

A misty, tree-lined path leading into the distance. The path is paved and stretches from the bottom center towards the horizon. On either side of the path are grassy areas and bare, leafless trees. The background is a soft, hazy yellow, suggesting a misty or foggy day. The overall mood is serene and contemplative.

A New Path

"Enjoy Your New Faith As You Walk With Jesus"

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How To Use This Material

It has been a long-term conviction of mine that intentional disciple-making materials are key. This material is designed to be used in a small group of three to four, or can be used in a one-on-one setting. It is also designed to be led by a mentor/coach who directs the discussion each week.

Each area has a set of Bible verses listed for you to study. The goal is to help you get comfortable with using your Bible and discovering key areas in your disciple journey. Questions are provided for you to engage with in each Bible reading. Use those questions as well as your own. When you meet with your mentor, you will review and discuss the Bible reading. It is key that you read and interact with God's Word before you meet with your mentor. This will allow you to come with questions and engage in fruitful discussion. A space is provided for you to write your observations and questions in each day's reading.

There are six areas that you will discuss in this study. These six areas will help you explore some general first steps in the life of a disciple.

The areas are:

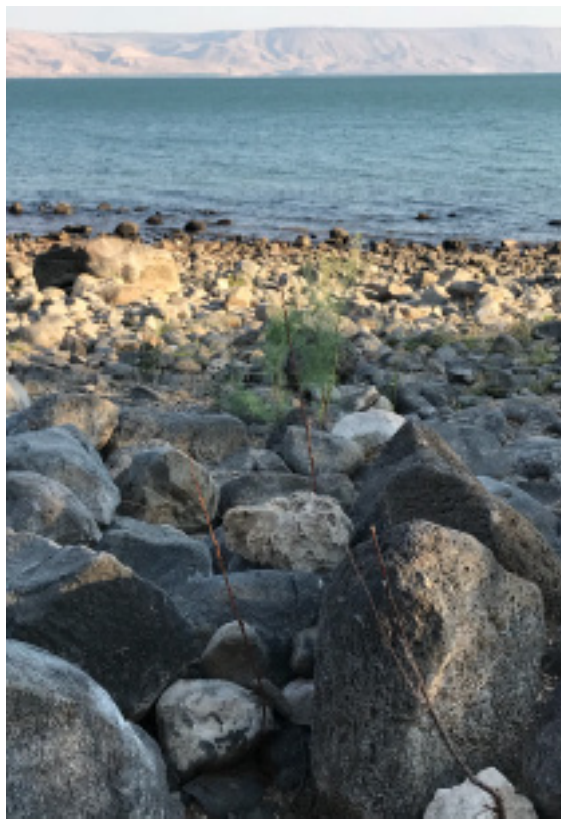
- God's Word
- Jesus
- Your Identity
- Prayer
- The Gospel
- Next Steps

Introduction

In 2017, Kim and I had the opportunity to travel on a study tour to Israel. For two weeks we literally walked where Jesus walked. The passages we have read for decades now came to life in a new way.

One day we sat on the shores of the Sea of Galilee and I read John 21:22. It was one of those special times that the Holy Spirit speaks to your heart as you read your Bible. The passage is an interaction between Jesus and Peter, after His resurrection. Peter was asking about what was going to happen to his friend and fellow disciple John. Jesus says to Peter, “you follow me.” In essence Jesus is saying don’t worry about other people, just follow me Peter.

The new path of being a follower of Christ is filled with many temptations to stray from the path of living to simply follow Jesus. There are temptations to get bogged down in religious ritual and language. When that happens you find yourself trying to add to your salvation. There is the temptation to become legalistic, so you become overly concerned with doing the wrong things. There is also the temptation to think your faith is just something you add to your life.



As a follower of Jesus, the most important thing for you to do is remember you are to follow Jesus. It really is that simple, “follow me.” If you have repented of your sin, accepted the forgiveness that is given to you by God, and now devoted yourself to living for Jesus, what’s next is following Jesus. You cannot earn more favor with God, you are unable to please Him more, and you cannot become more acceptable than you already are through what Jesus has done.

There are two very important terms you need to remember: grace and mercy.

Mercy is what God has given you, not only at the moment of your salvation, but forever. Mercy is not getting what you deserve. What we deserve is eternity in Hell and separation from God. Mercy is God now seeing you as forgiven by Jesus’ death on the cross. Mercy is God now saying to you, you are innocent of sin against me because of my son Jesus, therefore your death sentence is removed.

Grace is what God has given to you. Grace is getting what you do not deserve. It is God giving you His love, care, and presence. It is God now saying you are my son or daughter. He has adopted you into His family with full rights and privileges of any family member. It is God giving you eternity with Him; it is God loving you as His child. It is God looking

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upon you with full favor and acceptance, because Jesus made the way back to God possible.

Understanding grace and mercy allows you to worship God and be thankful that He alone has provided everything for your salvation. God is the author and completer of your saving faith — now rejoice in it!

So what exactly does it mean to follow Jesus you are probably asking? There has to be some specific requirements, some things I must do and must not do, right? I mean, Jesus is not here so how do I follow somebody that is not physically present, or ask Him?

