

BECOMING

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BECOMING

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BECOMING

INTRODUCTION

Accountants desire perfectly-balanced ledgers. Builders intend for the homes they construct to provide comfort and security for their occupants. Teachers aspire to develop eager learners. Trainers strive for their clients to have strong and fit bodies. Counselors long for their clients to enjoy healthy relationships. All of our work has an end goal or purpose that is marked by certain characteristics, whether spoken or unspoken, that say, “This is it! This is what I’ve been working for.”

As we gather together as a community of believers in Jesus, we also have a specific purpose, one that has been designed by God and given to us clearly through His Word. Beginning with Jesus’ first call to His disciples to “Follow me,” and ending with His last instructions to “Go and make disciples,” Jesus made it clear that the purpose He had specifically designed for His followers was to become more like Him.

Over the course of this study, we will spend 5 weeks unpacking what it means to answer the call of Jesus. We understand this call to have four parts, each one about progress, not perfection. They are about becoming who God created us to be. They are about following the example of Jesus. And, they are about sharing His love where we live, work, and play. On the 6th week, it will be time to celebrate! Meet up with your group and focus on celebrating your stories of courageous next steps!

THE CALLS

At Fellowship, we call each other to be:

CONSISTENT IN PURSUING A GOD-CENTERED LIFE

as we get to know Him more and surrender our lives to Him.

RESISTANT TO DOING LIFE ON OUR OWN

as we acknowledge our need for authentic relationships that remind us of our identity in Christ.

PERSISTENT IN DESIGNING A LIFE OF INTENTIONAL INVESTMENT

as we learn to make more purposeful commitments and be boldly generous in the places God calls us.

INSISTENT ON LEAVING A LEGACY OF EXPONENTIAL IMPACT

as we invest in the next generation, develop in our servant leadership, and draw others to Christ to build His Kingdom.

WEEK ONE

MARK 1:14-20

ANSWERING THE CALL OF JESUS

1975 was the year of the Pet Rock. Packaged in boxes complete with air holes and a detailed manual on “The Care and Training of Your Pet Rock,” over 1,000,000 of these special “pets” were sold for \$3.95 each. This made their inventor, Gary Dahl, an instant millionaire.

Now known as the most absurd fad in history, the genius of the Pet Rock, obviously, was not in the geological mass of solid minerals that could be found almost anywhere for free. One writer described the phenomenon this way:

The history of the Pet Rock isn't about the rock — the whole fad was never about the rock. If plain-old rocks had suddenly become popular, people would have flocked to beaches and streams to find their own, for free. But Pet Rocks were different, simply because of their packaging and the mock-seriousness with which their inventor presented them to the public. Gary Dahl's sense of humor struck a chord with a lot of people at a particular moment in time. On more than one occasion, he said that two feelings in the zeitgeist made the public receptive to his invention: a prevailing boredom, and a need for absurd, understated inside joke. “People are so bored, tired of all their problems,” he told *People Magazine* in 1975. “You might say we’ve packaged a sense of humor.” — *Groovyhistory.com, December, 2017*

Meeting the fleeting need of people who were thoroughly exhausted by their problems, Gary Dahl achieved celebrity and fame for a brief time. But, as soon as the novelty wore off, most people recognized their new “pets” for what they really were — rocks of very little value, worth less than a penny, taking up space on a shelf. As one writer put it, most Pet Rocks ended up being “set free” in the landfill where they belonged.

Without intentionality and commitment, Life Groups can become just another fad that simply meets immediate needs. People can attend and participate, but walk away without any substantial growth or purpose for life. God has something better in mind for His followers.

Jesus began His ministry by calling the people around Him to something more than they had ever experienced. A calling that would not only fulfill God’s will for their existence and produce in them a changed life, but also eventually change the course of history. In our Bible reading today, we’ll discover that Jesus made one simple but profound call, one that still applies to us today: “Follow me.”

DISCUSSION

ICE BREAKER

What is the craziest fad you ever participated in? (i.e. Fashion, diet, fitness, personal or spiritual growth)

GROUP DISCUSSION

Read Mark 1:14-20

As a group, think about the ramifications for Peter, Andrew, James, and John when Jesus spoke the words, “Follow me.” Most likely, they were familiar with Jesus and probably had observed Him enough to know He was not like other men. His appeal to repentance (vs 15) would have reminded them of the similar cries of Old Testament prophets as they announced God’s will for His people to turn from their sin and trust in Him. Following Jesus meant these men would leave everything, trust Him, and be fully devoted to His ministry. Answering this simple call required a deep commitment and life change.

- 1 Just like the first disciples, we are all called to follow Jesus. How does living in today’s world make it difficult to follow Jesus with this kind of deep commitment?

Following Jesus was not just a day job or a short-term experience. The men and women that Jesus called were to rearrange their entire lives around Him. They entered into a growing relationship with Him, day in and day out, observing His habits, listening to His teaching, experiencing the miracles He performed, and, ultimately, grieving when He died. Outside of our immediate families or perhaps a close friend, most of us have not taken the opportunity to get to know someone quite this well.

- ② What would change in your life if you could experience Jesus this intimately?
- ③ What influence would having a tight-knit loving community devoted to Jesus have on your ability to follow Him?

While the men and women who answered Jesus' call knew the level of commitment that would be required of them, they probably had no idea how significantly their own lives would be changed. The same is true for us today. The more we learn about Jesus—through God's word, in our relationships with others, through the different ways He works in our lives—the more our lives cannot be the same. Our identity, our purpose, our very existence in this world will all change as we become more like Jesus.

Jesus' calling is difficult, but it also includes a promise that we will become something more, something that can be used by God in a powerful and meaningful way. In the words of the great theologian Charles Spurgeon,

Jesus said, "Follow me, and I will make you." It is not "Follow me, because of what you already are." It is not, "Follow me, because you may make something of yourselves." But, rather, "Follow me, because of what I will make you." ... It did not seem a likely thing that lowly fishermen would develop into apostles; that men so skillful with the fishing net would be quite as much at home in preaching sermons and instructing converts. One would have said, "How can these things be? You cannot make founders of churches out of peasants of Galilee." [But] that is exactly what Christ did; and...we can feel encouraged to follow Jesus because of what He can make us into.

A COURAGEOUS NEXT STEP

This year at our Life Group Leader Rally, we encouraged our Life Group Leaders to commit to a courageous next step. A courageous next step is an action that you take based on God's prompting in your life. It takes relying on God's power and is only possible through Him!

At this point in your group time, your Life Group Leader is going to share about a courageous next step that God has prompted them to take over the past month.

