

Become:

A Kingdom Person Resource

Florida Baptist Convention
Church Leadership Development Group

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HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This guide contains 8 sessions that can be used as weekly lessons in a Sunday School or Small Group setting.

The goal of Become: A Kingdom Person Resource is to help your group understand the 6 Dimensions of a Kingdom Person and grow together toward a fuller expression of these dimensions in the lives of the group members and the class as a whole.

Each weekly session is divided into 4 parts: Warm Up, Know, Apply, and Live.

Warm Up – A group discussion that focuses attention on the lesson objective.

Know – This is a time of discovery and learning where Biblical concepts and ideas are introduced and explored.

Apply – A time of discussion in which the concepts and ideas introduced in “Know” are applied to life.

Live – A challenge to make the necessary life changes in order to live out what was learned.

There are also segments labeled **Discuss** which can help facilitate group discussion based on the insights presented.

Week 1

What is a Kingdom Person?

king-dom n.

1. A territory ruled by a sovereign.
2. The eternal spiritual sovereignty of God, or the realm of His sovereignty.
3. The realm in which one thing is dominant.

per-son n.

1. A living human
2. An individual of specified character.
3. The composite of characteristics that make up an individual's personality.

From:

www.thefreedictionary.com

KEY SCRIPTURE

2 Tim. 2:2&15; Matt. 12:46-50; 1 John 2:12-14; Eph. 4:11-1

KNOW

What is a Kingdom Person?

APPLY

Where are you on your journey to become a Kingdom Person?

LIVE

What will you change in your life based on what you have learned?

Warm up: Read the definitions of *kingdom* and *person* in the left margin and think about them as they relate to Christ's Kingdom. Also, read the statements below.

A Kingdom Person is in the process of disengaging from the American Dream in order to live like Jesus and advance God's Kingdom at any price.

A Kingdom person is growing in the following 6 dimensions of life:

A Worshiping Person – lives worship by surrendering his or her own agenda and embracing God's agenda.

A Praying Person – has learned to hear the Father's voice and respond to His mission, just as Jesus modeled.

A Biblical Person – is developing a healthy Biblical framework for living and is committed to following Jesus in every area of life.

A Serving Person - demonstrates love to one's neighbor through willingness to put the needs of others above oneself and live out the truths of the Gospel.

A Generous Person – invests extravagantly in the Kingdom of God and the well-being of His body.

A Reproducing Person – is a disciple maker who leads others to lead others to live like Jesus.

Discuss – Ask for volunteers from the class to tell about someone they know that lives out the qualities of a kingdom person.

KNOW: 5 Essential Elements for Developing Kingdom People

A Kingdom Person is a disciple of Jesus Christ who has learned to demonstrate maturity as a worshiping person, a praying person, a Biblical person, a serving person, a generous person, and a reproducing person.

Becoming a Kingdom Person does not happen without an intentional and strategic process. While the details of the Kingdom Person process can vary based on a particular context, the essential elements for developing Kingdom People are:

1. Establish Biblical Foundations

A process for developing Kingdom People must be based on Scriptural principles and encourage reading and applying the Bible to life as a foundational component for spiritual growth. **2 Timothy 2:15**

2. Encourage Relational Environments

Christian relationships are the key to developing Kingdom People. Jesus made disciples in the context of relationships. Relational environments promote effective learning based on modeling faith in real life situations. Genuine Christian relationships also promote unity, and provide an effective context for encouragement and accountability. **Matthew 12:46-50.**

3. Employ a Spiritual Development Process

A clear understanding of the spiritual development process is essential for developing Kingdom People. Mature disciples are not created overnight, but begin as new believers who reach maturity by growing through a developmental stage process. **1 John 2:12-14.** An example of a spiritual development process based on 1 John 2:12-14 is provided in the Appendix.

