

FUNDAMENTALS OF FAITH

6 CORES FOR BEING A CHRISTIAN

What Does it Mean to be a Disciple?

This intent behind this curriculum is to encourage our entire church family to evaluate ourselves (and our Life Groups) against 6 core attributes of being a follower of Jesus Christ. Similar to how Paul challenged the Corinthian church in 2 Corinthians 13:5 – *“Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you—unless, of course, you fail the test?”*

“Gentlemen, this is a football.”

The legendary NFL football coach, Vince Lombardi, used to start his training camps with that statement as he held a football for his team to see. He was famous for a hyper-focus on fundamentals (blocking, tackling, throwing, catching, etc...) that led to 5 NFL championships in 7 years.

In a day and age where we're enamored with the newest and latest, it's critical that we don't lose sight of the core fundamentals. After all, if we are truly following Jesus then we will be doing the things He did – the things He commanded His followers to do.

Peter describes a similar approach in 2 Peter 1:12-15:

“So I will always remind you of these things, even though you know them and are firmly established in the truth you now have. 13 I think it is right to refresh your memory as long as I live in the tent of this body, 14 because I know that I will soon put it aside, as our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me. 15 And I will make every effort to see that after my departure you will always be able to remember these things.”

The reality is that sanctification is a lifelong process and we all have room for improvement, both individually and collectively. That is why so many of our discussion questions are application-based. We want to encourage our

people to really wrestle with how we are actually living out these traits that mark the life of a follower of Jesus.

Like Paul, we should be able to boldly claim the statement found in 1 Corinthians 11:1:

“Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.”

We are excited to go on this journey together!

Format

As you read through the curriculum, you will notice a couple of differences from previous curriculums:

1. Discussion Questions Everywhere! Yes, it's true: there are far more questions in each lesson than you will have time to get to. Don't worry - this is by design. Since every Life Group is unique, different questions will appeal more to different groups. We have included questions after each point as well as a list of additional questions at the end of each lesson. Feel free to select the questions you believe will resonate most with your Life Group and use them accordingly.
2. Limited Exegesis – While there are multiple scripture passages in each lesson, we did not include the associated commentary for those scriptures within the lesson itself. Instead, we are including a link to an online commentary where you can access research for any scriptures as desired. The primary reason for this change (besides brevity) is because most of us don't need to be convinced that these core traits are biblical. Intellectually we understand that they are foundational for followers of Christ. The key is what we do with that knowledge. Are we living it out consistently? How about collectively as a group? We don't want to be hearers only, but doers of the Word. (James 1:22-25)

Below are the 6 core attributes and the primary scriptures for this study.

Session 1: Biblically Rooted
Passage: 2 Timothy 3:16-17

Session 2: Spiritually Transformed

Passage: Ephesians 2:8-10

Session 3: Kingdom Minded

Passage: Colossians 3:1-3

Session 4: Wholeheartedly Committed

Passage: Acts 2:42

Session 5: Generously Shared

Passage: 2 Corinthians 9:6-9

Session 6: Missionally Focused

Passage: Matthew 28:18-20

SESSION 1: BIBLICALLY ROOTED

Passage: 2 Timothy 3:16-17

*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.*

Key Idea: **All of Scripture comes from God.**

All Scripture is God-breathed

All of the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation is the inspired Word of God. Written over 1,500 years, 66 books, by more than 40 authors in 3 languages - all communicating the single truth of the story of God, and His desire to rescue and redeem His people!

Discussion Questions:

1. What is the significance of Scripture being inspired by God, as stated in 2 Timothy 3:16?
2. Why is it important to view the Scriptures as authoritative in matters of faith and practice?
3. How do we practically apply this truth in our lives?

Key Idea: **All of Scripture is useful to us.**

All scripture is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness

Everything in the Bible has been given by God to His people for our benefit. It is useful to us in four main areas: teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training. Each of these attributes are to grow us as followers of Jesus Christ.

For Teaching:

God has given us His Word for us to be able to teach one another the character and nature of God, including His plan for the redemption of humanity, thorough the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Colossians 3:16

Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts.