INTRODUCTION TO HOMEWORK

Each week of this study will include a homework section that will provide tools for you to engage with God and prepare you for the coming week's instruction. The homework is an essential part of this study. It will require you to intentionally set aside time to complete it, but the benefits of deepening your relationship with God through this time is well worth it!

GROUP PRAYER

After sharing your group prayer requests, your Life Group Leader will speak a blessing over the group. Since the days of the early church, the leader would end the group's time together by speaking a blessing (benediction) over the people God had entrusted to them. The blessing for today and the following weeks is modified from Ephesians 3:17-19. In this blessing Paul reminds us to keep our eyes focused on Jesus and the work He has called us to do.

LEADER BENEDICTION

May Jesus Christ dwell in your hearts through faith that you,

—Being rooted and grounded in love—

May have strength to comprehend with all the saints

The breadth of His kindness

The length of His patience

The extent of His grace

And the depth of His compassion.

As you write down your story this week,

May you experience the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge,

That you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

HOMework

This week you heard your Life Group Leaders share the story of how God has prompted them towards their own courageous next step. They were challenged to act in some manner that would cause them to rely on God more and grow in their relationship with Him. Usually, when God prompts us to a courageous next step, we have to overcome something (big or small) that may be holding us back from a deeper relationship with Him or the people around us.

For this week's homework, write down the story of Jesus and You. It's our hope that revisiting the story of how Jesus has worked in your life, saving you and shaping you into the person you are today, will remind you of what He is capable of doing in and through you. In the coming weeks, we will challenge you to think about and commit to a courageous next step as you become more like Jesus. So, keep this in mind as you follow the steps below and get ready for God to do something awesome!

- ① Open your time in prayer, asking God to open your heart to His presence. Spend a few moments thinking through the day, confessing any sins that come to mind and soaking in His grace and forgiveness. (5 min)
- ② Ask the Holy Spirit to help you remember clearly how you came to trust Jesus as your Savior. Don't only focus on the date and facts; try to remember the emotions and circumstances that led up to your decision. Sit in these emotions for a bit, thanking Jesus for what he willingly did at the cross on your behalf. (7-10 min)

Use the prompts on the next page to help as you write down the story of Jesus and You.

MY LIFE BEFORE JESUS

What was my life centered on before Jesus? How did I define my identity or purpose? What about this left me unfulfilled? How was God beginning to show me that there was something more to life?

WHEN JESUS ENTERED INTO MY LIFE

Where did I first hear the Gospel, the good news of Jesus' death and resurrection? Who told me about, or lived out their relationship with Jesus in front of me? What about my life or perspective changed when I trusted in Jesus? What were some of the things I struggled with before committing my life to Jesus? What helped me overcome this struggle?

RESOURCES

The Me I Want To Be • John Ortberg

Life is not about any particular achievement or experience. The most important task of your life is not what you do, but who you become. There is a me you want to be.

True Spirituality: Becoming a Romans 12 Christian • Chip Ingram

A launching pad for your spiritual journey, this inspiring book provides clear, specific, and practical guidelines for becoming a Christian who lives like Christ.

It's Not About Me • Max Lucado

Let Max Lucado show you how to make the shift of a lifetime. How to bump your life off self-center. How to experience the meaning-charged life you were meant to live. This is your lifeline to a life of purpose. Grab hold and let the rescue begin!

WEEK TWO

MARK 3:13-21

CONSISTENT IN PURSUING A GOD-CENTERED LIFE

Don't ever underestimate the person bagging your groceries at the local grocery store—you just might be looking at the next NFL super star! That's the story of Kurt Warner, a former NFL MVP quarterback who holds numerous records as one of the greatest playoff performers in NFL history.

After being cut as the 4th-string quarterback for the Green Bay Packers, things were looking pretty grim for Warner. They were so bad that he began working a \$5.50/hour night job just to make ends meet. However, there were two things Warner continued to pursue: his relationship with Jesus and his skills as a quarterback. While playing in the Arena Football League, he eventually caught the eye of a recruiter and signed with the St. Louis Rams in the NFL. That very season, Warner went on to win the title of MVP and lead the Rams to their first of two Super Bowls wins. His unlikely rise from grocery bagger to NFL MVP has been touted as one of the greatest rags-to-riches sports stories of all time.

God is in the business of calling unlikely people to extraordinary things and transforming them in the process! Moses (an orphan), David (a shepherd), Ruth (a widow), and Rahab (a prostitute) — none of these were people that we would have chosen for our all-star team. But God chose them just like He chooses us today. He has a life-changing purpose for each one of us, a purpose with extraordinary possibilities that unfold as we pursue a life of becoming more like Jesus.

DISCUSSION

ICE BREAKER

What is your favorite story of an unlikely hero?

GROUP DISCUSSION

Today we'll look at how Jesus called his disciples to a deeper relationship in order to continue the process of transformation in their lives. Not only would they never be the same, but Jesus even changed some of their names as He challenged them to embrace their calling and yield to God's will and purpose for their lives.

Read Mark 3:13-21

The verb used in verse 15 (which is translated “call” in the ESV) means to “authoritatively call; to convene.” Other translations use the stronger word “summon.” Usually words like these evoke a visceral reaction as we think of being summoned to the principal's office or summoned to appear in court. Jesus' authority was no doubt embedded in how He called the disciples to join Him on the mountain top. He had already performed outstanding miracles and had quite a large following. But it's important for us to remember, Jesus also specifically called “those whom He desired...” (v13) He chose twelve individuals that He desired to spend more intimate time with, desiring for them to learn and grow in His presence as He continued His work in the world.

- ① What type of relationship with Jesus do you think the disciples were hoping for as they answered this summons? Do you think they expected to be strongly challenged and deeply changed?

- ② How have Jesus' summons impacted your own life and the way you relate to people around you?

Sometimes we are too quick to focus on what the 12 disciples accomplished during their ministry (as they preached the gospel, healed the sick, and performed miracles).

What does verse 14 say about why these men were summoned by Jesus? Jesus called the twelve, not for what they would do for Him, but “that they might be with Him.”

“[Jesus] called them to share His life. He wanted to involve them in intimate communion and fellowship with Himself. He called them to be in a relationship with Him. He desired for them to share their lives with one another and with Him. But more importantly, He desired to impart His life to them.”

— *David B. Curtis*

Jesus knew that if real transformation was going to take place in the lives of these men, they would need to be in community with Him. They would need to see His example in all things. They would need to listen to His instruction and share with Him their thoughts and concerns. They would need to hold up His life as a mirror to their own, making corrections and changes along the way. Most of all, they would need to experience His love and care for them personally if they were to become like Him.