Those questions are legitimate. All those questions are right to ask. This booklet is going to help you get started on this new path and discover what it means to follow Jesus. First, let me encourage you to grasp your new identity. As a follower of Jesus, you are now called a disciple. A disciple is someone who has a desire to live for Jesus. It calls us to pursue the same passions and priorities that Jesus had. It calls us to pursue the same character that Jesus has. It calls us to love what Jesus loves and to embrace others as Jesus did.

Once Jesus was being interrogated by a group of religious leaders. Their question to Him was, what is the most important commandment in the Scriptures? You see the religious leaders had become experts at developing laws and rules for people to follow. They were rigid and replaced relationship with God for rules that they thought pleased God. I believe the religious leaders were really asking, what is the very least we must do in order for God to be pleased with us so we can go to Heaven. What is **THE** thing everyone must always do so they are good with God? Can you see the problem here?

The answer Jesus gives must have both shocked and frustrated them. He does not give the answer they expected. Jesus said the greatest commandment is this, “to love the Lord your God, with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength,” found in Mark 12:30. Can you see what Jesus is getting at? It was not a rule or ritual that they expected Him to say. The command was to love God with everything; to set your affections on loving God with your mind, with your passions, with your actions, with your very being. Not a specific action, but a passion that springs from knowing the mercy and grace of God toward you. Jesus was telling them that the most important thing is having a devoted heart to God. A deep love that comes from you knowing you are a child of God. Jesus did not stop there; He said the second most important is this, “to love your neighbor as yourself.” Jesus says the other thing that is important is to love other people the way He loves them. He wants them to know that when a person has a devoted, loving heart toward God that also results in loving other people the way God does.

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So what does Jesus want from us? To cultivate a heart that loves God and is devoted to Him. He wants us to model that to the world by having the same passions and priorities that He had. He wants us to love others and reflect that we truly are a follower of His.

How does this happen? By focusing on knowing Jesus better and learning His ways. Learning how Jesus worshipped God. Observing how Jesus prayed. Studying how Jesus interacted with our world and with other people. It will require you to purposefully walk a new path that is foreign to you. Yet Jesus has not left us alone to try and figure out this new path. He has sent the Holy Spirit to live in us and remind us of the way Jesus lived. Jesus has also given us other disciples to walk together with on this new path. This path-way is exciting, foreign, and full of life-giving times. Don't forget the main thing; the new path is about loving God with everything we have. So, we need not fear our new path; embrace it with excitement and expectancy.

Talk with your mentor about what you have read so far. What are your questions? Discuss Mark 12:30-31 with your mentor.

Your New Path

To begin on this new path, it is really important to get a proper start. One thing we learn from Jesus is that He was always inviting people to join Him. Jesus was always inviting people into His life to discover who He was and what it meant to follow Him. Jesus still does that today, and He wants you to join Him.

As you begin this new journey, there are three important things the Bible teaches that you don't want to forget. Jesus said in Matthew 7:7, "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you."

1. **If you call to Him, He will answer.....Ask** God always answers us when we call to Him. His answer is not always a yes. Sometimes a no, sometimes not yet, but He always answers. He answers through prayer through others, and always through His word.
2. **If you seek God you will find Him.....Seek** Proverbs 8:17, "I love those who love me and those who seek me diligently find me." Always remember that God is near and if you seek Him, He is easily found. God is never not available through prayer.
3. **If you draw near to Him, He will draw near to you.....Knock** James 4:8, "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you." The only thing that keeps you from being closer to God is you. God always desires to grow in His relationship with you. The more you pursue knowing God, the deeper your relationship gets with Him.

Jesus never traveled alone, He always welcomed others to journey with Him. As a follower of Jesus, it is important to learn the lesson of walking the new path with others. In the weeks ahead, you will meet with another believer to discuss the materials you will be discovering. This will give you someone to ask questions, pray, and be encouraged. This person is a needed guide to help you begin this new path.

Talk with your mentor about calling, seeking, and finding God. Ask them how they do this. Ask them how God has answered them on their journey. Think about your own life, what have you discovered in times of seeking, calling, and drawing near? Share this with your mentor.

This new path is all about calling, seeking, and drawing near to God. It is all relational and all about cultivating a heart that grows in loving God.

Well, let's get started and discover the most amazing, joyful, and life-giving journey you can ever imagine!

Lesson 1 - Reading God's Word

Along with prayer, God's Word is a key way He speaks with us. Your first thoughts about reading the Bible might be fear and feeling overwhelmed. That's normal, we all face that. It might be helpful for you to think about the Bible as God's letter written by Himself to you rather than think about it as a text book. While the Bible contains endless information about God and how to live your new identity, we must not make it something we only just study. God's Word is both informational and transformational. God reveals Himself to us, and by doing so we grow in love and appreciation for Him and His gospel.

We must develop a good pattern of reading God's Word throughout our lives. When our children are young, we train them how to feed themselves. It begins with putting a fork or spoon in their hand so they can learn to eat without the aid of a parent. It is usually ugly and messy until they learn how to use the spoon themselves. Eventually, they can be left alone and get good at feeding themselves. It takes practice and perseverance to learn to feed yourself with God's Word, but you can learn.

