

Focus on Jesus

In Him you will find...

WORDS
of **LIFE**



Isaiah 55:10-11

"As the centuries pass, the evidence is accumulating that, measured by His effect on history, Jesus is the most influential life ever lived on this planet."

-- Kenneth Scott Latourette,
Professor, Yale University

"As an intellectual, I have often convinced myself that I am living something just because I think I understand it."

-- Mary Poplin, Professor,
Claremont Graduate University

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Introduction

Nothing is more exciting or more difficult than trying to teach the majesty and depth of Christ in a few short pages. These lessons are an attempt to help disciples make disciples. Our prayer is that each reader would be brought face to face with Jesus and become as we are—radical, fired-up, crazy-in-love-with-Jesus disciples. While any human attempt is completely inadequate to save people, we hope that you will see past the pages of this study, past even the pages of the Bible, and see the God who set everything in motion. Focus on Jesus is dedicated to the Father who planned it all, to Jesus who gave it all, and to the Holy Spirit who fills the Earth with His presence. It is presented to learners and to learners who teach, that together we might win as many as possible. All glory be to God, forever and ever! Amen.

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The Bible

The Old Testament

The New Testament

GENESIS
EXODUS
LEVITICUS
NUMBERS
DEUTERONOMY

BOOKS OF LAW

JOSHUA
JUDGES
RUTH
I SAMUEL
II SAMUEL
I KINGS
II KINGS
I CHRONICLES
II CHRONICLES

HISTORY

EZRA
NEHEMIAH
ESTHER

JOB
PSALMS
PROVERBS
ECCLESIASTES
SONG OF SONGS

POETRY

ISAIAH
JEREMIAH
LAMENTATIONS
EZEKIEL
DANIEL

THE PROPHETS

MAJOR

HOSEA
JOEL
AMOS
OBADIAH
JONAH
MICAH
NAHUM
HABAKKUK
ZEPHANIAH
HAGGAI
ZECHARIAH
MALACHI

MINOR

MATTHEW
MARK
LUKE
JOHN

THE GOSPELS

ACTS

HISTORY

ROMANS
1 CORINTHIANS
2 CORINTHIANS
GALATIANS
EPHESIANS
PHILIPPIANS
COLOSSIANS
1 THESSALONIANS
2 THESSALONIANS

PAUL'S LETTERS

1 TIMOTHY
2 TIMOTHY
TITUS
PHILEMON

HEBREWS
JAMES
1 PETER
2 PETER
1 JOHN
2 JOHN
3 JOHN
JUDE

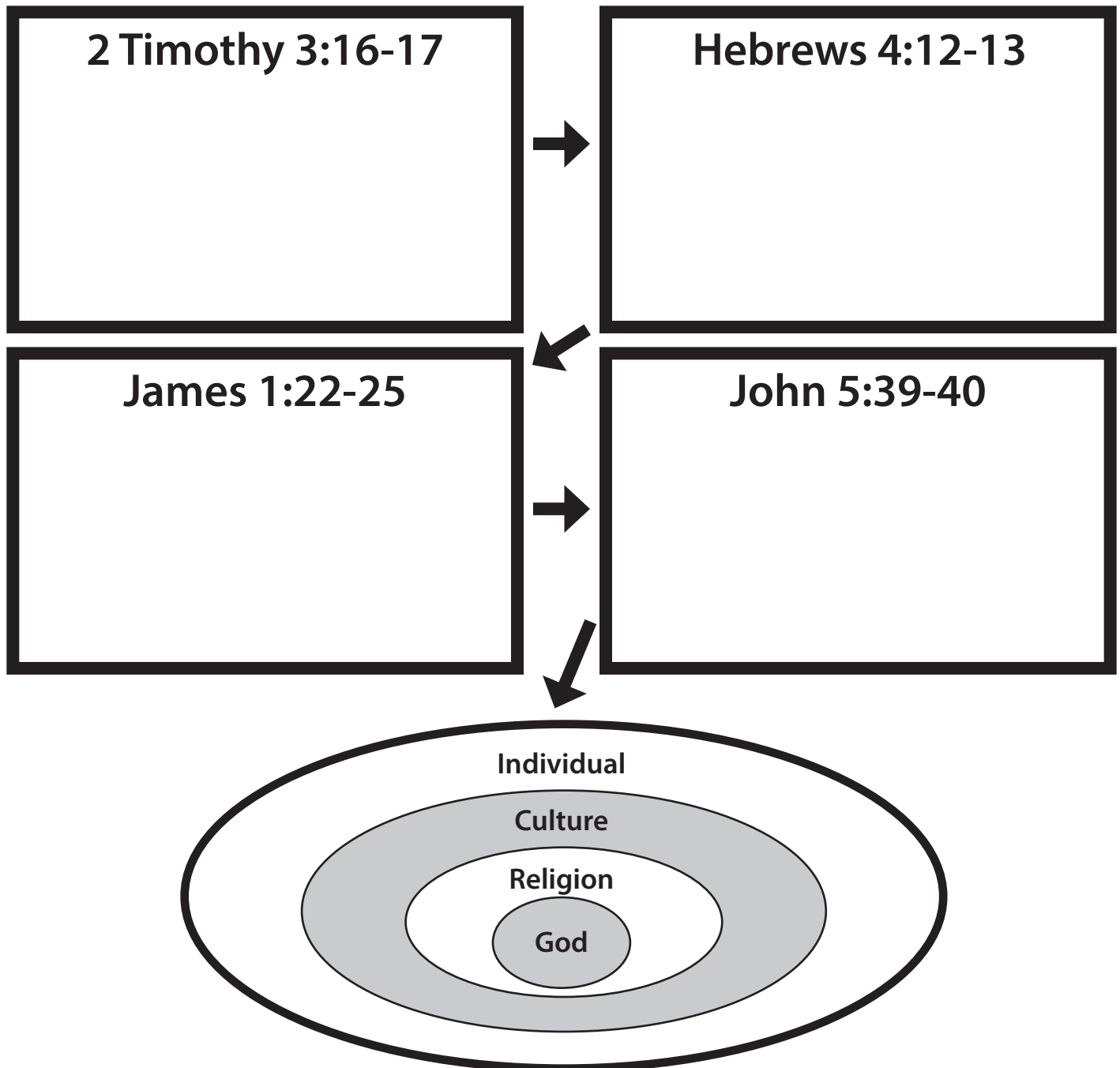
GENERAL LETTERS

REVELATION

PROPHECY

Words of Life

"For we did not follow cleverly devised stories when we told you about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in power, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty." -- 2 Peter 1:16 (NIV)



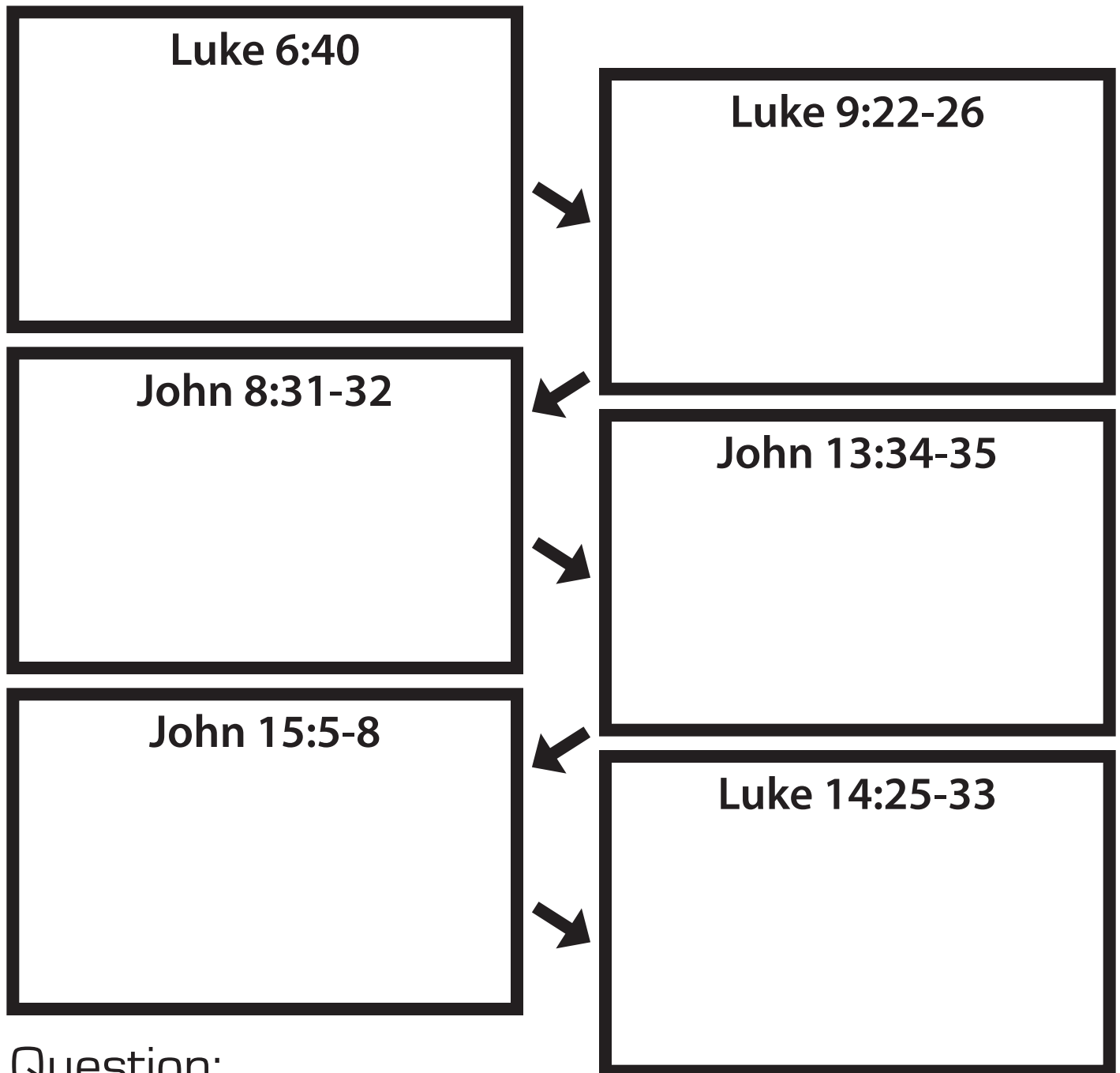
For Further Study:

