I AM FAITH PROMISE

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faith promise
CHURCH

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Faith Promise Church

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction to I Am Faith Promise 4
Using this Workbook 6
Outline for Each Session 6
Session 1: I Am a Servant 13
Session 2: I Am the Body 25
Session 3: I Am Radical Love 37
Session 4: I Am a Hope Bringer 49
Session 5: I Am an Intercessor 61
Session 6: I Am a Disciple 73

Appendix

Frequently Asked Questions 85
Small Group Covenant 87
Small Group Roster 88
Small Group Calendar 89
Team Roles 90
Circles of Life 92
Memory Verses 93
Prayer and Praise Report 94
Missions 95
Core Commitment Form 97
Additional Note Space

Small Group Leaders

Hosting an Open House 99
Leaders' Notes 100
Leading for the First Time 113
Small Group Leadership (Top Ten Ideas) 115

About the Pastor

Dr. Chris Stephens Biography 118

INTRO

Dear Church,

I am so excited about our first alignment of 2014! For those of you who may not be familiar with the term, an alignment is when we coordinate our group lessons with our sermon topics of the weekend. These topics are so vital and will help each of us to look at our spiritual lives more deeply.

The title of this sermon series is, I Am Faith Promise. God has created all of us with different gifts and talents, but we are all one body and are called to work together for His Kingdom as His servants. As Christ followers, we should continually strive to demonstrate the fruit of the Spirit, the foremost being our love for each other. We are called to bring hope through grace and truth, to lift one another to the Throne in prayer, and to make disciples by calling others to repentance. In other words, we are not to be just consumers, but contributors led by the Holy Spirit in the work of our Lord. A tall order, but one that is pleasing to our Heavenly Father!

In this study we will look at six different attributes which, when combined, show how God intends for us to function together as He designed. I truly believe that this series and study will transform the way we think about the Bride of Christ–His church–and the place that God intends for us to fill there. I also believe that you and your group will never be the same! We can't wait to see all that God will do through you and your group!

Please know that we love you and will be here to support and pray for you as we search the Scriptures and learn together. At the end of this study, I hope that you can say with greater resolve, "I am Faith Promise!"

Love,

Dr. Chris Stephens

Your Pastor

USING THIS WORKBOOK

Notice in the Table of Contents that there are three sections: (1) Sessions; (2) Appendix; and (3) Small Group Leaders. Familiarize yourself with the Appendix parts. Some of them will be used in the sessions themselves.

If you are leading or co-leading a small group, the section for Small Group Leaders will give you some hard-learned experiences of others that will encourage you and help you avoid many common obstacles to effective small group leadership.

Use this workbook as a guide, not a straightjacket. If the group responds to the lesson in an unexpected but honest way, go with that. If you think of a better question than the next one in the lesson, ask it. Take to heart the insights included in the Frequently Asked Questions section and the Small Group Leaders section.

Enjoy your small group experience. Now read Outline of Each Session on the next pages so that you will understand how the sessions flow.

OUTLINE OF EACH SESSION

Most people want to live a life that is orderly, meaningful, and satisfying, but few achieve this by themselves. Likewise, most small groups struggle to balance all of God's purposes in their meetings. Groups tend to overemphasize one of the various reasons for meeting. Rarely is there a healthy balance that includes teaching, evangelism, ministry, practical exercises, and worship. That's why we've included all of these elements in this study so you can live a healthy, balanced spiritual life over time.

A typical group session for I Am Faith Promise will include the following:

THEME

The lessons we will learn during I Am Faith Promise are best illustrated in the lives of real people. Each session's teaching will include comments by real people reflecting on the significance of the theme for that session in their lives.

FELLOWSHIP

The foundation for spiritual growth is an intimate connection with God and His family. A few people who really know you and who earn your trust provide a place to experience the life Jesus invites you to live. This section of each session typically offers you two options. You can get to know your whole group by using the icebreaker question(s), or you can check in with one or two group members for a deeper connection and encouragement in your spiritual journey.

As your group begins, use the Small Group Covenant, Small Group Calendar, and Team Roles to help your group see how everyone has a part in making a small group come to life. As the group develops intimacy, use the Prayer and Praise Report to keep the group connected.

DVD SEGMENT/ENCOUNTER GOD THROUGH BIBLE STUDY

Serving as a companion to the I Am Faith Promise small group discussion book is the I Am Faith Promise video teaching. This DVD is designed to combine teaching segments from your pastors along with leadership insights and personal stories of life change. Using the teaching video will add value to this 6-week commitment of doing life together and

discovering how walking with Christ changes everything.

ENCOUNTER GOD THROUGH WORSHIP & PRAYER

We have Jesus' affirmation that every aspect of life can ultimately be measured as a way of fulfilling one or both of the "bottom line" commandments: "The most important one," answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these" (Mark 12:29–31 NIV). The group session will close with time for personal response to God and group prayer, seeking to keep this crucial commandment before us at all times.

This is a good place to have different group members close in prayer, even when the instructions don't specify. You can also provide some time if the schedule allows for people to reflect on their Prayer and Praise Report.

DEEPER STUDY

If you have time and want to dig deeper into more Bible passages about the topic at hand, we've provided additional passages and questions. Your group may choose to do study homework ahead of each meeting in order to cover more biblical material. If you prefer not to do study homework, the Deeper Bible Study section will provide you with plenty to discuss within the group. These options allow individuals or the whole group to expand their study, while still accommodating those who can't do homework or are new

faith promise
CHURCH

to your group.

EMBRACING OTHERS

Here is where you will process as a group the teaching you heard and saw. The focus won't be on accumulating information but on how we should live in light of the Word of God. We want to help you apply the insights from Scripture practically, creatively, and from your heart as well as your head. At the end of the day, allowing the timeless truths from God's Word to transform our lives in Christ is our greatest aim.

ENGAGING THE WORLD AROUND US

Here we let the truth we are learning travel the 18 inches from our cranium (mind) to our cardium (heart, emotions, and will). Here is where the Bible urging us to "be doers of the Word, not just hearers" (James 1:22) comes into play. Many people skip over this aspect of the Christian life because it's scary, relationally awkward, or simply too much work for their busy schedules. But Jesus wanted all of his disciples to help outsiders connect with Him, know Him personally, and carry out His commands. This doesn't necessarily mean preaching on street corners. It could mean welcoming a few newcomers into your group, hosting a short-term group in your home, or walking through this study with a friend. In this study, you'll have an opportunity to go beyond Bible study to biblical living.

REFLECTIONS

Each week on the Reflections pages we provide Scriptures to read and reflect on between group meetings. We suggest you use this section to seek God on your own throughout the week. This time at home should begin and end with prayer. Don't get in a hurry; take enough time to hear God's direction.

WEEKLY MEMORY VERSES

For each session we have provided a memory verse that emphasizes an important truth from the session. This is an optional exercise, but we believe that memorizing Scripture can be a vital part of filling our minds with God's will for our lives. We encourage you to give this important habit a try.

Dan
The Man

SESSION 1

I AM A SERVANT

Memory Verse: I have become all things to all men, so that I may by all means save some. (1 Corinthians 9:22b)

Written by Justin Petrowski in memory of Dan Owsley, a true Faith Promise Servant—

I don't recall the first time I met Mr. Dan. I do remember him helping lead my Royal Ambassadors group at our old church. I might have been in second or third grade. He had sons close to my age. They were there with me. And so we sat and listened to Bible stories and tied knots and built campfires and explored caves and tossed footballs in the front lawn. We felt like kings of our vast domain. When you're eight years old, even a modest church front lawn feels bigger than Montana.

And there, watching over all us crazy kids, was Mr. Dan.

Not too many years later, my family, along with Mr. Dan's family and many others, helped start a new church called Faith Promise. Although his boys and I grew older, he never stopped caring about us. And he never stopped caring for kids. Kids came and kids went, but Mr. Dan was always there with a warm smile, a crazy costume, and a joyous greeting. Because to him, kids were a picture of the past and the image of our future. Kids were some of the most important people out there.

Mr. Dan cared about people.

That never changed. Even though the kids that he watched over grew up and had kids of their own, he never stopped loving us as if we were

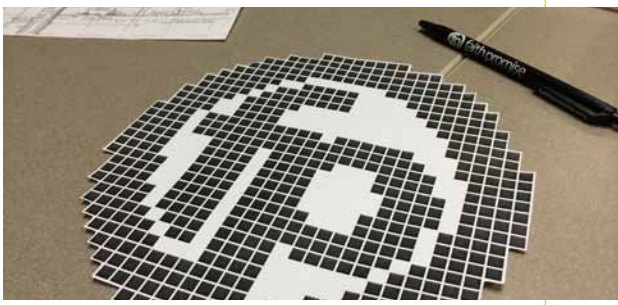
still those rambunctious little hooligans chasing each other around the lawn. He was always there with a smile and a hug and a greeting. He was beside himself the first time he got to meet my daughter.

"She's absolutely beautiful!!" he beamed, and flashed a grin that lit up his whole countenance—the kind of grin that starts from a place way deeper than just your face.

I do remember the last time we spoke, face to face. It was Easter weekend, and true to form, he had assumed the guise of one of his favorite characters. I was standing in the lobby talking when I noticed a long trench coat and a floppy deer-stalker hat headed my way.

"Morning, Sherlock!" I gave him a friendly nudge. "Solved any mysteries lately?"

He peered back at me, magnifying glass in hand. Then he smiled, and out of the corner of his mouth, he said "Oh, it's elementary, Justy."



It's funny how just one word can remind you of so many years and so many memories. There are only two people in the world that have ever called me that. The first is my father. The second was Mr. Dan.

And with that, he shuffled off towards another teeming mass of laughter and shouting.

It's been said that one of the most profound ways to measure someone's impact on the world is to examine the hole that's left behind after they're gone. Within hours, phone messages, sympathy calls, tweets, and Facebook posts began pouring in about Mr. Dan. People of all ages and walks of life, all saying the same thing: we are so sorry for your loss; we are sad he is no longer with us; but our lives are better, richer, more meaningful for having known him.

And we are all thankful for having known Mr. Dan. He changed our stories, and he helped us write better ones for ourselves. He showed us the power of caring and how even just a smile can be the start of someone's path to Jesus.

FELLOWSHIP

Open your group with prayer.

Whether your group is new or ongoing, it's always important to reflect on and review your values together. On page 87 is a Small Group Covenant with the values we've found most useful in sustaining healthy, balanced groups. We recommend that you choose one or two values—ones you haven't previously focused on or ones in which your group has room to grow—to emphasize during this study. Choose ones that will take your group to the next stage of intimacy and spiritual health.

- If your group is new, you may want to focus on welcoming newcomers or on sharing group ownership. Any group will quickly move from being the leader's group to our group if everyone understands the goals of the group and shares a small role. See the Team Roles on page 90 for help on how to do this well.

- We've come to realize that healthy groups rotate leadership. This helps to develop every member's ability to shepherd a few people in a safe environment. Even Jesus gave others the opportunity to serve alongside Him (Mark 6:30–44). Look at the FAQs on page 85 for additional information about hosting or leading the group.

Icebreaker: Go around the room and let everyone share about how he or she became a part of Faith Promise.

ENCOUNTER GOD
THROUGH BIBLE STUDY

Watch the Session 1 Video Now

We have provided a *Teaching Notes* page for note-taking. There you can record any key thoughts, questions, and things you want to remember or follow up on.

What do you think most people think of when they hear the word "church?" Perhaps they picture a steeple, cathedral, or pews. As Pastor Chris explained, the church isn't a collection of buildings. Faith Promise is a group of Christ followers fit together to impact the world with the gospel. The church is the body of Christ. You are Faith Promise.

At times, early Christians struggled to understand what it meant to be the church. The Corinthian church, wrestling with their new identity, had a hard time figuring out how to function as the body of Christ. How can so many believers—with different thoughts, hopes, and desires—all be unified for the sake of Christ? Paul, the author of 1 Corinthians, understood this difficulty. Paul recognized the only way for the church to function properly was for believers to have the mind of Christ, seeking His desires over their own.