- ③ Being with Jesus always comes before becoming like Jesus. What priorities or sacrifices do you need to consider in order to spend relational time with Jesus?
- ④ How does being an active part of a community that is devoted to following Jesus and relationally committed to one another help you become more like Jesus?

In Luke 6:12-16 we discover that during this time Jesus began calling these specific disciples “apostles” or “sent ones.” And not long after, He sent them two-by-two to preach, to cast out demons, and to heal the sick. These twelve ordinary men took the courageous next step of following Jesus’ commands and, over time, became His most devoted followers.

A COURAGEOUS NEXT STEP

Think back to last week when your Life Group Leader shared the story of their courageous next step. Spend at least five minutes of your group time in prayerful silence, as each member thinks about what step God might be calling them to take. Each person should list out some ideas in the space below. You won’t be sharing this week; thinking and praying through what your step might be will be an important part of the homework. (Your Leader will ask a few people to share in the coming weeks)

INTRODUCTION TO HOMEWORK

This week’s homework will focus on recognizing that God is relationally present. He is with us! You will be introduced to the Prayer of Examination (pages 58-59) and encouraged to think through what your own courageous next step will be.

GROUP PRAYER

Oh, let all who thirst,
Let them come to the water,
And let all who have nothing,
Let them come to the Lord:
without money, without price,
For the Lord has already paid the price!

And let all who seek,
Let them come to the water.
And let those who have nothing,
Let them come to the Lord:
Without money, without strife.
For the Lord has already spent His life!

And let all who toil,
Let them come to the water.
And let all who are weary,
Let them come to the Lord:
All who labor, without rest.
For the Lord has provided rest for your soul!
And let the poor,

Let them come to the water.
Bring the ones who are laden,
Bring them all to the Lord:
Bring those without the strength to carry themselves,
And let the Lord lighten their load,
Come to the Lord.

LEADER BENECTION

May Jesus Christ dwell in your hearts through faith that you,

—Being rooted and grounded in love—

May have strength to comprehend with all the saints

The breadth of His kindness

The length of His patience

The extent of His grace

And the depth of His compassion.

As you think through the courageous next step the Holy Spirit is prompting you to take,

may you experience the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge,

that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

HOMework

One of the most impactful prayer practices that the ancient church engaged in was the Prayer of Examination. Based on Psalm 139, it specifically recognizes the relational presence of God, inviting Him to walk through your daily experiences and the accompanying emotions, while letting the Holy Spirit guide you towards thankfulness and repentance. This week, set aside a specific time at the end of your day to engage in this prayer. (See Appendix for the Prayer of Examination) Then move on to thinking through what courageous next step the Holy Spirit is prompting you to take.

THINKING ABOUT YOUR COURAGEOUS NEXT STEP

Think for a moment about what courageous next step God is prompting you to take. Revisit what you originally wrote down in *The Story of Jesus and You* to gain a wider perspective, then walk through the questions below.

- ① Where have you seen God at work in your life in the past?

② Spend a few moments asking the Holy Spirit to reveal to you an area in your heart He is currently working on. (For example: your attitude towards family relationships or co-workers; your perspective on life and your purpose; your need for consistent relational time with God). Write down any ideas that come to mind.

③ What courageous next step might the Holy Spirit be prompting you to take in one of these areas? What are some practical things you can do to start this process? Who can you share with, and/or who will help you along the way or challenge you to continue?

Over the course of the next three weeks, work on taking this courageous next step. Then be sure to write out the Story of your Courageous Next Step in Week 5's Homework section.

After you have thought through your courageous next step, spend a few moments thanking God for what He is going to do in your life. Use the lyrics of the song to picture God speaking to you, letting you know He is calling you to His presence.

COME TO THE FOUNTAIN • NEEDTOBREATHE

Give me your heart give me your song
Sing it with all your might
Come to the fountain and
You can be satisfied
There is a peace, there is a love
You can get lost inside
Come to the fountain and
Let me hear you testify

Wave after wave
As deep calls to deep
Oh, I'll reveal my mystery
As soon as you start to let go

Give me your heart give me your song
Sing it with all your might
Come to the fountain and
You can be satisfied
There is a peace, there is a love
You can get lost inside
Come to the fountain and
Let me hear you testify

RESOURCES

Celebration of Discipline • Richard Foster

An essential introduction to the Spiritual Disciplines and how they impact the life of a follower of Jesus.

Abba's Child • Brennan Manning

Brennan Manning encourages us to let go of the impostor lifestyle and freely accept our belovedness as a child of the heavenly Father. In Him there is life.

Emotionally Healthy Spirituality • Peter Scazzero

How transforming your inner life will deeply transform the way you engage with the world around you.

The Gift of Being Yourself • David G. Benner

Discerning your true self is inextricably related to discerning God's purposes for you. Paradoxically, the more you become like Christ, the more you become authentically yourself.

Transformed • Chip Ingram

12 videos on moving from frustration & failure into freedom in Christ. Find it online at:
www.RightNowMedia.org/Content/Series/932

White Flag • Andy Stanley

Three sermons focused on Jonah's story of surrender. Find it online at:
www.RightNowMedia.org/Content/Series/558

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WEEK THREE

ACTS 4:23-37

RESISTANT TO DOING LIFE ON OUR OWN

Imagine being confined to a small, dark room, with no social interaction whatsoever for 30 days. Not many people would jump at this opportunity, but one man did.

In November 2018, professional US poker player Rich Alati bet \$100,000 that he could survive 30 days alone and in total darkness.

He was kept in a small, completely dark room with nothing but a bed, refrigerator, and bathroom. Even with all the resources he needed to survive, Alati couldn't last the month. After 20 days, he negotiated his release. Following the experiment, Alati revealed that he began experiencing hallucinations by his third day in isolation, ranging from seeing the room fill up with bubbles, to imagining that the ceiling had opened up to show him a starry sky. (The Conversation, January 2019)

Rich Alati realized that doing life in isolation could have some serious consequences, and that life alone was no life at all.

Multiple studies have shown that humans are hardwired to connect with others, especially during times of stress. When we go through a trying ordeal alone, a lack of emotional support and friendship can increase our anxiety and hinder our ability to cope.

On the other hand, having numerous and deeper connections predicts better health and well-being. Having close family relationships and a network of friends reduces the impact of stress on our brains and bodies. (Psychology Today, July 2018)

These studies show what the Bible has revealed to us all along: We were created for community. God never intended for us to be alone, but instead designed us to flourish in relationship with Him and in relationships with other believers.