The Bible is made up of 66 books. The Old Testament contains 39 books and the New Testament contains 27 books. All of the Bible is given to human authors by God, written by them, but are the words of God. All of the Bible is about God, His love, His holiness, His gospel, His forgiveness, His salvation, and His plan for His creation. His Bible is a gift to us by God to help us know Him and live for Him. The Old Testament is the time period before Jesus became man. The New Testament is the time from Jesus' birth to His second coming again — more on that later.

First, it is essential to purchase a study Bible. I highly recommend the ESV Study Bible as it has the most comprehensive resources, in my opinion. On the next page you will find a copy of one of the pages from the ESV Study Bible. Make sure you become familiar with how to use the resources I highlight for you.

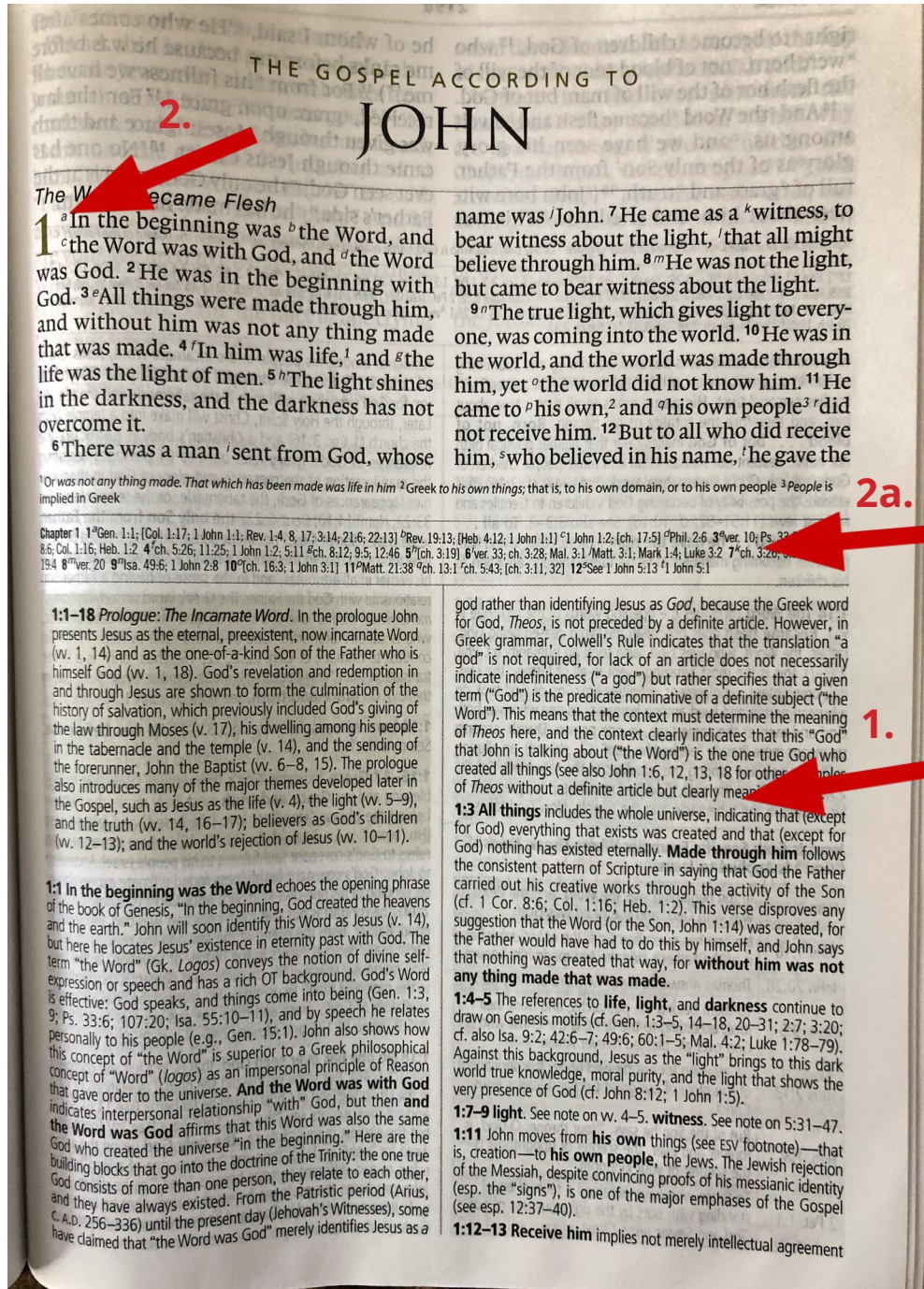
If our Bible is the key to growing in intimacy with God, we need to learn how to read it. Many get discouraged early because they don't have a good method. So, here is an outline to get started. When reading a passage for your devotion time, try to answer these questions:

What do these passages or verses teach me about God, Jesus, Holy Spirit?

What does it tell me to do, direct me to change, or caution me about?

What promises or warnings are given? How is God communicating His gospel in the passage?

Lesson 1 - Reading God's Word



The **red arrow** and **number 1** point to the commentary notes for the verses. The commentary notes help you to understand what is being said, important words or phrases, and additional information. The commentary sections help you connect other parts of the Bible to this verse or section.