As a missionary and church planter, Paul laid aside his freedom for the sake of others, becoming a servant to all. At Faith Promise we believe we are all called to do the same. Faith Promise began with a vision to impact the unchurched of the world for God, starting in our surrounding counties. When we focus on our personal desires, that vision becomes impossible. Being a part of Faith Promise means being a servant of all. Let's open up the Scripture to see what that might look like.

Read 1 Corinthians 9:19-23

1 What gives Paul the ability to say he is free from all? What does it mean to be free in Christ?

2 Why does Paul make himself a servant of all?

3 What kind of things did Paul give up in order to advance the gospel?

4 Why do you think Paul was able to give up his freedom in Christ for the sake of others? Why is that so hard for us?

Paul recognized the incredible freedom that comes from following Christ. However, his priority was never to use that freedom for his own desires. Paul sought first to glorify God and restricted his freedom in order to spread the truth about Christ. Unfortunately, far too often we use our freedom to make sure we get what we desire. But what would happen if we stopped making the church about our desires and preferences and instead sought what was best for advancing the gospel? What would Faith Promise look like then?

5 How have you made the church about your personal desires and preferences in the past?

6 Who would a church built on your preferences reach? Who would it exclude?

7 What would change if everyone stopped asking what Faith Promise has to offer him or her and started asking, "What do I have to offer Faith Promise?"

8 How are you a part of advancing the gospel through Faith Promise? How could you be?

WEEK 1 COMMITMENT

As a part of Faith Promise, I commit to have the attitude of Christ, "Who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross." In my personal life I commit to use my freedom in Christ to serve others. As the church, I commit to make Faith Promise about advancing God's Kingdom, not promoting my personal desires and preferences. I am Faith Promise.

ENCOUNTER GOD
THROUGH WORSHIP

What kind of worship fits your group? Spend a few minutes worshipping God together. Here are two ideas:

1. Have someone use their musical gifts to lead the group in a worship song. Try singing á capela, using a worship CD, or have someone accompany your singing with a musical instrument.

2. Read a passage of Scripture together, making it a time of praise and worship as the words remind you of all God has done for you. Choose a Psalm or other favorite verse.

EMBRACING OTHERS

Allow everyone in your group to answer this question, "How can we pray for you this week?" Be sure to write requests on your Prayer and Praise Report on page 94. Another great way to remember to pray for each other throughout the week is to create a private Facebook group. Each week you can share your prayer requests and share what God is doing in your lives.

ENGAGING THE WORLD AROUND US

At Faith Promise we truly believe that God has chosen serving as one of His strategies for reaching

the lost. It is our desire that as a part of Faith Promise you would begin faithfully serving Christ. 1 Peter 4:10 reminds us that we have each been given spiritual gifts and that we are to use them to serve others as faithful stewards of the Lord. It is our goal to help you recognize your spiritual gifts and then connect you with a ministry where you can use them. With that in mind, we have created numerous opportunities for you to get plugged in and serve at Faith Promise Church. To identify your spiritual gifts or for more information on ways you can begin serving at Faith Promise, please visit faithpromise.org/serve.

Group challenge for this week—invite someone to Small Group.

FOR DEEPER STUDY

If your group has time or you would like to do some personal study, please check out this passage in Romans about letting go of our own preferences for others.

Read Romans 14:5-9

1. Paul is addressing believers who have begun to argue over things that don't matter eternally. What insignificant issues have you seen cause conflict among believers?

2. What attitude described here determines whether we are seeking Christ or our own desires?

3. What does Paul mean when he says we live to the Lord? What does he mean when he says that we die to the Lord?

4. In what area of your life do you need to die to

yourself and live to the Lord?

5 How would your life look different if you truly realized your life is not your own?

REFLECTIONS

Each day, read the daily verses, and give prayerful consideration to what you learn about God, His Spirit, and His place in your life. Then record your thoughts, insights, or prayers in the Reflect section below the verses you read. On the sixth day, record a summary of what you have learned over the entire week through this study.

Day 1: Galatians 5:13-15
For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another.

Reflect:

Day 2: 1 Corinthians 10:23-24
All things are lawful, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful, but not all things edify. Let no one seek his own good, but that of his neighbor.

Reflect:

Day 3: 1 Corinthians 10:31-33
Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. Give no offense either to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God; just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit but the profit of the many, so that they may be saved.

Reflect:

Day 4: Romans 14:15-19

For if because of food your brother is hurt, you are no longer walking according to love. Do not destroy with your food him for whom Christ died. Therefore do not let what is for you a good thing be spoken of as evil; for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. For he who in this way serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men. So then we pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another.

Reflect:

Day 5: 1 Corinthians 8:9-13

But take care that this liberty of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak. For if someone sees you, who have knowledge, dining in an idol's temple, will not his conscience, if he is weak, be strengthened to eat things sacrificed to idols? For through your knowledge he who is weak is ruined, the brother for whose sake Christ died. And so, by sinning against the brethren and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ. Therefore, if food causes my brother to stumble, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause my brother to stumble.

Reflect:

Day 6: Use the following space to write any thoughts God has put in your heart and mind about the things we have looked at in this session and during your Reflections time this week.

Summary:

SHURE

SESSION 2

I AM THE BODY

Memory Verse: Now you are Christ's body, and individually members of it. (1 Corinthians 12:27)

Mike Ellis—

God has given me a heart for students, whether they be college or younger. They're at a time in their lives when they're trying to decide who they are and what they believe. It's so important for us as the church to step up and show them that God is who He says He is, and life with Him is so much better than life without Him. So when my wife, Mallory, and I heard that Faith Promise was planning to start a UT campus, we were instantly on board. We weren't involved in any other ministry at Faith Promise at the time, so we jumped right in when UT began!

One of the things that I initially struggled with when coming to Faith Promise was my mentality that the church was so big and had so many professional people volunteering and on staff that they probably didn't need me to do anything. Either that, or my skills weren't good enough. So while I had some experience in the past with audio and tech, I didn't immediately volunteer to do that at UT, thinking that it was probably already under control. After our launch week, I noticed that I could lend a hand with setup and tear down, so I started getting there early and staying late. I tried to learn all I could about how all the equipment was set up and packed. After the initial launch crew dispersed at UT, I simply started helping more and more with setup since I seemed to be one of the few who knew how everything went together. By the end of the first semester at UT, this spiraled into me leading the entire tech ministry at UT. It also allowed me the opportunity to pursue another passion of mine, which is running audio.

Something I've learned through this whole process is that if you want to be involved, you have to just do it! Faith Promise needs people with all kinds of skills, and we shouldn't think that we're not needed or we're not talented enough. If you want to be involved, say something, learn something, show up early, or stay late. People in leadership positions at Faith Promise will notice, and before you know it, you too will love serving at Faith Promise!

FELLOWSHIP

Open your group with prayer.

Icebreaker: Have you ever been a part of a team (or can you think of a popular sports team) where the whole was less than the sum of its parts? What about a team where you always seemed to overachieve? What characteristics contributed to each situation?

ENCOUNTER GOD
(THROUGH BIBLE STUDY)

Watch the Session 2 Video Now

We have provided a *Teaching Notes* page for note taking. You can record any key thoughts, questions, or things you want to remember there.

In 2011-2012, the Chicago Bulls were a great team. They finished the regular season with the best record in the NBA, earning the top seed in the playoffs. However, in the first round something incredible happened; the Bulls were upset by the eighth-seeded 76ers. The fate of the Bulls changed in an instant. In game one of the series, MVP Derrick Rose tore his ACL, ending his season. One seemingly insignificant ligament changed everything. That one small part of the body was the difference between a possible NBA championship and a first round exit.

Just like the ACL is a part of Derrick Rose's body, you also are a part of the body of Christ. When you look across our multiple campuses and service times, it's easy to begin to feel

like an ACL, unknown and seemingly insignificant. We can feel lost and unimportant in the crowd. Fortunately, Scripture teaches us that every person has an important role to play. God has created each of us with unique gifts and talents that fit together perfectly to form the body of Christ.

Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-26

1 What does it mean that all members of Christ's body were "made to drink of the same Spirit?"

2 Why is it important for the body of Christ to have many different parts? What would happen if all the parts looked the same?

3 Who does Paul say arranged the members of the body? Do you think God made a mistake in arranging you at Faith Promise?

4 What does Paul say about the seemingly weak or insignificant parts of the body?

5 What does it mean when Paul says that when one member suffers, all suffer together and when one is honored, all rejoice together?

Paul makes it clear that every member of the body is indispensable. That means that Faith Promise, one of God's local expressions of his body, needs your gifts, talents, and passions. It isn't an accident that God brought you to Faith Promise. There is no way we can do everything God has called us to do without you.

As you discuss the questions below, think about how God has created you to fit into His body at Faith Promise Church.

6 Have you ever experienced any friction within the body of Christ? How did you deal with it? How can Philippians 2:1-5 shape how we respond to tension in the body?

7 In what ways do our multiple locations make it easier for us live out the reality of being Christ's body?

8 What gifts and talents have you been given by God? How can you use those gifts and talents to benefit the body of Christ at Faith Promise?

9 What would Faith Promise be like if everyone who attended was just like you?

10 Have you ever felt like you were insignificant to the mission of Faith Promise? How would your involvement at Faith Promise change if you remembered each day that you are an indispensable part of the body?

WEEK 2 COMMITMENT

As a part of Faith Promise, I recognize that I am an indispensable member of the body of Christ. I commit to treasure the gifts and talents God has given me. I will value and encourage the gifting of others, while celebrating diversity and promoting unity. I commit to use my gifts, talents, and passions to further the Kingdom of God through serving at Faith Promise Church. I am Faith Promise.

DISCOVERING YOUR GIFTS

One helpful way to discover how God has gifted you is through a spiritual gifts assessment. If you are interested in gaining insight into the way that God has gifted you for service, go to faithpromise.org/serve for a link to a free online assessment. You may find it helpful to discuss your results as a group.

FAITH PROMISE CORE COMMITMENT

In Acts 2:41-47, we see how the church banded together as a Christ-centered community from the very beginning. They gathered regularly to serve and spread Jesus' message of hope as they grew in grace, maturity, and number. They were a core community who were committed to Jesus and His mission. It is our desire to be this kind of Core community at Faith Promise, and we would be thrilled for you to join us.

Who are the Core? The Core are committed believers at Faith Promise who:

- Have attended Next Steps.
- Have accepted Christ as Lord and Savior and have been biblically baptized by immersion after salvation.
- Are actively serving in a Faith Promise ministry area.
- Are currently attending a Faith Promise group.
- Are financially supporting Faith Promise with their tithe (giving 10%).

If this describes you, and you are ready to commit to the Core, please visit our website faithpromise.org/core. A copy of our Core Commitment form is located in the appendix on page 97.

EMBRACING OTHERS

Share your prayer requests in your group. You may want to gather in smaller circles of three or four people to pray. Be sure to have everyone write down the personal requests of the members to use as a reminder to pray for your group throughout the week. The Prayer and Praise Report is on page 94.

Pray for one another as you feel led. Remember not to put pressure on anyone to pray aloud.

FOR DEEPER STUDY

Read 1 Peter 2:4-11

1 What does Peter say God is building us to be?

2 What kind of spiritual sacrifices does Faith Promise make to God? How are you a part of that?

3 What does it mean to be a royal priesthood?

4 Does it give you confidence that God promises you will not be put to shame if you trust in Christ?

5 As a living stone, how do you fit into the spiritual house God is building?

REFLECTIONS

Each day, read the daily verses and give prayerful consideration to what you learn about God, His Spirit, and His place in your life. Then record your thoughts, insights, or prayers in the Reflect section below the verses you read. On the sixth day, record a summary of what you have learned over the entire week through this study.

Day 1: Ephesians 4:1-6

Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.

Reflect:

Day 2: Ephesians 4:11-16

And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.

Reflect:

Day 3: Ephesians 5:29-30
For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church, because we are members of His body.

Reflect:

Day 4: Colossians 1:15-18
He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything.

Reflect:

Day 5: Romans 12:3-8
For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith. For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to exercise them accordingly: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith; if service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching; or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

Reflect:

Day 6. Use the following space to write any thoughts God has put in your heart and mind about the things we have looked at in this session and during your Reflections time this week.