For Rebuking:

By definition, rebuke is defined as “to express sharp disapproval or criticism to behavior or actions.” The Bible serves as a tool used by God’s people to convict and challenge us when we are acting in a way that is contrary to what God has commanded.

2 Thessalonians 3:15

Yet do not regard them as an enemy, but warn them as you would a fellow believer.

For Correcting:

The purpose of correction is to shape us into the image of God, to redirect us back onto the path God desires for His children when we have strayed from it. God’s Word provides us with an understanding of what that path is, and instruction for how to bring ourselves and others back onto that path.

Hebrews 4:12

For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

For Training in Righteousness:

The Bible serves as a manual given by God to offer instruction to His people on how to live holy and godly lives. It trains us to observe and adopt Christ-like attitudes, actions, and words in how we conduct ourselves.

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.

Discussion Questions:

1. How could a better grasp of the Scriptures have helped you respond to a recent situation differently?
2. Discuss the importance of memorizing Scripture and how it can be beneficial in moments when you need guidance or encouragement. When was the last time you memorized a scripture? Can you still recite it?
3. Share a personal testimony of how a specific Bible passage has guided and directed you in a challenging situation.
4. Discuss the importance of meditating on Scripture and how it can deepen your understanding and application of God's Word.
5. In what ways can you actively seek the Holy Spirit's guidance as you read and study the Scriptures?
6. How can we encourage one another to regularly engage with the Word of God outside of our small group meetings?

Key Idea: **All of Scripture equips us for our calling:**

Be thoroughly equipped for every good work

God's Word provides all the necessary tools to fulfill what God has called each of us to do with our lives. That means that not only does the Bible supply us with teaching and wisdom, but it should empower us to live out our calling with confidence knowing that God has fully equipped us for the task, whatever that may be.

Hebrews 13:21

(He will) *equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.*

Discussion Questions:

1. As a small group, set specific goals for how you will collectively prioritize and integrate the teachings of 2 Timothy 3:16-17 in your lives.
2. Share an example of a time when you witnessed the transformative power of the Scriptures in someone else's life.

Going deeper into God's Word:

1. Identify a specific teaching from the Bible that you find challenging to apply practically. Meditate on this teaching and seek input from the group on how to put it into action.
2. Are there any specific teachings or doctrines you have questioned in the past? How will you approach them now, considering the authority of Scripture?

Leader Resources:

<https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/2-timothy-3/>

<https://www.crossway.org/articles/3-lessons-about-scripture-from-2-timothy-31617/>

Additional Questions for Consideration:

1. In what ways have you personally experienced the transforming power of the Scriptures in your life?
2. How do you interpret the phrase "useful for teaching" in relation to the Bible's role in our spiritual growth?
3. According to verse 16, the Bible is also useful for correcting. How can we approach biblical correction in a loving and respectful manner within our small group?
4. Share an example of how the Scriptures have been beneficial in equipping you for good works.
5. How can we distinguish between godly teaching and human opinions when interpreting and applying Scripture?
6. In what ways can we ensure that the Scriptures remain central in our small group discussions and decision-making processes?
7. Discuss the role of the Holy Spirit in helping us understand and apply the Scriptures in our lives.
8. Reflect on the phrase "for training in righteousness." How does the Bible help us grow in our character and live out our faith authentically? What does training in righteousness look like in your life?
9. Identify an area in your life that requires correction. How can you use the Scriptures to guide you toward positive change?
10. Reflect on the impact of God's Word on your character and behavior. What specific fruits of righteousness can you strive for in your life?

11. Pick out a passage of scripture for your Life Group and challenge the group to memorize it. Be sure to set aside a couple of minutes in subsequent meetings for people to recite the passage to one another.

SESSION 2: SPIRITUALLY TRANSFORMED

Passage: Ephesians 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.*

Key Idea: **Salvation is free by God's grace.**

By grace you have been saved

Salvation is offered to each of us by God, by God's love for us, despite our sinfulness and unworthiness. It is received not by our actions, but purely by faith of the person in the work of Jesus Christ: His life, death, burial, resurrection, and ascension.

