



THE  
JOURNEY

THE BLUE YEAR



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A 28-WEEK GOSPEL-CENTERED  
RESOURCE FOR DISCIPLESHIP

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# CONTENTS

	<b>ORIENTATION</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>IN PURSUIT OF GOSPEL LIVING</b>	<b>20</b>
	Unit 1 Glory – Why We Embrace Christ	21
	Unit 2 Glory – How We Embrace Christ	33
	Unit 3 Grace – Why We Embrace the Cross	45
	Unit 4 Grace – How We Embrace the Cross	57
	Unit 5 Truth – Why We Embrace the Word	69
	Unit 6 Truth – How We Embrace the Word	81
<b>2</b>	<b>IN PURSUIT OF GRACE COMMITMENTS</b>	<b>92</b>
	Unit 1 The Local Church, Part 1 – A Needed Authority for Kingdom People	93
	Unit 2 The Local Church, Part 2 – A Safe Spiritual Home for Kingdom People	107
	Unit 3 The Local Church, Part 3 – A Mission to Non-Kingdom People	117
	Unit 4 The Local Church, Part 4 – An Equipping Station for Kingdom People	129
<b>3</b>	<b>IN PURSUIT OF KNOWING GOD</b>	<b>142</b>
	Unit 1 The Sovereignty of God	143
	Unit 2 The Spirituality of God	155
	Unit 3 The Immutability of God	167
<b>4</b>	<b>IN PURSUIT OF A HEALTHY MARRIAGE</b>	<b>180</b>
	Unit 1 Male and Female: How God Designed Your Spouse	181
	Unit 2 Headship and Submission: How God Designed Marriage	197
	Unit 3 Love: How Husbands Fulfill Their Role in Marriage	211
	Unit 4 Respect: How Wives Fulfill Their Role in Marriage	223
<b>5</b>	<b>IN PURSUIT OF BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW</b>	<b>236</b>
	Unit 1 The Truth About Science & the Bible	237
	Unit 2 Before the Design	249
	Unit 3 The Facts of Life	261
	Unit 4 The Image of God	273
	Unit 5 Knowing Your Place in God's World	287
	Unit 6 The Sanctity of a Life	297
	Unit 7 What in the World are You Doing?	309
<b>6</b>	<b>IN PURSUIT OF GOD-HONORING PARENTING</b>	<b>324</b>
	Unit 1 Your Home as a School	325
	Unit 2 Your Home as a Hospital	341
	Unit 3 Your Home as a Mission	355
	Unit 4 Your Home as a Church	369
	<b>APPENDIX</b>	<b>384</b>

## WELCOME TO *THE JOURNEY*!

You are about to embark on an exciting opportunity for spiritual growth. No matter where you are in your own spiritual journey, *The Journey* will provide you with an opportunity for real, meaningful life change through *life-on-life missional discipleship* (LOLMD). This orientation will introduce you to the LOLMD process and to *The Journey* material that supports it.

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# HOW TO USE THIS MATERIAL

Discipling others and being a disciple are dynamic life processes. Think of how Jesus interacted with His disciples. What was He trying to impart to them? His goal was literally to impart His life to them so that they would be vessels of His life, imparting His life in turn to the lost world.

In a similar way, the goal of Journey Group leaders is to impart their “life product” – a mature and equipped Christian life – via regular, intentional, life-on-life encounters with the people in their Journey Group. This material is designed to facilitate life-on-life discipleship by including these crucial elements.



## INTRO

# ORIENTATION GUIDE

Introducing Life-on-Life Missional Discipleship

**ORIENTATION RESOURCES** Find your resources here: [PERIMETER.org/b0](https://PERIMETER.org/b0)

### WATCH/LISTEN

- ☐ Orientation Video | [thejourneycurriculum.com/orientation](https://thejourneycurriculum.com/orientation)
- ☐ Audio Message, *Spiritual Accountability*

### READ

- ☐ Read and Answer *Journey Group Orientation Handout*

### BEGIN

- ☐ Begin work on *Spiritual Journey*



## WHAT IS LIFE-ON-LIFE MISSIONAL DISCIPLESHIP?

Life-on-Life Missional Discipleship (LOLMD) is a process of one person, a Journey Group leader, working with a small group of 5 – 10 people, a Journey Group, *for the purpose of seeing them grow spiritually and mature in their walks with Christ.*

**LOLMD can be described as:** *Laboring in the lives of a few with the intention of imparting one's life, God's Word, and the gospel in such a way as to see them become mature and equipped followers of Christ, committed to doing the same in the lives of others.*

### LOLMD requires

- ▶ a qualified leader
- ▶ a faithful few, willing to follow
- ▶ the intention to make mature and equipped followers of Christ
- ▶ doing the right things that make mature and equipped followers of Christ

The life-on-life process includes a commitment to you and others in the group by the leader, as well as a commitment by you to the Journey Group. Your involvement in a Journey Group will result in you working through an intentional plan for spiritual growth, maturing in your spiritual life, and being equipped to share these principles with others. By the time you have completed *The Journey*, you will have been exposed to the necessary skills that will allow you to invest your life in the lives of others.

Your Journey Group will meet regularly in weekly meetings. These meetings have a relaxed, come-as-you-are atmosphere. Your Journey Group leader acts as a coach, guiding the group in creating a supportive, confidential environment that fosters camaraderie and openness. Group members encourage one another as they share honestly about the challenges they face and support one another through the hard times (and victories) as they grow spiritually.

## WHAT LIFE-ON-LIFE DISCIPLESHIP IS NOT

It's important to clarify what LOLMD is *not* because there are so many different approaches to spiritual growth that are sometimes labeled discipleship, yet miss the mark.

- ▶ **LOLMD is not curriculum-on-life.** Discipleship happens because of relationships, not because of books or materials; so it is not primarily about pen, paper, reading, and studying. Although there is a learning component to discipleship, it is more focused on living and sharing truth, not merely learning it. Thus, *The Journey* is designed to support a life-on-life process of growth, not a curriculum-on-life process.
- ▶ **LOLMD is not merely a person's church activities and experience.** However, a disciple will certainly be active in church.
- ▶ **LOLMD is not merely about serving.** However, a disciple will certainly develop the heart and skills of a servant and put them in action.
- ▶ **LOLMD is not only about mission.** Yet, a disciple will develop and pursue a specific life plan that is fruitful in mission.

## WHAT IS A DISCIPLE?

Simply put, a disciple is a follower of Jesus Christ. S/he is growing in love for, and trust in, Christ. As a member of a Journey Group s/he will covenant together with the other group members to meet weekly for the purpose of growing toward spiritual maturity as a follower of Christ.

## WHAT IS SPIRITUAL MATURITY?

Maturing spiritually involves having both the *spiritual life* and *spiritual skills* of a disciple. This is what it means to be a mature and equipped follower of Christ.

We define a *mature and equipped follower of Christ* as a person who:

- ▶ Lives consistently under the control of the Holy Spirit, the direction of the Word of God, and the motivation of the love of Christ
- ▶ Has discovered, developed and is using his/her spiritual gift(s)
- ▶ Has learned to effectively share his/her faith in both word and deed
- ▶ Gives strong evidence of being
  - A faithful member of God's church
  - An effective manager of life, relationships, and resources
- A willing minister to others, especially "the least and lost"
- An available messenger to non-kingdom people
- ▶ Demonstrates a life striving to be
  - Gospel-driven
  - Worship-focused
  - Morally-pure
  - Evangelistically-bold
  - Discipleship-grounded
  - Family-faithful
- ▶ Is socially responsible

## WHAT SPIRITUAL MATURITY IS NOT

Spiritual maturity is the desired life product of LOLMD. There is, however, some confusion. Here are two illustrations.

- ▶ **Spiritual maturity is not just having a lot of Bible knowledge.** Although understanding the Bible is a significant factor that drives spiritual growth, simple head knowledge is not *sufficient in itself*. There is a difference between *knowing* and *living* God's Word. Therefore, LOLMD is focused on *applying* God's Truth, not merely understanding it (head knowledge).
- ▶ **Spiritual maturity is not merely having high commitment.** Commitment is an integral attribute of a spiritually mature life, but commitment, even combined with abundant biblical knowledge, doesn't equate to being a mature Christian.

## WHAT IS THE JOURNEY?

*The Journey* is a three-year collection of weekly materials, spanning roughly seven months each year. Journey Groups use *The Journey* as a guide for LOLMD. Over the course of the material, group members will learn to apply the most significant lessons related to spiritual growth, biblical understanding, life management, relationships (including marriage), and spiritual

skills. Since the material is designed to support the life-on-life model, the most important growth and learning will come from interactions with the leader and members of the Journey Group.

Each week, *The Journey* follows the **T.E.A.M.S.®** outline based upon the five essential ingredients that foster life change:

T

### TRUTH

**Truth** is what God has revealed for His people to know, understand, and obey. Truth is critical. However, finding, learning, and knowing truth alone does not change lives. A disciple must also be shown how to implement what s/he knows, and to do so in the context of loving relationships.

E

### EQUIPPING

**Equipping** is massaging God's Truth until it becomes understandable and usable. Not only does a person need to hear and learn Truth, but s/he must also be shown how to use and apply the Truth. This is discussed extensively in your Journey Group.

A

### ACCOUNT- ABILITY

**Accountability** is asking (or being asked) hard questions in order to promote godly living. Even though a person is equipped to apply truth, that doesn't mean s/he will do it. Accountability questions are used to encourage each group member in their spiritual journey. This happens in the context of a proper understanding of the gospel to ensure that accountability doesn't devolve into behaviorism. The ultimate goal is to discover the sin beneath the sin. The questions may move you a bit out of your comfort zone, but be assured that the goal is to support and help, not to shame.

M

### MISSION

**Mission** is engaging with the lost world through word and deed with the intention of imparting the gospel. Mission enhances the hunger to put Truth and Equipping into use. Each week you will take small steps in learning to effectively relate to, and share the gospel with, those who are without Christ.

S

### SUPPLICATION

**Supplication** is engaging in conversation with God. This will include praying with and for the other members of your Journey Group. Truth, Equipping, Accountability, and Mission must all be supported by prayer because ultimately, spiritual maturity and equipping is a result of God's work, and we must not presume that any material or process is the secret to spiritual growth.



## EQUIPPING SEMINAR

In addition to the material covered in *The Journey*, additional training is encouraged in the area of evangelism. If you are participating in a Perimeter Church Journey Group, you will have the opportunity to attend an evangelism equipping seminar designed to provide you with skills and knowledge that require a deeper focus:

### Express Your Faith ([www.expressyourfaith.com](http://www.expressyourfaith.com)).

You will be asked to commit to attend this seminar. For churches using *The Journey*, you are always welcome to attend the seminars held at Perimeter Church – or look for opportunities being held in your area.

## AN OVERVIEW OF THE JOURNEY

SEMESTER I		
1 week	ORIENTATION	An introduction to LOLMD
6 weeks	GOSPEL LIVING	Pursuing glory, grace, and truth
4 weeks	GRACE COMMITMENTS	Spiritual commitments motivated by grace
3 weeks	KNOWING GOD	Understanding God's being and character
SEMESTER II		
4 weeks	HEALTHY MARRIAGE	Developing the spiritual center of your marriage
7 weeks	BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW	Living in the world with a biblical perspective
4 weeks	GOD-HONORING PARENTING	Raising children with a gospel focus

## THE VALUE OF BEING IN A JOURNEY GROUP

Life-on-life missional discipleship (LOLMD) is the most effective means of progressing toward spiritual maturity. This is the model Jesus used with His disciples. He spent time with them. It was interactive, one-on-one, in small groups, and out in the field serving together. He took them as they were, with no pre-qualification except that they wanted to follow Him. Through LOLMD you can come as you are, wherever you

are in your spiritual journey, and become what God has designed you to be, with nothing more required than your simple desire to follow Christ.

In addition to this, there is tremendous value in belonging to a brotherhood or sisterhood of believers. The bonds that are developed through LOLMD reach beyond the three years of *The Journey*.

## DISCIPLESHIP AND GRACE

Does being involved in discipleship make God love you more? You may be tempted to think that God loves you and accepts you more because you've been memorizing verses, learning about the Bible, and even sharing your faith. But, don't believe it! Let's make it very clear that engaging in discipleship activities *is not* a means of earning God's favor. Being a Christian means that you've stopped trying to earn God's favor. Instead you follow Christ because you trust that He has earned God's favor for you.

And remember that becoming a mature and equipped follower of Christ doesn't win you any more of God's love. Rather, God's love and grace gives you the freedom, power, and joyful motivation to follow Christ with all of your heart.