4. Expect Maturity

Every follower of Christ must be expected to grow. An expectation of Christian growth and maturity must become the norm for the church. It is a serious problem when believers do not grow in their faith and fail to demonstrate increasing levels of spiritual maturity. **Ephesians 4:11-14**

5. Equip and Release Leaders

Developing Kingdom People is dependent on effectively developing and releasing leaders who are skilled and motivated to impact the lives of others by modeling maturity and helping others grow in their faith. **2 Timothy 2:2**

Developing Kingdom People can be represented by the model on the following page that combines the 6 dimensions of a Kingdom Person with the 5 essential elements for developing Kingdom people.



A Kingdom Person organizes his or her life according to the Great Commandment: loving God and loving people. The vertical arrow represents the ways a Kingdom Person connects with God through worship, Scripture, and prayer. The horizontal arrow represents the ways a Kingdom Person connects with people through service, generosity, and spiritual reproduction. The five principles on the border represent the essential elements necessary for developing Kingdom People.

Discuss

Review the 5 essential elements for developing kingdom people: establish Biblical foundations, encourage relational environments, employ a spiritual development process, expect maturity, and equip and release leaders.

In what ways can our group intentionally seek to develop in these 5 elements as we study what it means to be a kingdom person?

APPLY: Where are you on your journey to become a Kingdom Person?

When Adam was in need of a spiritual self-evaluation God called out to him and asked, "Where are you?" God knew exactly where Adam was, but he asked Adam this question to help him understand the consequences of his disobedience and the current state of his spiritual life.

Just as God called out to Adam and encouraged him to evaluate his spiritual life, He also calls out to and encourages every follower of Christ to engage in regular periods of spiritual self-evaluation. Below is an exercise that can help determine where you are in your spiritual life.

Instructions: Respond to each statement by marking the choice that best describes you. Please take your time and seek to provide a genuinely accurate response to each statement. Since this is a self-evaluation, you are free to interpret the questions according to your own understanding.

Worshiping Person

1. I regularly spend time in private worship. ____1=almost never ____2=seldom
____3=occasionally ____4=frequently ____5=almost always

2. I experience life change through worship. ____1=almost never ____2=seldom
____3=occasionally ____4=frequently ____5=almost always

3. I look forward to worshiping with other Christians. ____1=almost never
____2=seldom ____3=occasionally ____4=frequently ____5=almost always

4. I worship God every day. ____1=almost never ____2=seldom ____3=occasionally
____4=frequently ____5=almost always

5. My life is characterized by peace, contentment, and joy. ____1=almost never
____2=seldom ____3=occasionally ____4=frequently ____5=almost always

6. My worship is a response to what God has done for me. ____1=almost never
____2=seldom ____3=occasionally ____4=frequently ____5=almost always

7. I attend church worship services (choose frequency): ____1=less than once a month
____2=about once a month ____3= about 2 times a month
____4=about 3 times a month ____5=every week

8. Participating in the Lord's Supper draws me closer to Jesus Christ. ____1=almost never
____2=seldom ____3=occasionally ____4=frequently ____5=almost always

9. I seek to obey God's teachings and commands as an act of worship. ____1=almost never
____2=seldom ____3=occasionally ____4=frequently ____5=almost always

10. My life demonstrates that worship is a priority. ____1=almost never
____2=seldom ____3=occasionally ____4=frequently ____5=almost always

Praying Person

11. I set aside time each day for prayer. ____1=almost never ____2=seldom
____3=occasionally ____4=frequently ____5=almost always

12. When I pray, I recognize that I am completely dependent on God for everything in my life. ____1=almost never ____2=seldom ____3=occasionally ____4=frequently
____5=almost always

13. My prayers regularly focus on discovering and obeying God's will for my life. ____1=almost never ____2=seldom ____3=occasionally ____4=frequently
____5=almost always

14. My prayers include a balance of thanksgiving, praise, repentance, and requests. ____1=almost never ____2=seldom ____3=occasionally ____4=frequently
____5=almost always

15. I wait patiently for God to answer my prayers. ____1=almost never
____2=seldom ____3=occasionally ____4=frequently ____5=almost always

16. I pray regularly in a group with others. ____1=almost never ____2=seldom
____3=occasionally ____4=frequently ____5=almost always

17. I maintain an attitude of prayer throughout the day. ____1=almost never
____2=seldom ____3=occasionally ____4=frequently ____5=almost always