Romans 3:23-24

*for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, **24** and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.*

Discussion Questions

1. Are there areas in your life where you struggle to fully grasp the concept of salvation by grace through faith? How can you seek greater understanding and acceptance of this truth?
2. Share a specific way in which you can demonstrate gratitude to God for His free gift of salvation.
3. Are there any areas of your life where you have been tempted to rely on your own efforts for favor with God? How can you shift your focus back to God's grace?
4. Identify a good work that you believe God has prepared for you to do. How will you take steps to fulfill this purpose?
5. In what practical ways can we actively seek to fulfill the purposes God has designed for us in terms of good works?

Key Idea: **Salvation is not based on our works**

Not by works, so that no one can boast

Salvation is not through anything we have done, can do, or will ever do. Instead our salvation frees us from the burden of work to respond to God's love as a gift that displays His character, mercy, and grace to all.

Titus 3:4-5

*But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared,**5** he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit*

Key Idea: **Salvation should lead us to serve.**

To do good works

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.

Salvation should lead us to serve wholeheartedly, out of gratitude for what God has done for us, as well as it being an expression of our faith in Jesus Christ. As Christians, we have not been saved by our works, but we have been saved by grace so that out of the overflow of our heart our response to God is our service.

2 Timothy 1:9-10

*He has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, **10** but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.*

Discussion Questions:

1. Discuss the importance of prayer and reliance on the Holy Spirit in discerning and fulfilling God's purpose for your life.
2. Are there any specific acts of service or good works that your small group can undertake together to impact your community positively?

3. Consider the people in your life who need to hear about God's grace and salvation. How can you share this message with them in a loving and compelling way?

Going deeper into God's Word:

1. Meditate on the relationship between God's grace and our sanctification process. How does understanding grace lead to a more transformed life?
2. Read and meditate on 2 Timothy 2:20-21: how can this be applied to our spiritual walk?

Leadership Resources:

<https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/ephesians-2/>

<https://www.thingsofthesort.com/sermons-2/2018/3/26/ephesians-28-10-how-we-are-saved>

Additional Questions for Consideration:

1. According to Ephesians 2:8-10, what is the relationship between grace, faith, and salvation? How does this understanding impact our perspective on salvation?
2. In verse 8, it says that we are saved "through faith." Discuss the significance of faith as the means of receiving God's grace and salvation.
3. How does the concept of salvation as a "gift of God" (verse 8) challenge common misconceptions about earning or deserving our salvation?
4. Share personal experiences or testimonies of how God's grace and salvation have transformed your life.
5. In verse 10, Paul talks about us being God's workmanship, created for good works. Discuss the balance between God's work in us and our responsibility to live out good works.
6. How can we ensure that our good works flow from a place of gratitude and love for God, rather than trying to earn or maintain our salvation?
7. Explore the idea of predestined good works mentioned in verse 10. How does God's plan for our lives intersect with our free will and choices?

8. Discuss the relationship between faith, grace, and obedience. How do they work together in the life of a believer?
9. How can we guard against legalism or a performance-based mindset in our Christian walk, given the clear message of grace in these verses?
10. Reflect on the phrase "created in Christ Jesus for good works." What does it mean to be "in Christ" and how does this identity impact our ability to do good works?
11. How can we encourage and support one another in living out a lifestyle of good works and obedience, all rooted in God's grace and love?
12. How will you personally apply the truth of Ephesians 2:8-10 in your daily life and interactions with others?
13. Reflect on your journey of salvation. How has God's grace been evident in your life from the beginning until now?
14. Discuss with the group how you can create a culture within your small group that emphasizes grace, faith, and good works in balance.
15. Reflect on the times when you may have taken credit for your good works instead of giving glory to God. How can you redirect the focus back to Him?
16. Share a recent experience where you felt God leading you to a good work or act of kindness. How did you respond, and what did you learn from it?
17. As a group, commit to holding each other accountable in living out a life of grace and good works, continually reminding one another of God's love and purpose for your lives.