Through LOLMD you may well understand God's character and will better. You may even feel more intimate with Him. But all this doesn't put you in a special class of God's favorites. His love is just as real (and just as undeserved) as when you are not involved in discipleship.

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## ONE-YEAR COMMITMENT

So, are you willing to make a commitment to your spiritual growth? Here's what it will take:

Joining a Journey Group will take time – around two hours a week (outside of your personal worship time) plus your Journey Group meeting. You will find that the payoff from your investment of that time will be quite high as your life is steadily transformed.

*The Journey* is a three-year collection of weekly materials and group meetings for 28 weeks each year. But Journey Group members are asked to commit only one year at a time. There is nothing magical about having a three-year plan. Practically speaking, it is short enough to be fully utilized, yet long enough to cover the abundance of subjects that need to be explored through the life-on-life experience. Life-on-life discipleship takes time. It cannot be done over a long weekend, nor can it be done well in a random fashion, so your commitment to regular weekly involvement is required.

At the end of your one-year commitment, you can tell your Journey Group leader whether you are interested in coming back the following year. Your leader then has the prerogative to invite you back or not, and will base this decision on your regularity of attendance, participation in the group, faithfulness in completing the assignments, and commitment to growing toward spiritual maturity and equipping. Some participants may experience different seasons of life that are not conducive to involvement in a Journey Group at that particular time. For such people, there is the freedom to withdraw from the group without criticism. If a group member consistently fails to live up to his or her commitments, s/he may be asked to discontinue during the discipleship year.

Joining a Journey Group also requires your willingness to move out of your comfort zone. Let's say you wanted to improve your physical condition. You might hire a personal trainer to move you out of your comfort zone by instructing you in good diet and exercise habits, and to help you stay disciplined. Your trainer shouldn't exercise you until you pass out, but s/he really wouldn't be doing their job if you weren't sore once in a while.

In a similar way, your Journey Group leader will help you develop a good spiritual diet by helping you cultivate the disciplines of prayer and Bible study. S/he will also coach you with spiritual exercises that might be uncomfortable at first, but will train and equip you to be involved in missional activities so that you can become an agent of change within the spheres of your influence where you live, work, and play.

Interested? Then turn the page and get started by making a note of your expectations and reservations on the next page. Then sign the Journey Group Member Covenant on the page following (an extra copy is included for you to keep).

As you begin your orientation, be sure to listen to "A Commitment to Spiritual Accountability" which is available with your Journey files. This audio message will help you understand spiritual accountability and how it can aid your spiritual journey.

Lastly, on page 17 you will find an exercise that will help you think about your own spiritual journey up to this point. Your Journey Group leader will discuss this page with your group, so you don't need to write anything down yet. But, please be thinking about the significant turning points in your spiritual journey that have brought you to where you are right now.

# Expectations and Reservations

Name .....

What do I expect to get from joining a Journey Group?

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What are my reservations and concerns about joining a Journey Group?

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What do I want God to do in my life through this Journey Group?

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# Journey Group Member Covenant

*In order to glorify God by pursuing this opportunity to grow in spiritual maturity and equipping, I covenant together with this Journey Group and commit, with God's help to the following:*

.....  
Initial

**to attend all meetings, unless providentially hindered.** If I am unable to attend, I will call my Journey Group leader as soon as possible, and take responsibility to keep current with my group. As much as my schedule lies within my control, I will arrange work and other commitments so as not to conflict with Journey Group meetings.

.....  
Initial

to be prompt in attendance. I understand that this group will meet  
each ..... from ..... until .....  
Weekday Start Time End Time

Initial ..... **to engage in daily personal worship.** This includes a commitment to spend time in prayer and Bible reading in order to grow in my relationship with God.

.....  
Initial to complete all homework assignments to the best of my ability. I understand that this will usually require about 2 hours per week, not including time spent in personal worship.

.....  
Initial

**to participate in group discussion and activities.** I will be ready and willing to give an account of my spiritual progress on a weekly basis for the purpose of accountability and greater spiritual growth.

.....  
Initial

**to protect the confidentiality of my group.** I pledge to keep all discussions shared in this group confidential so as to intentionally create an environment of trust, openness, honesty, and safety.

Initial **to pray for non-believers within my circle of influence** and to seek opportunities to win them to Christ through prayer, word, and deed.

**to attend at least one equipping seminar during this ministry year** that will improve my skills, knowledge, or leadership abilities.

I understand that the term of this group is for one year.

**Signature**

Date





# Journey Group Member Covenant

*In order to glorify God by pursuing this opportunity to grow in spiritual maturity and equipping, I covenant together with this Journey Group and commit, with God's help to the following:*

.....  
Initial      **to attend all meetings, unless providentially hindered.** If I am unable to attend, I will call my Journey Group leader as soon as possible, and take responsibility to keep current with my group. As much as my schedule lies within my control, I will arrange work and other commitments so as not to conflict with Journey Group meetings.

.....  
Initial      **to be prompt in attendance.** I understand that this group will meet each ..... from ..... until .....  
Weekday      Start Time      End Time

.....  
Initial      **to engage in daily personal worship.** This includes a commitment to spend time in prayer and Bible reading in order to grow in my relationship with God.

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I understand that the term of this group is for one year.

.....  
Signature

.....  
Date



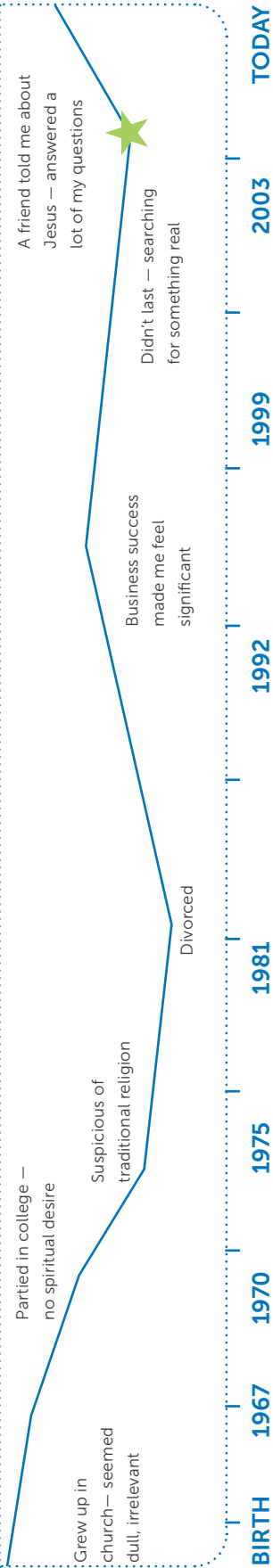
# My Spiritual Journey So Far

Has it ever occurred to you that your life is a story in the making – a story that matters?

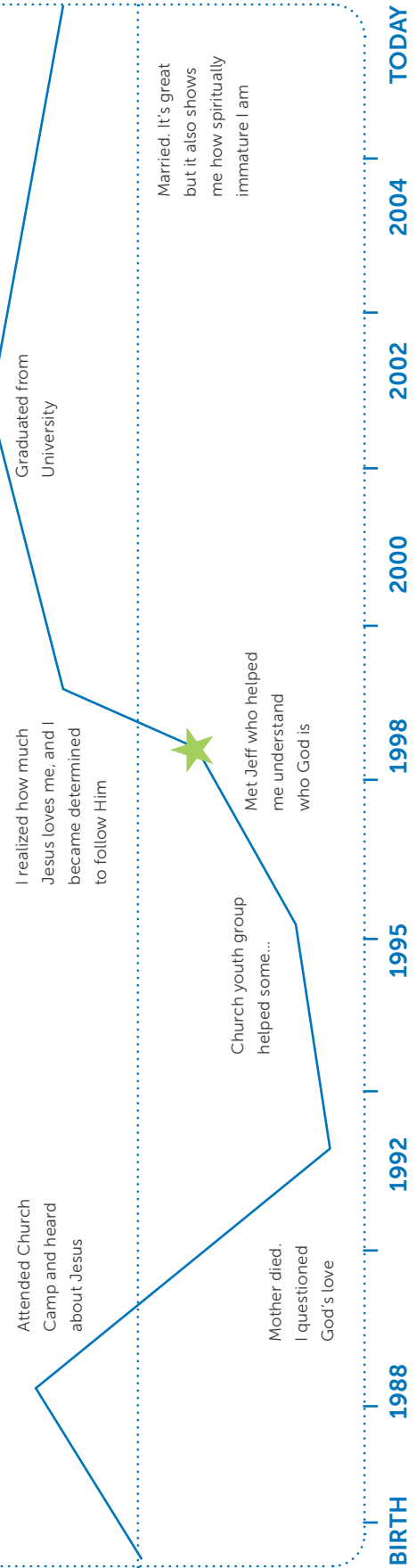
One of the foundational exercises of life-on-life missional discipleship is taking time to reflect on your life story up to this point; what we call your spiritual journey. This exercise is useful for helping you and your Journey Group understand where you are in your spiritual journey. It may be a difficult exercise for you, but rest assured, you will see the value of it the moment you begin thinking about the significant events and patterns in your life. It could take you a few moments to complete, or a few weeks depending on how deeply you begin mulling over your life.

Here's how to do it. On the next page you're going to have an opportunity to draw a picture of your life story. You will be drawing a line graph that plots how you think about the twists and turns of your life story. At each turn in the road, put a label. You can think of the labels as chapter titles in your life story. They can represent significant events, turning points, changes in your view of life, experiences, trials, or triumphs. What matters is that when you look at the picture, you recognize it as an honest representation of your spiritual journey so far. Place a star where you believe you became a true follower of Christ. A few examples are provided below. You can draw yours on the next page.

EXAMPLE A



EXAMPLE B



# My Spiritual Journey So Far

Divide this timeline into segments that best represent your spiritual journey.  
Place a star where you believe you became a follower of Christ.

POSITIVE  
SPIRITUAL  
EXPERIENCES

NEGATIVE  
SPIRITUAL  
EXPERIENCES

TODAY

BIRTH

# IN PURSUIT OF GOSPEL LIVING

Living for Glory, Living by  
Grace, Living in Truth

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<b>UNIT 1</b>	<b>GLORY</b>	Why We Embrace Christ	21
<b>UNIT 2</b>	<b>GLORY</b>	How We Embrace Christ	33
<b>UNIT 3</b>	<b>GRACE</b>	Why We Embrace the Cross	45
<b>UNIT 4</b>	<b>GRACE</b>	How We Embrace the Cross	57
<b>UNIT 5</b>	<b>TRUTH</b>	Why We Embrace the Word	69
<b>UNIT 6</b>	<b>TRUTH</b>	How We Embrace the Word	81

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# 1

## UNIT ONE

# GLORY WHY WE EMBRACE CHRIST

Finding the Missing Piece that Satisfies

**UNIT ASSIGNMENTS** Find your assignments here: [PERIMETER.org/b1-1](https://PERIMETER.org/b1-1)

### READ

- ☐ Part 1, "The Story of Glory" in *The Answer* by Randy Pope

### LISTEN

- ☐ Audio message, *Why Pray?*

### COMPLETE

- ☐ *Semester I Spiritual Assessment* and hand in to your group leader
- ☐ *Work on My Spiritual Journey So Far*

# TRUTH

## ► BY MEMORY

*“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.”*

**JOHN 1:14 (ESV)**

## ► IN BIBLE

Welcome to *The Journey* and to your Journey Group!

Over the next few weeks, as you get to know others in your group and become acquainted with the way life-on-life missional discipleship works, you will be excited to see how it can help you make progress toward becoming a mature and equipped believer for the lost world.

During this break-in period, *The Journey* will lay a solid foundation for your spiritual growth this year by focusing on the true heart and soul of Christianity – the gospel. In a six-unit section called Gospel Living, you’ll discover what the true gospel is, how it frees us, and how it calls us to embrace the pursuit of glory, grace, and truth.

This week, you will begin to explore the story of glory. To get started you’ll want to read two very important passages in the New Testament that describe who Jesus is by using the term *glory*. Read these passages carefully, asking God to help you understand and apply what these chapters teach about Jesus and glory.

**JOHN 1:1-18** – These verses form the prologue of the Gospel of John. John’s prologue is unique in the way he introduces Jesus to the reader. The Gospels of Matthew and Luke introduce Jesus by telling the story of His birth, while Mark tells the story of how His ministry began. John’s prologue, on the other hand, uses terms like *word*, *light*, *flesh*, *glory*, *grace*, and *truth* to describe who Jesus is before going on to tell the stories of what Jesus taught and did.