Summary:

SESSION 3

I AM RADICAL LOVE

Memory Verse: A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.
(John 13:34-35)

Tiffany Reid—

When I think of what radical love means, I think of Christ dying for us and loving us beyond what we could ever imagine. As a Christ follower, we find that love in the church. God has used His church to speak to me, comfort me, and help me grow in my walk of faith. I am proud to say that Faith Promise was the catalyst for the radical love I have received from God.

I was living a life full of sinful choices. Those choices led me to the verge of a nervous breakdown one weekend when I prayed and asked God to change this path for me. Pastor Chris delivered a message that day about focusing on God instead of focusing on yourself. It touched my heart and confirmed my decision to allow God to change me. That is when my life changed forever. I was baptized and started serving in children's ministry, and there I built relationships. From there I really started to get connected to a body of believers. I also began dating my future husband, Aaron. I told everyone that God gave Aaron to me for a reason.

After I got involved in groups, my faith was growing every day in a new way. Aaron and I were married, and my life was blessed. Then, out of nowhere, my husband found a lump in my breast. This was the radical love that God showed me. He revealed to me one of the reasons why he gave me Aaron—to save my life!

God's love was shown again to me through my doctors. I had a doctor visit my small group for the first time the weekend before I found out I had cancer. He was a surgical oncologist; this was not a coincidence! I ended up getting an appointment with his partner and picked him as my surgeon. God also placed my oncologist in my life 30 years ago as he is

my personal friend. God knew I would need him. God really does know the plan of your life.

God's love continued to be with me during my surgery, my recovery, and my chemotherapy. I had no problems and very mild side effects. During this eight-month journey, God, the church, my husband, my family, and my friends were my support. But, the most important support were the prayers and the genuine love from the church. God gave me the strength to stay involved and not to isolate myself because he was pouring his love out to me through all the prayers and support. Today, my prognosis is good. I thank God that I can be a testimony of faith for Him. He gave me the desire and courage to be a light for Him even in my darkest days. All because I know He has a radical love for me as His child.

FELLOWSHIP

Open your group with prayer.

Icebreaker: Do you know anyone who consistently demonstrates unconditional love? Describe this person and how they demonstrate unconditional love.

ENCOUNTER GOD
(THROUGH BIBLE STUDY)

Watch the Session 3 Video Now

We have provided a *Teaching Notes* page for note-taking on page 47.

Anti-homosexual. Judgmental. Hypocritical. In David Kinnaman's book, unChristian, he found that 85% of non-Christians age 16-29 believe Christians are anti-homosexual, judgmental, and hypocritical. Kinnaman also found that 70% believe Christians are insensitive to others. It seems Christianity has an image problem. If you take a minute and really

think about it you might find their perception isn't the issue. The issue is us. Christians have positioned themselves to be known more for their moral stance than the love of the one they serve. Jesus said, "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." How then can 70% of unbelieving young adults believe Jesus' disciples are insensitive to others? Clearly something needs to change.

At Faith Promise we believe the change starts here. We believe that God has called us to a radical love that will transform our lives and the lives of others. When we experience the love of Christ from those closest to us, it changes how we interact with everyone. That's why at Faith Promise we believe radical love begins in groups. Who better to embody the love of Christ than a group of Christ followers meeting together regularly? As you discuss 1 John 3, think about how your group and the lives of those around you might be different if you lived out this love.

Read 1 John 3:14-18

1 What does John say is the evidence of the kind of faith that saves?

2 What does it mean to abide in death? How can John say that whoever hates their brother is a murderer?

3 What is the ultimate expression of love? How can we do that for our church family?

4 What does it mean to love in deed and in truth? How is that different than just loving in word?

Just as Jesus laid down his life for us, we also should lay down our lives for each other. Jesus showed us what sacrificial love looks like with his life and death. As a group of Christ followers, laying down our desires to show each other love isn't a choice but a calling. Unfortunately, it's easy to talk about sacrificial love but much harder to actually live it out. As you discuss the following questions, think about how you can love each other in deed and in truth.

5 What needs does your group have? How can you open your heart to those needs?

6 How would an outsider describe your group? What are your key characteristics?

7 Do you know each other well enough to know what's really going on in each other's lives?

8 Read 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 again. Does this passage describe your group? What do you do a great job with? Where do you struggle?

9 Is your love dependent on others' actions? How is that different than the love Christ has for us?

10 How can your group begin to love each other like Christ this week?

WEEK 3 COMMITMENT

As a part of Faith Promise, I commit to love in a radical way. I take seriously the words of Jesus: "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." Just as Jesus showed his love for me on the cross, I will show my love for others through action, not just in talk or emotion. I commit to be a part of a group that is marked by sacrificial love. I am Faith Promise.

EMBRACING OTHERS

Share your praises and prayer requests with one another. Record these on the Prayer and Praise Report on page 94.

FOR DEEPER STUDY

Read Ephesians 4:1-6

1. What is the calling Paul says we are to walk worthy of?

2. What are the characteristics of this calling? Why are these so hard to walk in?

3. Why does Paul explain we should walk in these?

4. How does the reality that there is one body and one Spirit make it possible to be unified in love?

5. Why should Ephesians 4:6 give us confidence that we can walk worthy of our calling?

ENTER
HERE

REFLECTIONS

Each day, read the daily verses and give prayerful consideration to what you learn about God, His Spirit, and His place in your life. Then record your thoughts, insights, or prayers in the Reflect section below the verses you read. On the sixth day, record a summary of what you have learned over the entire week through this study.

Day 1: 1 John 4:7-10

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love. By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

Reflect:

Day 2: 1 John 4:11-14

Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has seen God at any time; if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us. By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. We have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son to be the Savior of the world.

Reflect:

Day 3: 1 John 4:18-21

There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love. We love, because He first loved us. If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also.

Reflect:

Day 4: Hebrews 10:24-25

And let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.

Reflect:

Day 5: Romans 12:9-13

Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor; not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer, contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality.

Reflect:

Day 6: Use the following space to write any thoughts God has put in your heart and mind about the things we have looked at in this session and during your Reflections time this week.

Summary:

SESSION 4

I AM A HOPE BRINGER

Memory Verse: And if you give yourself to the hungry and satisfy the desire of the afflicted, then your light will rise in darkness and your gloom will become like midday. (Isaiah 58:10)

Julie Rumph—

Have you ever felt that God was asking you to do something out of your comfort zone? For many years, I'd had a nagging thought that God was calling me towards something new, and I was more and more afraid that it might be missions—maybe even foreign missions. I was very uncomfortable with the idea. Who am I to go and be a missionary, really? As time passed, what initially began as a small thought became a burden I couldn't escape.

I've always really enjoyed doing local outreach projects at Faith Promise. It was comfortable, and I enjoyed serving others—seeing the needs, and trying to help. The clothing ministry was something that I felt particularly proud of. We were working in the background to support other ministries who were already out there doing good work, and it meant a lot to me.

Because of that, I thought starting and serving in an area of local ministry was what God was calling me to. Over time, it became evident to me that there was something else. I had been on several international mission trips with the church, but when I came to Living Hope for the first time, I was impressed with the vision of the organization and how they partnered with the locals. Even the place itself felt oddly familiar. Still, I didn't immediately know that's where I was supposed to be serving, so I spent months praying, researching, and seeking counsel.

Once I began to discern God's leading to continue in this direction, things began divinely coming in line. I applied to come to Africa without a specific job in mind, thinking I was leaving my career as a physical therapist behind. As it turns out, Living Hope was ready to add a physical therapist to their health care center.

And that's where God has placed me—allowing me to bring care and hope to those in need. I've learned that missions isn't just about geography. God led me to start by collecting clothing at my own church and then expanded my heart for the world and took me to Africa. Through it all, I came to know more than ever that as a Christ follower and having been given hope, I was called to be a hope bringer.

FELLOWSHIP

Open your group with prayer.

Icebreaker: Share about a time when you felt as if there was no hope but God came through. How did you and others respond to God's activity?

ENCOUNTER GOD
(THROUGH BIBLE STUDY)

Watch the Session 4 Video Now
We have provided a *Teaching Notes* page for note-taking on page 59. There you can record any key thoughts, questions, and things you want to remember or follow up on.

Did you know that there are 2.2 billion children in the world today? Would it surprise you to learn that 1 billion of those children live in poverty? It's hard to comprehend, but nearly 1 in 2 don't have access to basic necessities like food, water, or shelter. Where we live, it's very easy to go about our day-to-day lives and never really consider or be impacted by some pretty huge needs that exist in our world.

These needs don't just occur in third world countries—they're also right here in East Tennessee. Every year Knox Area Rescue Ministries serves

360,000 meals to the poor and homeless in our own communities, and many of them are women and children. With these and other great needs in our city and world, we as Christ followers have a unique opportunity. We have the chance to be salt and light in our world, bringing the hope of the gospel and the healing of compassionate response. Let's take a look at how Christ followers in the early church saw a need and responded with grace and truth.

Read Acts 3:1-10

1 What need did the lame man express? What else did he need?

2 Why do you think the author of Acts points out that Peter and John looked at the lame man? Why is it important for us to really look at those we bring hope to?

3 What did the lame man expect to receive from Peter and John? Why was that all he expected?

4 How did Peter and John bring grace to this man? How did they bring truth?

5 How did the lame man respond to what Peter gave him? How did those who knew him respond?

It's easy to get caught up in our own world and never see the needs of those around us. When Peter and John encountered this man they didn't see him as he was. Instead they recognized what he could become in Christ. They did more than meet his current needs; they gave him the ability to meet his own needs. In Christ we have the hope that the entire world needs. As you continue to discuss this passage, consider how you can bring that hope to others.

6 How many people do you think walked by this lame man every day on their way to practice religious activities? Can we get caught up in doing religious things and miss out on the opportunity to bring hope?

7 What does it mean to really look at those we want to help? How do we avoid the temptation to see them as somehow less important or worthy than ourselves?

8 Who in your life needs hope? Who do you walk past without noticing their deep need?

9 Peter and John used their gifts of the Holy Spirit to heal this man. How can you use your gifts and talents to bring hope to those in need?

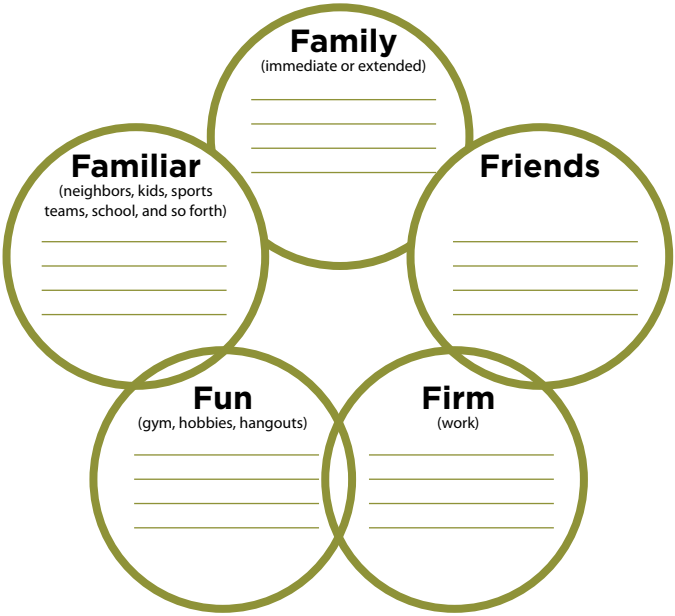
10 How can your small group use your gifts and talents together to bring hope to those around you?

WEEK 4 COMMITMENT

As a part of Faith Promise, I recognize that in Christ I have the hope that the world needs. I will be intentional as I live my day-to-day life in looking for ways to meet the needs of the poor and less fortunate in my life. I commit to find ways to use my gifts, talents, and passions to serve my community while bringing the hope of the gospel. Along with my group, I will actively engage the world around me with a compassionate heart. I am Faith Promise.

ENGAGING THE WORLD AROUND US

Take a look at the Circles of Life diagram below, and write the names of two or three people you know who need the hope of Christ. Commit to praying for God's guidance and an opportunity to share with each of them.