SESSION 3: KINGDOM MINDED

Passage: Colossians 3:1-3

*Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. **2** Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. **3** For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.*

Key Idea: **We are raised with Christ.**

You have been raised with Christ

As Christians, we cannot begin to truly live out this mindset unless we have actually been saved. This is attained only through putting our faith in Jesus Christ and trusting in Him as both our Savior and Lord of our life.

Romans 6:4

We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

Discussion Questions - Raised with Christ

1. How does the concept of being "raised with Christ" in verse 1 impact the way we view our identity and purpose as Christians?
2. Take time to reflect on your identity in Christ and the significance of being raised with Him. How can you remind yourself of this truth regularly?
3. In what practical ways can you count yourself 'dead to sin but alive to God' (Romans 6:11)?

Key Idea: **Know where to direct our thoughts.**

Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things

Our thoughts should be centered on Christ. By choosing to focus on God Himself, we can avoid being consumed by the distractions and temptations of this world.

Philippians 4:8

Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.

Discussion Questions - Direct your thoughts

1. According to Colossians 3:1-3, what does it mean to set our minds on things above? How can we practically do this in our daily lives?
2. Discuss the role of spiritual disciplines, such as prayer, meditation, and studying the Word, in cultivating heavenly-mindedness.
3. Consider your daily routines and habits. Are there any adjustments you can make to align them more closely with heavenly values?
4. What practical steps can you take to detach from materialism and focus more on investing in eternal treasures?

Key Idea: **Know who we are in Christ**

Your life is now hidden with Christ

In becoming a Christian, we have been given a new identity in Christ. This means that our lives have been transformed so that everything we say and do should reflect the character of our God.

2 Corinthians 5:17-19

*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! **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 people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.*

Discussion Questions

1. In what ways can the knowledge of our hidden life with Christ impact our confidence and assurance in our faith journey?
2. Reflect on the assurance of your hidden life with Christ. How can this truth empower you to face life's uncertainties with greater confidence?
3. How will you remind yourself of the truth of being hidden with Christ during times of success, disappointment, or temptation?
4. What does it mean that Christ has given us the ministry of reconciliation? What does that look like in your life? What about in the context of our Life Group?

Leadership Resources:

<https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/colossians-3/>

<https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revised-common-lectionary/resurrection-of-our-lord/commentary-on-colossians-31-4-4>

Additional Questions for Consideration:

1. Share personal examples of how earthly desires and distractions have competed with your focus on heavenly things. How do you overcome these challenges?
2. In Romans 12:2, Paul encourages us to not be conformed to the pattern of this world. How can we avoid conformity to worldly values and maintain a Christ-centered perspective?
3. Discuss the relationship between pursuing heavenly-mindedness and living out our faith in the midst of everyday responsibilities and tasks.
4. How can we create a balance between engaging with the world and setting our minds on things above, without becoming isolated or disconnected from society?
5. Reflect on the phrase "your life is now hidden with Christ in God." What does this mean in terms of protection, security, and significance in our lives?
6. How does the truth of our hidden life with Christ influence our attitudes toward material possessions and worldly achievements?

7. Share a testimony of a time when focusing on heavenly things brought a sense of peace and perspective during a challenging circumstance.
8. How can we support and encourage one another as a small group in pursuing a mindset focused on eternity and heavenly values?
9. Reflect on the ways earthly pursuits can distract us from our relationship with Christ. How can we develop a greater awareness of these distractions and combat them?
10. In what practical ways can we live out the truth that our ultimate citizenship is in heaven, as mentioned in Philippians 3:20?
11. Share with the group some practical steps you plan to take to set your mind on things above and embrace your hidden life with Christ.
12. How will you intentionally set your mind on things above throughout each day, even amidst your daily responsibilities and challenges?
13. Share with the group some practical strategies you've implemented to resist conformity to worldly patterns and mindsets.
14. Identify one area in your life where you can practice selflessness and demonstrate Christ-like love to others. How will you carry this out?
15. Share a testimony of how pursuing heavenly-mindedness has positively impacted your relationships or interactions with others.
16. Discuss with the group how you can hold one another accountable in maintaining heavenly-mindedness and supporting each other in spiritual growth.
17. Choose a Bible passage that specifically emphasizes heavenly values and meditate on it throughout the week. Share your insights with the group afterward.
18. Reflect on the ways you engage with media and entertainment. How can you filter and moderate these influences to maintain a heavenly perspective?
19. Consider the language and topics of your conversations. How can you steer discussions toward edifying and spiritually uplifting content?
20. As a group, pray for each other's journey in pursuing heavenly-mindedness and living out the reality of our hidden life with Christ.