Read this passage and think about how John describes Jesus. What does he mean by *word*, *light*, *glory*, etc? Try to put John’s description of Jesus in your own words.

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**COLOSSIANS 1:15-28** – In this letter to the church at Colossae, the apostle Paul provides his own brief summary of who Jesus is. You will note that he has his own unique description, but there is a clear overlap with John 1 both in concepts and in the actual terms he uses.

Compare Paul’s description of Jesus with John’s. What do you notice that is unique? What is similar? How does Paul’s description of Jesus add to your understanding of who Jesus is?

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What do you think Paul means when he said “*Christ in you, the hope of glory*” in verse 27?

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## ► TO SUMMARIZE

If there is one thing that all people – religious or irreligious – have in common, it is that everyone is searching for that *one* thing that will satisfy them permanently. It's as if every person is a puzzle with one vitally important missing piece. The void people feel as a result of that missing piece triggers a life-long search for that elusive something. Sometimes we describe it as happiness, meaning, significance, hope, or fulfillment. But people seldom discover it though they look for it in a variety of life's experiences, pleasures, or relationships. In fact, some people despair of ever finding it, and choose instead not to go on living.

What is that missing piece? What can truly satisfy? What are people *really* searching for?

The answer is *glory*. People may or may not be familiar with the word, but glory is the missing piece that will bring their search to an end.

## WHAT IS GLORY?

Check a thesaurus for synonyms and you'll find "renown," "fame," "splendor," "magnificence," "grandeur," and "brilliance." In churches, when the word *glory* is used, it is most often used in reference to the glory of God, meaning God's awesome majesty. Or sometimes Christians talk about giving glory to God, that is, to acknowledge His majesty in worship. But the Bible speaks of glory in a third way, and that is the subject we are addressing here; it is the glory from God, the glory that God satisfies people with by bestowing it upon them.

Where is that glory now? Lost. The story of glory is that God designed humanity to be made complete with the crowning touch of His glory. Psalm 8:5 says that God "...crowned him [e.g. humanity] with glory and honor." Yet, the first generation of people forfeited that glory by trying

to establish their own glory, independent of God's gift. The apostle Paul writes that although the earliest people knew God, "...they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him...although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles" (Romans 1:21-23).

Thus, the all-important crowning piece is missing, and we are all burdened with an instinctive search for that unknown quantity that will satisfy us. But because the search is unnatural (we were not designed to be without glory from God), people go astray into counterfeit, temporary glories whose satisfaction is short-lived at best, and destructive at worst. We live with an addiction to praise, power, and pleasure as we go from toy to toy, fix to fix, and relationship to relationship.

The sobering truth is that glory is lost and it is the *only* thing that will satisfy. Yet God has not left humanity without hope. Jesus called this hope the gospel; it is the good news that glory can be rediscovered. And Paul tells us how we come to a satisfying end to our search; it is through "...Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:27).

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What does “Christ in you” mean? It means coming into a personal, life-changing encounter with Jesus Christ, resulting in His indwelling presence. Jesus called it being “born again.” Now this phrase has been thrown around a lot and a lot of negative stereotypes are associated with it. But let’s try and clear up what Jesus meant by it.

If you were asked to identify yourself by clicking one of these buttons, which would it be?

NOT A CHRISTIAN

CHRISTIAN

BORN-AGAIN CHRISTIAN

Many people will identify themselves as a Christian, just not a *born-again* Christian. But that’s like saying someone is semi-married, or semi-pregnant. It just isn’t a real category at all. Jesus said in John 3:3, “... no one can see the kingdom of God [where glory from God is complete] unless he is born again.” So every Christian by Jesus’ definition, is a born-again Christian. He didn’t intend for us to attach a social stigma to this term. He used it to indicate that through His indwelling presence, an initial deposit of glory is *birthed* again in all Christians, ending the search for the missing piece.

But this is not the end of the story of glory. God never intended the initial deposit to be sufficient by itself. He wants to keep pouring His glory into people’s lives, satisfying them day by day. How can we go on receiving glory from God?

By *giving* glory to the God of glory. Now, what gives glory to God is this: renouncing all counterfeit glories, and placing our hope of satisfaction in Him alone. Paul describes this very thing when he said that he accounted all his earthly gains (the counterfeit glories of personal status, power, human praise, and self-righteousness) to be losses compared to the “... surpassing greatness of knowing Christ” (Philippians 3:7-9).

Unfortunately, we may make the mistake of thinking that we can gain glory from God while we continue to embrace our counterfeits. This is what the Bible calls “idolatry.” The counterfeit glories may not be bad things in themselves, but they can become idols when we cling to them as necessary for life satisfaction because they rival the place of God in our lives.

The final chapter in the story of glory is, in a sense, still unwritten. Christians are looking forward to a full restoration of glory from God that had crowned humanity before it was lost. But in another sense this chapter is already certain, because Christ is the hope of glory and this promise will not fail. So because of deposits of glory, Christians can be satisfied with Christ in this life, but not with life in and of itself.

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# EQUIPPING

As you read through the Truth section, perhaps there were some things you didn't agree with, or points that weren't clear to you. Perhaps you haven't experienced anything like the story of glory and it all seems rather idealistic to you. Take some time before your next group meeting to investigate further by exploring the Scripture passages given below. Jot down some notes for discussion with your group.

Compare Genesis 1:26-28 to Psalm 8:3-8 to understand what glory has to do with the way humanity was designed.

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Compare Genesis 3 to Romans 1:21-32 to discover how the forfeiture of glory impacted humanity.

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Reflect on your life and your own search for the missing piece. How did you become aware of a void within? How did your search affect your life? Have you discovered satisfaction in glory from God? Are you still searching? Are any counterfeit glories competing for God's place in your life? Use this section to journal your thoughts and be willing to share them with your group.

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# ACCOUNTABILITY

Before your Journey Group meeting, think about the questions below. You may be asked any of these questions and you may be asking them of another group member. These questions will help you to examine your life in light of the truth you explored this week. They also give other group members an opportunity to encourage you to live fully for Christ. Space is provided below so you can jot down notes during the accountability discussions in your group meeting.

Have you found the one, truly satisfying missing piece in life?

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If so, what difference has it made in your life?

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If not, where is your search headed at this moment?

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At this moment, how would you describe your satisfaction with glory from God?

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Complete this sentence: "I find life satisfaction in glory from God plus \_\_\_\_\_."

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Complete this sentence: "I do/don't think of myself as born again because \_\_\_\_\_."

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# MISSION

## ► INTRODUCTION

In John 12, you will find the story of Jesus' triumphal arrival in Jerusalem just a few short days before He was crucified. On this day – the day Christians now celebrate as Palm Sunday – large, joyous crowds accompanied Him shouting,

*“Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!” (v. 13).*

Now, imagine that you were there, a part of the crowd jostling for a view of Jesus. Like everyone else, you are fascinated by the stories you've heard. There is even a rumor in the crowd that a man had been raised from the dead. Many in the crowd are His devoted followers; others are just spectators enjoying the excitement of the moment. You're not sure how you feel about Him yet, but whatever He is, He certainly is a man of purpose and action. You'd like to meet Him to get your own sense of Him, though you don't see a way past the crowd. Then, by chance it seems, you catch the eye of one of Jesus' disciples, Philip. “Please,” you ask, “my friends and I would like to meet Jesus.” Philip, seeing that you aren't a Jew, first talks it over with Andrew, and then they both go to tell Jesus that some curious “Greeks” wish to meet Him. Seeing your opportunity, you follow behind and get just near enough to overhear Jesus telling Philip and Andrew, *“If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also”* (v. 26). As He speaks, you observe a strange, but attractive blend of compassion and purpose in His face.

And, in that moment, you learn this: Jesus is on a mission driven by love. And those who serve Him must follow Him into that mission.

As you learned in the orientation to *The Journey*, the purpose of life-on-life missional discipleship is to develop mature and equipped followers of Christ *for the lost world*. The goal of the Mission section is to support this purpose so that Truth, Equipping, Accountability, and Supplication are transformed into a missional life, that is, a life that follows Jesus in His mission.

What is Jesus' mission? It is to make His gospel known to all people through word (sharing the gospel) and deed (demonstrating the gospel). This is the mission that every generation of His followers must take up as well. But, don't confuse becoming *missional* with becoming a foreign missionary. A missionary may devote his or her life to making the gospel known beyond a border or across an ocean. But, Christ calls all His followers to make the gospel known through word and deed wherever they live, work, or play, as well as in their surrounding communities.

Throughout this year, *The Journey* will help you deepen your understanding of what it means to live a missional life, and why, as Christ's follower, you would want to take up His mission. Along the way you'll learn how to pray for people you know who aren't believers, and how to find meaningful opportunities to serve those around you. You'll also learn to tell the story of your own spiritual journey in a comfortable, engaging way, and you'll find out how easy it can be to discuss the common questions that most people want to know about faith in Jesus Christ.

*Take a few moments to begin thinking about Jesus' purpose and compassion by answering the questions below.*

What is Jesus' mission as it was defined on the previous page?

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What does "word and deed" mean?

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What is your immediate response to the idea of following Jesus in His mission?

Are you uncertain? Eager? Resistant? Use the space below to write your first thoughts and feelings about the missional aspect of your spiritual journey.

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Use this space to turn your thoughts and feelings about missional living into a prayer.

What would you want to say to Jesus about the missional aspect of your spiritual journey?

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# SUPPLICATION

*"Then Moses said, 'I pray, show me thy glory!'"*

**EXODUS 33:18 (NASB)**

What would happen if you began to ask for, look for, and expect to see the glory of God in your life? Be bold and seek the face of God and His glory. Ask Him to draw near to you.

This week, take some time to talk with God about His glory. Consider the glory *of* God and the glory *from* God as you pray.

My prayer request regarding the truth for this week:

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My prayer request regarding a situation in my life:

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My prayer request regarding living a missional life:

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## UNIT TWO

# GLORY

## HOW WE EMBRACE CHRIST

Embracing Christ in Personal Worship

**UNIT ASSIGNMENTS** Find your assignments here: [PERIMETER.org/b1-2](https://PERIMETER.org/b1-2)

**LISTEN**

- ☐ Audio message, *God's Honor*

**COMPLETE**

- ☐ *Semester I Spiritual Assessment* and hand in to your group leader
- ☐ *Work on My Spiritual Journey So Far*

**BEGIN**

- ☐ *21 Days of Personal Worship*

# TRUTH

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## ► BY MEMORY

*"So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature."*

**GALATIANS 5:16 (NIV)** — option a

*"This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success."*

**JOSHUA 1:8 (ESV)** — option b

## ► IN BIBLE

Last week, you began *The Journey* by looking at the story of glory and saw that Jesus Christ is our one true hope of realizing lasting glory in our lives. This week, you will learn how to embrace Christ through daily personal worship. Developing this spiritual discipline is crucial for becoming a mature and equipped follower of Christ for the lost world. It is not just a

religious thing to do. It is a spiritual channel through which God's glory, grace, and truth continually flow into your life. **The 21 Day Personal Worship Journal**, a supplemental document available with this week's lesson, is provided to help you establish a consistent habit of daily personal worship. Please download it and bring it to your Journey Group meetings.

**MATTHEW 6 & 7** – These two chapters contain part of Jesus’ most famous sermon — The Sermon on the Mount. This sermon, which begins in chapter 5, gives us some of Jesus’ best-known and best-loved teaching, including the Beatitudes, the Lord’s Prayer, the Golden Rule, and even His teaching about judging others. Matthew 6 and 7 have a lot that is worth your attention, but try to focus on Jesus’ teaching about communication with God. Look for what He says about prayer, fasting, worry, trust, and making requests.

Matthew 6 relates Jesus’ teaching on how to pray to how *not* to pray.  
Try to summarize Jesus’ teaching on prayer in Matthew 6.

How to pray:

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How *not* to pray:

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In Matthew 7:13-28, Jesus told several stories to illustrate the need to obey His teachings, not just marvel at them. In your own words, summarize what Jesus taught about the benefits of obeying, and the consequences of not obeying His teachings.

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## ► TO SUMMARIZE

In the last unit, we introduced the idea that the ultimate answer to anyone's search for satisfaction, significance, and happiness is the *glory that comes from God*. We reviewed how God designed us to be satisfied by nothing less than the glory He bestows and how humanity forfeited that glory by pursuing counterfeits that can't truly satisfy. Yet, God is merciful and offers the promise of renewed glory when we embrace His son Jesus Christ (Colossians 1:27). The question for this week is how to actually embrace Christ (and receive satisfaction) in our daily lives. Once you first embrace Christ as your soul-satisfying source of glory, how is that commitment expressed in a practical, tangible way?