Jesus summarized this as He spoke to His Father in one of the last prayers heard by His disciples: “I in them and You in Me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that You sent Me and loved them even as You loved Me.” (John 14:27)

This week we will look at how the first followers of Jesus depended on one another for support and encouragement as they continued the work Jesus had called them to do. We will also discover some practical ways we can grow in our relationships with one another.

DISCUSSION

ICE BREAKER

How many days do you think you could last in a room alone with no human contact? What would be most challenging for you?

GROUP DISCUSSION

The story of the healing of a crippled man in Acts chapter 3 is one of the first accounts of the Holy Spirit working in a powerful way in the lives of the apostles after Jesus' ascension into heaven. A large crowd had gathered, and Peter commanded the man, who had been lame since birth, to stand up and walk in the name of Jesus. A number of people trusted Jesus as their savior as a result, but Peter and John were thrown into jail by the temple priests and the temple captain. The men who had accused Jesus and sent Him to His death only a short time before were now a potential threat to the lives of the apostles.

Since they had no legal reason to hold them, the Jewish leaders released Peter and John the next day. But they demanded the disciples no longer preach and teach in the name of Jesus.

Read Acts 4:23-31

- ① Considering all the options available to them —running, hiding, or simply continuing on with their ministry— what was it about this group of people that compelled Peter and John to immediately go back to them when they were released from jail?
- ② When a crisis happens, conflicts arise, or emotions run high, how do you think a prayer like this might encourage unity among followers of Jesus?

Poverty was not uncommon in the ancient world, and it could have been the reality among some of the followers of Jesus. Many had left their homes to follow Him, and others had been abandoned by their families. In spite of this, we discover in this passage that “not one of them was wanting.”

- ③ What attitudes do we cling to about ourselves or our relationships that might hinder our ability to engage in this kind of community?
- ④ Joseph so embodied the spirit of generosity that he was renamed by the apostles “Barnabas,” which means “Son of Encouragement.” Besides financial gifts, what other expressions of generous love and care should we expect of one another in a community of followers of Jesus?

It would be easy to focus on the actions of the early church as prescriptive for healthy community. But the emphasis of the passage is the unity the early believers experienced through the power of the Holy Spirit. Their response to the physical needs of one another revealed what was going on in their hearts as they grew in their love for Jesus and for one another.

Being in community with other followers of Jesus today should be a similar experience. Our communities can be safe places where each one of us can be vulnerable enough to share our struggles and ask for help. We can support each other by sharing our knowledge of the Bible, praying for one another, and expressing love to one another in practical ways. And we can encourage each other to be courageous as we go into the world with the message of Jesus’ love.

- ⑤ What attitudes do we cling to about ourselves or our relationships that might hinder our ability to engage in this kind of community?

A COURAGEOUS NEXT STEP

Set aside some time for two or three members of your group to share about what courageous next step God is prompting them to take through last week's reflections and exercise.

INTRODUCTION TO HOMEWORK

This week's homework will be an exercise that helps us understand where we are investing our time, talents, and resources. It will challenge us to look at what current life priorities and give us vision for a possible future.

GROUP PRAYER

We welcome you, Spirit of God,
You who seek our company
And choose to make yourself known to us.
We are grateful for your many blessings,
Including bringing us together at this time, and this place.
We ask that you would use our Life Group time to challenge us,
To encourage us, to change us,
That we may continue to grow and be transformed
And in this process find hope to offer the world around us.

In our conversations and our sharing,
In our eating, resting,
Learning and laughing,
May we notice you,
Find you and follow you,
And offer you our best. Amen

LEADER BENECTION

May Jesus Christ dwell in your hearts through faith that you,

—Being rooted and grounded in love—

May have strength to comprehend with all the saints

The breadth of His kindness

The length of His patience

The extent of His grace

And the depth of His compassion.

As you act this week, taking your courageous next step,

Do so knowing that the Holy Spirit is with you, empowering you and guiding you.

May you experience the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge,

That you may be filled with all the fullness of God

HOMework

This week, continue with the Prayer of Examination. After each prayer time, spend some time working through the following exercise. Think about the people and places to which God has called you.

“I have community with others and I shall continue to have it only through Jesus Christ. The more genuine and deeper our community becomes, the more will everything else between us recede, the more clearly and purely will Jesus Christ and his work become the one and only thing that is vital between us. We have one another only through Christ, but through Christ we do have one another, wholly, and for all eternity.” — *Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Life Together*

THE “LIVE SENT” TOOL

God never intended us to do life on our own. His calling on our life was always designed to be lived out in community with others. He wants us to do life with people we love and enjoy, people who bring out our best. However, He also wants us to know that our gifts, talents, and abilities are needed by certain people more than others.

God also has certain places that He desires to send us to serve. Places where we give life to others by investing our time and other resources. Places where we enjoy a sense of fulfillment, knowing that we are making a difference in the lives of the people around us.

The Live Sent exercise is created to help you discover the intersection between who God has called you to do life with and where (or what place) you should be living out this calling. Living/Sent (see the grid below) means that we understand our calling begins today with the people and in the places determined by God.

Fill out the grid on page 40, starting on the left and working your way to the right, and consider the following:

① WHO BRINGS OUT MY BEST?

Who has God placed in my life that amplifies my best? What qualities do these people have that sync up with my own calling?

Who is in my life that causes me to thrive? Being with this person doesn't feel like work. Instead they inspire me to live life on purpose and pursue the things of God with tenacity.

Try and narrow down your list to specific people you know who match these characteristics or qualities. If you can't think of anyone specific, start with general characteristics or qualities of people and eventually narrow this list.

② TO WHOM SHOULD I GIVE MY BEST?

Who should I be pouring my own life into? These are people with whom I should be spending specific relational time pointing to God and inspiring them to live out what God has called them to do.

Who takes my investment of time, energy, knowledge, and finances and multiplies it? (e.g., students, children, leaders, missionaries,)