Choose a book of the Bible you are interested in reading and read it this week. Write down at least 3 questions that come up while you're reading it.

Discipleship

"The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch." -- Acts 11:26 (NIV)

Disciple = **Mathetes** (Gr) = "a learner; one who follows one's teachings" (Vine's)



Question:

Based on these scriptures, are you living as a disciple?

If so, how is that demonstrated in your life?

If not, what is your response to today's teaching?

Read 1 John 1:1-2:6.

What do you think it would look like for you to live as Jesus did?

Read Galatians 5:13-6:10. How would keeping in step with the Spirit change your life? What are you sowing right now?

Make a list of everything that you value—relationships, possessions, attitudes, dreams, plans, honors, sins, careers, degrees, etc. Which of these would be hardest for you to give up for Christ? How could you see Him asking you to do so?

“Christianity without discipleship is always Christianity without Christ. It remains an abstract idea, a myth which has a place for the Fatherhood of God, but omits Christ as the living Son.”

-- Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Life In the Body

"I pray also for those who will believe in me... that all of them may be one...so that the world may believe that you have sent me." --Jesus (John 17:20-21, NIV)

Acts 2:42-47

Romans 12:4-8

Hebrews 10:24-25

Ephesians 4:2-3

Matthew 18:15-17

Matthew 28:18-20

Question:

How do you think the instructions above compare to the modern idea of "church"?

What's Jesus Like?

"We cannot deduce anything about Jesus from what we think we know about God; we must now deduce everything about God from what we do know about Jesus." -- Brennan Manning

"The Son is the image of the invisible God..." -- The Apostle Paul (Colossians 1:15, NIV)

"For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost." -- Luke 19:10 (NIV)

Luke 2:41-52

Mark 1:40-45

John 2:13-17

Luke 20:20-26

John 13:1-15

Philippians 2:5 says, "Have the same mindset as Christ Jesus." How would following Jesus by imitating His mindset change your life? What excuses do you make for not being like him?

For Further Study:

Choose one of the 4 gospels to read this week, and write down three things that really stand out to you about Jesus.

Sin

"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God..." -- Paul (Romans 3:23, NIV)

Sin = **Hamartia** (Greek) = "to miss the mark" (Vine's)

Romans 1:18-32

Mark 7:21-23

Looking back over the last two scriptures, which of these sins have most affected your life? Which are most tempting to you?

1 Corinthians 4:4

James 4:17

James 1:13-15

Challenge:

The questions on the following page are designed to help you take stock of the impact sin has had on your life, past and present. Consider these things and record your answers in a journal or on a separate sheet of paper.