The answer is that the primary and regular means God has given to receive this satisfaction is through personal and congregational worship. The goal of this unit is to help you understand how to begin a lifelong habit of embracing Christ in daily personal worship.

If you are married, you probably understand that your marriage ceremony was not an end in itself; it was the beginning. Beyond the ceremony where you formally vowed your exclusive devotion to your spouse, your marriage consists in the daily enriching experience of that devotion. In the same way, personal worship is the daily enriching expression of your devotion to Christ. It is not the ceremonial beginning. It is the daily path.

Personal worship is the daily time you spend devoting your attention exclusively to the

glory of Christ and receiving the satisfaction He gives. (This is why it is sometimes called "devotions"). The two key activities that comprise personal worship are prayer and Bible study. These are critical for your spiritual growth, and without them your spiritual journey will be seriously hampered.

If the act of praying or reading the Bible is unfamiliar to you, don't feel anxious. This material will present a simple and engaging plan for getting started that you can follow as long as you feel that it helps you to engage with God. Along the path of your spiritual journey, you will discover other methods that will help you, too. Just remember, personal worship isn't a *to-do* you check off of your day planner, and it doesn't earn you a special place in God's heart. It's really an opportunity, an invitation, for you to enjoy the glory of God in Christ and to receive satisfying glory from Him.

That being said, you do have to be intentional about making time for personal worship, or you will never form the habit. Take a look at your schedule, and decide on a time and place where you can carve out few minutes of *consistent, private* time for personal worship. Many people find it beneficial to begin their day with personal worship, and feel like it strengthens them prior to the stress of the day. So, try to find early morning time if you can. You will probably need a minimum of 20 minutes.

Next, it's important to have a plan for reading the Bible. If reading the Bible regularly is a new experience for you, ask your group leader to recommend a plan for you. It would probably be best for you to begin reading in the New Testament, learning about the life and teachings of Jesus. It's also important for you to understand how to read the Bible for your maximum spiritual benefit. To that end, the **PRAISE** acrostic below will help you understand the basics of how to read, interpret, and apply the Bible to your life.

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## P R A I S E

**PRAY  
FIRST**

Our nature is to be blind to spiritual things, so we need God to make us spiritually sensitive to what He wants to teach us. The Psalms contain a prayer that would serve us well: “Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law” (Psalm 119:18).

**READ  
THE TEXT**

If you read the Bible randomly—a verse here and a verse there—it’s almost certain that you will never really understand the major teachings of Scripture. Most of the Bible is meant to be read in paragraphs and sections. Chapter divisions are convenient section markers.

**ASK  
QUESTIONS**

Ask interpretive questions to help you get at the facts. What is the issue? What does that word mean? What is the flow of thought? Why did he say that? But be sure to ask application questions, too. What should I do? Learn? Believe? Repent of? How should I respond?

**INTERPRET  
IN CONTEXT**

Be careful that you don’t interpret a word, phrase, or verse in a way that isn’t consistent with its context. Check your conclusions by asking yourself if the author would have intended his original audience to understand him the way you’re interpreting him.

**SUMMARIZE**

A most useful exercise is to capture the main point(s) and personal application(s) of a section (whether a paragraph or chapter) in a journal or notebook. This forces you to think through the meaning of a passage and your response, rather than skimming through without much benefit.

**ENGAGE  
WITH GOD**

Now, talk to God in response to what you have read. Ask Him to apply His Word to your heart; to give you understanding, faith, and obedience. If you are new to prayer, you can pray aloud or silently, but don’t worry about fancy words. God is interested in the sincere expression of your devotion to Christ. If you don’t know what to pray, it may help you to focus on these 5 important elements (or targets) of prayer which Jesus taught in the Lord’s Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13).

## ► FIVE TARGETS OF PRAYER

**GOD'S HONOR** – acknowledging His worth

*"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name."*

First, focus on God himself. Praise Him for His greatness; that He rules over all things. Consider His fatherly love for you. Meditate on who He is and what He is like.

**GOD'S KINGDOM** – acknowledging His priority

*"Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."*

Next, focus on God's rule over you and the world. Think about what you just read and invite Him to accomplish His plans in every situation of your life, and in the world around you. You can also pray specifically for family, friends, and the people on your prayer list.

**GOD'S PROVISION** – acknowledging His trustworthiness

*"Give us this day our daily bread..."*

Now focus on God's ability and willingness to meet all your needs. Ask God for His blessing on your work and home, and affirm your contentment with what He provides, great or small.

**GOD'S FORGIVENESS** – acknowledging your repentance

*"...and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors."*

Then consider how you have fallen short of God's glory and confess your sins specifically. Ask that He would forgive you for Christ's sake, and rejoice that He has promised you forgiveness and glory in Christ Jesus. Pray that Christ's righteousness would be more evident in your life.

**GOD'S POWER** – acknowledging your dependence

*"And deliver us from the Evil One so that we may not be led into temptation."*

Last, focus on God's ability and promise to deliver you from all the temptations of the Evil One. Thank Him for His promise to help you in every need. Pour out your troubles to Him, and bring your requests before Him. Make a list of people and situations to pray for. As you keep track of answered prayers, your faith in God's power and love for you will increase.

## ► LET'S REVIEW

The goal of this unit is to help you begin a lifelong habit of embracing Christ in daily personal worship. Personal worship is the time you spend devoting your attention exclusively to the glory of Christ and the satisfaction He gives. To form this habit you should:

- **PLAN** for a **CONSISTENT** time and private place.
- **FOLLOW** a Bible reading plan using **PRAISE** as a guide.
- **FOCUS** on the **FIVE TARGETS OF PRAYER** described here.

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# EQUIPPING

How would you describe your attitude toward the Bible? Is it a familiar friend, or is the Bible an unfamiliar mystery to you? Do you think of it as trustworthy? Is it relevant, or irrelevant? Is it a foundation of your life, or a Sunday only religious handbook?

Take a few minutes to write your thoughts, attitudes, beliefs, and questions about the Bible.

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Learning to pray is as important to your spiritual health as learning to eat and drink is to your physical health. But perhaps you don't see it that way. Perhaps you wonder if prayer is important, effective, or if it "works." In the space below, write a few lines about what your attitude has been toward prayer.

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If a friend were to ask you, "Why should I bother to pray? Isn't God in control of everything?" how would you answer? Try to give 3 or more reasons why prayer is a worthwhile use of your time.

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# ACCOUNTABILITY

Before your Journey Group meeting, think about the questions below. You may be asked any of these questions and you may be asking them of another group member. These questions will help you to examine your life in light of the truth you explored this week. They also give other group members an opportunity to encourage you to live fully for Christ. Space is provided below so you can jot down notes during the accountability discussions in your group meeting.

Do you understand the connection between glory that satisfies and personal worship?

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What life issues (if any) could be hindering your spiritual growth right now?

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Do you have a daily habit of personal worship? If not, what actions are you taking to begin?

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How do you feel about taking up Christ's mission to make the gospel known?

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Is there any area of your life where you are a hearer, but not a doer of Jesus' teaching?

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Did you complete the Mission assignment this week?

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Have you found the one truly satisfying missing piece in life?

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# MISSION

## ► LIVING

Last week, you were reminded that the purpose of life-on-life missional discipleship is to develop mature and equipped followers of Christ for the lost world. The goal of the Mission section of *The Journey* is to support this purpose so that Truth, Equipping, Accountability and Supplication are transformed into a missional life.

### SO THEN, WHAT IS A MISSIONAL LIFE?

To answer that question, you must start with Jesus. What was His mission?  
Let's let Scripture speak for itself:

*"And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction."*

**MATTHEW 9:35**

*"For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve"*

**MARK 10:45**

*"For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."*

**LUKE 19:10**

From these three verses, how would you describe the mission of Jesus?

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In its most basic sense, *a missional life is one that is motivated by the gospel and empowered by the Holy Spirit to take up Jesus' mission*. Imagine that a great baseball manager approached you with a remarkable gift to offer. He has the power to instantly give you all the raw skills and athleticism to become a professional baseball player. What's more, he can also instantly give you a love for the game. What do you think you would do with those gifts? Would you become

a lifelong baseball fan? Sure, but you would also begin learning the intricacies of the game. You would develop your skills and try out for a team. You couldn't be content to just observe from the stands. In the same way, as a believer begins to grasp the life changing power and love that s/he has received in the gospel, this motivates and empowers them to become a participant in the gospel mission, an agent of the gospel's love and power, not just a recipient.

**EPHESIANS 2:8-10** shows that the gospel has power to not only save the recipient of grace, but also to transform the recipient into a "player." Go ahead and read Ephesians 2:8-10 and use the space below to describe your thoughts and feelings about becoming an agent of the power and love God expressed in the gospel. Is this really possible? How can this happen? Are you sure you want to be an agent of God's power and love?

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Use this space to turn your thoughts and feelings into a prayer. What would you want to say to Jesus about becoming an agent of His love and power?

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# SUPPLICATION

*"I love the Lord, because He hears my voice and my supplications. Because He has inclined His ear to me, therefore I shall call upon Him as long as I live."*

**PSALM 116:1-2 (NASB)**

In Psalm 116, the psalmist declares his love for God, because God hears his voice. Because he knows that God hears his prayers, he declares he will call on Him as long as he lives.

In prayer, ask God to grab your heart and draw you near to His. Ask Him to make your personal times of worship rich. Thank Him for hearing your prayers and for loving you.

Let your personal worship be born and bathed in prayer.

My prayer request regarding the truth for this week:

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My prayer request regarding a situation in my life:

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## 3

## UNIT THREE

# GRACE

## WHY WE EMBRACE THE CROSS

Learning to Rightly Relate to God

**UNIT ASSIGNMENTS** Find your assignments here: [PERIMETER.org/b1-3](https://PERIMETER.org/b1-3)

**READ**

- ☐ Part 2, "The Story of Grace" in *The Answer* by Randy Pope

**LISTEN**

- ☐ Audio message, *God's Kingdom*

**COMPLETE**

- ☐ Hand in *Semester I Spiritual Assessment*
- ☐ Finish *My Spiritual Journey So Far*

**CONTINUE**

- ☐ *21 Days of Personal Worship*

# TRUTH

## ► BY MEMORY

*"For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."*

**2 CORINTHIANS 5:21 (ESV)**

## ► IN BIBLE

In your study of the true gospel over the last two weeks, you learned that you were created in such a way that lasting satisfaction can only be found in the glory that God bestows in Christ. You also learned that the way to embrace glory is by experiencing Christ in daily, personal worship.

This week, you will begin to consider a second important term as it relates to the true gospel – *grace* – and the cross by which grace is made available to us. As you read the **IN BIBLE** study passages, concentrate on discovering how God's blessings are secured for you, and how to rightly relate to God. Pay attention to key concepts like grace and law, sin and righteousness, freedom and slavery, and faith and love.

If you like, you can use these **IN BIBLE** Scriptures in your personal worship. Be sure to follow the elements of **PRAISE** and the **5 Targets of Prayer** while you are establishing the habit of personal worship. Don't skimp on the "**S**" (Summarize Applications). It is especially important that you learn to apply the Scriptures to your own life and become a doer of God's Word.

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**GALATIANS 5:1-8** – In this passage from the apostle Paul’s letter to Galatia, Paul is rebuking the Galatians for turning from grace in an attempt to relate rightly to God by another means.

How were the Galatians trying to relate to God? What were the consequences of their actions?

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**EPHESIANS 2:1-13** – In these verses, Paul is describing every person’s natural standing before God apart from Christ. He then shows what God did that allows Christians to have a right standing before God in Christ.

What was your spiritual standing before God apart from Christ? (verses 1-3, 11-12)

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What did God do to give you a right standing before Him? (verses 4-10, 13)

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**COLOSSIANS 2:13-23** – In this passage, Paul gives more details about what God did for Christians in the cross of Christ, and draws a contrast between what God has done for us and what we do for God.

Compare and contrast what God has done for us and what we do for Him. What constitutes a basis for rightly relating to God?

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## TO SUMMARIZE

Last week, you explored how to begin a lifelong habit of experiencing glory from God by devoting your attention to His glory in daily personal worship. Hopefully you are now several days into the formation of this invaluable spiritual habit. If you haven't started yet, it's not too late. Your group leader can help you and you can follow these bullet points as a simple guide.

- Plan for a **consistent time** and **private place**.
- Follow a Bible reading plan using **PRAISE** as a guide.
 