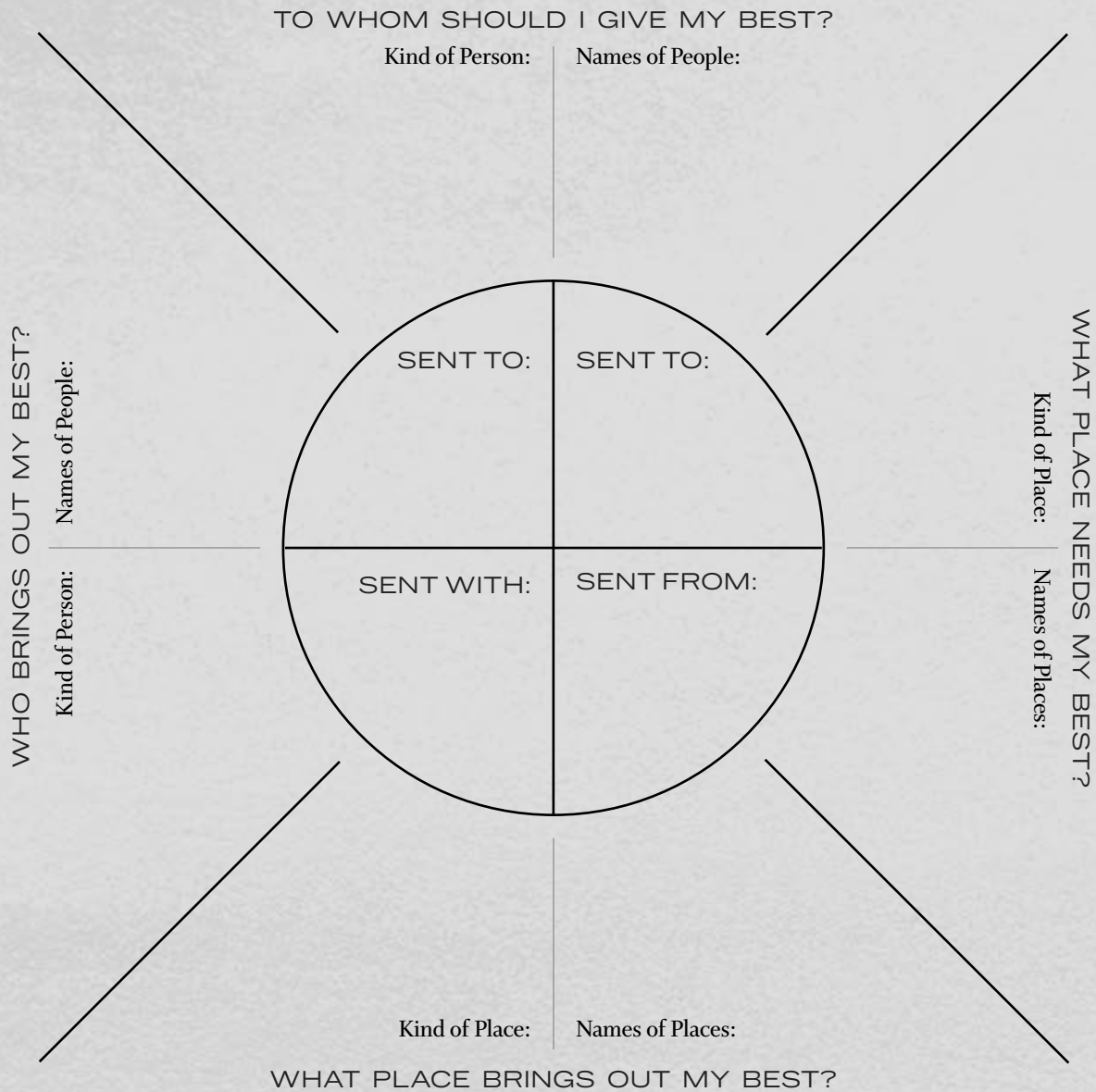
Remember: these can be specific people who you know or general characteristics or qualities of people.

③ WHAT PLACE NEEDS MY BEST?

Where are my gifts, talents and abilities most needed and most appreciated?

④ WHAT PLACE BRINGS OUT MY BEST?

What kind of place gives me life? (e.g., city, country, topography, classroom, kitchen, organization)



What does this exercise reveal to you about who God has called you to do life with and where He has called you to serve? What next step do you need to take as you move closer to the people and places in the center of your grid?

more like Jesus • more

RESOURCES

Life Together • Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Giving practical advice on how life together in Christ can be sustained in families and groups, *Life Together* is bread for all who are hungry for the real life of Christian fellowship.

How People Change • Timothy S. Lane and Paul David Tripp

In the previous chapters, we have focused on individual change and growth in grace. This process is not simply an individualistic one. It happens best – and primarily – within community.

(See Chapter 5: “Change is a Community Project”)

Balcony People • Joyce Landorf Heatherley

Some people are in the “balcony” of your life, cheering you on, energizing you with their affirmation. Others are in your “basement” doing exactly the opposite. This book is about being a “balcony person.”

RESOURCES FROM RIGHT NOW MEDIA

COMMUNITY & FRIENDSHIP

Befriend • Scott Sauls

Being vulnerable and taking risks to form friendships in an age of judgment, isolation, and fear.

A book and six short video sessions. Find it online at: www.RightNowMedia.org/Content/Series/257968

Never Alone, A Study on Friendship • A Women's Study by Jennie Allen

A study guide and six short videos. Find it online at: www.RightNowMedia.org/Content/Series/340122

HOSPITALITY

The Gospel Comes with a House Key: Practicing Radically Ordinary Hospitality in our Post-Christian World • Rosaria Butterfield

A book and 13 very short videos. Find it online at: www.RightNowMedia.org/Content/Series/303451

Christian Hospitality: Messy Over Perfect • Gospel Coalition Women's Conference

A 10 minute conference video + reflection questions.

Find it online at: www.RightNowMedia.org/Training/Post/View/181944

WEEK FOUR

JOHN 17:1-10

PERSISTENT IN DESIGNING A LIFE OF INTENTIONAL INVESTMENT

Are you a giver or a taker? A 2013 Harvard Business Review Article titled “In the Company of Givers and Takers” revealed the surprising findings of a study of the differences between the two. Givers were those workers who were perceived as contributing to others without seeking anything in return. Takers, on the other hand, were those who tried to get other people to serve their needs. According to the article, the benefits of having more Givers than Takers in any organization were notable: higher rates of Givers were predictive of higher profitability, problem-solving, productivity, efficiency and customer satisfaction.

On one hand, the study also noted that certain Givers were more productive and focused than others. Those who gave their time and energy indiscriminately experienced feelings of frustration and, ultimately, burnout. However, those who set limits on their available time and energy, who were specific about who they could help the most, and who tapped into their particular area of expertise earned the reputation of being more generous Givers than those who didn't. (Harvard Business Review, April 2013)

Givers who are intentional about where they invest their time and resources are more productive and make the greatest impact for their businesses. When we are intentional about what we do as followers of Jesus, with the help of the Holy Spirit, we can be sure that our lives will make the greatest impact as well.

God is in the Kingdom-building business, and He has a unique job for each one of us. Work that benefits the Church brings energy and joy to our lives. Being intentional about how we live out our God-given purpose may be the difference between feelings of frustration and burnout versus the full life God has for us.

DISCUSSION

ICE BREAKER

What percentage of your time would you say is invested wisely? (Give an actual % estimate and be honest, nobody is perfect!)