The **red arrow** and **number 2** above, point to small letters that are beside a word. These connect to the verse in **2a**. These provide other Bible verses that connect to this verse. For instance in John 1:1 (chapter 1, verse 1), the letter a points us to Genesis 1:1. Both verses are referencing God creating in the beginning. These connections help you put together ideas and teachings.

Finally, in the very back of your Bible, there is a section of maps, glossary of terms, and a concordance. Here you can match names and terms, and find where they appear other places in the Bible. These resources are invaluable in studying and understanding your Bible. Spend time working with your mentor and learn how to use your study Bible.

Lesson 1 - *Reading God's Word*

Studying Your Bible

This document is also helpful to use when you have extra time to study your Bible. This three-step process allows you to dig deeper, but also requires you to spend additional time.

The three step process of **OBSERVATION, INTERPRETATION, AND APPLICATION** will help you learn to read and study your Bible on your own. Take each of the areas and use the question or add your own to gain insight from the Scripture you are reading.

Observation – *What is being said*

- Read the passage or passages completely through; several times may help.
- Reference the passages before and after to help you get context.
- What are the general themes you see?
- What words appear that you need to understand? What words or phrases appear more than once?
- What is clear, and what is unclear in the passage?
- Who is talking? Who is being addressed?
- What is the setting? Time period?
- What does the passage/passages teach about God?

Interpretation – *Why it is being said*

- What is the main theme of the passage? What is the big idea?
- What warnings, advice, cautions, or errors are being addressed?
- How do these verses connect to the gospel?
- What is being commanded to do or not to do?
- What is the meanings of the words from the observations section above?
- Are there other places in Scripture this passage occurs? How is it related to this passage?
- In general, what is being said, to what people, at what time, in what place, and about what?
- What promises or warnings are given and why?

Application – *What it says to me today*

- In what ways does this passage connect to us/me today?
- What things or areas does this address in my life?
- How do the cautions, warnings, or instructions culturally connect today?
- What things must I guard, change, or incorporate in my life as a result of this passage?
- Where did God speak to your heart in this passage? How are you encouraged?
- What will you do as a result of studying this passage?

Lesson 1 - *Reading God's Word*

Read the following passages and use the questions below to engage with the verses. Write down your answers and also write down any questions about what you read. Discuss your thoughts and questions with your mentor when you meet the next time.

What do these passages or verses teach me about God? Jesus?
What does it tell me to do, direct me to change, or caution me about?
What promises or warnings are given? What is God teaching about His gospel?
What do these verses tell me about God's love, His grace, His mercy, His forgiveness?

1. Isaiah 40:18-31

2. Ephesians 1:3-14

3. Psalm 103

4. Philippians 2:1-11

5. John 14:15-31

Lesson 2 - Jesus

Our identity and faith is tied to Jesus Christ. There is no saving faith without Jesus, and without Jesus there is no saving faith. A temptation we all face is to add to our faith something other than Jesus. Your faith, and mine, is solely based on who Jesus is and what Jesus accomplished. Therefore, it is important to ground yourself in understanding and following Jesus. We must never fall into thinking what else must I do to be accepted by God, or what things must I do to make God more pleased with me. Jesus, and Jesus alone, makes you acceptable to a Holy Righteous God. Jesus, and Jesus alone, saves you, redeems you, and restores you to God.

A common error is to begin to make our faith more about a church than Jesus. There is a church because of Jesus and it is His. He established the church and has sole rights to it. Church is a gift of Jesus to us to help us grow in our faith with other believers. The church exists to worship and serve Jesus and to carry out His mission on earth. We must never elevate Jesus' church over Jesus Himself. Remember, the church exists because of Jesus!

In Matthew 28:16-20, Jesus said those who are followers of Him are to focus on making disciples. He said to His followers we are to go into all the world and make disciples, people who have the same passions and priorities as Jesus did. In order to do this, and be a disciple maker, we must know the things Jesus prioritized and the things Jesus was passionate about. Many stray from this command and begin to focus more on attending church than being and making disciples. Many begin to identify their faith more by what church they attend than Jesus. Many begin to place expectations on churches they attend to be a place to get their religious needs met rather than grow into mature disciples who make more disciples.

Church attendance is very important, don't get me wrong. Church is the place we gather corporately to sing, pray, and study God's Word together. The church is the people of God encouraging one another, loving one another, serving one another, and investing in one another. But this all must be done with the goal of loving and serving Jesus. We must protect ourselves from becoming distracted by our desire to make our faith something about us and not Jesus. Therefore, it is important to connect with a church who is doctrinally sound, Jesus loving, gospel centered, and intentional about disciple making.

So, in order to be a disciple of Jesus, we must get to know Jesus. We need to learn the things He was passionate about. We need to see the things He prioritized in His life. We need to discover the things Jesus taught those that followed Him. How He loved people, challenged people, taught people, and how He walked with people. The way Jesus most often interacted with people looked like this:

Invite - Come and see who Jesus was, what was He like, and who did He claimed to be.