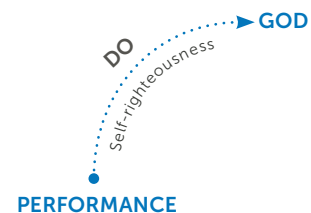
<b>PRAY FIRST</b>	<b>READ THE TEXT</b>	<b>ASK QUESTIONS</b>	<b>INTERPRET IN CONTEXT</b>	<b>SUMMARIZE APPLICATIONS</b>	<b>ENGAGE WITH GOD</b>
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- Focus on the **5 Targets of prayer**.
 

<b>GOD'S HONOR</b>	<b>GOD'S KINGDOM</b>	<b>GOD'S PROVISION</b>	<b>GOD'S FORGIVENESS</b>	<b>GOD'S POWER</b>
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- Commit to **21 days of personal worship** to establish the habit.

The subject for this week is relating to God. Everyone who believes in God wants to rightly relate to Him. That is, we want to be assured of His goodness to us now, and especially when we die. Now, if someone was to ask you if you know how to rightly relate to God, what would you say? Not sure? It turns out there are basically two ways to relate to God, and every religion follows one or the other.

## WHAT I DO FOR GOD

The first is characterized by *what I do for God*, and is best captured by the word *performance*. Performance is all about doing things (or not doing things) in order to gain God's approval. Interestingly, the commitment and determination required for performance does create a kind of goodness that we could call *self-righteousness*.



Self-righteousness sounds bad, doesn't it? We say we don't like self-righteous people and we don't want to be perceived as self-righteous ourselves. But, what we really mean is that we don't like haughty, arrogant self-righteousness, like the Pharisee in a story Jesus told who thanked God that he was so much better morally than other men. We don't like that. But, we actually like regular, non-arrogant self-righteous people. They make good friends and neighbors. We like our kids to play with theirs.

Why? Because they act the *right* way. We aren't concerned with why they act that way.

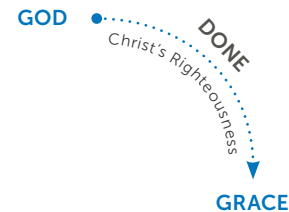
But Jesus, on the other hand, was repulsed by all forms of self-righteousness because He was concerned with the motives that drive actions. Imagine the man who has decided to break his promise to keep a special date with his wife for purely self-centered reasons. Before he breaks the news to her, he tries to buy her off with gifts or romantic



gestures. At first she may be flattered and respond warmly. But when she discovers the true motive for his seemingly loving actions, she is repulsed, and rightly so. In the same way, God is repulsed when we give to charity, attend church, or volunteer in the community in order to get Him to like us. He loves these things, but only when they spring from a motive of love for Him. Performance is giving God the things He loves, yet with improper motives.

## WHAT GOD HAS DONE FOR ME

The second way to relate to God is characterized by *what God has done for me*, and is best captured by the word *grace*. Grace refers to what God has done for us through Christ's work on the cross. On the cross, God exchanged our sinfulness with Christ's righteousness. This *great swap*, as it is called, is what the apostle Paul spoke about in this week's memory verse, "*For our sake he [God] made him [Jesus] to be sin [that is, a sin offering] who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God*" (2 Corinthians 5:21). This righteousness is known as *declared* righteousness because a person is declared righteous by God the moment the swap takes place.



Another term for declared righteousness is *justification*, which you can remember as *just-as-if-I'd-never-sinned*. Justification doesn't imply that we become sinless. Rather, it means that God pardons the penalty due for all our sins. He forgives us. God not only likes us, He loves us unconditionally! True, we can still offend Him, and then we must confess our sin to experience joy. But nothing could alter His faithful love for us because our right standing

with Him is based solely on what Christ has accomplished for us on the cross. Paul describes how the great swap resulted in forgiveness this way: "*And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross*" (Colossians 2:13-14).

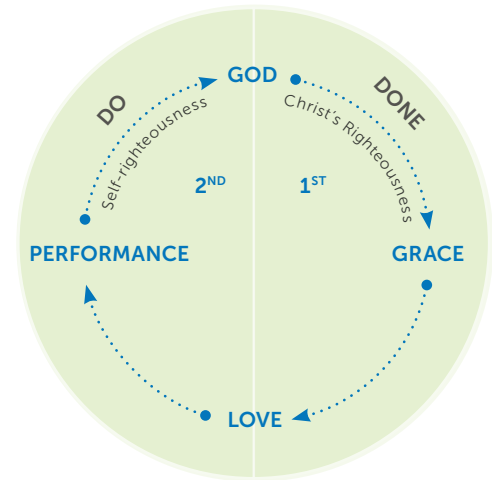
Now consider this question: **does the great swap leave you free to live however you please, while being assured of eternal security?** The answer is both no and yes.

The answer is *no* if you mean that a prayer of acceptance causes the swap to happen. A prayer might express your desire for the swap. But just like a wedding ceremony, the prayer itself doesn't create love; it must be the expression of a love that already exists. Where does this love come from? It is a newborn love, created in the heart by the grace of Christ's imputed righteousness. This newborn love is typically called *faith*; it is trust in God alone for righteousness. So, the swap depends completely on what He has done (grace), not what you could do (performance).

On the other hand, the answer is also *yes* because true believers are both free from sin's debt, and also free to live according to what pleases them. They now have the *moral ability*, because of grace, to perform for God out of a motive of love. This changes performance from an expression of self-righteousness to *demonstrated righteousness* as the diagram on the next page shows.

Incidentally, the diagram also explains a perceived contradiction in Scripture between Paul and James.

Paul taught that we are justified by faith apart from performance, whereas James emphasized that faith without performance is useless. How can we reconcile this? Well, what Paul was talking about was the *declared righteousness* that is based on Christ's work on the cross alone (the 1<sup>st</sup> side of the diagram), whereas James is concerned with *demonstrated righteousness* (the side labeled 2<sup>nd</sup>). He wants to show that if we say we have declared righteousness, but our lives don't demonstrate righteousness, then we have never really received Christ's righteousness at all.



So where does your spiritual pilgrimage begin? Do or Done? If you say *Do*, you may indeed live an attractive, moral and religious life—but it will not earn you God's favor and love. For Paul and James, rightly relating to God is based solely on what God has done. That's why they embraced the cross, expecting to see a righteousness born of love demonstrated in the lives of all who embrace the cross.

Are you struggling with this? Most people do. Operating from the performance mode comes naturally to us. It just *feels* like we're supposed to do something in order to get rightly related to God. Even if you are truly a born-again Christian, you may still struggle with a performance orientation in your relationship with God. Do you ever look at your

past moral failures and wonder if they affect God's love for you? Do you ever find yourself motivated to go to church, to give money, or to spend time in personal worship because you worry that God's favor won't be quite the same if you don't? Well, there are 3 simple beliefs about grace that can help you break out of the performance mentality.

## WE LOST IT ALL

The first is ***we lost it all*** – meaning all humanity has lost *all* virtue in God's eyes; not just perfection, but also all goodness. If this is true, then no amount of effort spent performing for God could ever result in your being good enough to earn His love. (And deep down we all know we should be a lot better.) In fact, the Bible teaches that, "all our [performance-based] righteousness is as filthy rags" in God's sight. Of course the performance mentality doesn't believe that. It would have you believe we *lost a lot*, but not all. Performance tells you that there is something good enough you *can* and *must* do to earn a right standing with God. So, to break the trap of performance-based living, you must first embrace the belief that you lost it all.

## HE DID IT ALL

The second is ***He did it all*** – meaning Christ did everything necessary to completely pardon law breakers like you and me. That means there is nothing left to be done. The grace of the great swap completely satisfies God and puts us in right relationship with Him. Performance thinking will tell you that *He did a lot*, but that we must also contribute faith and repentance out of our own goodness to make salvation a reality. But the true gospel has no room for the meritorious work of self supplying any aspect of our salvation. Someone once said the only thing a person can contribute to their own salvation is the sin that makes it necessary.

## WE GET IT ALL

The last is ***we get it all*** – meaning that God credits the full righteousness of Christ to His followers. Therefore, since we are forever forgiven of all past, present, and future sins, we can be fully assured of God's unconditional love. He also gives us everything necessary to live rightly related to Him and to be fully satisfied in life and eternity. Performance will tell you that we *get a lot*, but not everything that is needed. You can see that as long our beliefs leave us with anything lacking, this becomes the breeding ground for performance. Only when we believe we get it all and embrace the grace that comes via the cross can we expect to rest in Him and to accept that what He did for us was enough.

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# EQUIPPING

Take a few minutes to think about grace vs. performance. How do you see yourself relating to God? In what ways are you performance-oriented, and in what ways are you living by grace?.....

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In Galatians 5:1-8, Paul argues that the Galatian Christians should not seek circumcision as a means of relating to God because Christ has set them free from the slavery of performance. **Think about your own life. In what ways has Christ freed you from the need to perform for God?**

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Review Ephesians 2:1-13 and write down the words and phrases Paul uses to describe how we lost it all, He did it all, and we get it all.

We lost it all .....

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He did it all .....

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We get it all .....

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Colossians 2:13-23 gives another explanation of how what God has done (grace) frees us from the need to do for God (performance). **How do you try to perform for God to make Him love or accept you? How can you find freedom in accepting what God has done for you instead?**

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# ACCOUNTABILITY

Before your Journey Group meeting, think about the questions below. You may be asked any of these questions and you may be asking them of another group member. These questions will help you to examine your life in light of the truth you explored this week. They also give other group members an opportunity to encourage you to live fully for Christ. Space is provided below so you can jot down notes during the accountability discussions in your group meeting.

How have you been trying to relate to God?

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What life issues (if any) could be hindering you from fully resting on God's grace?

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Have you been abusing your freedom in Christ as a license to pursue sinful habits?

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Are you finding in yourself a growing love for God and trust in Him? Explain.

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How do you feel about taking up Christ's mission to make the gospel known?

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How are you doing in developing a personal worship habit?

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Did you complete the Mission assignment this week?

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# MISSION

## ► LIVING

Last week, you began to think about the mission of Jesus and what it means to follow Him in His mission. His mission is to make His gospel known to all people through word and deed, and He charges those who follow Him to take up His mission in their generation. The gospel itself is the motivating power that enables us to participate in Christ's mission. So in its most basic sense, a missional life is one that is motivated by the gospel to take up Jesus' mission.

Now let's look a bit deeper at what it means to live a missional life. Matthew 9:35 tells us how Jesus made His gospel known: *"And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction."* Jesus shared the gospel message in His preaching and demonstrated the gospel with His actions. This approach has been summarized by the phrase *word and deed*. Like Jesus, His followers will make His gospel known through word and deed, as well. This implies that those who desire to live missionally will share a few common characteristics:

- Rather than isolating themselves, they will seek to engage relationally with the people they meet where they live, work, and play.
- They will seek equipping opportunities to enhance their natural abilities, gifts, skills, experiences, resources, knowledge, and compassion with which they make the gospel known by word and deed.
- They will look for needs around them where they can make the gospel known through word and deed.

Your Mission assignment this week is to think about the needs that surround you where you live, work, and play, as well as in your larger community. Who lives around you? What kinds of people groups do you encounter there? What needs do they have?

Make a list of at least 5 different needs of individuals or groups where you live, work, or play.

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Use this space to journal about 1 or 2 of these needs that particularly concern you. Why do these needs capture your attention?

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How do you think Jesus would respond to these needs? Would He make His gospel known in these situations with words, deeds, or both? Try to describe exactly what you think Jesus would do.

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What gifts, abilities, experiences, or resources could you apply to these needs? Are there ways you would like to be better equipped to meet these needs?

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Use the space below to write a prayer about the needs that concern you. Or, perhaps you find your eyes unseeing, or your heart unmoved by needs around you. If so, what would you ask of your heavenly Father?

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# SUPPLICATION

*"For one will scarcely die for a righteous person — though perhaps for a good person one might possibly dare to die. But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."*

**ROMANS 5:7-8 (ESV)**

*"We love because he first loved us."*

**1 JOHN 4:19 (ESV)**

God loves you beyond anything you could ever imagine. There is simply nothing you can do to make Him love you any more than He already does. While you were a sinner, He loved you first. He is the one who pursued your heart.

God desires for you to know Him in an intimate way. Prayer is His gift, freely given to you, to help you communicate with and fall in love with Him.