GROUP DISCUSSION

Sometimes referred to as “The Great Intercessory Prayer,” John 17 contains the longest prayer of Jesus recorded in Scripture. Right before He was taken into custody, in the presence of His apostles, Jesus prays a prayer acknowledging what He had accomplished during His time on earth, including the final work He was about to do on the cross. He also prays for protection and provision for His followers who are to continue the work God has for them.

Because it mattered to Jesus, what we do with our days here on earth should matter to us. Today we are going to discuss how we can be more intentional about how we invest our lives so that our relationships, our resources, and our commitments all reflect a growing relationship with God as we become more like Jesus.

Read John 17:1-5

- ① What does this passage tell you about the nature of the relationship between Jesus and the work the Father gave Him to do?

Ephesians 2:10 says, “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”

Each one of us has work to do, a purpose given to us by God. All of our gifts, talents, abilities, passions, and experiences are woven together in God's unique design for each of our lives. At Fellowship, when we say we are "calling each other to live out our God-given purpose in Christ every day," it's our desire that we would bring God glory by doing the very thing He has made us to do.

- ② How does knowing your God-given purpose encourage you to be more intentional with your life?
(If you don't know your two words, be sure to sign up for the next Repurposed Training Experience to begin to discover how God has uniquely designed you.)

Read John 17:6-10

Jesus knew that His time on earth was limited. If He was going to make a lasting impact, His work and influence would need to continue long after He was gone. From verses 6 and 9 of the passage we just read, we learn that God chose 12 men from Israel for Jesus to pour His life into. Jesus would live with them, teach them and model the good news of God's love, so that they would be able to share with others what they had experienced themselves. Jesus made a more significant relational investment with a few to make a greater impact on the world.

The people God has put in our lives are not there by accident. God knew ahead of time the family in which you would be born, the neighborhood where you live, and the people that you would work with. Even the group you are going through this study with is not a surprise to Him. God doesn't expect you to have intimate relationships with everyone you meet. But out of all the people you have come in contact with, He has given you certain people that need your presence and your purpose more than others. Positioning yourself to be available to them is one of the most important things you can do.

- ③ Think about the people that God has given you—family, friends, neighbors, co-workers. What would have to change about your life in order to engage more intentionally with a few of them in order to make a greater impact?

Knowing our purpose helps us engage more intentionally with the people around us. It also helps us say “yes” to the commitments we need to make, and “no” to things that we are not supposed to do. Jesus is the perfect model of this. In the passage we just read, Jesus prays not for the world, but for the group of men He’s been given. In Mark 1, He opts out of returning to Galilee to perform miracles in order to “go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came.” And from an early age, in Luke 2:49, we know that Jesus was always about doing God’s will, not the will of those around Him.

Our world is a needy place, and we could give ourselves from sunup to sundown until we are burned out and the well is run dry, so to speak. But when we are more thoughtful about the commitments God wants us to make, we can be assured that He will equip us for every good work He wants us to do.

- ④ Share with your group some practical ways you can be more purposeful with the commitments you make with your time and resources. How could being more purposeful with your commitments allow you to be generous with your resources and make a greater impact?

God never intended for us to live our lives feeling depleted and overwhelmed. Instead, He promised that He came so that we would have life and have it more abundantly.

What has God been calling you to do? Whatever it is, you can be sure that if it’s His calling, He has given you everything you need to carry it out. Being intentional with the relationships God has given you, and thoughtfully considering the commitments you make will position you to live out your God-given purpose in a way that brings life to you and glory to God.

A COURAGEOUS NEXT STEP

Set aside some time for two or three members of your group to share about what courageous next step God is prompting them to take.

INTRODUCTION TO HOMEWORK

In our Homework this week, we will be wading through an exercise that will challenge us to consider where we are intentionally investing our physical and spiritual resources. The five capitals exercise is one of the many tools that you will complete in our Repurposed Training Experience. It's designed to help you think through where you are currently investing your time and resources, challenge you to think through what God is calling you to become, and design your life with specific steps to get there. Make sure you take time to go through this exercise and consider what God can do in and through you!

GROUP PRAYER

God as we strive for success,

For wealth,

For stability,

For status,

Turn our eyes down from the top of the mountain

That we may see to wash the feet of the world:

For if we pray, we will believe;

If we believe, we will love;

If we love, we will serve.

LEADER BENEDICTION

May Jesus Christ dwell in your hearts through faith that you,

—Being rooted and grounded in love—

May have strength to comprehend with all the saints

The breadth of His kindness

The length of His patience

The extent of His grace

And the depth of His compassion.

As you act this week, taking your courageous next step,

Do so knowing that the Holy Spirit is with you, empowering you and guiding you.

May you experience the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge,

That you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

HOMework

Read Matthew 25:14-30

God has called each one of us to do the work He has designed us to do. And when God calls, He always equips. Just like in the Parable of the Talents, He has made an investment of certain capital, expecting us to use this capital wisely. We have all been given life in Him (spiritual capital), relationships with others (relational capital), a certain amount of time and energy (physical capital), the ability to know, learn, or create (intellectual capital), and even our money and resources (financial capital).

Prioritizing and reordering our capital may mean the difference between faithfully completing the work God has called you to do or living your life like the third servant — seemingly safe, but never receiving the praise and honor of the Master.

Take a minute to complete the following exercise:

- ① Where are you currently investing your capital?

In the chart on page 54, pretend you are given 17 gold bars that represent the different resources in your life. Some people may have a lot of relational capital, but very little financial capital. Some people may have a long history of life with God, but very little physical capital.

Use the first column to record how you have currently distributed your 17 gold bars of capital. Remember, this is an honest look at where you are currently in life.

Next, think through the following questions. Spend some time in prayer, asking the Holy Spirit to give you insight into these things.

- ② What call has God placed on your life?
- ③ What capital is required to achieve that calling?

Let's think towards the future and fast forward three years. Now your capital has increased, and you have 34 gold bars.

- ④ If you are thinking about what your life might look like in the future, how would you like these 34 gold bars to be distributed?
- ⑤ In order to achieve the work God has for you in the next three years, what areas would you need to intentionally add more capital? What capital would you need to draw from?
- ⑥ Spend a few moments praying through what steps you need to take in order to reprioritize what God is calling you to do. Could one of these steps be your courageous next step?



FIVE CAPITALS	MY LIFE NOW	MY LIFE IN 3 YEARS
SPIRITUAL CAPITAL		
RELATIONAL CAPITAL		
PHYSICAL CAPITAL		
INTELLECTUAL CAPITAL		
FINANCIAL CAPITAL		

Capital that needs to increase most: _____

Investment that needs to be made to increase that capital: _____

RESOURCES

Freedom From Tyranny of the Urgent • Charles Hummel

“Charlie Hummel shows us how to keep from majoring in minors when it comes to how we use our time. This is a must read!” – Tony Campolo.