SESSION 4: WHOLEHEARTEDLY COMMITTED

Passage: Acts 2:42

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

Key Idea: **Committed to Learning God's Word.**

The apostles' teaching

As Christians, we should be devoted to growing in our knowledge of God's Word. The Bible has been given to us by God so that we have all that we need to serve Him, and continue to know Him more deeply.

Psalm 1:1-2

*Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers, **2** but whose delight is in the law of the LORD, and who meditates on his law day and night.*

Discussion Questions

1. How will you personally apply the principle of devoting yourself to biblical teaching in your daily study of God's Word?
2. Identify one aspect of the apostles' teaching that you would like to dive deeper into and commit to seeking additional resources or guidance to understand it better.
3. How can we hold one another accountable in remaining devoted to the apostles' teaching, especially when distractions and busyness arise?

Key Idea: **Committed to the Community of God's People**

And to fellowship

God has created us as relational beings. We were created for community! For the Christian, community is where we can grow in our faith, be encouraged by others, and be held accountable to live in a way that is honoring and pleasing to God.

Hebrews 10:24-25

*And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, **25** 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.*

Discussion Questions

1. Discuss the significance of fellowship among believers. How does genuine community strengthen our faith and witness to the world?
2. How can we foster an environment of openness and vulnerability in our fellowship, where people feel comfortable sharing their joys and struggles?
3. How can we practically extend the fellowship beyond our small group meetings and be more intentional in caring for one another throughout the week?
4. As opposite as it may seem, the busier our lives are the more we need to prioritize fellowship with other Christians. Discuss this as a group as well as potential implications.

Key Idea: **Committed to Remembering God's Work**

The breaking of bread

As Christians, we need to continually go back and be reminded about the work God has done in rescuing us from sin and death. The Lord's Supper, or communion is one of the ways we do that. Through the elements, we reflect on the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and it should foster in us a spirit of gratitude and thanksgiving.

1 Corinthians 11:23-26

*For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, **24** and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me." **25** In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." **26** For whenever you*

eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Discussion Questions:

1. In what ways can we practically apply the principle of breaking bread together, both in a literal sense and as a symbol of unity and communion in Christ?
2. Choose a specific act of service or kindness to carry out together as a small group, demonstrating your commitment to breaking bread and fellowship.
3. Besides observing the Lord's Supper together, what are some other ways we can remind one another of how God is working in our lives today?

Key Idea: **Committed to Praying to God**

And to prayer

Prayer is our opportunity as Christians to get to talk to God and bring to Him all of our thoughts, concerns, and struggles. This serves as a reminder for us that we are dependent on Him, and helps us in aligning our hearts to the will of God.

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.*

Discussion Questions:

1. Share a testimony of a time when prayer played a significant role in a breakthrough or answered need in your life.
2. In what ways can we cultivate a culture of prayer within our small group, supporting and interceding for one another?
3. Reflect on the quality of your prayer life. What steps can you take to prioritize and improve your prayer habits?

4. Share a time when God did not answer your prayer the way you had hoped. How did God show Himself both good and faithful despite not giving you the answer you wanted?