My prayer request regarding the truth for this week:

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My prayer request regarding a situation in my life:

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## 4

## UNIT FOUR

# GRACE

## HOW WE EMBRACE THE CROSS

Embracing the Cross Through Spirit-Filled Living

**UNIT ASSIGNMENTS** Find your assignments here: [PERIMETER.org/b1-4](https://PERIMETER.org/b1-4)

**LISTEN**

☐ Audio message, *God's Provision*

**COMPLETE**

☐ Complete *My Spiritual Journey So Far* by this week

**CONTINUE**

☐ *21 Days of Personal Worship*

# TRUTH

## ► BY MEMORY

*"And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.*

*<sup>25</sup>If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit."*

**GALATIANS 5:24-25 (ESV)**

## ► IN BIBLE

Last week, you saw that embracing the cross is the key to having a right relationship with God. It is by embracing the cross that you trust the grace of what God has done for you, instead of what you can do for Him.

This week, you will focus on how the grace that comes by the cross can empower you to live a Spirit-filled life. You will be comparing Jesus' teaching with complementary passages from Paul's letters to learn about Spirit-filled living. The passages from John's Gospel will introduce you to the concept of the Christian's union with Christ through the indwelling presence of the

Holy Spirit. The passages from Paul will explain the results of the Holy Spirit's presence and work in our lives. There is a lot to absorb here, so study these texts carefully using **PRAISE**. Don't be concerned if you don't understand everything at first reading. Gather what you can, then move on to the Summary section below for a fuller understanding and practical application.

**PRAY FIRST** | **READ THE TEXT** | **ASK QUESTIONS** | **INTERPRET IN CONTEXT** | **SUMMARIZE APPLICATIONS** | **ENGAGE WITH GOD**

**JOHN 15:1-11** – In this passage, Jesus uses the analogy of a vine and its branches to illustrate the spiritual union between Himself and believer.

What results can be expected when a person is united with Christ?

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**JOHN 14:15-23** – Here Jesus begins to teach that even though He is going to return to the Father, His disciples would continue to experience union with Him by the agency of the Holy Spirit.

What does this passage teach about the person of the Holy Spirit and His role in believers' lives?

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**ROMANS 6:1-13** – In this important passage, Paul explains more fully what our union with Christ means: freedom from slavery to our sinful nature so that we can live a new life of righteousness.

What does it mean to be united with Christ in His death and in His life?

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**GALATIANS 5:13-25** – In this letter, Paul explains that the Spirit's work leads to freedom – not license to sin, but freedom from the power of sin – therefore he urges the Galatians to "walk" in the Spirit.

Describe what you think it means to *walk by the Spirit*.

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## ► TO SUMMARIZE

Last week, you explored why Christians embrace the cross as the only means by which we can rightly relate to God and break out of the performance trap. This week, we will survey how we can embrace the grace of the cross in our daily lives. This important discussion will help you understand how you can experience God's presence and power, making Christ more real to you and making you more like Christ. In simple terms, everyone wants to be aware of God in their lives. We want to *feel* His nearness and love. We want to *know* that He is at work in us blessing our lives, and at work through us blessing others. Spirit-filled living is the practical answer for this desire.

But, before we go further, let's make sure we don't attach any inaccurate perceptions to this phrase. Phrases like being *filled with the Spirit*, or *baptized with the Spirit* have gathered some unbiblical associations in the contemporary Christian world. So, if a discussion of the Holy Spirit brings to your mind negative connotations of extreme emotionalism or bizarre, out-of-control behavior, let's establish now that this is *not* what Spirit-filled living is about. In the Bible, the original words for spirit (*ruach* in the Hebrew Old Testament; *pneuma* in the Greek New Testament) were word pictures that brought to mind the breath of God forcefully breathed or blown as in a strong, blowing wind. These words were expressions of God's power in motion actively creating, controlling, revealing, transforming, or empowering. So, the concept of being filled with God's Spirit should bring to

your mind the idea of *living under the control of God's Spirit*, rather than being out of control.

So then, let's examine what Spirit-filled living is by dividing this discussion into two parts. First, you will learn about the *spiritual reality of your union with Christ*. Then, you will learn about your *spiritual responsibility to be filled with the Spirit*. These two ideas are captured in this week's memory verse: "*If we live [are made alive] by the Spirit, let us also walk by [surrender to the control of] the Spirit.*"

Last week, you learned that having a right relationship with God is based on what God has done for you through the cross of Christ. This is what we call *grace*. Another benefit of grace is your spiritual union with Christ. Jesus promised this union in John 14:16-18.

You may recall that Jesus said He would not abandon believers to leave them as orphans in the world. Instead, He would send the Holy Spirit in His place to make a living union with Him a reality for every believer. Thus, your spiritual union with Christ began when He took up residence in you by the indwelling of His Spirit at the beginning of your spiritual journey. In other words, God's Spirit is the *agent* of your union with Christ; the Spirit makes the union happen.

Your union with Christ has some unique benefits. One is that God regards Christ's death on the cross as your death, thus satisfying the death penalty for sin. But in addition to this, your union with Christ in His death has actually freed you from the *power* that sin once held over you. In your study of Romans and Galatians, you read that we died to sin so that we are no longer slaves to our old sin natures (Romans 6:1-6; Galatians 5:13). Instead, believers are made alive with Christ by His Spirit so that we are free to live righteous lives that please God.

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You might wonder about the freedom that a union with Christ brings. Were you freed from an old master (sin) so that you could be your own master? No. From a biblical perspective, there is no such thing as self-mastery. You are

either a slave to sin, or you have been freed from sin to be God's slave (Romans 6:22). However, slavery to God is actually a delightful freedom because you now have a master who is devoted to your good and loves you unconditionally.

But, does freedom from sin mean that Christians will never sin? It's admittedly obvious that Christians can and do sin and can sometimes even commit grievous sins. Actually, freedom from sin doesn't mean that you *can't* or *won't* sin, it means that you *don't have to* sin. This wasn't the case before you became a follower of Christ, but Paul argues in Romans 6:7 that because you have died to the old sin nature, you are no longer enslaved to its mastery. It is still powerful, and it is still present within you. But you also have within you a new nature; one that is alive through union with Christ and free to struggle against sin by the power of His Spirit. (Romans 6:8-11)

Imagine you are a sailor on an old sailing ship, and you and your shipmates are subject to a wicked and cruel captain. The crew hates the old captain but can't escape his ruthless control. Then unexpectedly, a new captain comes aboard who strips the old captain of his rank and power but allows him to roam the ship freely until the next port of call. The new captain is strong but gentle and treats you and the crew with kindness. One day, the old captain finds you relaxing on the deck and screams expletives and orders at you, which you promptly obey. Soon after, the new captain finds you and asks what you are doing. You explain what happened. Then the new captain reminds you that you don't have to obey the old captain anymore. He no longer has any authority over you.

In the same way, you may struggle with temptation. You may often yield to sin. But your old sin nature can't order you around. You aren't enslaved to it. You are free to struggle against it, empowered by the Spirit of Christ who dwells in you.

This leads us now to consider *your spiritual responsibility to be filled with the Spirit*. As mentioned earlier, Spirit-filled living means living under the control of the Holy Spirit.

The person who is Spirit-filled understands the purpose of the Spirit's presence and lives in harmony with that purpose.

So, what is the purpose of the Spirit-filled life? In one sense that has already been answered, it is to unite us spiritually with Christ. But in a practical sense, the Spirit's purpose is to draw us ever more into the faith, hope, love, obedience, and devotion which constitute our communion with Christ.

Now with this purpose in mind, how can we live under the Spirit's control? We must start with recognition of the power of the cross in our lives. In Romans 6, Paul teaches that we should *know*, or *understand* (v. 3) that we are dead to sin and alive to God because of our union with the crucified and resurrected Christ. In addition, Paul wants us to *consider*, or *chew on* (v. 11) this fact so that we embrace it wholeheartedly, and then *present*, or *surrender* (v. 13) our lives to God to be tools of His righteousness. Paul expressed the same idea of daily surrender to God using different language when he taught the Galatian Christians to *walk by [i.e. surrender to the control of] the Spirit*, to avoid gratifying their sinful desires (Galatians 5:16). Jesus taught a similar thought

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in John 15 with His illustration of a vine and branches. Just as a branch draws physical life from a central vine to bear fruit, so Christians must *abide* in Christ, drawing their spiritual life from Him to demonstrate the fruits of loving obedience to Him. From this you should learn that being filled with the Spirit is not a one-time experience, but rather a constant surrendering to the Holy Spirit's control. In fact, when Paul says to the Ephesian Church, "*be filled with the Spirit*" (Ephesians 5:18), he means that he wants them to *keep on being filled with the Spirit*.

What then, does it mean for you to live a Spirit-filled life – a life of surrender to God? First, it means that you must regularly confess your inability to do anything good and your total dependence on His work in your life. Jesus said, "*...apart from me you can do nothing*" (John 15:5). If you have an "I can do it" attitude of moral determination, you will fail. But, if you humbly admit your dependence on Him, His Spirit will fill you with the power you need to be who He wants you to be, and do what He wants you to do. Further, you must trust Christ completely with your

life and offer it daily in service to Him. You must pray continually that God through His Spirit would use your heart, mind, hands, feet, eyes, and tongue as His instruments.

Certainly, sinful failures will come. When they do, confess your sin to Him, knowing that He forgives you without reservation because of the cross. Then thank God for His forgiveness and for your union with Christ, and ask Him to fill you again with His Spirit. Some have called this exercise *spiritual breathing*: exhaling the impure by confessing your sin, and inhaling the pure by inviting the Spirit's control of your life again.

Finally, remember that a Spirit-filled life is totally dependent on the reality of your union with Christ, which is a gift of grace, won by the cross and put into effect by His Spirit. This is where the power for Spirit-filled living comes from. It is like a spiritual battery pack that you switch on by inviting the control of the Holy Spirit. If you are a follower of Christ, you have been made alive in Him by the Spirit. So, embrace the work of the cross in you by surrendering your life to the Spirit's control.

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# EQUIPPING

After reading the Scripture texts and Truth section for this week, you may have some lingering questions. Write a question or two that you would like to discuss with your Journey Group.

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Something that wasn't specifically explored in the Truth section are the benefits of living a Spirit-filled life. Spend a few moments thinking about the beneficial impacts that living under the Spirit's control could have in your own life situations or struggles. You can look at Romans 6:20-22 if you need some thoughts to get you started.

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Describe how you view the controlling forces of your life. Do you see yourself as in control? Someone else? God's Spirit? A sinful habit? What would need to change so you could better align your life with the Truth you studied this week?

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# ACCOUNTABILITY

Before your Journey Group meeting, think about the questions below. You may be asked any of these questions and you may be asking them of another group member. These questions will help you to examine your life in light of the truth you explored this week. They also give other group members an opportunity to encourage you to live fully for Christ. Space is provided below so you can jot down notes during the accountability discussions in your group meeting.

Do you know whether you are a follower of Christ? How do you know?

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Are there any relationships that you are unwilling to surrender to the Spirit's control?

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Are there any life issues that you are unwilling to surrender to the Spirit's control?

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In what ways do you see yourself as depending on God, or independent of Him?

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Has the Spirit revealed to you a need to change any life habits? If so, what are you doing to surrender to the Spirit's control regarding that habit?

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How do you feel about taking up Christ's mission to make the gospel known?

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How are you doing in developing a personal worship habit?

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Did you complete the Mission assignment this week?

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# MISSION

## LIVING

Depending on where you are in your spiritual journey, you may be wondering why you would want to participate in Christ's mission. Perhaps you're shy. Maybe you just don't like people. Maybe in your mind, the thought of talking about "religion" ranks right up there with "root canal" and "tax audit." Or, you may wonder, "How can I think about other's needs, when I'm the one who needs help?"

There are several reasons to take up Jesus' mission, not the least of which are to follow Christ's command, to bring glory to God, or to receive a glorious reward in heaven. But, if you're not in a place in your journey where this seems very helpful, perhaps the apostle Paul can lend you a hand.

Read 2 Corinthians 5:14-15. In this passage, Paul is describing his motivation for taking up the mission of Jesus. What motivates Paul to make the gospel known?

The love of Christ is a compelling reason to make the gospel known through word and deed. Let's note that Paul's response to Christ's love is to become an agent of His love. We could say that the gospel itself, once received, motivated Paul to participate in its spread. Now, note this: The gospel of Christ's love gave Paul the reason and the power to be its agent. Paul was not a servant of the gospel for mere obligation of

duty, or guilt without heart. No, Paul's service to Christ was the obedience of love he offered in response to the great love of God he had first experienced in Christ. Paul loved Christ, and was empowered to become a conduit of Christ's love for the world, because, as the apostle John writes, Christ first loved him (1 John 4:19). Paul lived a missional life because the gospel of Christ's love created a missional heart in him.

Do you have a missional heart? Write your thoughts and feelings about having a missional heart.