18. My prayers impact my life. ____1=almost never ____2=seldom
____3=occasionally ____4=frequently ____5=almost always

19. My prayers impact the lives of others. ____1=almost never ____2=seldom
____3=occasionally ____4=frequently ____5=almost always

20. I take time to listen to God when I pray. ____1=almost never ____2=seldom
____3=occasionally ____4=frequently ____5=almost always

Biblical Person

21. I study the Bible. ____1=almost never ____2=seldom ____3=occasionally
____4=frequently ____5=almost always

22. The Bible is the authority for the way I think and act. ____1=almost never
____2=seldom ____3=occasionally ____4=frequently ____5=almost always

23. My life demonstrates the truths of the Bible. ____1=almost never ____2=seldom
____3=occasionally ____4=frequently ____5=almost always

24. When I read the Bible, I know how to apply its teachings to my life. ____1=almost
never ____2=seldom ____3=occasionally ____4=frequently ____5=almost always

25. I make changes in my life based on the things I learn in the Bible. ____1=almost
never ____2=seldom ____3=occasionally ____4=frequently ____5=almost always

26. I reflect thoughtfully on passages I read in the Bible. ____1=almost never
____2=seldom ____3=occasionally ____4=frequently ____5=almost always

27. I evaluate my culture by the Bible's teachings. ____1=almost never
____2=seldom ____3=occasionally ____4=frequently ____5=almost always

28. I study the Bible to understand the doctrines of my church. ____1=almost never
____2=seldom ____3=occasionally ____4=frequently ____5=almost always

29. My beliefs are based on the teachings of the Bible. ____1=almost never
____2=seldom ____3=occasionally ____4=frequently ____5=almost always

30. I read the Bible (choose frequency): ____1=less than 1 hour a month
____2=about 1-2 hours per month ____3=about 1 hour a week ____4=15-30
minutes a day ____5=more than 30 minutes a day

Serving Person

31. The way I live demonstrates that the needs of others are as important as my own
needs. ____1=almost never ____2=seldom ____3=occasionally ____4=frequently
____5=almost always

32. I regularly serve in the ministry of my church. ____1=almost never
____2=seldom ____3=occasionally ____4=frequently ____5=almost always

33. I take responsibility for meeting the needs of others. ____1=almost never
____2=seldom ____3=occasionally ____4=frequently ____5=almost always

34. I use my spiritual gifts to serve God and others. ____1=almost never
____2=seldom ____3=occasionally ____4=frequently ____5=almost always

35. God uses me to make a difference in His kingdom. ____1=almost never
____2=seldom ____3=occasionally ____4=frequently ____5=almost always

36. I believe that God will help me accomplish the work He has called me to do.
____1=almost never ____2=seldom ____3=occasionally ____4=frequently
____5=almost always

37. When I see a need in the church or the community, I offer to help. ____1=almost
never ____2=seldom ____3=occasionally ____4=frequently ____5=almost always

38. I make sacrifices to help others. ____1=almost never ____2=seldom
____3=occasionally ____4=frequently ____5=almost always

39. I use my talents and abilities to accomplish God's work. ____1=almost never
____2=seldom ____3=occasionally ____4=frequently ____5=almost always

40. I make time in my schedule to serve others. ____1=almost never ____2=seldom
____3=occasionally ____4=frequently ____5=almost always

Generous Person

41. I regularly support the ministry of my church through financial giving.
____1=almost never ____2=seldom ____3=occasionally ____4=frequently
____5=almost always

42. I contribute my time to a ministry at my church ____1=almost never
____2=seldom ____3=occasionally ____4=frequently ____5=almost always

43. I give willingly to help others in need. ____1=almost never ____2=seldom
____3=occasionally ____4=frequently ____5=almost always

44. I go out of my way to demonstrate compassion to others. ____1=almost never
____2=seldom ____3=occasionally ____4=frequently ____5=almost always

45. It gives me joy to help meet the needs of others. ____1=almost never
____2=seldom ____3=occasionally ____4=frequently ____5=almost always

46. I do without things to give sacrificially to the work of God. ____1=almost never
____2=seldom ____3=occasionally ____4=frequently ____5=almost always