Leadership Resources:

<https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/acts-2/>

<https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revised-common-lectionary/fourth-sunday-of-easter/commentary-on-acts-242-47-4>

Additional Questions for Consideration:

1. Why do you think the early believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching? What can we learn from their example in our pursuit of spiritual growth?
2. How can prayer be a unifying and transformative force within our small group and the broader Church, as seen in Acts 2:42?
3. Share personal experiences of being devoted to the teaching of God's Word, and how it has impacted your understanding of the Christian faith.
4. Discuss the challenges of maintaining genuine fellowship and community in today's fast-paced and individualistic culture. How can we overcome these challenges?
5. Reflect on the importance of regularly celebrating the Lord's Supper as a means of remembering and proclaiming Christ's sacrifice. How can we make it more meaningful in our gatherings?
6. Share examples of how being devoted to the apostles' teaching has led to spiritual growth and transformation in the lives of believers you know.
7. Discuss the balance between structured teaching and organic discussions in our Bible study meetings. How can both approaches be valuable for our growth?
8. As a group, brainstorm ways to incorporate the principles from Acts 2:42 into your Life Group and make an impact on those around you.
9. Consider someone in your small group who might be going through a challenging time. How can you intentionally reach out to offer support and encouragement through prayer and practical help?

10. Share with the group a specific teaching from the apostles that has had a profound impact on your faith and worldview.
11. Identify any barriers that might hinder you from engaging fully in fellowship and brainstorm solutions to overcome them.
12. Reflect on the times when you have personally experienced the power of prayer within your small group. How can you keep fostering this spiritual connection?

SESSION 5: GENEROUSLY SHARED

Passage: **2 Corinthians 9:6-8**

*Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. **7** Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. **8** And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.*

Key Idea: **What We Give Matters.**

Whoever sows generously will also reap generously

Our giving matters for several reasons, but one of those is the simple idea that what we put in is what we get out. As we give towards the things of God, we in turn will be blessed in seeing God work through our giving.

Proverbs 19:17

Whoever is kind to the poor lends to the LORD, and he will reward them for what they have done.

Discussion Questions

1. How can you adjust your giving habits to align more closely with the principles of sowing generously and reaping bountifully, as outlined in 2 Corinthians 9:6-8?
2. Reflect on the reasons behind your giving. Are there any motives that need to be realigned to reflect a cheerful heart in giving?
3. Share with the group a recent example of when you gave cheerfully and how it affected your heart and attitude toward giving.
4. Identify a specific area or cause in which you can increase your giving with a sense of purpose and intentionality.

Key Idea: **What It Means to Give Freely**

God loves a cheerful giver

Giving freely is an expression of love and reflects the selflessness and grace that God has shown us, as demonstrated through the ultimate gift of His Son, Jesus Christ who gave Himself up freely in obedience to the Heavenly Father (John 10:18).

Proverbs 11:24-25

*One person gives freely, yet gains even more; another withholds unduly, but comes to poverty. **25** A generous person will prosper; whoever refreshes others will be refreshed.*

Discussion Questions

1. In what ways can you actively seek opportunities to sow generously, whether through financial giving, acts of service, or giving of your time and talents?
2. In what ways can we practically apply the concept of purposeful and intentional giving in our church and community?
3. Reflect on any fears or doubts you may have about giving sacrificially. How can you surrender these concerns to God and trust in His provision?

Key Idea: **What God Can Provide**

Bless you abundantly

God's capacity to bless and provide for His people goes far beyond our human comprehension. He cares for us deeply and desires to bless us abundantly.

Ephesians 3:20-21

*Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, **21** to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.*

Discussion Questions:

1. Discuss the relationship between our attitudes in giving and God's promise to provide for our needs. How does trust play a role in this dynamic?
2. Consider ways to be more creative and intentional in your giving, especially in areas where there is a significant need.
3. Discuss the concept of spiritual blessings resulting from our generous acts of giving. How can we be open to recognizing and receiving these blessings in our lives?
4. Share with the group practical ways you have seen giving impact the lives of those who received it, and also how it transformed the giver.

Key Idea: **What God Has Already Provided**

Having all that you need

God is a loving and attentive Father who has already provided for our essential needs. Instead of worrying and being anxious about material needs, we are encouraged to trust in His care and focus on seeking His Kingdom and living righteously. This perspective shifts our attention from material concerns to spiritual priorities, cultivating a deeper relationship with God and aligning our lives with His will.

