based on Pastor Jakes Y.I.E.L.D, how did Jesus model yielding to Unity?**
- 4. Which of each of these YIELDing actions do you struggle with the most? Have you ever prayed for God to help you in this area?**
- 5. Pastor Jake said “The goal of humility is to have a person rid themselves of self-centeredness.” Share why that is such a difficult thing to do?**
- 6. Read again St Francis’ prayer and discuss whether or not you are at a point of yielding like St Francis. What would keep you from yielding in such a way?**
- 7. Have you decided to have the attitude of Christ? Pray as a group to have Jesus give you the awareness of when our pride is in the way of yielding for Unity.**

Soaping/Journal Suggestions

Monday- What are some of the core differences between pride and humility?

Tuesday- Soap Philippians 2:3-4

Wednesday- Soap Philippians 2:5-8

Thursday- Soap Romans 12:10

Friday- What in your life will you yield for the sake of unity?