Include - Come and spend time with Jesus. He welcomed them into every area of His life; there was deep intimacy they experienced.

Invest - Come and be trained by Jesus. They watched how He prayed, how He loved, how He served, how He taught. How He made disciples.

Lesson 2 - *Jesus*

Read the following passages and use the questions below to engage with the verses. Write down your answers, and also, write down any questions about what you read. Discuss your thoughts and questions with your mentor when you meet with them the next time.

What do these passages or verses teach me about God? Jesus?
What does it tell me to do, direct me to change, or caution me about?
What promises or warnings are given? What is God teaching about His gospel?
What do these verses tell me about God's love, His grace, His mercy, His forgiveness?

What do these verses teach me about Jesus?

1. John 1:29
John 1:35-39

2. John 13:1-7
John 13:34-35

3. Mark 6:30-44

4. Matthew 5:13-20
Matthew 6:19-21

5. Matthew 11:28-30
Matthew 3:13-17
John 3:16-21

Lesson 3 - Your New Identity

In 1980, my wife Kim and I were married. The exciting day finally arrived, and we became husband and wife. For Kim, she now takes on a new last name and identity. For both of us, we have a new identity as Mr. and Mrs. Jeff Powell. When you become a Christian, you take on a new identity.

When you move from spiritual death to spiritual life in Christ, you have an identity change. You move from being an enemy of God to being a child of God. You are now a son and daughter of God, adopted into the family, with full family status. You take on the family name Christian. Listen to what God says about you in 1John 3:1, "See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are."

Think about that Bible verse and consider what God is saying to you. The degree of love that God has for you means He has fully accepted you through Christ, and now calls you His son or daughter. Your status is secure as His child; He now loves you and calls you His child. Maybe you did not have a good family experience growing up, but you now have a part in an eternal family that has the perfect father. The God who saved you now is your heavenly Father forever. Your brothers and sisters are fellow believers that you will spend eternity with. Your family heritage is set to eternity with God, your fellow brothers and sisters, for eternity in Heaven!

For many, the idea of family identity is hard to process. Because we live in a sinful world, none of us has experienced a perfect family identity. Maybe you grew up in the country, maybe the city. Maybe you had many siblings, maybe only a few. Maybe you had a close family or maybe your family was disconnected with other family members. Maybe your family was rigid and uncommunicative or maybe your family only expressed love by working to please each other. Some have good relationships with their fathers and mothers, others have strained relationships. Maybe you felt unsafe in your family or unloved.

Your new identity is secure. God's love in saving you also secures you. He chose you, He saved you, He adopted you, and He now secures your identity. As a perfect Father, His love will never become more or less for you. His acceptance of you was accomplished for you through Jesus and will never fail. As your loving Father, He wants to spend time with you and have you get to know Him more and more.

Whatever your experience is with your earthly family, your new family identity is different. It's important now to start discovering your new family and identity. Let's start to uncover what God says about who you are now, and who He is. Remember, God is a perfect father, giving perfect love, always offering mercy and grace.

Lesson 3 - Your New Identity

Read the following passages and use the questions below to engage with the verses. Write down your answers, and also, write down any questions about what you read. Discuss your thoughts and questions with your mentor when you meet with them the next time.

What do these passages or verses teach me about God? Jesus?
What does it tell me to do, direct me to change, or caution me about?
What promises or warnings are given? What is God teaching about His gospel?
What do these verses tell me about God's love, His grace, His mercy, His forgiveness?

What do these verses teach me about my identity?

1. 1 John 3:1
James 1:17
Colossians 1:13-14

2. John 1:9-13
Luke 15:11-32

3. Galatians 3:26
Ephesians 2:5-6

4. Romans 8:14-17
Galatians 4:6-7
John 14:1-3

5. Ephesians 1:3-5
Ephesians 2:18-19
Acts 2:42-47

Lesson 4 - Praying - Calling and Listening

One of the great gifts God has provided to you is prayer. You may or may not have been involved in some sort of praying. For most, prayer can be a confusing and intimidating thing to participate in. All of that can even keep us from practicing prayer. The good news is that God has opened the door for you and I to come to Him anytime, any place, and in all things through prayer.

Prayer is simply you coming to God and interacting with Him. You can come with your questions, with your concerns, or with your hurt, even your anger. You can come to Him with your failures, your fears, and your frailties. God is all knowing so anything you bring to Him never takes Him by surprise or shocks Him. God is your loving Father who will never cast you out, refuse to meet with you, or punish you for coming to Him with something. Remember what I shared earlier, if we call to Him He will answer, if we seek Him we will find Him, and if I draw near to Him He will draw near to me. Prayer is one way we seek, call, and draw near to God.

There are a couple of things that generally trip us up when it comes to praying. We tend to think we need to know all the right religious words in order to pray — wrong. We tend to think there is a very specific way you have to pray — wrong. We tend to think praying is generally only done in religious settings — wrong. The main obstacle we must overcome is us. We are the main obstacle in praying. Don't worry about how long or what words to use, simply enter prayer looking to interact with God.