Taking Stock

1. Read Mark 7:21-23, Galatians 5:19-21, and Romans 1:29-31.
How have these been present in your life?
Be prepared to share a few of these.
2. Sin is usually the result of us trying to meet healthy wants and needs in unhealthy ways. What legitimate needs are you trying to meet through sin? (For example, think about thirst in Jeremiah 2:13)
3. Review 1 Corinthians 4:4. Knowing that you can't always trust your feelings, is there anything in your life that you aren't sure whether it's sinful or not?
4. Who have you hurt because of your sin? (yourself, God, friends, family, roommates, others--be specific) How has each been hurt?
5. In his letter to the Corinthian church, Paul says that true repentance includes a desire to see justice done and an eagerness to clear things up (2 Corinthians 7:11). What steps do you need to take to make things right? (return things you've stolen, ask for forgiveness, etc.)
6. Reflect on the following quote:
"The Bible presents sin by way of major concepts, principally lawlessness and faithlessness, expressed in an array of images: sin is the missing of a target, a wandering from the path, a straying from the fold. Sin is a hard heart and a stiff neck. Sin is blindness and deafness. It is both the overstepping of a line and the failure to reach it--both transgression and shortcoming. Sin is a beast crouching at the door. In sin, people attack or evade or neglect their divine calling. These and other images suggest deviance: even when it is familiar, sin is never normal. Sin is disruption of created harmony and then resistance to divine restoration of that harmony. Above all, sin disrupts and resists the vital human relation to God Sinful life, as Geoffrey Bromily observes, is a partly depressing, partly ludicrous caricature of genuine human life."

-- Cornelius Platinga Jr., *Not the Way It's Supposed to Be*
6. Read Genesis 1:1-4:16. How do you see the concepts from the previous questions playing out in this story?

Grace

"For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

-- Romans 6:23 (NIV)

Grace = **Charis** (Greek):
"undeserved favor or mercy"

John 1:14-17

John 3:16-21

Ephesians 2:4-10

Titus 2:11-14

Luke 15:11-32

Do you tend to think of God as being more like the father or the brother in the story from Luke 15? Which of the two is more like you?

Taking Stock:

How do you feel about the idea of God forgiving you? Is His forgiveness something you're willing to accept?

Is there anyone, yourself included, who you are unwilling or unable to forgive? If so, who and why?

Read Luke 7:36-50. Now read it again slowly, imagining yourself as one of the people in the story. What do you see, hear, feel, experience? Then talk to Jesus about what you imagined.

Jesus' Hard Teachings

"I have no idea how the fans of Christianity Lite reconcile their approach to religion with the teachings of Jesus, or how they become comfortable ignoring what He said." -- John MacArthur, Hard to Believe

"Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?" -- Jesus (Luke 6:46, NIV)

Matthew 25:31-46

Matthew 18:21-35

Luke 6:35-36

Matthew 7:13-27

John 14:6-10

Which of these teachings is the hardest for you to accept? Why?

Matthew 5-7 is commonly called The Sermon on The Mount. Read it this week. Which parts are most challenging to you? Take the time to copy those passages in your own handwriting.

Faith, Love, & Obedience

"The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love." -- Galatians 5:6 (NIV)

"Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love." -- 1 John 4:8 (NIV)

Hebrews 11:1,6

1 Corinthians 15:1-2

James 2:14-17

John 14:23

1 Corinthians 13:1-7

Which of these qualities of love is hardest for you? Who is hardest for you to love?

For Further Study:

Read Hebrews 11 & 12. Choose a person whose story interests you and go read about him or her in the Old Testament.

What can you learn from their faith?

Read 11:16 again. Do you long for a "better country"? Do you have a sense that things are not the way they're supposed to be?

Talk to God about your answers.

Rebirth

"I tell you the truth, no one can see the Kingdom of God unless he is born again."

-- Jesus

John 3:3-7

2 Corinthians 7:8-11

Acts 2:36-40

1 Peter 3:21

Galatians 3:26-27

Acts 22:16

Question:

Describe in God's own words the rebirth Jesus talked about.

Have you been reborn as the Bible describes it? If not, are you ready?

Using only phrases from the following scriptures, write out what the Bible teaches about repentance.

2 Corinthians 7:8-11
1 Peter 3:10-11
2 Timothy 2:25-26
Luke 13:3-5

1 Thessalonians 1:6-10
James 4:7-10
Isaiah 55:6-7
Acts 2:36-40

Using only phrases from the following scriptures, write out what the Bible teaches about baptism.