EMBRACING OTHERS

We realize that Faith Promise is a geographically diverse church with members who live, work, and play all over the East Tennessee area. It is our desire for all of our groups to connect in local outreach where they are already planted, not to simply plug into one of a few "pre-selected" ministries. Please contact the Missions Ministry office at missions@faithpromise.org for advice and aid in developing your group missional strategy. For more information on where to start, turn to 95 in the appendix.

FOR DEEPER STUDY

Read Isaiah 58:1-14

1 What religious activities were the Israelites engaged in? Why were they doing these things?

2 What is the difference between doing religious things to appear righteous and doing righteous things because Christ is in us?

3 How does God set the oppressed free? How can we join God in breaking chains of oppression?

4 What does it mean to "turn away from your own flesh and blood?" How do we ignore the needs of those around us?

5 According to this passage, what kind of person's prayers does God respond to? How does this compare to the teaching of James 5:16?

6 How do caring for those God cares about and delighting ourselves in the Lord go hand in hand?

REFLECTIONS

Each day, read the daily verses, and give prayerful consideration to what you learn about God, His Spirit, and His place in your life. Then record your thoughts, insights, or prayers in the Reflect section below the verses you read. On the sixth day, record a summary of what you have learned over the entire week through this study.

Day 1: Acts 2:43-47

Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles. And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common; and they began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need. Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.

Reflect:

Day 2: Matthew 25:34-40

"Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me something to drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in; naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me.' Then the righteous will answer Him, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry, and feed You, or thirsty, and give You something to drink? And when did we see You a stranger, and invite You in, or naked, and clothe You? When did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' The King will answer and say to them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me.'

Reflect:

Day 3: Matthew 25:41-46

"Then He will also say to those on His left, 'Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry, and you gave Me nothing to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me nothing to drink; I was a stranger, and you did not invite Me in; naked, and you did not clothe Me; sick, and in prison, and you did not visit Me.' Then they themselves also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not take care of You?' Then He will answer them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.' These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

Reflect:

Day 4: James 1:26-27

If anyone thinks himself to be religious, and yet does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this man's religion is worthless. Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.

Reflect:

Day 5: Micah 6:6-8

With what shall I come to the Lord
And bow myself before the God on high?
Shall I come to Him with burnt offerings,
With yearling calves?
Does the Lord take delight in thousands of rams,
In ten thousand rivers of oil?
Shall I present my firstborn for my rebellious acts,
The fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?
He has told you, O man, what is good;
And what does the Lord require of you
But to do justice, to love kindness,
And to walk humbly with your God?

Reflect:

Day 6: Use the following space to write any thoughts God has put in your heart and mind about the things we have looked at in this session and during your Reflections time this week.

Summary:

SESSION 5

I AM AN INTERCESSOR

Memory Verse: Finally, brethren, pray for us that the word of the Lord will spread rapidly and be glorified, just as it did also with you. (2 Thessalonians 3:1)

Isabell Simcoe—

One of the most valuable truths the Lord taught me when I began my walk with Him was that prayer is a conduit between God and His children, with Jesus as our Mediator (1 Timothy 2:5). In Hebrews 7:25 God's Word says that, "..He (Jesus) always lives to intercede for them (His church body)."

God taught me that prayer is an expression of love, and because we're called to live in the unity of love for one another it has become one of my passions. As one of His children, I've been privileged to stand in the gap for others by taking their burdens to the throne of grace—to see marriages healed, bones healed overnight, tumors disappear, and broken people restored. All honor, glory, and praise to Him alone! I've seen that prayer can mean the difference between life and death (physical or eternal).

I love the emphasis the biblical leader, Timothy, places on praying for our leadership. "I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession, and thanksgiving be made for everyone—for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth." (1Timothy 2:1-4) This really reveals to me what kind of results we should see when we pray for our church leadership.

I see the leadership of the body as being like the wall in Jerusalem and we, the supporting members of the leadership body, are the Watchmen. "All the day and all the night they shall never be silent. You who put the Lord in remembrance take no rest." (Isaiah 62:6-7)

It's been a great blessing for me to see God's movement in our leadership and their families. Because our leaders are anointed and appointed

by God to shepherd various ministries within the church, we have a great responsibility to cover them in prayer. The world is watching, and I feel that only through persistent prayer will they see the light, love, and victory that Jesus desires us to walk in.

FELLOWSHIP

Icebreaker: Can you think of a time when God answered your prayers? How did the way God answered your prayers affect your relationship with Him?

ENCOUNTER GOD

(THROUGH BIBLE STUDY)

Watch Session 5 Video Now

We have provided a *Teaching Notes* page for note-taking on page 71. There you can record any key thoughts, questions, and things you want to remember or follow up on.

John and Kevin had been leading a small group together for years. What began as two guys agreeing to meet a need had become a lifelong friendship. They both cheered for the Vols, their kids went to school together, and their wives were inseparable. When they were together, they talked about everything. So when Kevin started becoming more and more guarded when they talked about the church, John knew there was a problem.

Everything exploded one night after group. Everyone else had left, and Kevin unloaded onto John all his frustrations with their church. Kevin didn't agree with the direction the church was headed. He was frustrated

about the recent change of service times, the current building plans, and the changes in the style of worship. John sat quietly and listened as Kevin lobbied complaint after complaint about the church's leadership. He was frustrated and wanted John to join him, saying, "Don't some of the decisions they keep making bother you?"

John spoke softly, but deliberately, "Kevin, I've had some of the same concerns as you. I even set up a meeting and discussed some of my concerns with the pastor. It certainly can't be easy navigating all those issues. Ultimately, they aren't accountable to us for the decisions they make. They're accountable to God." After a pause he continued, "But I have found something that helped me. I've made it a point to pray for our leaders every day as they lead our congregation. Why don't we pray for them together now?"

Kevin's demeanor quickly changed. Over the next few weeks, he took John's words to heart and began praying daily for the leaders in the church. Now, it's been three years since John and Kevin had that conversation. Through the process of setting aside their personal preferences and lifting their leaders in prayer, the two men have become more committed to the church than ever before.

Read Hebrews 13:17-19

1 Why does the author of Hebrews instruct readers to obey and submit to spiritual leaders?

2 Who are the spiritual leaders at Faith Promise?

3 What does this passage explain our spiritual leaders are responsible for?

4 What will spiritual leaders give an account of? To whom will they give an account?

Time after time, Scripture explains the incredible responsibility that church leaders have. At Faith Promise, our leaders make decisions daily that have

eternal consequences. Luckily, they don't do this alone. Not only does the leadership of Faith Promise rely on Godly counsel, but they also rely on the prayers of the congregation. As you continue to discuss this passage, consider how important your prayers are as your leaders continue to seek God's will on how to lead Faith Promise.

5 Recognizing the great responsibility spiritual leaders have, why is it important that Faith Promise pray for their leaders?

6 How does this passage explain we should pray for our leaders? What other specific things should we pray for our leaders about?

7 Why do you think it is important for spiritual leaders to be able to lead with joy? How can you help make that happen?

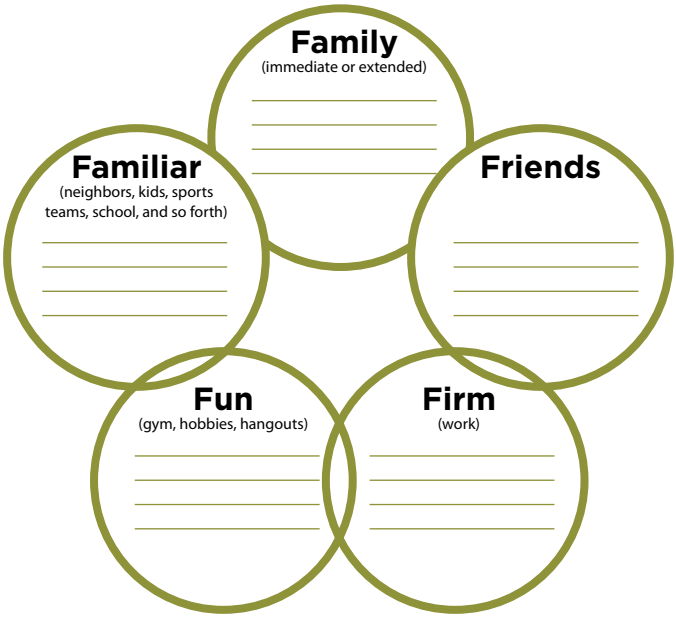
8 Take some time now as a group to pray for the leaders of Faith Promise. Pray that God blesses their families and gives them direction as they lead.

WEEK 5 COMMITMENT

As a part of Faith Promise, I believe that prayer is vital to the life of our church. As a group member, I commit to understand the needs of my group and pray for them daily. I will pray specifically for the needs of the ministries in which I serve. I commit to pray for God's will to be done in every aspect of Faith Promise. Recognizing the incredible responsibility the leaders at Faith Promise have, I will pray for God to give them direction and guidance. I am Faith Promise.

ENGAGING THE WORLD AROUND US

In the last session, we asked you to write some names on the Circles of Life diagram. Who did you identify as the people in your life who need to meet Jesus? Go back to the Circles of Life diagram on page 92 to help you think of the various people with whom you come into contact on a regular basis who need to know Jesus more deeply. Consider the following ideas for action and make a plan to follow through on one of them this week.



- This is a wonderful time to welcome a few friends into your group. Which of the people you listed could you invite? It's possible that you may need to help your friend overcome obstacles so he or she can encounter Jesus. Does your friend need a ride to the group? Help with child care?
- Consider inviting a friend to attend a weekend service with you and possibly plan to enjoy a meal together afterward. This can be a great opportunity to talk with someone about your faith in Jesus.

- Is there someone whom you wouldn't invite to your group but who still needs a connection? Would you be willing to have lunch or coffee with that person, catch up on life, and share something you've learned from this study? Jesus doesn't call all of us to lead small groups, but He does call every disciple to spiritually multiply his or her life over time.

EMBRACING OTHERS

At Faith Promise we believe praying for each other is one of the greatest ways to minister to the body of Christ. With that in mind, we have created several avenues for you to get involved in the Prayer Ministry at Faith Promise. One of those ways is through the Faith Promise Prayer Wall. At the Prayer Wall you can post your prayer requests while praying for the requests of others. Our goal is to develop a more cohesive and fully integrated prayer community. Go to faithpromise.org/prayer to find out more.

Share your praises and prayer requests with one another. Record these on the Prayer and Praise Report on page 94, then pray together for each other.

Take a few minutes to discuss the plans for your group after this study. Talk about what your next topic or study might be so your leader can communicate this to your group coach. If you have time, turn to the Small Group Covenant on page 87, and talk about any changes you would like to make as you move forward as a group.

FOR DEEPER STUDY

Read 2 Thessalonians 3:1-5

1 What specifically does Paul ask these believers to pray for? Why is it important to pray these things over Faith Promise's spiritual leaders?

2 What kind of opposition do spiritual leaders face as they try to advance the gospel? What opposition does Faith Promise face in advancing the gospel?

3 How should this reality of opposition change how we pray?

4 What confidence does it give you that God will guard you against the evil one? How does this confidence make it easier to pray for our leaders?

REFLECTIONS

Each day, read the daily verses, and give prayerful consideration to what you learn about God, His Spirit, and His place in your life. Then record your thoughts, insights, or prayers in the Reflect section below the verses you read. On the sixth day, record a summary of what you have learned over the entire week through this study.

Day 1: Ephesians 1:15-17

For this reason I too, having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which exists among you and your love for all the saints, do not cease giving thanks for you, while making mention of you in my prayers; that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him.

Reflect:

Day 2: Ephesians 1:18-21

I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.

Reflect:

Day 3: Philippians 1:3-7

I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always offering prayer with joy in my every prayer for you all, in view of your participation in the gospel from the first day until now. For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus. For it is only right for me to feel this way about you all, because I have you in my heart, since both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers of grace with me.

Reflect:

Day 4: Philippians 1:8-11

For God is my witness, how I long for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus. And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ; having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

Reflect:

Day 5: Colossians 1:9-12

For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light.

Reflect:

Day 6: Use the following space to write any thoughts God has put in your heart and mind about the things we have looked at in this session and during your Reflections time this week.