Matthew 6:21, 32-33

For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. ... 32 For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. 33 But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

Discussion Questions

1. How can you encourage one another in your small group to live generous lives?

2. Take time to pray together as a group, thanking God for His provision and guidance in giving, and seeking His wisdom in stewarding our resources with generosity and wisdom.
3. Reflect on the impact of your giving on the lives of those who received it. How can you continue to be a blessing to others through your generosity?
4. In what way(s) is generosity a spiritual training ground? If our hearts follow our treasure, how can we use money to help direct our hearts to the Lord?

Leadership Resources:

<https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/2-corinthians-9/>

<https://www.biblestudytools.com/2-corinthians/passage/?q=2+corinthians+9:6-8>

Additional Questions for Consideration:

1. Living a generous life is not limited to just financial transactions. What are other characteristics of true generosity in the life of a follower of Christ?
2. According to 2 Corinthians 9:6-8, what principles govern the act of sowing and reaping? How do these principles apply to our spiritual lives as well as our giving?
3. Reflect on a time when you experienced the truth of sowing generously and reaping bountifully in your life. How did this impact your perspective on giving?
4. How does a cheerful heart in giving reflect our understanding of God's grace and provision in our lives?
5. Share testimonies of how God has blessed you as a result of your generous giving, whether financially or in other areas of your life.
6. How can we avoid a mindset of scarcity and fear in our giving, and instead cultivate a heart of abundance and faith in God's provision?
7. Reflect on the difference between giving out of obligation versus giving willingly and eagerly. How can we encourage one another to give with joy?
8. How can we overcome any hesitations or reservations we may have about giving sacrificially to God's work and to others in need?

9. Discuss the concept of proportionate giving and how it relates to the resources and blessings God has entrusted to us.
10. How can we make giving a regular part of our spiritual worship and expression of gratitude toward God?
11. As a group, brainstorm ways to encourage and support one another in living out the principles of cheerful and generous giving.
12. How will you ensure that your giving is proportionate and consistent with the blessings and resources God has provided to you?
13. Share with the group a testimony of when you experienced a spiritual blessing as a result of your generous giving.
14. Discuss the difference between giving as an obligation versus giving as an act of worship. How will you approach your giving with a heart of worship and gratitude?
15. As a small group, discuss ways you can collectively participate in generous giving, whether through a special offering, fundraising event, or community outreach project.

SESSION 6: MISSIONALLY FOCUSED

Passage: Matthew 28:18-20

*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."*

Key Idea: **Go in the Power of Jesus Christ.**

All authority in heaven and on earth

In these verses, Jesus asserts that He possesses all authority in both heaven and on earth. This statement is of utmost importance because it affirms Jesus' divine nature and His position as the Son of God. As the risen Lord, He has triumphed over sin and death, and now He exercises absolute authority over the entire universe.

Colossians 1:15-17

*The Son is the image of the invisible God, the first born over all creation. **16** For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. **17** He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.*

Discussion Questions

1. Discuss the significance of Jesus' authority in giving the Great Commission. How does His authority impact our obedience and confidence in fulfilling this command?
2. Reflect on Jesus' authority over all things, as mentioned in Matthew 28:18. How can this truth inspire boldness and courage in your disciple-making efforts? How does it negate many of the excuses we make for our disobedience?

3. Reflect on moments when you have felt the Holy Spirit leading you to share your faith or take action in disciple-making. How can you continue to seek and follow His guidance?

Key Idea: **Making disciples**

Go and make disciples of all nations

The calling for every believer is to be disciple-makers, sharing the love of Christ and leading others to a personal relationship with Him. By doing so, we participate in the continuation of Jesus' mission on earth, bringing hope, transformation, and eternal life to those we encounter.

Romans 10:14-15

*How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? **15** And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"*

Discussion Questions - Making Disciples:

1. Discuss the importance of discipleship in the process of making followers of Christ. How can we be intentional in mentoring and guiding new believers?
2. Share examples of successful disciple-making efforts you have seen or been a part of. What factors contributed to their effectiveness?
3. Discuss the benefits of being discipled and mentoring others in the faith. How can you seek both types of relationships in your walk with Christ?