47. I use my own possessions to provide for those in need. ____1=almost never
____2=seldom ____3=occasionally ____4=frequently ____5=almost always

48. I give at least a tithe (10% of my income) to support God's work. ____1=almost
never ____2=seldom ____3=occasionally ____4=frequently ____5=almost always

49. I pray and ask God what I should give. ____1=almost never ____2=seldom
____3=occasionally ____4=frequently ____5=almost always

50. My life is characterized by generosity ____1=almost never ____2=seldom
____3=occasionally ____4=frequently ____5=almost always

Reproducing Person

51. I regularly share my faith with others. ____1=almost never ____2=seldom
____3=occasionally ____4=frequently ____5=almost always

52. I seek out opportunities to help others grow In Christian maturity ____1=almost
never ____2=seldom ____3=occasionally ____4=frequently ____5=almost always

53. I am comfortable sharing my faith. ____1=almost never ____2=seldom
____3=occasionally ____4=frequently ____5=almost always

54. I use my gifts and talents to help people, become more mature Christians.
____1=almost never ____2=seldom ____3=occasionally ____4=frequently
____5=almost always

55. I actively work with my church and other Christians to accomplish the Great
Commission. ____1=almost never ____2=seldom ____3=occasionally
____4=frequently ____5=almost always

56. I regularly pray that God will send more people to work for the salvation of the
unsaved. ____1=almost never ____2=seldom ____3=occasionally ____4=frequently
____5=almost always

57. I invite unchurched people to attend church or small group meetings with me.
____1=almost never ____2=seldom ____3=occasionally ____4=frequently
____5=almost always

58. I encourage others in their Christian faith. ____1=almost never ____2=seldom
____3=occasionally ____4=frequently ____5=almost always

59. I pray for unsaved people by name. ____1=almost never ____2=seldom
____3=occasionally ____4=frequently ____5=almost always

60. I participate in the outreach/evangelism ministry of my church. ____1=almost
never ____2=seldom ____3=occasionally ____4=frequently ____5=almost always

Live: What will you change in your life based on what you have learned?

Follow the directions below to provide insight into where you are as a Kingdom Person. Each choice you made has a numerical score from 1 to 5 next to it. Use these numbers to complete the table below.

Worshiping Person Add Scores for Statements 1-10 = _____ Divide this number by 10 = _____

Praying Person Add Scores for Statements 11-20 = _____ Divide this number by 10 = _____

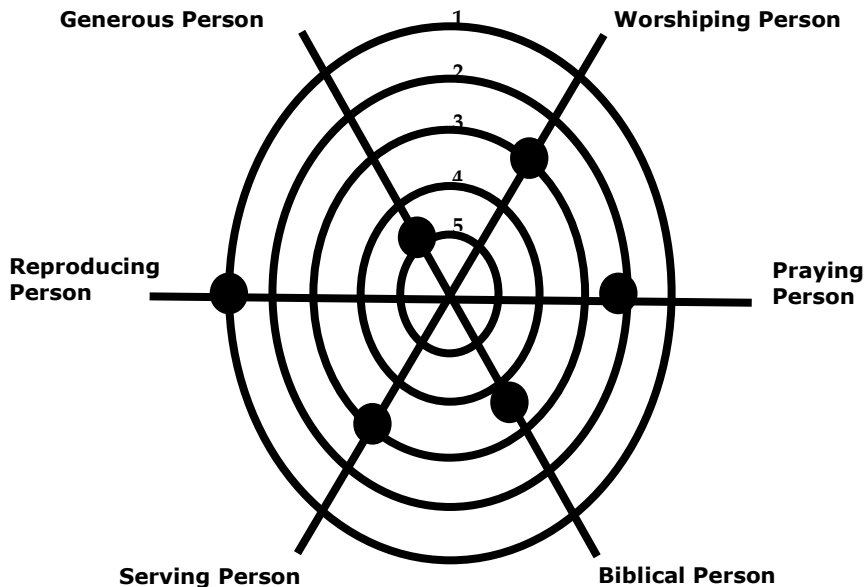
Biblical Person Add Scores for Statements 21-30 = _____ Divide this number by 10 = _____