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Now turn your thoughts into prayer. What would you say to Jesus about having a missional heart?

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# SUPPLICATION

*"I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing."*

**JOHN 15:5 (ESV)**

When you come to God in prayer, you come completely helpless. You cannot depend on your intelligence, your worldly wealth, or your physical strength or appearance to win His favor. As you begin to understand and embrace "apart from Me you can do nothing," then you will begin to bear fruit.

This week, in humility and helplessness, bring all your needs to the Father through Jesus.

My prayer request regarding the truth for this week:

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My prayer request regarding a situation in my life:

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## 5

## UNIT FIVE

# TRUTH

## WHY WE EMBRACE THE WORD

Following God's Path to Full Glory

**UNIT ASSIGNMENTS** Find your assignments here: [PERIMETER.org/b1-5](https://PERIMETER.org/b1-5)

**READ**

- ☐ Part 3, "The Story of Truth" in *The Answer* by Randy Pope

**LISTEN**

- ☐ Audio message, *God's Forgiveness*
- ☐ Audio message, *Know, Consider, Present (Walking in the Spirit)*

**CONTINUE**

- ☐ *21 Days of Personal Worship*

# TRUTH

## BY MEMORY

*"If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, <sup>32</sup>and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."*

**JOHN 8:31-32 (ESV)**

## IN BIBLE

So far in *The Journey*, you have learned how and why we embrace the glory and grace that comes to us in the gospel. We embrace glory by experiencing Christ in daily personal worship. We embrace grace by living in the Spirit-filled freedom from sin that was bought by the cross.

This week, you will turn your attention to a third word as it relates to the gospel – *truth*. You will be comparing three selections from the Gospel of John that preserve some of Jesus' best-known teaching on this subject. You should take note of Jesus' teaching about the concepts of *truth*, *freedom*, *discipleship*, and *glory*. How did Jesus use these terms? How are they related in His teaching?

You may now be only a few weeks into developing the spiritual habit of personal worship. If you find yourself faltering, don't quit. The spiritual benefits are worth the struggle. For your convenience, you can use the **IN BIBLE** passages in your personal worship. Remember to follow the **PRAISE** outline and the **5 Targets of Prayer**, asking God to open your spiritual eyes and make you a doer of His word.

**PRAY FIRST**    **READ THE TEXT**    **ASK QUESTIONS**    **INTERPRET IN CONTEXT**    **SUMMARIZE APPLICATIONS**    **ENGAGE WITH GOD**

**JOHN 8:25-47** – In this passage, Jesus is addressing a crowd of Jews and Pharisees (Jewish religious leaders) who challenged His claims to be from God, and had a mixed response to His teaching.

Why do you think it was so difficult for the Jews in this passage to believe in Jesus?

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In this passage, Jesus is challenging what the Jews believed to be true, and at the same time calling them to stake their lives and obedience upon trust that what He says is true. This is no small challenge for anyone. **What mental obstacles challenge your ability to trust Jesus with your life?**

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**JOHN 14:1-11** – Here in one of His last conversations with His disciples before the crucifixion, Jesus responds to an important question from Thomas.

Think about the many implications of the tremendous statement Jesus makes in verse 6. Try to think of as many implications of verse 6 as you can by completing this statement. **If Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life,**

then... ..

then... ..

then... ..

then... ..

**JOHN 17:1-19** – Just before entering the garden of Gethsemane where He was betrayed and arrested, Jesus prayed this prayer for His disciples.

Look at verses 17-19. What did Jesus mean when He prayed for those who believe in Him: *"Sanctify them in the truth?"*

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## ► TO SUMMARIZE

In the preceding weeks, you learned that God designed you in such a way that you will never be fully satisfied by anything but the glory that comes as a gift from God. You also learned that God has given Jesus Christ as your only hope of glory, and that you can experience glory by embracing Christ in daily personal worship. In unit 3, you learned that God loves and accepts you solely because of what He has done for you through the cross of Christ, so you don't need to perform to earn His love. And last week, you learned how to embrace the power of the cross by surrendering your life to the control of the Spirit of Christ that lives in all believers.

This week, you will begin to explore God's path to full glory – the path of *truth*. This is a critical study for you, because you will have to think about whether there is such a thing as absolute truth. If you say yes, then you will next have to think about whether Jesus is the personification of truth and whether you will follow His teaching.

The passage you read in John 8 tells us that as Jesus was speaking to a crowd, many believed Him. His response may have surprised you, because He immediately challenged them with these words, *"If you abide in [continue to follow] my word, you are truly my disciples."* Jesus knew that it's one thing to say "I believe," and another thing to actually follow. Mere agreement wasn't enough to make them or us His disciples. Jesus is looking for followers; people who will stake their lives on His words as absolutely true, not half-hearted believers who only have a preference for His teaching under ideal circumstances. It is only those who continue to follow His word, who will discover that Jesus is the truth that sets them free.

Ok, wait. Maybe you think this description of a disciple sounds a little tough to swallow; maybe even fanatical. If so, you are a living illustration of the tension that exists between two worldviews that are competing for your allegiance: *Christian theism* and *naturalism*. Let's talk about each.

## NATURALISM

Naturalism is the predominant worldview in our society despite the fact that most people say they believe in God. It is founded on the belief that natural causes alone are responsible

for the world we live in, and therefore, the universe itself is the ultimate reality. According to naturalistic philosophy, truth, morality, and the meaning of life are created by each individual. Thus, nothing is absolute; everything is relative, except perhaps science. So, since everyone's beliefs, philosophies, and morals are equally valid, the only way everyone can get along is to be tolerant of each other's views. Tolerance is perhaps the ultimate value of our culture. Ironically, there is little, if any, cultural tolerance for commitment to absolutes.

## CHRISTIAN THEISM

You can see how this worldview is clearly opposed by the teaching of Jesus. His teaching was based on what we call Christian theism. Christian theism is committed to the belief in one transcendent God who created and now rules over everything. He transcends the universe, yet He is not far off, irrelevant to His creation. Instead, He has entered into the history and experience of humanity by revealing Himself and His will, especially through the person of His Son, Jesus Christ. So, God is the ultimate reality, not His creation. Truth (*what is true or false*), morality (*what is good or evil*), and the meaning of life (*what is significant or not*) are absolutes revealed by the Creator.

The dilemma that people who say they believe in God face is that a bold commitment to absolute truth is completely out of step with our modern culture. To resolve this tension, many people try to compartmentalize life so that their *religious* belief in God doesn't conflict with their generally

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naturalistic view of life. But to do this, they have to abandon the notion that there is *absolute moral truth* that applies to all people from all cultures at every point in history. This puts them squarely at odds with Jesus. He calls for followers who are not only committed to the concept of absolute truth, but are also committed to Him as the living reality of truth (John 1:14; 8:31-32 and John 14:6).

Well then, if you abandon truth as Jesus describes it, what possible substitute could replace it? The answer is *human reason* – the number one competitor of truth. Reason could be described as the human mind’s decision-making capacity without the guidance of God. Now, let’s not get confused, truth and reason are not contradictory per se. But the trouble is that sinful human minds, making decisions on limited information, are not as reasonable as they think they are. Certainly human reason cannot even be compared to the all-knowing mind of God, *“For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts”* (Isaiah 55:9). Our human reason becomes dangerous when it determines that God’s thoughts (eternal truth) aren’t as important as our own pursuit of temporary happiness, situational convenience, or momentary pleasure. Reason will offer you the promise of true freedom, but God says it will only lead to bondage: *“there is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death”* (Proverbs 14:12). Contrast this to what Jesus promised in this week’s memory verse, *“If you abide in my word...you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free”* (John 8:31).

As an example, suppose you and your spouse no longer feel in love with each other. What does reason say about this? Reason says it’s pointless to stay married to someone you don’t love. Isn’t it more important for you both to be happy? But God’s Truth teaches that love is first of all a choice and that the marriage vow should not be broken just because feelings of love are gone. It goes without saying that God designed marriage for blessing and the happiness of families, and no one would ever say that divorce is a blessing. But human reason can convince us

that anything is *right and reasonable* when we want it badly enough, though it will ultimately lead to trouble and pain. You could say that human reason is to revealed truth what human performance is to divine grace – a human-centered path to counterfeit glories that rivals God’s plan and is doomed to result in bondage.

Why do we embrace God’s Word? Primarily, because He is worthy of our trust, but also because Jesus promised that following His teachings (the path of truth) would set us free. What did He mean? Free to do whatever you think is good, right, or reasonable at the moment? Obviously not. True freedom is having the power to act in harmony with the truth. The freedom Jesus promises is freedom from our fallen selves, and the power to live according to His word. It is freedom to know God as our Father, and freedom to receive soul-satisfying glory from Him in ever-increasing measure. So let truth’s promise of freedom and glory serve as a call not only to profess that you believe in Jesus, but to continue to follow Him as a disciple of His Word.

Here’s a concluding note. Perhaps as you studied what Jesus said about truth this week, you have a nagging question. *What about evolution? Doesn’t evolution prove that naturalism is valid?*

It is true that the theory of evolution appears to present a significant challenge to Christian theism and its belief in absolute truth as revealed in God’s Word. Generations of people in our society have an implicit faith in this theory as the explanation of the origins of life, even though they want to retain a belief in God or some sort of higher power. But the two systems are contradictory. Naturalism (based on evolution) and Christian theism cannot both be true.

If evolution is a subject you are interested in investigating further, you will find that the supposed scientific consensus on the subject isn’t real. There are several thoughtful books available that carefully examine the science behind evolution and present a Biblically-informed response. Your group leader can suggest some titles that might interest you.

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# EQUIPPING

What do you think about absolute truth? Is there such a thing? Why or why not?

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This week, you have been studying the way Jesus used the words *truth*, *glory*, *freedom*, and *discipleship*. Perhaps you have begun to see these words in a new light. **Use the space here to write your thoughts about the way Jesus used these terms.**

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If you were to “abide in” or continue following Jesus’ teaching, how would your life be different?

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Naturalism and Christian theism are diametrically opposed worldviews, but they both wield tremendous influence in our culture. Try to think about specific ways that naturalism may have influenced your perspective on life. **How would Jesus’ teaching redirect your life in those areas?**

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# ACCOUNTABILITY

Before your Journey Group meeting, think about the questions below. You may be asked any of these questions and you may be asking them of another group member. These questions will help you to examine your life in light of the truth you explored this week. They also give other group members an opportunity to encourage you to live fully for Christ. Space is provided below so you can jot down notes during the accountability discussions in your group meeting.

Do you know whether you are a follower of Christ? How do you know?

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Where do you stand in your commitment to take Jesus at His word and follow Him?

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Have you been trusting God's grace or are you still performing to earn His love? Explain.

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Describe your faith in Jesus in light of this week's memory verse.

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How do you feel about taking up Christ's mission to make the gospel known?

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How are you doing in developing a personal worship habit?

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Did you complete the Mission assignment this week?

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Are you finding in yourself a growing love for God and trust in Him? Explain.

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# MISSION

## ► LIVING

In the last few weeks, you have been introduced to the concept of missional living, that is, living as a participant in Jesus' mission. You have given thought to what a missional life is, and to why you would want to live missionally. This week, you will look a bit deeper into how you can live a missional life.

First, know that a missional life begins with a Spirit-filled life. You learned last week that Spirit-filled living is living under the control of the Holy Spirit. It is like *spiritual breathing* – exhaling the impure by confessing your sin, and inhaling the pure by inviting the Spirit's control of your life. But don't imagine that the Holy Spirit would only lead you to abstain from sin. He also leads you into righteous pursuits, such as participating in Jesus' mission.

So, if the root of a missional life is living under the Spirit's control, how is the fruit of missional living expressed? Through both word and deed. In other words, those who take up Christ's mission will make the gospel known by sharing and demonstrating the gospel to those in need. All Christians are called to this mission, though some may be more active in the telling and others in the doing.

Acts 9:31-43 shows that Christ's followers, living under the Holy Spirit's control, can make the gospel known in different ways. Describe how Peter and Tabitha made the gospel known in this passage.

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Look back at the list of needs you identified in unit 3 of this section. Describe how you could make the gospel known in one of those situations through both word and deed.

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Use this space to write a prayer asking God to fill you with His Spirit and to begin leading you into a missional life. If you feel you can't pray this yet, ask God who is patient to begin changing your heart.

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# SUPPLICATION

*"If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it shall be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples."*

**JOHN 15:7-8 (ESV)**

Jesus gave us simple guidelines for prayer. He tells us to abide in Him and His words, and He promises that He will answer our prayers. When you are seeking the heart of Jesus, you will naturally pray for His will to be done. In this way, God will be glorified, and you will bear much fruit and will prove to be Jesus' disciple.