Key Idea: **Go and Baptize**

Baptizing them

Baptism is a symbolic act that represents a believer's identification with Jesus Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection. Through baptism, believers publicly declare their faith in Jesus and their commitment to follow Him. As believers are baptized in the name of The Father, The Son, and The Holy Spirit, this unifying act that brings believers together symbolizing one family of believers.

Colossians 2:12

having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through your faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead.

Discussion Questions - Raised to Life:

1. In what ways can we overcome the fear or hesitation often associated with sharing our faith and making disciples?
2. Share your personal testimony with the group and discuss how it can be a powerful tool in making disciples.
3. Identify potential obstacles or personal fears that hinder you from sharing your faith. How can you work to overcome them?
4. Is there anyone in our group who has not been baptized by immersion after they were saved? If so, what is preventing you from doing so? As adults, it can be intimidating to think about what others might say if they found out that we haven't been baptized according to the model we see in Scripture. But at the end of the day, it's a matter of obedience: did Jesus really command us to be baptized? If so, then nothing else matters! And the reality is that your Life Group family will be thrilled and celebrate any and every spiritual act of obedience that we each take. That's a primary function of biblical community! Let's follow the example of the Ethiopian eunuch when after hearing the gospel and seeing a body of water, say, "What can stand in the way of my being baptized?" (Acts 8:36)

Key Idea: **Go and teach others**

Teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you

Teaching others the commands of Jesus, His life, death, resurrection, and the redemption He offers through faith in Him. It also involves sharing the principles of the Kingdom of God and living a life that reflects those principles and is an act of love. By embodying His teachings and relying on the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we can effectively fulfill this sacred mission, bringing light and hope to a world in need of God's grace.

Luke 8:39

"Return home and tell how much God has done for you." So the man went away and told all over town how much Jesus had done for him.

Discussion Questions - Teach the Commands of Jesus:

1. Sometimes we have a tendency to overcomplicate the gospel. We can feel like we need a seminary degree before we can lead anyone else to Christ. What does the scripture above imply about how long we should wait after we've been saved until we start telling others about Jesus? What is the application for us today?
2. How will you actively engage in the Great Commission in your everyday life, starting from your immediate circle of influence?
3. How can you demonstrate genuine care and compassion for those who may be unfamiliar with Christianity or come from different cultural backgrounds?
4. How can your small group collectively engage in local outreach and missions, partnering with organizations or ministries to fulfill the Great Commission?
5. Set specific and measurable goals for disciple-making and evangelism in your personal life and as a small group. How will you track progress and celebrate victories?

Leadership Resources:

<https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/matthew-28/>

<https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revised-common-lectionary/the-holy-trinity/commentary-on-matthew-2816-20-3>

Additional Questions for Consideration:

1. What are some practical ways we can engage in making disciples in our local communities and beyond, considering the diversity of cultures and people groups around us?
2. Share personal experiences of how someone else's obedience to the Great Commission has impacted your own faith journey.
3. Reflect on the responsibility of teaching others to obey all that Jesus commanded. How do we balance truth and grace while engaging with individuals from various backgrounds?
4. How can we ensure that our disciple-making efforts are grounded in love and respect, showing genuine care for those we are reaching out to?
5. In what ways can we support and encourage one another as a small group in fulfilling the Great Commission both collectively and individually?
6. Reflect on the global impact of the Great Commission and how we, as a local small group, can contribute to reaching the nations with the Gospel.
7. Discuss potential challenges or barriers to making disciples in our current cultural context. How can we address these obstacles with wisdom and sensitivity?
8. Identify specific people in your life who are open to learning about Jesus or exploring their faith. How can you initiate conversations with them about the Gospel?
9. In what ways can you be more intentional in building relationships with those who are new to the faith or seeking to know more about Jesus?
10. Consider the people groups or communities around you that may have limited access to the Gospel. How can you be a bridge to share the Good News with them?
11. Share with the group your experiences in evangelism and disciple-making, and seek feedback and encouragement from your fellow believers.
12. As a group, commit to praying for one another's disciple-making efforts, seeking God's wisdom and power as you carry out the Great Commission together.