Acts 2:36-40
1 Peter 3:21
Romans 6:3-11
Matthew 28:18-20

John 3:1-7
Galatians 3:26-27
Ephesians 4:4-5
Mark 16:16

Colossians 2:9-12
Acts 22:16
Titus 3:4-7
I Corinthians 12:12-13

(Also consider these examples of conversion in Acts: 2:36-42, 8:12-13, 8:26-39, 9:1-19, 10:44-48, 16:13-15, 16:25-34, 18:7-8, 19:1-7. Do any of these Biblical experiences look like your experience?)

"It is His will that all who have believed be baptized for the remission of sins. Hence those who have thought that baptism is nothing else than the badge and mark [or symbol] by which we profess our religion before men, in the same way as soldiers attest their profession by bearing the insignia of their commander, have not attended to what was the principle thing in baptism; and this is, that we are to receive it in connection with the promise: 'He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.'"

-- John Calvin

Sent Into the World

"Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation." -- Mark 16:15 (NIV)

"A ship in the harbor is safe, but that is not what ships are built for." -- William Shedd

Acts 1:6-8

John 17:13-18

1 Peter 1:13-17

1 Peter 2:9-12

2 Corinthians 5:14-20

Romans 8:14-25

Challenge:

Complete the "Sent Into the World" worksheet on the next three pages. Considering everything you have learned through this study, what will your ministry look like when you go out into the world to make disciples?

As this study comes to a close, it's imperative that you allow God to turn your focus outward and begin seeking those He wants to impact through you.

Who are some people in your life that you believe may not be right with Christ? What specific prayers can you begin praying for them??

List the top four or five most significant needs you see in your peers.

What are the three or four most important personal contributions you can bring to meeting those needs?

"When you are on your death bed, you will be asking only two questions: Who did I love? Who loved me? You won't be thinking about your GPA, MBA, IRA, or BMW. You will be overwhelmed by the depth (or lack of depth!) of relationships you formed during your brief stay on this planet." --Steve Shadrach, The Fuel and the Flame

"I wonder if it might be true that if we are not engaged in spiritual friendship, there are things we can never learn as disciples--no matter how many Bible studies we join, classes and courses we complete, sermons we take notes on, verses we memorize, doctrines we affirm. Might spiritual friendship be an essential dimension of our own training as disciples, an experience we need as much as others do? And further, might it be fair to say we cannot really call ourselves disciples if we are not following Jesus' and Peter's example of being 'friends of sinners'--spiritual friends who love, accept, learn with, and teach those who are missed by God, precious to God?" --Brian McLaren, More Ready Than You Realize

Sent Into the World - Further Study (cont.)

Consider again Matthew 13:44-46. Was this your response to the best news?

What have you “sold” for the Kingdom?

What do you need to sell?

The primary difference between Jesus and any other “good” person was his purpose. Are you living your life on purpose? How does that line up with His? How is that demonstrated in your life?

“The Master said that he who “does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me” (Matthew 10:38). Deitrich Bonhoeffer, the German martyr, caught the meaning of this when he wrote, ‘When Jesus calls a man, he bids him come and die.’ We have no reason or right to choose another way than the way God chose in Jesus Christ. The Cross is both the symbol of our salvation and the pattern of our lives. When our dogmatic beliefs and moral principles do not realize themselves in discipleship, then our holiness is an illusion.”

--Brennan Manning, The Signature of Jesus

Sent Into the World - Further Study (cont.)

In light of this entire study, take some time to dream with God. What do you want to accomplish in your short time here? Prayerfully consider this, and use the space below to set 20 spiritual goals for your life.

We leave you now with some of Jesus' words to his disciples:

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." -- Acts 1:8

"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." -- Matthew 28:18-20

What's Next?