Serving Person Add Scores for Statements 31-40 = _____ Divide this number by 10 = _____

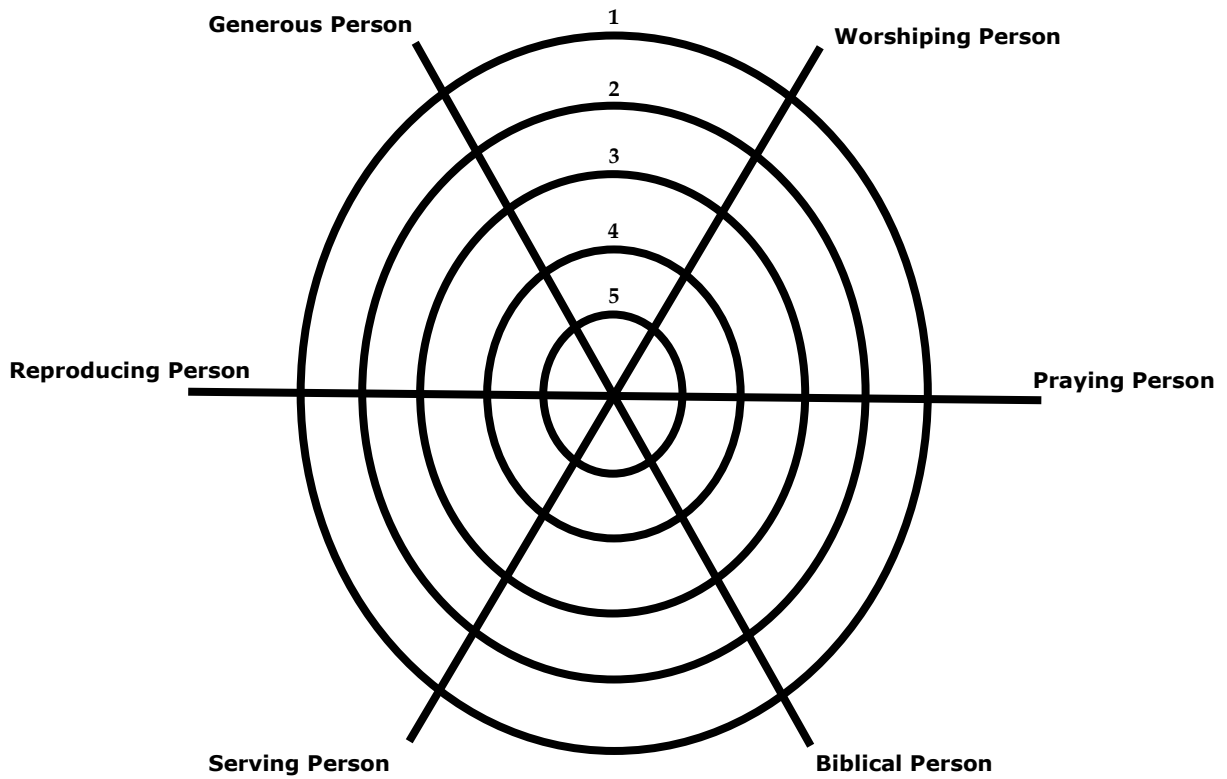
Generous Person Add Scores for Statements 41-50 = _____ Divide this number by 10 = _____

Reproducing Person Add Scores for Statements 51-60 = _____ Divide this number by 10 = _____

Plot the scores for each of the Kingdom Person attributes on the corresponding lines on the graph on the following page. (See the example below).



Now, plot your scores on the appropriate lines below.



Becoming a Kingdom Person

Think of the graph as a target. Our goal should be to hit the center of our target. If a particular dimension is not hitting the center of the target, this represents a challenge area. We need to evaluate what steps we should take to move ourselves closer to the center in each of our challenge areas.

Discuss - Which dimensions of a Kingdom Person are your challenge areas?