Summary:

emotion
CoMotio

SESSION 6

I AM A DISCIPLE

Memory Verse: Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ. (1 Corinthians 11:1)

Ron and Gloria Murff—

When we joined Faith Promise in early 2001, we knew that we wanted to lead a small group. For most of our married lives we have been involved in some type of a small group Bible study and have found it to be one of the best things we've ever done together.

We began the first West Knox group for adults in 2001, and about seven years ago we began the first young marrieds' small group. Young married couples were our real passion in discipleship and have continued to be through the years.

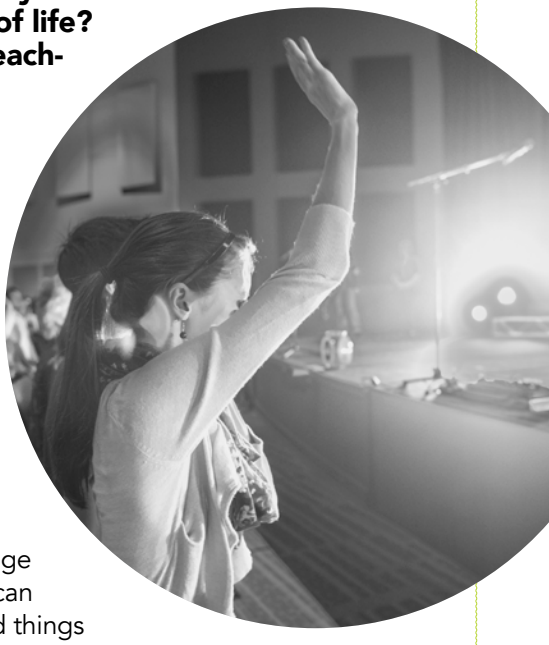
Beginning your marriage in the Word and with other believers who can hold you accountable is a great way to build a strong foundation. During our early years together, we were blessed to have some older couples in our lives who greatly impacted our walk and marriage, so we have personally known the benefits. Plus, working with young couples helps keep us young.

Marriage was God's idea, so it makes great sense to get His input! We enjoy cheering these younger folks along the way, and we'll still be doing that in the "great cloud of witnesses" when they're older.

FELLOWSHIP

Open your group with prayer.

Icebreaker: Who is someone that you have learned a lot from in some area of life? What made them such a great teacher or example?



ENCOUNTER GOD

(THROUGH BIBLE STUDY)

Watch Session 6 Video Now

We have provided a *Teaching Notes* page for note-taking on page 83. There you can record any key thoughts, questions, and things you want to remember or follow up on.

Pastor Chris mentioned in the video that Jesus called his first disciples with a simple command: "Follow me" (Matthew 4:19). At Faith Promise, we love to see people step out in faith and begin a lifelong journey of following after Jesus. We also love to see people lay claim to the promise that accompanies Jesus' command to follow Him. Jesus explained in Matthew 4:19 that if we follow Him, He will make us fishers of men. From this statement, we know that if we follow Jesus, He will equip and empower us to make disciples who follow after Him.

There isn't a better example of this promise in Scripture than the life of Paul. The book of Acts shows Paul spreading the good news about Jesus Christ throughout the Roman Empire. As Paul went from city to city, a pattern emerged; Paul always took other believers with him and always left behind disciples who continued the work he began. Paul's influence was felt by some of the most prominent leaders of the early church such

as Barnabas, Luke, Mark, Titus, Apollos, and Timothy. Because Paul was constantly pouring into the lives of others, his influence for Christ became exponential. As you take a closer look at Paul's discipleship relationship with Timothy, think about who you can invest in to make a greater impact for God's Kingdom.

Read 2 Timothy 1:13-14; 2:1-2

1 What does Paul ask Timothy to follow?

2 What is the deposit that Paul has placed in Timothy? By what power is Timothy called to guard it?

3 Why does Paul call Timothy his child? How is a father/son designation a fitting description of their relationship?

4 What does Paul instruct Timothy to do with what Paul has taught him? What affect will this have?

5 Historically speaking, was this strategy for advancing the gospel message effective?

The early church didn't use an innovative marketing campaign to change the world. Instead, they relied on a God-inspired strategy to spread the gospel—disciples of Jesus making disciples of Jesus. As early believers encountered the incredible reality of who Jesus is, they shared the truth they learned with others and the outcome was remarkable. Though God has blessed us with new and innovative ways to proclaim His Word today, the underlying strategy remains the same—changed people changing people.

6 Paul invested into Timothy through years of doing ministry together. Why is this method of teaching so effective?

7 Do you think Timothy picked up things from Paul that were unintentional? If someone was following you, what things would they unintentionally pick up from you?

8 When we think about Paul and Timothy, our temptation is to think, "Why don't I have a Paul in my life?" What if we started asking, "Who is my Timothy?"

9 Do you believe that we have a personal responsibility to make disciples? Are there things that are keeping you from obeying Jesus' command to make disciples?

10 Who is following Jesus and growing closer to Him because of you?

Spend some time as a group praying that God would make it clear with whom you need to start a discipleship relationship. Pray for boldness to entrust to them what God has taught you.

WEEK 6 COMMITMENT

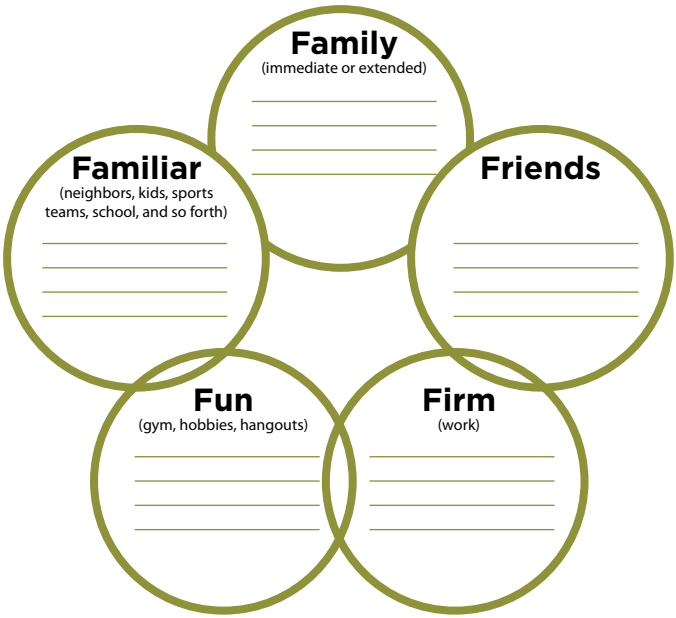
As a part of Faith Promise, I commit to change the world one person at a time. I will take seriously the call of Jesus to make disciples of all the nations. I commit to intentionally walk with others and invest in them as I do ministry. I will pass this strategy along, encouraging those I disciple to disciple others. In order to ensure that the mission and message of Faith Promise continues on, I commit to invest in the next generation as they proclaim the Good News of Jesus. I am Faith Promise.

EMBRACING OTHERS

This is the last week of this study. It is important to celebrate all that God has done in your group during the past six weeks. Plan a party for next week. You might even want to invite some new people so they can see what group life is all about.

ENGAGING THE WORLD AROUND US

Each of you share the results from the people you identified on the Circles of Life sheet on page 92 after inviting them to church or small group.



FOR DEEPER STUDY

Read Luke 14:25-33

1 Why do you think Jesus stresses the cost of being a disciple?

2 What does it mean for a person to carry their cross?

3 What has it cost you to be a disciple of Jesus? What might you have to let go of if you completely followed after Christ?

4 Why is it important to make sure those you disciple count the cost of following Jesus?

5 If the cost of following Jesus is so high, why should anyone follow Him?

WORSHIP CENTER

REFLECTIONS

Each day, read the daily verses, and give prayerful consideration to what you learn about God, His Spirit, and His place in your life. Then record your thoughts, insights, or prayers in the Reflect section below the verses you read. On the sixth day, record a summary of what you have learned over the entire week through this study.

Day 1: Philippians 3:12-16

Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, have this attitude; and if in anything you have a different attitude, God will reveal that also to you; however, let us keep living by that same standard to which we have attained.

Reflect:

Day 2: Philippians 3:17-21

Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us. For many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose god is their appetite, and whose glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things. For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.

Reflect:

Day 3: 2 Thessalonians 3:6-9

Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from every brother who leads an unruly life and not according to the tradition which you received from us. For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example, because we did not act in an undisciplined manner among you, nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with labor and hardship we kept working night and day so that we would not be a burden to any of you; not because we do not have the right to this, but in order to offer ourselves as a model for you, so that you would follow our example.

Reflect:

Day 4: 1 Corinthians 4:14-17

I do not write these things to shame you, but to admonish you as my beloved children. For if you were to have countless tutors in Christ, yet you would not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel. Therefore I exhort you, be imitators of me. For this reason I have sent to you Timothy, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, and he will remind you of my ways which are in Christ, just as I teach everywhere in every church.

Reflect:

Day 5: James 1:21-24

Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls. But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was.

Reflect:

Day 6. Use the following space to write any thoughts God has put in your heart and mind about the things we have looked at in this session and during your Reflections time this week.

Summary:

APPENDIX

FAQS

What do we do on the first night of our group?
Like all fun things in life–have a party! A "get to know you" coffee, dinner, or dessert is a great way to launch a new study. You may want to review the Group Covenant (page 87) and share the names of a few friends you can invite to join you. But most importantly, have fun before your study time begins.

Where do we find new members for our group?
This can be troubling, especially for new groups that have only a few people or for existing groups that lose a few people along the way. We encourage you to pray with your group and then brainstorm a list of people from work, church, your neighborhood, your children's school, family, the gym, and so forth. Then have each group member invite several of the people on his or her list.

No matter how you find members, it's vital that you stay on the lookout for new people to join your group. All groups tend to go through healthy attrition–the result of moves, releasing new leaders, ministry opportunities, and so forth–and if the group gets too small, it could be at risk of shutting down. If you and your group stay open, you'll be amazed at the people God sends your way. The next person just might become a friend for life. You never know!

What if this group is not working for us?
You're not alone! This could be the result of a personality conflict, life stage difference, geographical distance, level of spiritual maturity, or any number of things. Relax. Pray for God's direction, and at the end of this 6-week study, decide whether to continue with this group or find another. You don't always buy the first car you look at or marry

the first person you date, and the same goes with a group. Don't bail out before the 6 weeks are up–God might have something to teach you. Also, don't run from conflict or prejudge people before you have given them a chance. God is still working in you too!

Who is the leader?
All groups have an official leader. But ideally, the group will mature and members will rotate the leadership of meetings. We have discovered that healthy groups rotate hosts/leaders and homes on a regular basis. This model ensures that all members grow, give their unique contribution, and develop their gifts. This study guide and the Holy Spirit can keep things on track even when you rotate leaders. Christ has promised to be in your midst as you gather. Ultimately, God is your leader each step of the way.

How do we handle the childcare needs in our group?
Very carefully. Seriously, this can be a sensitive issue. We suggest that you empower the group to openly brainstorm solutions. You may try one option that works for a while and then adjust over time. Our favorite approach is for adults to meet in the living room or dining room, and to share the cost of a babysitter (or two) who can be with the kids in a different part of the house. In this way, parents don't have to be away from their children all evening when their children are too young to be left at home. A second option is to use one home for the kids and a second home (close by or a phone call away) for the adults. A third idea is to rotate the responsibility of providing a lesson or care for the children either in the same home or in another home nearby. This can be an incredible blessing for kids. Finally, the most common idea is to decide that you need to have a night to invest in your spiritual lives individually or as a couple, and to make your own arrangements for child care. No matter what decision the group makes, the best approach is to dialogue openly about both the problem and the solution.

SMALL GROUP COVENANT

A group is a place where we belong. We all want to be surrounded by people who care about us and value us for who we are. Groups are the catalyst for this to take place at Faith Promise. Moving people out of the crowd and into group where they Encounter God, Embrace Others, and Engage the World Around Us.