Each of these can be done individually or with a partner:

1. Read a gospel followed by a commentary of the same gospel.
2. Write your own annotated bibliography of each book of the New Testament (an annotated bibliography provides a concise summary of each source and some assessment of its value or relevance). Go a step further and identify a theme verse for each book.
3. While reading through John and Acts, write out all of the scriptures that talk about the Holy Spirit. Reflect on His role in the church, your life, and your ministry.
4. In one place, keep an ongoing list of spiritual questions that you have for God in one place. Seek answers in Scripture, in prayer, and from other people. Keep this list going and be patient! Discipleship is a life-long endeavor!
5. Memorize the Beatitudes (Matt 5:3-10). This has been called the ethical core of Jesus' teachings.
6. Think of a topic that challenges you (for example: women in ministry, spiritual gifts, baptism, etc.) and develop arguments for two (or more) opposing sides with scriptural support.
7. Pray through the Lord's prayer (found in Matt 6:9-13) daily for a week (or more), expanding each line into your own words and applying it to your own life.
8. Read a chapter in Proverbs and pray for wisdom every day for a month (there are 31 chapters in Proverbs total). As you encounter wisdom that you need to hold on to, capture it in writing.
9. There are a number of different types of psalms found in the book of Psalms. Use the Internet to identify a praise psalm and a lament psalm and read both. Then write your own psalm. Feel free to lament before God or rejoice. Note that most Psalms of lament end with rejoicing in who God is.

There are many great resources that will help you grow in your faith and deepen your understanding of the scripture. Here are a few we recommend as good places to start. (These resources are chosen to be challenging for college students. Don't expect high school level material!)

1. RegentAudio.com - Regent College in Vancouver, British Columbia, is a transdenominational graduate school of Christian studies. They offer mp3 recordings of many of their for-credit courses for a fraction of the cost of tuition through their bookstore's website. Two great classes to start with would be "Old Testament Foundations" by Iain Provan and "New Testament Foundations" by Rikk Watts
2. NIVAC Series - NIV Application Commentaries are available for almost every book of the Bible. They strike a great balance between thoughtful scholarship to help you understand the original context and helping you apply the text to today. If you don't have a specific book in mind to study, [Mark](#) by David Garland is an excellent place to start.
3. [How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth](#) and [How to Read the Bible Book by Book](#) by Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart. These two companion books are great tools for learning how to better read and understand scripture on your own.
4. [So, You Want to Be Like Christ?](#) by Chuck Swindoll. If you want to deepen your personal walk with God and develop spiritual disciplines, this book is our recommended place to start.
5. [Vine's Expository Dictionary](#). Use this resource to look up words from scripture. It will identify the original Greek or Hebrew words used and define them. The English translation doesn't always capture the nuances of the original text, and this resource can take your understanding a step further.
6. [Counterpoints](#) and [Spectrum Multiview](#) book series (examples: [Women in Ministry: Four Views](#), [Three Views on Creation and Evolution](#)). If you want to explore a controversial doctrine, these series are great places to start. Each book has multiple viewpoints put forth by multiple authors who hold those views. Then each author gets the chance to respond to each of the others. This is a great way to expose yourself to the various issues that surround the debate and give you ideas for further study.

“One Another” Passages

- Mark 9:50** “...Be at peace with each other”
- John 13:14** “...Wash one another’s feet”
- John 13:34** “...Love one another”
- Romans 12:10** “Be devoted to one another in brotherly love...”
- Romans 12:10** “...Honor one another above yourselves”
- Romans 12:16** “Live in harmony with one another...”
- Romans 15:7** “Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you...”
- Romans 15:14** “...Instruct one another”
- Romans 16:16** “Greet one another with a holy kiss...”
- 1 Corinthians 12:25** “...Have equal concern for each other”
- Galatians 5:13** “...Serve one another in love”
- Galatians 6:2** “Carry each other’s burdens...”
- Ephesians 4:2** “...Be patient, bearing with one another in love”
- Ephesians 4:32** “Be kind and compassionate to one another...” 44
- Ephesians 5:19** “Speak to one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs”
- Ephesians 5:21** “Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ”
- Colossians 3:16** “...Teach and admonish one another with all wisdom”
- 1 Thessalonians 3:12** “...Make your love increase and overflow for each other”
- 1 Thessalonians 4:18** “...Encourage each other...”
- 1 Thessalonians 5:11** “...Build each other up...”
- Hebrews 3:13** “Encourage one another daily...”
- Hebrews 10:24** “...Spur one another on toward love and good deeds”
- Hebrews 10:25** “Let us not give up meeting together...”
- James 5:16** “Confess your sins to each other...”
- James 5:16** “...Pray for each other”
- 1 Peter 1:22** “...Love one another deeply, from the heart”
- 1 Peter 3:8** “...Live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble.”
- 1 Peter 4:9** “Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling”
- 1 Peter 4:10** “Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others...”