Develop a Kingdom Person Strategy

A. Worshiping Person (Below are some suggestions for growing as a worshiping person)

1. Attend Church Worship Weekly.
2. Establish a daily time of private worship.
3. Participate in a Bible study about worship.
4. Other suggestions:

B. Praying Person (Below are some suggestions for growing as a praying person)

1. Set aside time each day to pray.
2. Participate in the prayer ministry of your church.
3. Participate in a Bible study about prayer.
4. Other suggestions:

C. Biblical Person (Below are some suggestions for growing as a Biblical person)

1. Set aside time each day to read the Bible.
2. Learn how to keep a Bible reading journal.
3. Participate in a Bible study at your church.
4. Other suggestions:

D. Serving Person (Below are some suggestions for growing as a serving person)

1. Learn about your spiritual gifts.
 2. Meet with your pastor or a church staff member to talk about where you could serve in your church.
 3. Discover ways you could meet the needs of others in your community.
 4. Other suggestions:
-
-
-

E. Generous Person (Below are some suggestions for growing as a generous person)

1. Commit to supporting the ministry of your church financially (if you are not currently tithing, make a commit to start).
 2. Spend time in prayer about what God wants you to give to advance His kingdom.
 3. Learn about biblical generosity.
 4. Other suggestions:
-
-
-

F. Reproducing Person (Below are some suggestions for growing as a reproducing person)

1. Learn how to share the Gospel with someone.
 2. Get involved in the disciple making ministry of your church.
 3. Invite others to attend worship services or small group meetings with you.
 4. Other suggestions:
-
-
-

Week 2

A Worshiping Person?

Worship is...our response, both personal and corporate, to God – for who He is! And what He has done! Expressed by the things we say and the way we live.

Louie Giglio

KEY SCRIPTURE

Isaiah 6:1-9

KNOW

Worship is a way of living, not merely an external practice.

APPLY

What would it take to lay aside that which hinders our worshiping God?

LIVE

Pursue the presence of God on a daily basis.

*By: Terry Williams
Florida Baptist Convention
Music and Worship
Ministries*

Warm up

Discuss - What does *worship* mean to you? (Respond to the question above; then review the comments below.)

Most of us have little problem recognizing the Biblical command to worship. The challenge comes in trying to understand and obey the command.

For too many years we have allowed “worship” to be defined by what we do at church. “Worship” was used to describe our Sunday services. We had a specific time and place that we would routinely meet. We had a form we followed that included songs, prayers, Bible study, offering, and invitation. We even recognized that God was the focus and purpose of our gathering.

Everything we knew about worship was external with little if any understanding that worship begins as an internal response. We sang songs about God and were rarely encouraged to sing to God. We lived our lives during the week in response to what we do for God, and never understood that we are to have an active, passionate, relationship that pursues God on a daily basis.

At some point in time we must come to a realization that worship is not a Sunday only activity. A worshiping person, one who has had a supernatural, transforming encounter with God, will desire to pursue Him on a daily basis. It becomes a lifestyle. Lifestyle means a “way of life”, or a “standard of living”.

Here’s the Louie Giglio definition of worship: Worship is...our response, both personal and corporate, to God – for who He is! And what He has done! Expressed by the things we say and the way we live.

Let’s take a look at Isaiah Chapter 6 and explore Isaiah’s worship experience in the temple.

KNOW: Revelation, Confession, Purification, & Commission

In Isaiah 6 we learn that worship is experienced through 4 stages: Revelation, Confession, Purification, and Commission.

Stage 1 - Revelation - Isaiah 6:1-4 (HCSB)

1 In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a high and lofty throne, and His robe filled the temple. 2 Seraphim were standing above Him; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. 3 And one called to another: Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts; His glory fills the whole earth. 4 The foundations of the doorways shook at the sound of their voices, and the temple was filled with smoke.

Isaiah's encounter with God began when he looked up and saw the Lord sitting high upon a throne. This leads us to understand: **Our approach to worshiping God must be vertical first.** Too often we respond to God with "what can I do for you?" instead of "I worship You, Almighty God, there is none like You".

Isaiah looked up from where he was and saw the Lord! The symbols detailed in this passage: the throne, God's robe, and the Seraphim, have a vertical reference to God's presence. Even though Isaiah loved and served God faithfully, he was overwhelmed when confronted with a vision and revelation of God's glory and greatness.