The Best Yes • Lysa Terkeurst

Making wise decisions in the midst of endless demands.

Ask It • Andy Stanley

The question that will revolutionize how you make decisions.

The Treasure Principle • Randy Alcorn

Unlocking the secret of joyful giving.

RESOURCES FROM RIGHT NOW MEDIA:

The Genius of Generosity • Chip Ingram

A book with 4 short videos. Find it online at www.RightNowMedia.org/Content/Series/927

The Treasure Principle • Randy Alcorn

A book with 4 short videos. Find it online at www.RightNowMedia.org/Content/Series/198062

WEEK FIVE

2 TIMOTHY 2:2

INSISTENT ON A LEGACY OF EXPONENTIAL IMPACT

The year was 1934. Albert McMakin was a 24 year old hired hand at the dairy farm down the road from where he grew up in North Carolina. Every day, Albert woke up at 2:30 in the morning and drove his truck to work on the farm. But that spring, every evening, Albert loaded up his truck with kids and drove them into town. Albert had recently become a Christian, and an evangelist named Mordecai Ham was hosting nightly tent meeting revivals in their city. Albert wanted to make sure every kid he knew had the opportunity to give their life to Jesus.

There was one young man, though, that would never accept Albert's invitation: a handsome 16-year-old, the son of the farmer Albert worked for, who always seemed more intrigued by girls and baseball than religion. He made it very clear he had no interest in accompanying Albert to the tent meetings.

But Albert was relentless. One day in particular invited his young friend not just to attend the meeting with him, but to drive his truck full of other kids. It was just the right carrot to dangle in front of a 16-year-old, and the young man took the bait.

That evening was followed by several others, until one night, young William Franklin Graham, Jr., "Billy Frank" to his family, walked the aisle and gave his life to Jesus.

Albert McMakin could never have guessed the ripple effect of his invitation. It's been estimated that over 15 million people attended Billy Graham's Crusades over his lifetime, while hundreds of millions more experienced his radio and tv broadcasts. Preaching to more people than in the history of the world, his influence also extended to well-known evangelists, presidents, and other world leaders. Called the "Great Legitimator" because of his work against social wrongs, Graham was on Gallup's "Most Admired Man and Woman" list 61 times, more than any other person in history.

Very few people know of Albert McMakin today. But the difference his life made cannot be denied. His faithfulness to invite a young man to come with him as he followed Jesus has left a legacy of exponential impact.

DISCUSSION

ICE BREAKER

What one person has had the greatest impact on your life as a follower of Jesus?

GROUP DISCUSSION

In this lesson we'll look at the impact the apostle Paul had on the life of his young disciple, Timothy. Paul understood the importance of leaving a more intentional legacy with a few people who could carry on his work. From the initial invitation to the life-on-life investment he made, Paul committed to spending time with Timothy, training him, and sharing his life so that Timothy could one day follow in his footsteps.

Paul's relationship with Timothy is a wonderful example of the calling Jesus gave each one of us to "go and make disciples" in Matthew 28:19-21. Paul used his influence, his time, and his knowledge to model for Timothy what it means to be a follower of Jesus.

Read Acts 16:1-5

After just having a disappointing experience with another disciple, John Mark, Paul knew he needed to identify the right man to help him in his work. God gave him Timothy at just the right time.

- 1 In an age of Facebook and Instagram where an invitation to friendship can reflect a brief encounter with someone, what characteristics of Paul's invitation to Timothy stand out to you?

Timothy responded to the call to join Paul and was very quickly “all in.” It’s been said that “you have to be winsome to win some.” Paul’s devotion to Jesus, his stature among the believers, and his desire to spend time mentoring Timothy were all sure to be attractive or winsome qualities to a young man who wanted to grow in His own relationship with Jesus.

- ② What qualities would you look for in another follower of Jesus that would encourage you to say an enthusiastic “yes!” if they invited you to spend more intentional time with them?

While we don’t know many specifics about how Paul trained Timothy, Scripture gives us plenty of hints about the progression of their relationship.

Read 1 Timothy 1:2, 2 Timothy 3:10-11, and Romans 16:21

- ③ Helping Timothy grow from “child in the faith” to “my fellow worker” took intentionality and commitment on the part of both Paul and Timothy. What sacrifices might you have to make in order to be a part of a relationship where the purpose is to grow your faith?

In 2 Timothy 1:5 we learn that Timothy wasn’t mentored by just Paul. He had been taught by his mother and grandmother, who no doubt continued to encourage him. Not all Christians have the benefit of families who share their faith. Many of us need spiritual fathers and mothers, men and women who can model what it looks like to follow Jesus.

- ④ How has your time with the people in your Life Group helped you grow as a disciple of Jesus?

Read 2 Timothy 2:1-2

From his jail cell (where 2 Timothy was written), Paul humbly demonstrated what true servant leadership is all about. In spite of his inability to teach and preach to large crowds, Paul continued to encourage others by writing letters. Paul used the resources he had in order to give Timothy the confidence he needed to continue the work God had called him to.

We don't all have the knowledge and abilities of Paul, but we can all strive to be servant leaders. Servant leaders are simply people who are willing to humbly use whatever time and talents they have to encourage others to follow Jesus. Working with children, mowing lawns, giving car rides, or even leading a Bible study are just a few examples of the opportunities we have to influence others. When intentional, this influence has the awesome potential to deepen spiritual relationships while following Jesus' command to make disciples where we live, work, and play. Our homes, our schools, and our communities need more servant leaders to shape the next generation of followers of Jesus. The Kingdom depends on it.

- ⑤ How could you use your gifts, knowledge, or experience to serve someone else in order to develop a more intentional spiritual relationship?

A COURAGEOUS NEXT STEP

Set aside some time for two or three members of your group to share about what courageous next step God is prompting them to take.

INTRODUCTION TO HOMEWORK

In our homework this week, we will be challenged to tell the story of our courageous next step. It's our hope that God has been working on your hearts these past few weeks, prompting you and stretching you to become more like Jesus. Make sure you take time to look back through the homework sections and prayerfully think through your courageous next step. Don't forget to share what God is up to you with your leader and your Life Group. Also, the Life Group team wants to celebrate with you! Snap a picture of your homework sheet and send it to the email provided to share what God is up to in your life as you become more like Jesus!

GROUP PRAYER

For the potential You see in us
And the possibilities that lie ahead:
Christ be before us.