Group Attendance	To give priority to the group meeting. We will call or email if we will be late or absent. (Completing the Group Calendar will minimize this issue.)
Safe Environment	To help create a safe place where people can be heard and feel loved. (Please, no quick answers, snap judgments, or simple fixes.)
Respect Differences	To be gentle and gracious to people with different spiritual maturity, personal opinions, temperaments, or "imperfections" in fellow group members. We are all works in progress.
Confidentiality	To keep anything that is shared strictly confidential and within the group, and to avoid sharing improper information about those outside the group.
Encouragement for Growth	To be not just takers but givers of life. We want to spiritually multiply our life by serving others with our God-given gifts.
Shared Ownership	To remember that every member is a minister and to ensure that each attender will share a small team role or responsibility over time (See the Team Roles).
Rotating Hosts/ Leaders and Homes	To encourage different people to host the group in their homes, and to rotate the responsibility of facilitating meetings. (See the Group Calendar)

Our Times Together:

- Refreshments/mealtimes _____
- Childcare _____
- When we will meet (day of week) _____
- Where we will meet (place) _____
- We will begin at (time) _____ and end at _____
- We will do our best to have some or all of us attend a worship service together. Our primary worship service time will be _____
- Date of this agreement _____
- Date we will review this agreement again _____
- Who (other than the leader) will review this agreement at the end of this study

_____

SMALL GROUP ROSTER

NAME	ADDRESS	PHONE	EMAIL	MINISTRY	OTHER

SMALL GROUP CALENDAR

Planning and calendaring can help ensure the greatest participation at every meeting. At the end of each meeting, review this calendar. Be sure to include a regular rotation of host homes and leaders, and don't forget birthdays, socials, church events, holidays, and mission/ministry projects.

Date	Lesson	Host Home	Dessert/Meal	Leader
Sun. 9/8	1	Steve and Laura's	Joe	Bill

TEAM ROLES

The Bible makes clear that every member, not just the small group leader, is a minister in the body of Christ. In a healthy small group, every member takes on some small role or responsibility. It's more fun and effective if you team up on these roles.

Review the team roles and responsibilities below, and have each member volunteer for a role or participate on a team. If someone doesn't know where to serve or is holding back, have the group suggest a team or role. Serving in even a small capacity will not only help your leader but also will make the group more fun for everyone. Don't hold back. Join a team!

FELLOWSHIP TEAM

Crawl:
Have an icebreaker question or game prepared to help people open up and begin sharing with each other.

Walk:
Plan a monthly/quarterly social event or activity to help connect your group members or use it to invite new people to the group.

Run:
Plan a twenty-four-hour retreat or weekend getaway for the group. Lead the Connecting time each week for the group.

DISCIPLESHIP TEAM

Crawl:
Plan and coordinate future study topics with your leader for upcoming group meetings. Using coach approved studies or Groups curriculum.

Walk:
Help each group member complete Pastor's Personal Growth Plan. Encourage personal devotions through group discussions and pairing up with spiritual (accountability) partners.

Run:
Take the group on a prayer walk, or plan a day of solitude, fasting, or personal retreat.

PRAYER TEAM

Crawl:
Maintain the group Prayer and Praise Report or Journal.

Walk:
Send weekly email reminders to encourage the group to pray daily for the requests and to send in updates on their praise reports.

Run:
Develop a team of 2-3 Prayer Posturers who will meet together before each group meeting to pray for leaders and the group.

EVANGELISM TEAM

Crawl:
Coordinate the group's Prayer Requests of friends and family who don't know Christ. Look for and plan opportunities to help connect those people to the group.

Walk:
Search for group mission opportunities and plan a cross-cultural group activity.

Run:
Take a small-group "vacation" to host a six-week group in your neighborhood or office. Then come back together with your current group.

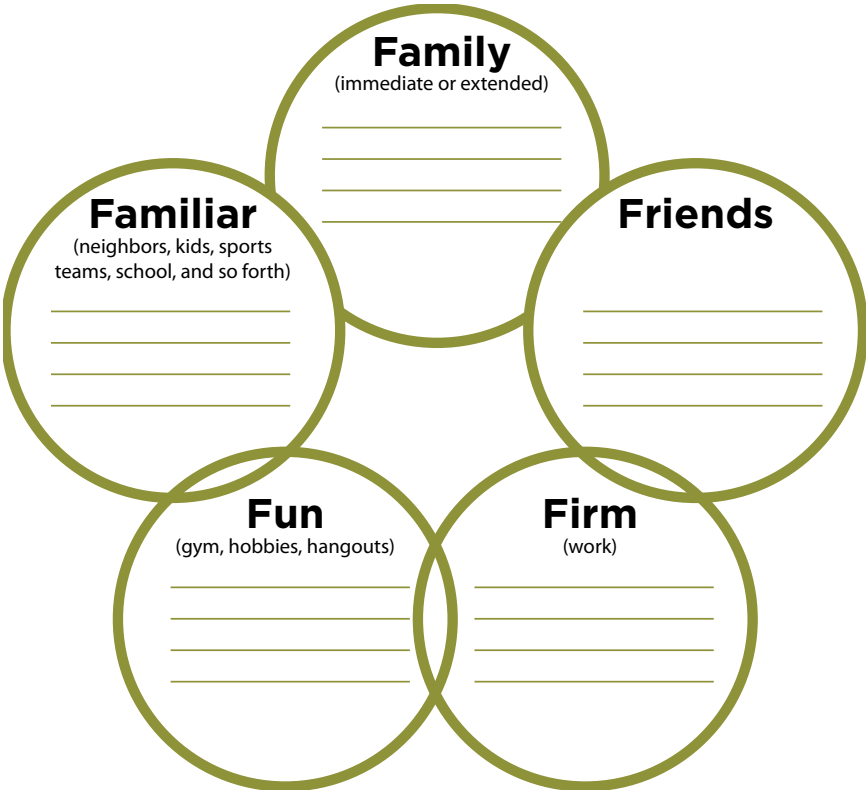
WORSHIP TEAM

Crawl:
Update the group on Praise Reports and celebrate what God is doing in your group. Invite a group member to share how God recently spoke to them or is moving in their life.

Walk:
Lead a brief time of worship each week (at the beginning or end of your meeting), either a cappella or using a song from the DVD or Life Together Worship DVD/CD.

Run:
Plan a unique time of worship through Communion, foot washing, night of prayer, or nature walking.

CIRCLES OF LIFE



MEMORY VERSES

Session 1
(1 Corinthians 9:22b)
I have become all things to all men, so that I may by all means save some.

Session 2
(1 Corinthians 12:27)
Now you are Christ's body, and individually members of it.

Session 3
(John 13:34-35)
A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.

Session 4
(Isaiah 58:10)
And if you give yourself to the hungry and satisfy the desire of the afflicted, then your light will rise in darkness and your gloom will become like midday.

Session 5
(2 Thessalonians 3:1)
Finally, brethren, pray for us that the word of the Lord will spread rapidly and be glorified, just as it did also with you.

Session 6
(1 Corinthians 11:1)
Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ.

PRAYER AND PRAISE REPORT

DATE: _____

"6 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." Philippians 4:6–7

	Prayer Requests	Praise Reports
Session 1		
Session 2		
Session 3		
Session 4		
Session 5		
Session 6		

MISSIONS

It is our belief that serving others is a key component to having a healthy group. Just as prayer, worship, and bible study are foundational to our spiritual health, so also is having an outward focus with compassionate eyes for those in need. We realize every group and environment is different, but we want to equip you and free you up to meet the needs that the Holy Spirit puts in your path as a group. This list is just a start, but here are a few recommended places you can begin. Please contact the missions office at Faith Promise for help in moving forward.

Adopt a Classroom or Teacher—
At a local school

Water Angels—
Thewaterangels.com (Pellissippi, North Knox)

Choices Resource Center—
Choicesresource.com (Anderson)

Second Harvest Food Bank—
Secondharvestetn.org (Blount)

Hope Resource Center—
Knoxvillehope.com (Pellissippi)

Knox Area Rescue Ministries—
Karm.org (Pellissippi, North Knox)

Focus Prison Ministries—
Focusprisonministries.com

Serve as a part of the Missions Team at your campus—
Help with things like Benevolence, Angel Tree, School Collections, Compassion Groups, and our Marketing Team

Faith Promise is also invested in equipping and sending missionaries to help plant churches, train leaders, advocate for the voiceless, and help grow the body of Christ all over the world. There are three ways we encourage each group to engage in this extension of ministry at our church.

1. Pray for our missions strategies, leadership, stewardship, missionaries, and mission partners. You can find a list of these on our website at faithpromise.org/missions.

2. Your group can participate in a short-term mission trip. We have trips designed for all ages and experience levels. Trips include working in rural Appalachia, large North American cities, and countries all over the world. Your group will never be the same after participating in a short-term mission team.

3. Adopt-a-Missionary. Your group can choose one of our Faith Promise sponsored missionaries so that you can be their home group away from home. We would love to see you send them care packages on special days, email and Skype with them, pray for their ongoing daily needs, and serve as a relational connection back to their home church. It's a simple way for your group to connect to international missions and have a major impact in ministry around the globe. Contact adopt@faithpromise.org for more information.

CORE COMMITMENT FORM

CORE COMMITMENT FORM

The Core consists of committed believers at Faith Promise who are:

ATTENDING	HAVE ATTENDED THE NEXT STEPS CLASS	Date you attended the Next Steps Class:
SAVED	HAVE ACCEPTED JESUS AS THEIR LORD & SAVIOR	Approximate date you accepted Jesus as your Savior:
BAPTIZED	HAVE BEEN BAPTIZED BY IMMERSION	Approximate date you were baptized by immersion:
GIVING	ARE FINANCIALLY SUPPORTING FAITH PROMISE WITH YOUR TITHE (10%)	Are you giving at least ten percent of your income?
GROWING	ARE CURRENTLY ATTENDING A FAITH PROMISE SMALL GROUP	Name of your small group leader:
SERVING	ARE ACTIVELY SERVING IN A FAITH PROMISE MINISTRY AREA	Name of the ministry where you serve:

FAITH PROMISE CORE COMMITMENT

Only after completing all of the above requirements, please read and pray through the rest of this form. When ready, sign and turn in this form to your campus Pastor or ministry leader.

The Faith Promise Core Commitment

As part of the Core, I will honor the values of Faith Promise Church by adopting and living out the following commitments:

PEOPLE ARE OUR PRIORITY:
Pursue intentional, transparent relationships with non-Christians and invite them to attend.
Act in love toward others by being welcoming to all.
Not gossip, but instead use my words to give grace to those who hear them.

FAMILIES ARE OUR FOUNDATION:
Honor my family with my words and actions.
Lead my family to love and serve God together.
Pray for my family to live for God and strive to do His will.

GATHERING FOR OUR GOD:
Faithfully attend the weekend to worship in community with the Faith Promise family.
Protect the unity of Faith Promise Church.
Respect the vision of the leaders.
Attend a small group at Faith Promise.

GOD GET'S THE LAST WORD:
Live my life based on the teachings of God's word.
Not teach beliefs contrary to the Faith Promise core beliefs.

DEVELOPING HEAVENS HEART- GENEROSITY:
Financially support the mission of Faith Promise Church, starting with a tithe (10%) of my income.
Live a life of blessing others with my time, talents, and treasures.

SERVING IS HIS STRATEGY:
Discover my gifts and talents, and use them to serve the body of Christ at Faith Promise.
Lead and equip others to discover their gift, and use it within the Body of Christ.

MISSIONS IS OUR MANDATE:
Serve the lost, hurting, and poor both locally and globally.
Live out and share the gospel both locally and globally.

I recognize that these commitments are not requirements for being a Christian, but rather what it looks like to truly be a part of the Core at Faith Promise Church. The motives of these commitments are to shape and encourage Godly character in our people.

Having read The Core Commitment, completed the Core requirements, and in agreement with the Faith Promise mission, vision, and values, I agree and commit myself to the purposes of Jesus Christ through Faith Promise Church.

Print Name: _____

Date _____

SMALL GROUP LEADERS

HOSTING AN OPEN HOUSE

If you're starting a new group, try planning an "open house" before your first formal group meeting. Even if you only have two to four core members, it's a great way to break the ice and to consider prayerfully who else might be open to join you over the next few weeks. You can also use this kick-off meeting to hand out study guides, spend some time getting to know each other, discuss each person's expectations for the group, and briefly pray for each other.