We cannot afford to go horizontal in ministry effectively until we have been vertical in worship affectionately.

Dr. Henry Blackaby explains, what this means "As God's people encounter God, then God's people will display God to the world." (Experiencing God)

More importantly, Jesus said:

"Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."

"Love me ... and then, Love your neighbor as yourself."

"If I be lifted up, I will draw all men unto myself."

James McDonald writes: God's glory is what emanates from His presence. It is the fuel everything runs on. The biblical purpose for church is for God's people to experience and express the glory of God. When that happens, evangelism and meeting the needs of society happen naturally as a by-product. But without God's glory as the central passion and pursuit of a church, everything gets pretty horizontal. (Vertical Church Blog)

Key Concepts:

1. Our approach to worshiping God must be vertical first.
2. We cannot afford to go horizontal in ministry effectively until we have been vertical in worship affectionately.

Confession - Isaiah 6:5 (HCSB)

5 Then I said: Woe is me, for I am ruined, because I am a man of unclean lips and live among a people of unclean lips, [and] because my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts.

Isaiah never fell short of self-esteem or confidence. Imagine how difficult it was for this Prophet of God to acknowledge a sense of unworthiness in anyone's presence. But, having seen the actual, literal, awesome presence of God on that day, Isaiah was very aware of his sin.

His encounter with a holy God revealed a very specific confession of sin. He said he was a man of unclean lips. It is usually understood that unclean lips is a result of an unclean heart. And, he was living among people with unclean lips.

Every time we find ourselves in God's presence, we are confronted with our sinfulness. Typically, the natural progression moves from confession to repentance. Isaiah cried out in confession, and God responded with cleansing.

Key Concept: Every time we find ourselves in God's presence, we are confronted with our sinfulness.

Purification - Isaiah 6:6-7 (HCSB)

6 Then one of the seraphim flew to me, and in his hand was a glowing coal that he had taken from the altar with tongs. 7 He touched my mouth [with it] and said: Now that this has touched your lips, your wickedness is removed, and your sin is atoned for.

Isaiah admitted that he was ruined, incomplete, and inadequate in the face of God. The very presence of God is life-changing. Every experience of worship will be life-altering. If we approach God in worship and leave that experience unchanged, we did not worship.

Notice the angel only touched the part of Isaiah's body that he admitted was unclean. I am convinced that if Isaiah had said, "I am a man of unclean hands," the angel would have touched his hands, or any other part that Isaiah would have mentioned.

For the believer, every time we enter God's presence we are confronted with our sin. Like a surgeon, God is ready to repair, restore, and renew any part of us that would hinder our approach to Him in worship. Are we willing to go through the fire of self-surrender?

Regardless of our weakness or sin, the Lord invites us to worship Him. And in the midst of His holiness, we can be touched and restored by His holy, purifying fire.

Key Concept: If we approach God in worship and leave that experience unchanged, we did not worship.

Commission - Isaiah 6:8-9 (HCSB)

8 Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying: Who should I send? Who will go for Us? I said: Here I am. Send me. 9 And He replied: Go! Say to these people: Keep listening, but do not understand; keep looking, but do not perceive.

Real worship always leads to a response. When everything in life is spiritually and vertically aligned, we find ourselves in the proper position for God to fulfill His purpose. Isaiah was confronted with a compelling question. The Lord was asking, "Who can I count on?" Isaiah had no other response but surrender.

It is in the context of worship that Isaiah saw the Lord, confessed his sin, experienced true cleansing, and committed to God's call in ministry.

If we walk the walk of worship, we will be able to talk the talk of testimony. Our mission and purpose is found in the framework of worship. Real worship will always witness. Our motivation to "go and tell" is because we have just "been" in the presence of God. And just like Isaiah, we will confess our sin, become clean and pure vessels, and only then will we be in the proper posture for God to use us in His Kingdom work.

Key Concept: Real worship always leads to a response.