Prayer is about you coming before the God who loves you and saved you. He invites you to now speak with Him. Some of the best prayer times I have been a part of is with new believers who simply talk with God, like He is right in the room. Prayer is desiring to come to God and interact with Him. It is helpful for me to find places where I am not distracted easily so I can focus. Find that quiet place — morning, noon, or night — and start to seek, call, and draw near to God. I also find it helpful to start with some praise music; I simply sit and listen or sing along. Music helps me relax, focus, and quiet my soul.

Next, I try to focus on who God is and why I am so thankful. Sometimes I read a verse of Scripture to help me focus. I find it very helpful to speak out loud just like God is sitting there with me — well He actually already is! I may start by saying something like, "God I am so thankful that you loved me first, that you saved me, and you now call me your son. Thank you that you invite me to come to you today, you the almighty God." There are unlimited things for me to be thankful for, so I just start saying how much I love Him and how thankful I am.

I now try to honestly express to God the ways I have sinned recently. How I have not been thankful, maybe how I complained, been critical of others, coveted, my language, my attitude, my passions or priorities that have not been honoring to God.

Lesson 4 - *Praying - Calling and Listening*

I next begin to pray for things that are on my mind and heart. These are people, situations, cares I have, burdens I am carrying. I try to be as honest as I can be about what I am bringing to God. Again, God already knows what concerns I have so they are not going to shock Him — even the ones I bring with the wrong motives! What are the things weighing on me.

The final piece of praying is the most difficult for me. It is simply sitting and being quiet. I find it much easier to talk a lot when I pray and much harder to sit and quietly listen for God. This part of prayer is kind of weird if you are not careful. I don't sit quietly waiting for God to verbally speak to me. I sit quietly and let God speak to my heart. How does He do that? Through His Holy Spirit that lives in me, through His Word, maybe through the worship music. Whatever the method, He does speak. I find that making myself sit quietly allows me to be open to God interacting with me in ways I would have missed if I was not quiet. So, I maybe sit outdoors, maybe inside by a fire, near a window, or in a place that does not distract me and give myself time to simply be quiet. Ok, I confess this is not the easiest for me. I don't put a time limit on it or even force something to happen. Sometimes it's five minutes, sometimes it's 15 minutes. Sometimes God places something on my heart; sometimes I come away just knowing I was close with God. Anyway, there are no rigid rules; simply coming before God listening is my intent.

Below there is a page called Prayer Using Scripture. This is a helpful tool to use when you do your daily devotions. Review this with your mentor.

Praying Using Scripture

Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer.

(Psalm 19:14 ESV)

Proclaim - Focus is on who God is

Observe the words, phrases, sentences that reveal who God is. What is being said about who God is or what God has done. Use those same words, phrases, examples to pray back to God, proclaiming and thanking Him for who He is. Praise and thanksgiving are spoken back to God.

Personalize – Focus is on my need of God in light of who He is

Use the words, phrases, subject, to ask God to reveal to you your need for Him. What things in the text do you need to repent of, confessing to God. Use the Scripture to confess to God your need of Him. Confession and repentance are spoken to God.

Petition – Focus is on my request to God

Use the words, phrases, subject, to bring your petitions to God. What are the areas, things you are bringing to God asking Him to speak into or answer? Center your petitions on God's sovereignty, submitting to His love and care. Cares, concerns, and requests are brought before God.

Lesson 4 - *Praying - Calling and Listening*

Read the following passages and use the questions below to engage with the verses. Write down your answers, and also, write down any questions about what you read. Discuss your thoughts and questions with your mentor when you meet with them the next time.

What do these passages or verses teach me about God? Jesus?
What does it tell me to do, direct me to change, or caution me about?
What promises or warnings are given? What is God teaching about His gospel?
What do these verses tell me about God's love, His grace, His mercy, His forgiveness?

What do these verses teach me about prayer?

1. Matthew 6:9-13

2. Psalm 63:1-8

3. Matthew 6:1-8

4. Psalm 51

5. Mark 1:35-39
John 17:15-24

Lesson 5 - *The Gospel*

As you walk this new path with Jesus, you will find that you will encounter a nagging temptation to think you must do something to be more acceptable to God. In all other areas of life we must work or perform some task, in order to receive something. If you don't show up to work, you don't get a pay check, for example. The gospel that saves you is so unlike every other area of life that it seems to be too good. We have this inclination that we must do something to make God love us, or if we perform some religious duty God will be more pleased with us. Drifting from the security of the gospel not only wears you out, but it taints the magnificent love that Jesus has already shown you.

It is a common saying that we must constantly preach the gospel to ourselves. Why? Because living in the knowledge and security of the gospel is counter to every other way we live. The gospel not only saves you but sustains you. The life-giving message of the gospel is not only what you need, it is what the world needs. It is what your friends and family need.

Chances are that you have had someone notice you are different now that you follow Jesus. If it has happened, they are really asking why the choice to follow Jesus? Why are you now spending time going to church, hanging out with other Christians? Why do you have a different set of priorities than you used to? How will you answer people? The gospel is the answer you have to share. You need to become comfortable in sharing that the gospel, the good news, is what has brought your new path in life. You need to be ready to share your story, how God called you to Himself and saved you. At the end of this week's study there is a worksheet on how to share your story. Begin to work with your mentor on how to organize your story so you are ready to share it.