A simple meal or good desserts always make a kick-off meeting more fun. After people introduce themselves and share how they ended up being at the meeting (you can play a game to see who has the wildest story!), have everyone respond to a few icebreaker questions: "What is your favorite family vacation?" or "What is one thing you love about your church/our community?" or "What are three things about your life growing up that most people here don't know?" Next, ask everyone to tell what he or she hopes to get out of the study. You might want to review the Small Group Agreement and talk about each person's expectations and priorities.

Finally, set an open chair (maybe two) in the center of your group and explain that it represents someone who would enjoy or benefit from this group but who isn't here yet. Ask people to pray about whom they could invite to join the group over the next few weeks. Hand out postcards and have everyone write an invitation or two. Don't worry about ending up with too many people; you can always have one discussion circle in the living room and another in the dining room after you watch the lesson. Each group could then report prayer requests and progress at the end of the session.

You can skip this kick-off meeting if your time is limited, but you'll experience a huge benefit if you take the time to connect with each other in this way.

LEADERS' NOTES

WEEK 1

Read 1 Corinthians 9:19-23

1 What gives Paul the ability to say he is free from all? What does it mean to be free in Christ? Freedom in Christ means that we have been set free from sin and now have the ability to follow Christ (Romans 6:16-18). Our flesh has been crucified with Christ so that we might live for him (Galatians 2:20). While on the one hand this means that we are able to follow Christ through the Holy Spirit, it also means that the Law no longer binds us. Because our right standing before God does not depend on what we've done, but on what Christ has done for us, we don't have to do anything in order to obtain salvation. That's why Paul can say all things are lawful to him in 1 Corinthians 10:23.

2 Why does Paul make himself a servant of all? Even though Paul has this newfound freedom in Christ, he has decided not to use that freedom to live out his own selfish desires. Instead Paul sets out to use his freedom to bring people closer to Christ. For Paul this meant restricting his freedom by serving others so that the love of Christ would be evident in his life.

3 What kind of things did Paul give up in order to advance the gospel? Paul lived the life of a missionary and church planter. In the 1st century this meant harsh travel and no financial security. Paul often provided for himself by working odd jobs from town to town as he proclaimed the gospel. Most notably Paul faced harsh persecution consistently throughout his ministry. Paul was beaten multiple times, stoned and left for dead (Acts 14:9), and imprisoned at least twice. Church tradition tells us that Paul was ultimately killed for proclaiming the gospel.

4 Why do you think Paul was able to give up his freedom in Christ for the sake of others? Why is that so hard for us? For Paul the top priority in his life was his calling, to proclaim the hope of Christ to the Gentiles (Acts 20:24). Everything else in Paul's life was secondary to this calling.

Questions 5-8 are meant to be application questions and will allow your group to share openly about their own experience.

FOR DEEPER STUDY

Read Romans 14:5-9

In this passage Paul is addressing a specific issue in which some Christians judged others because they didn't hold certain Old Testament ceremonial laws. In Christ we have been given a deeper understanding of these laws, recognizing that they pointed forward to a greater reality in Christ (Colossians 2:16-17).

Questions 1, 4 and 5 are meant to be application questions and will allow your group to share openly about their own experience.

2 What attitude described here determines whether we are seeking Christ or our own desires? Paul points out that ultimately what matters is not what we decide to do, but whether we are doing it for God. This doesn't mean that we are free from following the commands of Christ (1 Corinthians 9:21). However, when it comes to decisions that are morally neutral, what matters is that we are seeking to honor God in our actions.

3 What does Paul mean when he says we live to the Lord? What does he mean when he says that we die to the Lord? For Paul all these questions boil down to one reality—our life is not our own. Paul's teaching is built on the fundamental understanding that our lives belong to Christ. Everything we do in life or in death should be done unto the Lord. If then we are making decisions to please Christ, we can move forward in confidence.

WEEK 2

Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-26

1 What does it mean that all members of Christ's body were "made to drink of the same Spirit?" One of the benefits of following Christ is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. If you are a follower of Christ, Scripture teaches that the Holy Spirit lives in you (Ephesians 1:13-14). That means that every Christian has the same Holy Spirit in them. However, as Paul teaches in this chapter, the spiritual gifts that the Holy Spirit manifests in each of us will

be different. Since we all have the same Spirit, no one should boast in how that Spirit works in his or her life.

2 Why is it important for the body of Christ to have many different parts? What would happen if all the parts looked the same? Paul clearly explains here that a variety of gifts, talents, and passions are necessary for the body of Christ to fulfill God's purposes. Just like a body made up completely of eyes wouldn't function correctly, so too, a church made up of people with the same gifting won't function properly. If everyone at Faith Promise only cared about foreign missions, who would share hope with their neighbors? Having a variety of gifts, talents, and passions will keep Faith Promise balanced as we live out Christ's calling as his body.

3 Who does Paul say arranged the members of the body? Do you think God made a mistake in arranging you at Faith Promise? In verse 18, Paul states that God arranged the body of Christ. Instead of questioning our gifts, we should trust that God created us perfectly for His will and desire. Since God is fully sovereign, that also means God didn't make a mistake in placing you in the body at Faith Promise. Your gifts and talents are necessary for Faith Promise to fulfill God's purpose for His church.

4 What does Paul say about the seemingly weak or insignificant parts of the body? Paul teaches us that even those seemingly insignificant parts of the body are indispensable. The body simply doesn't function properly without them. Each part of Christ's body is invaluable. As members of the body we must be intentional about honoring every member of the body. What difference might it make in the body if we honored everyone at Faith Promise the same way we honor Pastor Chris?

5 Why does Paul say that when one member suffers, all suffer together and when one is honored, all rejoice together? When you injure your leg, your entire body suffers

the consequences. In the same way, the body of Christ at Faith Promise should be so interconnected that we suffer and rejoice together. We have found that in a church of our size this happens best through small groups. As a small group, God calls us to care for each other just as we would our own body.

Questions 6-10 are meant to be application questions and will allow your group to share openly about their own experience.

FOR DEEPER STUDY

Read 1 Peter 2:4-11

1 What does Peter say God is building us to be? Peter explains that God is building us to be a spiritual house. Before Christ, God's Spirit primarily dwelled in the midst of the temple. As a result of Jesus' sacrifice, followers of Christ are now temples of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19). Here Peter explains that collectively, Christ followers become the temple in which God's Spirit dwells.

2 What kind of spiritual sacrifices does Faith Promise make to God? How are you a part of that? The Old Testament lays out a sacrificial system in which animals and other things were physically sacrificed. God's desire was always focused more on the heart of such sacrifices (Hosea 6:6) than the sacrifices themselves. Jesus put an end to the need for blood sacrifices on the cross, perfectly atoning for humanity's sin. In the New Testament we instead see a focus on, and calling to, spiritual sacrifices. While a spiritual sacrifice can manifest itself in many different ways, it boils down to sacrificing our selfish desires and seeking to live out God's desire for our lives (Romans 12:1).

3 What does it mean to be a royal priesthood? In the Old Testament, priests performed the role of intermediaries between God and man. These priests would perform sacrifices on behalf of the people for their sin. As a result of Jesus' sacrifice there is no longer any need for a human mediator between God and His people. Jesus is the only mediator between God and man (Hebrews 9:15). That means we have full access to God—able to approach His throne with full confidence (Hebrews 4:6).

Questions 4-5 are meant to be application questions and will allow your group to share openly about their own experience.

WEEK 3

Read 1 John 3:14-18

1 What does John say is the evidence of the kind of faith that saves? According to John, loving one another is evidence that Christ has transformed us. Let's be clear: loving one another does not bring salvation. However, John is saying that if we have come to know Christ and his Spirit lives in us, we will be marked by love for each other.

2 What does it mean to abide in death? How can John say that whoever hates their brother is a murderer? John will later explain that God is love (1 John 4:7-8). Since God is love, anyone who

abides in Christ abides in love. This means that those who live their life hating others cannot be abiding in Christ (4:8) and therefore abide in death (separation from God). John then alludes to Jesus' teaching in Matthew 5:21-22, explaining that even if our actions don't lead to murder, our hearts' desire can condemn us.

3 What is the ultimate expression of love? How can we do that for our church family? John explains that Jesus' sacrifice is the ultimate expression of love. While this sacrifice is most clearly seen in the cross, it is no less visible in His life. In the cross, Jesus clearly sacrifices His own desires for the sake of others (Luke 22:42). It is this dying to self that should mark Christians' love for each other.

4 What does it mean to love in deed and in truth? How is that different than just loving in word? Simply put, John is calling believers to action, not just emotion. Obedience to Christ is at the heart of biblical love. When we love like Jesus, we stop focusing our attention on ourselves. This one-way love doesn't ask what others can do for us, only how we can sacrificially demonstrate the love of Christ.

Questions 5-10 are meant to be application questions and will allow your group to share openly about their own experience.

FOR DEEPER STUDY

Read Ephesians 4:1-6

1 What is the calling Paul says we are to walk worthy of? Paul explains this calling as our adoption in Christ (1:5) and our hope of our future inheritance (1:18). The Holy Spirit is a deposit of this future glory (1:14). When we are adopted by Christ our future changes; we are no longer dead in our sin facing eternal separation from God. Instead, we await our future glory when God will transform our bodies, and suffering will be a thing of the past (Romans 8:18-25). Our calling then is to be sons and daughters of the Most High, living a life worthy of our future glory in Christ.

2 What are the characteristics of this calling? Why are these so hard to walk in? Paul explains that humility, gentleness, patience, and love are particular marks of our calling. These are difficult to walk in because they go against our sinful and selfish nature. Each of these characteristics will be perfected in our glorification to come. Until then, we are called to walk in them, relying not on our own power but on the power of Christ in us. By drawing near to Christ, these characteristics will become more and more evident in our lives.

3 Why does Paul explain we should walk in these? Paul explains that when we walk in this manner, we will maintain the unity of the Spirit. This unity, seen most clearly through our love, will allow us to fulfill God's calling for Faith Promise. Without these characteristics, it will be impossible for Faith Promise to faithfully be the body of Christ.

4 How does the reality that there is one body and one Spirit make it possible to be unified in love? Since there is one body and one Spirit that lives in all believers, we have the ability to overcome our selfish desires. By yielding to the Spirit in our lives, unity will naturally flow out of our interactions.

5 Why should Ephesians 4:6 give us confidence that we can walk worthy of our calling? Since God is in control of everything and in all believers, unity doesn't rely on us. If left to our own efforts, Faith Promise could never be unified in mind and action. However, by drawing near to Christ, God will change our hearts and desires to match His own. When our desires match God's desires, our actions will be unified.

WEEK 4

Read Acts 3:1-10

1 What need did the lame man express? What else did he need? The lame man expressed his immediate need—money for that day. But he clearly had a greater need which was the need to be able to walk. Further, he also had the common need of all people—the need for Jesus Christ as their Savior.

2 Why do you think the author of Acts points out that Peter and John looked at the lame man? Why is it important for us to really look at those we bring hope to? Probably very few people looked directly at this lame man. Just like we often avoid eye contact with the men and women at the end of interstate exits, it is safe to assume most of the Jews did the same. Unfortunately, we have a tendency to stop seeing people with chronic needs as people created in the image of God. Instead when we look at them we only see their need. However, if we are ever going to bring true hope to those in need we have to first and foremost see them as children of God. We have to really look at them and see they are no different than us.

3 What did the lame man expect to receive from Peter and John? Why was that all he expected? The lame man expected to receive a little bit of money. He clearly didn't expect to be healed. While the lame man knew this was a need, he almost certainly didn't believe Peter and John could meet it. Luckily, Peter and John had faith for him. We can also bring ongoing hope to people beyond simply meeting their current needs. At Faith Promise our desire through compassion ministries is to address the root of chronic needs. In doing this, we hope to meet their greatest need—their need for a Savior.

4 How did Peter and John bring grace to this man? How did they bring truth? Peter and John first brought grace to the lame man through his healing. They also used this as an opportunity to share about the truth of Jesus Christ. First they healed the man in the name of Christ. Then, in Acts 3:11-4:4, Peter used the healing as an opportunity to share with the crowd about the hope of Jesus Christ.