Ask Jesus to help you abide in Him, and for His words to abide in you.

My prayer request regarding the truth for this week:

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My prayer request regarding a situation in my life:

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My prayer request regarding living a missional life:

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Prayer requests from others in my group:

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*"Of all things,  
guard against  
neglecting  
God in the  
secret place  
of prayer."*

**WILLIAM  
WILBERFORCE**

Handwriting practice lines consisting of 10 sets of three horizontal dotted lines for tracing and writing practice.



## 6

## UNIT SIX

# TRUTH

## HOW WE EMBRACE THE WORD

Living as Ambassadors in a Broken World

**UNIT ASSIGNMENTS** Find your assignments here: [PERIMETER.org/b1-6](https://PERIMETER.org/b1-6)

**READ**

- ☐ "A Few Final Thoughts" in *The Answer* by Randy Pope

**LISTEN**

- ☐ Audio message, *God's Power*

**CONTINUE**

- ☐ *21 Days of Personal Worship*

# TRUTH

## BY MEMORY

*"Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God."*

**2 CORINTHIANS 5:20 (ESV)**

## IN BIBLE

Last week, you learned that God's Word must be embraced as absolute truth, the one path to full glory. You also learned that God's Son must be embraced as the embodiment of that truth.

In this final week of Gospel Living, you will explore how God intends that we live in response to truth. In the **IN BIBLE** passages you will discover the commission that all Christians share, and catch a glimpse of how Paul lived and taught in response to that commission.

Don't neglect to develop the habit of daily personal worship. Remember to follow the **PRAISE** approach that you learned in unit two and the **5 Targets of Prayer**.

**PRAY FIRST**    **READ THE TEXT**    **ASK QUESTIONS**    **INTERPRET IN CONTEXT**    **SUMMARIZE APPLICATIONS**    **ENGAGE WITH GOD**

**MATTHEW 28:16-20** – This passage at the end of Matthew's Gospel contains what has been called Jesus' *Great Commission* to all His disciples.

Who is the commission in verse 19 directed to? The disciples? All Christians? Explain your answer.

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Imagine Jesus speaking to you personally to give you this commission. Describe what your thoughts and feelings would be. What would you feel you needed to do in obedience to the commission?

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**ROMANS 1:1-17** – In this letter to the Christian community living in Rome, the apostle Paul introduces himself and the gospel message, and then explains why he wants to visit Rome.

In verse 14, Paul refers to his calling to preach the gospel as an “*obligation*” (ESV). What do you think motivates him to view his calling this way? Should all Christians share Paul’s attitude in this regard?

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**2 CORINTHIANS 5:14-21** – In his second letter to the Christians who lived in Corinth, Paul explains the essence of the gospel message and his motive for making that message the priority of his life.

In verses 16-21, Paul describes several changes that occur when someone becomes a Christian. What are they? How does God accomplish these changes?

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What motivates Paul to be so devoted to spreading the gospel? Several reasons can be found in this passage. Summarize them in your own words.

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## ► TO SUMMARIZE

Congratulations! This is the sixth and final unit of the Gospel Living portion of *The Journey*. Over the past few weeks, you were introduced to the biblical concepts of *glory*, *grace* and *truth*. You learned how to begin the invaluable spiritual discipline of daily personal worship. You also learned what it means to live by grace under the control of God's Spirit instead of living in the performance trap. As you continue to apply the principles and disciplines you learned, they will form the foundation of healthy growth into a mature and equipped follower of Christ. As in any endeavor in life, the fundamentals are critical to success. So, if you have unanswered questions about the earlier units don't ignore them. It's best to pursue a fuller understanding by talking with your Journey leader.

Last week, your worldview may have been challenged by the teaching that God's Word is the revelation of absolute truth and that Jesus is the incarnation of God's Truth. This week, you will begin to contemplate the call to embrace God's Truth by living as an ambassador to a broken world.

The apostle John relates an amazing story in chapter 12 of the book of Revelation. It is a symbolic vision of a monumental, cosmic event: a great war in heaven. God's angels fought in the heavenly realm against Satan, who is pictured as a huge, red dragon. The angels of God prevailed so that Satan and his minions were thrown down to earth, and power was taken from him so that he could no longer deceive the nations. When was this war? The details in Revelation 12 make it clear that this was not a vision of Satan's pre-creation

rebellion and fall from glory. Rather, this is a vision of another war; a war that took place during human history. What we see here is Satan's raging attempt to destroy Jesus and so prevent the Kingdom of God from coming on earth. But his failure is declared across the heavens: *"Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down"* (Revelation 12:10).

The wonder of this vision is that in it, God reveals His perspective on the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. History records a suffering man and later, an empty tomb. But behind the history is a decisive war in heaven and the defeat of a cruel enemy who has been stripped of his power to blind and deceive the nations. At the same time, through the coming of the Holy Spirit,

God has bestowed power on His Church to bring the light of the gospel to the nations (see Acts 1:8). Think of the enormity of it! The heavens embattled as the Son of God lays down His life and takes it up again! And because of this, the Church receives divine power and divine opportunity to be His witnesses. It should take our breath away, and it should profoundly reshape our perspective on life.

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Paul can be our example in this regard. He had probably never heard of John's vision, yet he understood that the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus called for a drastic change in the way he looked at the world. He expressed his new perspective this way: *"from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view"* (2 Corinthians 5:16, NIV). What Paul means is that he simply can't continue to pursue life and relationships in the way that he once had, as if the cross was a trifling matter with no impact on the world. For Paul, the crucifixion and resurrection was a truth so compelling that it required a thorough reorienting of his life purpose. In fact, he sees this truth as a call to all people not only to believe in Christ, but to be His ambassadors to the broken world so that God's Kingdom may continue to come through His people. Do you share his perspective? Perhaps not. Many of us must admit that we are far too engaged in what could be called *"so what" life pursuits*. Imagine a millionaire telling you excitedly that he made \$38 in a garage sale. You would say, "So what? You're worth millions!" Yet, perhaps you, like that millionaire, pursue the trivial to the neglect of the monumental.

The two most common *"so what" life pursuits* that capture people's attention are *enjoying* one's world, and *impressing* one's world. To these pursuits, God says, "So what!" His design is that people respond to His victory by living in such

a way that they *impact* their world. Is this your approach to life? As you studied 2 Corinthians 5 this week, you read that Paul said *"Christ's love compels us"* (v. 14, NIV). What Paul means is that as far as his life goals are concerned, Christ's love for him has become the controlling principle. In other words, Paul lives in response to Christ's love. Secondly, he says that Christ's love is imperative to all believers that they *"should no longer live for themselves but for Him who died for them and was raised again"* (v. 15). So, in these two verses, we must think about the controlling principle of our lives, and then about where our allegiance lies. Is it to live for the kingdom of self, or for the Kingdom of our God and of His Christ?

Now, just pause for a moment on this question. If you are a Christian, you would at least know what you want the answer to be. You want to live for His Kingdom. Why? Is it because you determined out of your own goodness that this was the right thing to do? Not at all. The reverse is true. It was Christ's love for you, poured into your heart that has made a change in *who you are*. You are a *"new creation"* (v. 17) with a new moral ability that you didn't previously have. And as a new creation, God calls upon your new moral ability to change *what you do* so that your life impacts the world. For you, like Paul, life won't be what it's meant to be, until you have embraced being an *"ambassador"* for Christ (v. 20).

Instead of *"so what" life pursuits*, set your heart on the Kingdom of God growing in and through you. Abandon counterfeit glories and worship Christ as your hope of glory. Put to rest your efforts to earn God's love, and rest in the grace of what He has done for you through the cross. Recognize your union with Christ, and surrender to the control of His Spirit. Follow Christ as God's only eternal truth, and make it your life pursuit to be a messenger of that truth.

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# EQUIPPING

How would you define what the gospel is? Review all three **IN BIBLE** passages for this week and try to write two or three sentences that summarize your definition of the gospel.

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Now, based on these same three passages, write a few sentences describing how you want to respond to the call to be an ambassador of the gospel. Be specific and be honest.

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Take a few minutes to review your Spiritual Journey diagram and reflect on your own experience of responding to the gospel to become a follower of Christ. Write a brief story about your experience. Organize your story around this outline: *before*, *when/how*, and *since* you became a follower of Christ.

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# ACCOUNTABILITY

Before your Journey Group meeting, think about the questions below. You may be asked any of these questions and you may be asking them of another group member. These questions will help you to examine your life in light of the truth you explored this week. They also give other group members an opportunity to encourage you to live fully for Christ. Space is provided below so you can jot down notes during the accountability discussions in your group meeting.

To what extent do you find yourself pursuing “so what” life pursuits?

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Do you think it’s important for you personally to be an ambassador for Christ? Explain.

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Have you been trusting God’s grace or are you still performing to earn His love? Explain.

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How are you doing in developing a personal worship habit?

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Are there any life issues that you are unwilling to surrender to the Spirit’s control?

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In what ways do you see yourself as depending on God, or independent of Him?

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Did you work on the Mission assignment this week?

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# MISSION

## LIVING

So far in this series, you have investigated the what, why, and how of missional living:

**What is it?** Sharing in Jesus' mission to make the gospel known to all people

**Why participate in it?** The love of God displayed in the gospel compels and empowers

**How is it manifested?** By sharing in word and demonstrating by deeds

Let's now think about *where* a missional life will take you. As Christians seek to live missionally, their engagement with the world can be defined by the categories of need and distance. Needs may be spiritual, psychological or physical (e.g. food, shelter, protection, provision, etc.). Distance may be measured culturally or geographically. For example, in the story of the good Samaritan (Luke 10:29-37), Jesus describes a man from Samaria who met a Jewish man's immediate physical needs (food, shelter



and medicine) even though their respective cultures were antagonistic to one another (Jews and Samaritans generally did not associate even though they lived close together). In the story of the conversion of Cornelius (Acts 10), a Galilean fisherman (Peter) met the spiritual needs of a Roman army officer from Caesarea who was culturally distant from Peter's life experience. In Acts 16:25-34, a Jewish Christian from the eastern Mediterranean (Paul) met the spiritual needs of his jailer, a Greek from Philippi who was both culturally and geographically distanced from Paul's life experience. So, living a missional life under the control of the Holy Spirit can take you across spiritual, economic, cultural, and geographic boundaries.

Listen to Jesus' instructions to the apostles in Acts 1:8, noting the locations He refers to on this map, *"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."* To the apostles, Jerusalem was their home base. Judea was the larger, but familiar, region surrounding them. Samaria was a region that was geographically near, but culturally distant from them. And of course, the end of the earth was both culturally and geographically distant from them. From this verse, it is clear that Jesus intended His followers to make the gospel known across every kind of barrier.



So, a good first step toward missional living is to take stock of your surroundings. Where are the Jerusalems, Judeas, and Samarias in your life? What would the end of the earth be for you? Now, this doesn't mean that Jesus calls you to go to all of these arenas. But, you should give thought and prayer to which arena(s) you could make the gospel known, and in which you might assist other believers in making the gospel known.

Based on the teaching of Acts 1:8 that Christians are called to make the gospel known to all people and across all barriers, *The Journey* uses the phrase **across the street, track, and ocean** to describe the arenas in which Christians may live missionally. **Across the street** refers to the everyday spheres of a believer's

life and influence where they live, work, and play. **Across the track** refers to the larger spheres of our communities where people may be geographically close, but culturally or economically distant. **Across the ocean** refers to the sphere of the world where people in need are both geographically and culturally distant.

Where would you define across the street, track, and ocean in your life? Be as specific as you can.

street .....

track .....

ocean .....

Take a few minutes to journal about how you can imagine yourself following Jesus in His mission to make the gospel known to all people across the street, track, and ocean, through word and deed. How could the Holy Spirit work through you? What could you do? Why would you do it? Where could you make a difference? How could you support others who are making a difference?

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# SUPPLICATION

*"After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them on ahead of him, two by two, into every town and place he himself was about to go. And he said to them, 'The harvest is plentiful but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into the harvest field.'"*

**LUKE 10:1-2 (ESV)**

Prayer and the advance of God's kingdom through evangelism are inseparable. Jesus taught His disciples to pray that God's Kingdom would come, and His will would be done on earth just as it is in heaven. He also told them to pray before they went out, asking God to send more workers. His final commission to His followers was to make disciples of all the nations. He promised to be with them in that work, and to empower their labor through the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Ask God to use you and empower you to bring the gospel to those who do not know Him.

My prayer request regarding the truth for this week:

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My prayer request regarding a situation in my life:

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