Here are the four foundational pieces of the gospel:

Creation - None of us arrived on this planet by chance. We have been intentionally created by God, and created for God (Colossians 1:16). The very first book of the Bible, Genesis, describes how God created us in His image. We are created to have an intimate relationship with God. A relationship that interacts and relates with God. The deepest and closest relationship you can ever have is with your creator God. Everyone has been created by God and for God.

Fall - The perfect relationship we were created to have with God has been broken. Genesis 3:1-19 tells the story of how Adam and Eve chose to live for their own purposes instead of God's. They willfully chose to disobey God and not believe everything God had shown them and told them. At that point the perfect relationship between God and man was broken. As a result, all people are sinful now by nature and by choice. You and I desire the things God created for us over God Himself. God is not our first love, God is not who we desire to live for and serve. We are now man-centered instead of God-centered. Sin keeps us from relating with God and loving God. God is so pure, so Holy, that He cannot look upon sin. We are separated from God because of sin: Isaiah 59:2, "your sin has separated you from God."

Lesson 5 - *The Gospel*

Redemption - The presence of sin now keeps us from having a relationship with God. God is a just God and a righteous God. He cannot ignore sin and cannot allow sin to go unpunished. He told Adam and Eve, and you and I, that choosing sin will result in death. The Bible also reveals God is rich in mercy and desires for no one to perish, meaning being separated from Him for eternity. God decided that His great love would be put on full display by sending His son Jesus to become man. Jesus would become man, flesh and blood like us; live a perfect life without ever sinning; and die the death we deserve; so that our sin penalty could be paid in full. In living, dying on the cross, and rising from the grave He became the perfect one time sacrifice and payment for our sin. The broken relationship could now be restored with God. How? By believing Jesus is the son of God, who lived, died, and rose again. How? By confessing and repenting of sin. Not only confessing you are a sinner, but by repenting, which means changing the direction of your life to following Jesus. Romans 6:23, "The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord."

Restoration - Anyone who believes in Jesus, confesses they are sinners, repents and now lives their life trusting and loving Jesus is restored in their relationship with God. Not only is our relationship with God restored, but we are now constantly on a new path to being restored to what we were created to be. We now can love God rightly, love others rightly, enjoy serving and living the life we are created to live. This is a lifelong restoration call sanctification. We now want to love God and live for Him — not to gain salvation, but to celebrate and show our love of Jesus because He saved us.

Lesson 5 - The Gospel

Learning to Share Your Story

The Gospel as a Story

Your story follows the same storyline as all who have been saved. Your story also is unique to you, how God saved you. The outline below allows you to incorporate your unique story into the gospel story.

God - God has created all things, all things are created by Him and for Him. We are created intentionally by God, to have a loving relationship with Him. Therefore, each person has a deep yearning to know and experience God.

Key Verse - Colossians 1:16

Personal - What did life without God feel like?

Man/Sin - Although we are created by God and for God, our very nature is to rebel and reject God. We desire the created things of God over the creator God and therefore pursue things that cannot satisfy our deepest need. We sin against God by not loving Him, desiring Him, or serving Him. Therefore, our relationship with God is broken by our sin and we are eternally separated from Him.

Key Verses - Romans 1:21-22

Personal - What things did you pursue over God seeking fulfillment?

Jesus - God is full of mercy and grace. His love for us as his creation means he was willing to do what is necessary to bridge our broken relationship. Our sin has a penalty, that penalty was death and eternal separation from God. God being rich in mercy, sent Jesus to live and die as a substitution for our sin. His life and death is the all sufficient one time payment for our sin that enables a person to be forgiven of their sin. Confessing we are sinners and trusting the person and work of Jesus restores us to God.

Key Verse - Romans 6:23

Personal - How did you repent and trust Jesus?

Holy Spirit - Being forgiven by God through the person and work of Jesus restores us to a right relationship with God. The Holy Spirit now resides in us to guide, direct, empower, and teach us how to now live as a son and daughter of God. Although we are restored to God, we still battle sinful natures. The Holy Spirit is our helper in loving and serving God with our lives.

Key Verses - John 16:12-14

Personal - How do you now live seeking after God?

Lesson 5 - *The Gospel*

Example of what a testimony can look like:

My life used to be driven by a desire to be recognized and be successful.

- I was never happy with the things I accomplished or the recognition I received.
- The need to be center stage drove me and kept me from seeing the unhappy path life was leading me on.
- I lived seeing my life as my own and selfish pursuits left me without joy.
- Was there a purpose in life that I was missing?
- Could I find true joy and contentment?

A friend of mine challenged me to ask myself some very hard questions.

- Is my life my own?
- Why am I here on this earth?
- Does everything happen by chance?
- Is there a God, do I believe in Him, and what does God want in my life?

It was only then did I begin to ask the right questions about life.

- Is there a God, YES!
- What does God want in my life, to be in a relationship with HIM!