5 How did the lame man respond to what Peter gave him? How did those who knew him respond? The lame man leaped around praising God. Those who knew him were amazed by this reality. The change in the lame man's life presented an opportunity for others to hear about the source of his hope. Acts 4:4 explains that as a result, many of the men who heard Peter's message believed in Christ.

Questions 6-10 are meant to be application questions and will allow your group to share openly about their own experience.

FOR DEEPER STUDY

Read Isaiah 58:1-14

1 What religious activities were the Israelites engaged in? Why were they doing these things? The Israelites were fasting, wearing sackcloth (a sign of mourning) and publically praying to God. However, God recognized these activities were simply an attempt to seek their own pleasure, while living an oppressive lifestyle. They were praying and fasting to feel good about themselves, not to seek the face of God.

2 What is the difference between doing religious things to appear righteous and doing righteous things because Christ is in us? Ultimately this is a question of the heart. As Christ-followers we don't change our behaviors so that we look more like Christ. We focus on Christ and allow the Holy Spirit to change our behaviors (See Colossians 3).

3 How does God set the oppressed free? How can we join God in breaking chains of oppression? God explains His desire is to loose the chains of injustice and set free the oppressed. The specific examples from this passage include feeding the hungry, housing the homeless, and clothing the naked. This is a great time to talk about how your group has seen these things happen.

4 What does it mean to hide yourself from your own flesh? How do we ignore the needs of those around us? God is explaining that when we ignore the needs of the rest of humanity we are ignoring the call of God. All the religious activity in the world doesn't mean a thing if we don't have love for each other (1 Corinthians 13).

5 According to this passage, what kind of person's prayers does God respond to? How does this compare to the teaching of James 5:16? This passage explains that God responds to those who truly seek Him, just as James 5:16 explains God responds to the prayers of righteous people.

6 How do caring for those God cares about and delighting ourselves in the Lord go hand in hand? When we have the heart of God and the mind of Christ, it becomes a joy to care for those God cares about.

WEEK 5

Read Hebrews 13:17-19

1 Why does the author of Hebrews instruct readers to obey and submit to spiritual leaders? We should obey and submit to spiritual leaders because they are responsible for keeping watch over our souls. 1 Peter 5:1-5 explains that spiritual leaders are to lead with humility, seeking the best for their flock. This leadership isn't like a dictator, but like the leadership of Christ who gave His life for those He led.

2 Who are the spiritual leaders at Faith Promise? While clearly Pastor Chris and the other pastors fall into this category, there are also other examples. Those to whom God has entrusted major portions of ministry are also spiritual leaders. This would include the Elders, Leadership Team, and lay members who oversee ministry areas.

3 What does this passage explain our spiritual leaders are responsible for? This passage explains spiritual leaders are responsible for keeping watch over Faith Promise's souls. This means that they are to provide spiritual care as well as direction and guidance to the congregation.

4 What will spiritual leaders give an account of? To whom will they give an account? Spiritual leaders will give an account of how they shepherded God's people. This account will be given directly to God. This means that spiritual leaders can't listen primarily to the calls of men. While it is important for them to hear Godly counsel, the leadership at Faith Promise is primarily responsible to God.

Questions 5-8 are meant to be application questions and will allow your group to share openly about their own experience.

FOR DEEPER STUDY

Read 2 Thessalonians 3:1-5

1 What specifically does Paul ask these believers to pray for? Why is it important to pray these things over Faith Promise's spiritual leaders? Paul asks these believers to pray for him and other leaders so that the gospel can advance quickly among unbelievers. These prayers are especially important because of the opposition the gospel faces.

Questions 2-4 are meant to be application questions and will allow your group to share openly about their own experience.

WEEK 6

Read 2 Timothy 1:13-14; 2:1-2

1 What does Paul ask Timothy to follow? Paul asks Timothy to follow him in two ways. First, Timothy is to follow the instruction and teaching Paul has given him. Secondly, Timothy is to follow the example he has seen throughout Paul's life.

2 What is the deposit that Paul has placed in Timothy? By what power is Timothy called to guard it? The deposit Paul has given Timothy is the fullness of Paul's teaching. Simply put, this teaching can be summed up as the Good News about Jesus Christ. Paul has instructed Timothy in everything he needs to follow after Jesus.

3 Why does Paul call Timothy his child? How is a father/son designation a fitting description of their relationship? Paul sees himself as a spiritual father to Timothy. While the difference in ages makes this designation fit culturally, age has nothing to do with Paul's designation. A spiritual father/mother can be older or younger than their spiritual sons/daughters. You are never too young to be a spiritual parent to others.

4 What does Paul instruct Timothy to do with what Paul has taught him? What affect will this have? Paul instructs Timothy to entrust other faithful people with the gospel message. Those people are in turn to share it with others. This means that every believer is to be taught the gospel and then is called to teach it to others. This is the discipleship process in the fullest sense.

5 Historically speaking, was this strategy for advancing the gospel message effective? In the early church, the gospel spread with incredible speed. What began with 120 people (Acts 1:15) quickly grew to 3,000 (Acts 2:41). Christianity continued to spread through the book of Acts and by the 4th century had become the official religion of the Roman Empire.

Questions 6-10 are meant to be application questions and will allow your group to share openly about their own experience.

LEADING FOR THE FIRST TIME

1. Sweaty palms are a healthy sign. The Bible says God is gracious to the humble. Remember who is in control; the time to worry is when you're not worried. Those who are soft in heart (and sweaty palmed) are those whom God is sure to speak through.

2. Seek support. Ask your coach, co-leader, or close friend to pray for you and prepare with you before the session. Walking through the study will help you anticipate potentially difficult questions and discussion topics.

3. Bring your uniqueness to the study. Lean into who you are and how God wants you to uniquely lead the study.

4. Prepare. Prepare. Prepare. Go through the session several times. Listen to the teaching segment and Leadership Lifter. Consider writing in a journal or fasting for a day to prepare yourself for what God wants to do.

5. Don't wait until the last minute to prepare.

6. Ask for feedback so you can grow. Perhaps in an email or on cards handed out at the study, have everyone write down three things you did well and one thing you could improve on. Don't get defensive, but show an openness to learn and grow.

7 Prayerfully consider launching a new group. This doesn't need to happen overnight, but God's heart is for this to happen over time. Not all Christians are called to be leaders or teachers, but we are all called to be "shepherds" of a few someday.

8 Share with your group what God is doing in your heart. God is searching for those whose hearts are fully His. Share your trials and victories. We promise that people will relate.

9 Prayerfully consider whom you would like to pass the baton to next week. It's only fair. God is ready for the next member of your group to go on the faith journey you just traveled. Make it fun, and expect God to do the rest.

SMALL GROUP LEADERSHIP 101

IDEAS FOR NEW LEADERS

Congratulations! You have responded to the call to help shepherd Jesus' flock. There are a few other tasks in the family of God that surpass the contribution you will be making. As you prepare to lead, whether it is one session or the entire series, here are a few thoughts to keep in mind. We encourage you to read these and review them with each new discussion leader before he or she leads.

1 Remember that you are not alone. God knows everything about you, and He knew that you would be asked to lead your group. Remember that it is common for all good leaders to feel that they are not ready to lead. Moses, Solomon, Jeremiah and Timothy—they all were reluctant to lead. God promises, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you" (Hebrews 13:5). Whether you are leading for one evening, for several weeks, or for a lifetime, you will be blessed as you serve.

2 Don't try to do it alone. Pray right now for God to help you build a healthy leadership team. If you can enlist a co-leader to help you lead the group, you will find your experience to be much richer. This is your chance to involve as many people as you can in building a healthy group. All you have to do is call and ask people to help, you'll be surprised at the response.

3 Just be yourself. If you won't be you, who will? God wants you to use your unique gifts and temperament. Don't try to do things exactly like

another leader; do them in a way that fits you! Just admit it when you don't have an answer, and apologize when you make a mistake. Your group will love you for it, and you'll sleep better at night!

4 Prepare for your meeting ahead of time. Review the session and the leader's notes, and write down your responses to each question. Pay special attention to exercises that ask group members to do something other than engage in discussion. These exercises will help your group live what the Bible teaches, not just talk about it. Be sure you understand how an exercise works, and bring any necessary supplies (such as paper and pens) to your meeting. If the exercise employs one of the items in the appendix, be sure to look over that item so you'll know how it works. Finally, review "Outline for Each Session" so you'll remember the purpose of each section in the study.

5 Pray for your group members by name. Before you begin your session, go around the room in your mind and pray for each member by name. You may want to review the prayer list at least once a week. Ask God to use your time together to touch the heart of every person uniquely. Expect God to lead you to whomever He wants you to encourage or challenge in a special way. If you listen, God will surely lead!

6 When you ask a question, be patient. Someone will eventually respond. Sometimes people need a moment or two of silence to think about the question, and if silence doesn't bother you, it won't bother anyone else. After someone responds, affirm the response with a simple "thanks" or "good job." Then ask, "How about somebody else?" or "Would someone who hasn't shared like to add anything?" Be sensitive to new people or reluctant members who aren't ready to say, pray, or do anything. If you give them a safe setting, they will blossom over time.

7 Provide transitions between questions. When guiding the discussion, always read aloud the transitional paragraphs and the questions. Ask the group if anyone would like to read the paragraph or Bible passage. Don't call on anyone, but ask for a volunteer, and then be patient until someone begins. Be sure to thank the person who reads aloud.

8 If your group has more than seven people, we strongly encourage you to consider having the group gather sometimes in discussion

circles of three or four people. With a greater opportunity to talk in a small circle, people will connect more with the study, apply more quickly what they're learning, and ultimately get more out of it. A small circle also encourages a quiet person to participate and tends to minimize the effects of a more vocal or dominant member. It can also help people feel more loved in your group. When you gather again at the end of the section, you can have one person summarize the highlights from each circle. Small circles are also helpful during prayer time. People who are unaccustomed to praying aloud will feel more comfortable trying it with just two or three others. Also, prayer requests won't take as much time, so circles will have more time to actually pray. When you gather back with the whole group, you can have one person from each circle briefly update everyone on the prayer requests. People are more willing to pray in small circles if they know that the whole group will hear all the prayer requests.

9 Rotate facilitators weekly. At the end of each meeting, ask the group who should lead the following week. Let the group help select your weekly facilitator. You may be perfectly capable of leading each time, but you will help others grow in their faith and gifts if you give them opportunities to lead. You can use the Small Group Calendar to fill in the names of all meeting leaders at once if you prefer.

ABOUT THE PASTOR

Pastor Chris was born in Chattanooga, Tennessee, to teen parents who split up when he was only three. By the age of 22 he was a heavy drug user and dealer. Later that year, Chris woke up in a hospital room after a drug overdose and made a decision to connect with God. This decision was especially amazing since neither Chris nor his family had ever attended church.

Over the next 26 years Chris has been serving God as a speaker and a pastor. He has had the opportunity to speak all over the world and has impacted tens of thousands of lives.

As the Senior Pastor of Faith Promise Church, he has seen thousands find hope and fulfillment in their destiny. Chris says his purpose is to help people recognize and achieve their full potential. He came so close to death and missing all God had for him—he now wants to help others find the same purpose in their lives that he has found.

I AM FAITH PROMISE

LIVING AS THE BODY OF CHRIST

What defines who you are as a person? What makes you who you are? Is it your job or your relationships? Is it the type of clothes you wear or the music you listen to? Does it extend beyond your hobby or sport?

What does it mean to be a member of Faith Promise Church? Does the Christian life consist of more than just enjoying the songs and sermons at church on the weekends?

In this study, *I Am Faith Promise*, we will look at six characteristics God uses to change our lives and make us into true followers of Jesus. These things build his Kingdom and allow us to make a difference in the world.

1. I Am a Servant
2. I Am the Body
3. I Am Radical Love
4. I Am a Hope Bringer
5. I Am an Intercessor
6. I Am a Disciple

This journey is not meant to be travelled alone. As part of our alignment, you will get the most out of *I Am Faith Promise* when you are both connected to a group and also attending the weekend services. To find out more, visit faithpromise.org.

faith promise
CHURCH