For our plans and their fulfilment,
For Your promises and their unfolding:
Christ be before us.

In the problems that beset us
And the perils that ensnare us:
Christ be within us.

Be around us, above us, and beneath us.
On Your path, O my God, and not my own,
Be all my journeying.
Rule this heart of mine
That it be only Yours.
Amen.

LEADER BENEDECTION

May Jesus Christ dwell in your hearts through faith that you,
—Being rooted and grounded in love—
May have strength to comprehend with all the saints
The breadth of His kindness
The length of His patience
The extent of His grace
And the depth of His compassion.

As you act this week, taking your courageous next step,
Do so knowing that the Holy Spirit is with you,
Empowering you and guiding you.
May you experience the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge,
That you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

HOMework

Your homework for this week will be to take the courageous next step that the Holy Spirit is prompting you towards and share the story of what happened in the space below.

Name / _____

Phone / _____

Email / _____

Life Group / _____

THE STEP

Please share the courageous next step that was taken:

THE CALLS

Which of The Calls does this courageous next step fit into? Check all that apply.

- Consistent in Pursuing a God-Centered Life Persistent in Designing a Life of Intentional Investment
- Resistant to Doing Life on Our Own Insistent on a Legacy of Exponential Impact

RESOURCES

WOMEN MENTORING WOMEN

“Adorned: Living Out the Beauty of the Gospel Together” • Nancy DeMoss Wolgemuth

Woman to woman. Older to younger. Day to day. Life to life. This is God’s beautiful plan.

“Captivating: Unveiling the Mystery of a Woman’s Soul” • Staci Eldredge

The message of Captivating is this: Your heart matters more than anything else in all of creation. The desires you had as a little girl, and the longings you still feel as a woman are telling you of the life God created you to live.

MEN MENTORING MEN

“As Iron Sharpens Iron” • Howard and William Hendricks

Whether you are looking for a mentor or wish to mentor someone else, this book, rooted in biblical principles, provides specific steps to beginning the relationship and make the most of it.

“Killing Lions: A Guide Through the Trials Young Men Face” • John and Samuel Eldredge

More than fatherly advice, this book is an invitation into a journey: either to be the son who receives fathering or the father who learns what must be spoken. Most important, these conversations speak to a searching generation: “You are not alone. It’s not all up to you. You are going to find your way.”

RESOURCES FROM RIGHT NOW MEDIA

MISSIONAL MULTIPLICATION

Woven: The Art of Making Disciples • IF: Gathering Women's Study

5 weeks of personal devotionals & videos.

Find it online at: www.RightNowMedia.org/Content/Series/250802

The Gospel of Mark • Francis Chan

11 part book study + videos that focus on discipleship.

Find it online at: www.RightNowMedia.org/Content/Series/289491

Acts • Matt Chandler

A sermon series focusing on the Great Commission and growing the church through discipleship

Find it online at: www.RightNowMedia.org/Content/Series/1102

SERVANT LEADERSHIP

Servant Leadership • Ken Blanchard

40 minute session from 2012 World Leaders Conference.

Find it online at: www.RightNowMedia.org/Training/Post/View/160006

Leadership • John Maxwell

Books and a video series. Find it online at: www.RightNowMedia.org/Content/Speaker/999520

Lead Like a Shepherd (In The Church) • Larry Osbourne

Book and 5 short video sessions. Find it online at: www.RightNowMedia.org/Content/Series/292761

PRAYER OF EXAMINATION

A SIX-STEP METHOD TO PRAYER

① *Pray for light.*

Since we are not simply daydreaming or reminiscing but rather looking for some sense of how the Spirit of God is leading us, it only makes sense to pray for some illumination. The goal is not simply memory but graced understanding. That's a gift from God devoutly to be begged. "Lord, help me understand this blooming, buzzing confusion."

② *Review the day with thanksgiving.*

Note how different this is from looking immediately for your sins. Nobody likes to poke around in the memory bank to uncover smallness, weakness, lack of generosity. But everybody likes beautiful gifts, and that is precisely what the past 24 hours contain—gifts of existence, work, relationships, food, challenges. Gratitude is the foundation of our whole relationship with.

③ *Review the feelings that surface in the replay of the day.*

Our feelings, positive and negative, the painful and the pleasing, are clear signals of where the action was during the day. Simply pay attention to any and all of those feelings as they surface, the whole range: delight, boredom, fear, anticipation, resentment, anger, peace, contentment, impatience, desire, hope, regret, shame, uncertainty, compassion, disgust, gratitude, pride, rage, doubt, confidence, admiration, shyness—whatever was there.

④ *Choose one of those feelings (positive or negative) and pray from it.*

That is, choose the remembered feeling that most caught your attention. The feeling is a sign that something important was going on. Now simply express spontaneously the prayer that surfaces as you attend to the source of the feeling—confession, praise, petition, cry for help or healing, whatever.

⑤ *Look toward tomorrow.*

Using your appointment calendar if that helps, face your immediate future. What feelings surface as you look at the tasks, meetings, and appointments that face you? Fear? Delighted anticipation? Self-doubt? Temptation to procrastinate? Zestful planning? Regret? Weakness? Whatever it is, turn it into prayer—for help, for healing, whatever comes spontaneously.

⑥ *Recognize the Holy Spirit's relational presence.*

Jesus promised us that the Holy Spirit would be present with us, teaching us and guiding us throughout our lives as we follow Jesus' commands. Close your time thanking God for this awesome gift and asking Him to give you an awareness of how He desires that you act, live, and walk through the next day.

THE CALLS

① CONSISTENT IN PURSUING A GOD-CENTERED LIFE

Marked by: Surrendered Life • Disciplined Discovery • Transformed Identity

Evidenced by: A Life of Joyful Worship

② RESISTANT TO DOING LIFE ON OUR OWN

Marked by: Courageous Vulnerability • Hospitable Care • Devoted Relationships

Evidenced by: A Life of Covenant Community

③ PERSISTENT IN DESIGNING A LIFE OF INTENTIONAL INVESTMENT

Marked by: Compassionate Engagement • Bold Generosity • Purposeful Commitments

Evidenced by: A Life of Activated Presence

④ INSISTENT ON A LEGACY OF EXPONENTIAL IMPACT

Marked by: Relational Winsomeness • Missional Multiplication • Servant Leadership

Evidenced by: A Life of Kingdom Orientation

YOU'VE TAKEN YOUR FIRST STEP.

WHAT'S NEXT?

As you continue to take steps in becoming more like Jesus,
share your story through our website and on social media.

FELLOWSHIPDALLAS.ORG/BECOMING

#STORIESOFBECOMING



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