After some time of seeking these answers, here is what I found:

- **Colossians 1:13-14** – I was intentionally Created by God for God.....my existence is no accident.
- **Isaiah** – My life was not the life that was acceptable to God; sin separated me from God and keeps me from a relationship with Him. God is perfect, Holy, and Righteous and I am not!
- **Romans 3:23** – All have sinned and fall short...There is no good person; all of us are in the same situation, sinful, not like God.
- **Acts 2:19** – That is all bad news, but God is rich in mercy and grace and provides a way back to Himself so we can restore our broken relationship.....Repent and return so sin can be removed... This takes humility and confession.
- **1 John 1:9** – God tells us this If we confess sin He forgives.
- **John 5:24** – He who hears My Word and believes moves from death to life! This was the good news I wanted. Jesus was the bridge, the way back to God. God so loves us that He sent Jesus so that my sin could be forgiven and I could be restored to God....and that is what I did; I prayed asking Jesus to forgive my sin and help me live for Him!

Lesson 5 - *The Gospel*

My life is not perfect now; I still have struggles, I still sin even though I don't want to. The peace, joy, and contentment I desired is now what I enjoy because of Jesus. I know my purpose in life is to worship, love, and serve Jesus.

Share Your Story:

Lesson 5 - *The Gospel*

Read the following passages and use the questions below to engage with the verses. Write down your answers, and also, write down any questions about what you read. Discuss your thoughts and questions with your mentor when you meet with them the next time.

What do these passages or verses teach me about God? Jesus?
What does it tell me to do, direct me to change, or caution me about?
What promises or warnings are given? What is God teaching about His gospel?
What do these verses tell me about God's love, His grace, His mercy, His forgiveness?

What do these verses teach me about the gospel?

1. 1 Corinthians 15:1-8

2. 1 Corinthians 15:12-17

3. Romans 8:31-39

4. Romans 5:1-11

5. John 3:16-21

Mark 1:14-15

Lesson 6 - *Next Steps*

At this point you have spent five weeks getting to know this new path you are on. I hope this has been an encouraging and enlightening time. There are a couple of other areas I want to make sure you are incorporating at this early stage.

First, this Christian faith that is now yours is not meant to be lived alone. One of the temptations is for us to add our faith to our normal patterns of life. The truth is we start with our faith and then add our life into it. This is a hard and challenging process to grow into. This is why Jesus has called you to be connected and involved in the lives of other Christians. Your faith is not only about what you get, but also about what you can give. To live like Jesus requires us to invest ourselves in the lives of other people. When we are connected to the church body, we find encouragement and growth. It is these relationship circles we devote ourselves to that will challenge us, hold us accountable, and strengthen our daily walk with Jesus.

A key next step is one Jesus commands: be baptized. In Matthew 28:19, Jesus tells those who are His, His followers, to go into all the world and make more disciples, and baptize them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Baptism is the outward expression to the world of your inward conversion and devotion to Jesus. By being baptized you are publicly affirming your devotion to following Jesus. You are proclaiming that you believe Jesus is the promised Messiah, who was the God-Man who lived, died, and rose again. That Jesus is the one time all-sufficient sacrifice for your sin, and His death has paid your debt so you can be accepted by God. Baptism is also your public statement of alignment with the gospel and proclamation of your devotion to Christ and His church. It is your public proclamation that you are following Christ, and in obedience to Him, you are being baptized. Your baptism is also a commitment to other Christians that you are part of the family of Jesus.

Another key step is to get connected to other followers of Jesus. In the New Testament there are two words used at least 59 times that direct us in relating to other Christians. The two words are “one another.” In the original language it is only one word. God wants to make sure we are intimately involved with other followers of Jesus, and so He speaks much about how that looks. Here are a few “one another” examples: Love one another, be at peace with one another, be devoted to one another, instruct one another, and forgive one another. Can you see how being vitally connected with other followers of Christ helps us grow and live like Jesus wants? The Christian faith is not meant to be lived alone. You need other followers of Jesus to help you navigate this new life. Other Jesus followers need you to help them navigate their faith life as well.

It is important that you follow the pattern Jesus has established. In Matthew 16:24, Jesus said, if a person is a follower of His, they must learn to deny themselves. Living in community with other followers of Jesus gives us that opportunity to deny ourselves. The more you are in community, the more you want to encourage, love, and invest in each other. Living in community allows us to find encouragement as well as be an encourager.

Lesson 6 - *Next Steps*

Living in community allows us to give the grace to others just as Jesus gives graces to us. Living in community allows us to practically live out the “one another” call of Jesus.

If you have not been baptized as a believer in Jesus, now is the time. Talk to your mentor and/or pastor about baptism. This is a marking point in my life and will be for you as well.

Lesson 6 - *Next Steps*

Read the following passages and use the questions below to engage with the verses. Write down your answers, and also write down any questions about what you read. Discuss your thoughts and questions with your mentor when you meet with him or her the next time.

What do these passages or verses teach me about God? Jesus?
What does it tell me to do, direct me to change, or caution me about?
What promises or warnings are given? What is God teaching about His gospel?
What do these verses tell me about God's love, His grace, His mercy, His forgiveness?

What do these verses teach me about living as a Christian?

1. 1 Corinthians 12:13
Acts 8:12

2. Acts 2:42-47

3. 1 Thessalonians 5:14

4. Romans 12:9-13

5. 1 Peter 4:8-11