Discuss

1. How can we ensure that sin does not keep us from worshipping God?
2. Do you agree with the following statement, "We cannot afford to go horizontal in ministry effectively until we have been vertical in worship affectionately." Why or why not?

APPLY: The Worshiper God Seeks

We live in a world that is consumed with hobbies, sports, and entertainment. Tremendous amounts of time and energy are absorbed by golf, cycling, fishing, scrapbooking, the latest sports updates, movies, videos, and many other activities. In today's social media culture, we are inundated with downloads, texts, tweets, and Google updates. Specialty shops with all the "must have" resources; clubs, networks, and teams have become a "way of life".

There's nothing wrong with hobbies, sports, or entertainment. If we could capture that same desire, passion, and appetite for God, we would then know what it means to be a worshiping person. David said, I will praise the Lord at all times; His praise will always be on my lips. Psalm 34:1 (HCSB)

The writer of Hebrews said to “continually offer up to God a sacrifice of praise” Hebrews 13:15 (HCSB)

In his book “The Air I Breathe”, Louie Giglio says, “Simply put – worship is about value. It is our response to what we value most. If you were to follow the trail of your time, your affection, your energy, your money, and your allegiance; at the end of that trail you’ll find a throne; and whatever, or whoever is on that throne is what’s of highest value to you. On that throne is what you worship.”

What would it take to lay aside everything we have, everything we are to worship God? Are we willing to approach God in total sacrifice and surrender? How long will we continue to do worship “business as usual?” How much more of Himself does God desire to reveal through our times of private and public worship? Has Satan stunned our spiritual senses causing us to be awkward at best in our approach to worship? Is it possible to have the language of worship without the lifestyle of worship?

Regardless of how we answer these questions, the reality is that God is looking for those who are willing to worship Him.

Psychologists tell us that every human being struggles with feelings of loneliness. We were created with an innate need for relationship that must be filled. Our culture encourages us to meet that need with it with friends, fame, fortune, and fun.

There is only one thing that can truly satisfy the soul, and fill the longing in our hearts; it is the presence of a holy God who is high and lifted up.

In John Chapter 4, Jesus said, “There is coming a day when true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth”.

Our church culture has developed SADD Spiritual Attention Deficit Disorder. We have been distracted and diverted by so many well intended church ministries and activities that we have a hard time focusing on the one thing God created us for ... worship.

Jesus said, “The Father is seeking for such to worship Him”. Seeking implies that it must be hard to find. God is actively seeking for the heart of a worshiper. He’s asking do you have the heart of a worshiper; are you willing to worship Me in spirit and truth? Isaiah was captivated by God’s presence, and God captured Isaiah’s heart that day in the temple. Isaiah turned away from his pride, his position, and his personal plans to surrender to God’s plan.

Discuss

1. What types of things can hinder worshipping God?
2. What can we do to ensure that nothing hinders our worship?

LIVE: The Worship Lifestyle We Seek

A worshipping person understands that a lifestyle of worship involves pursuing the presence of God on a daily basis. It means having to look up from where we are; our circumstances, our struggles, and our challenges to see God who is high and lifted up above ALL things. Isaiah was totally oblivious to what was going on around him the day he encountered God on the throne. The presence of God trumped all other things that were on his mind at that moment.

There are so many great ways to pursue the presence of God; prayer being one of the most common. Too often we pray benevolent prayers ... asking God to meet our needs. An effective worship prayer would be a listening/looking kind of prayer. Allowing God an opportunity to reveal Himself, to make His presence known, and remind us of His majesty, His power, and His might.

Another way to pursue God's presence would be to read God's Word. For a number of years, my wife Earlene and I would read through a chapter in the book of Psalms a day. Each chapter would provide rich opportunities to be reminded of the character of God. The brilliant poetry and songs of praise provided a vertical focus that would last throughout the rest of the day.

We live in a CD/DVD culture. An awesome way to experience the presence of God is to listen to worship CD's, MP3's, or other downloadable songs that are vertically based. Music that speaks of who God is, His attributes, and His character. YouTube is loaded with wonderful worship videos by artists as well as worship teams from all over the world. The opportunities to have a vertical connection with God are limitless.

Find times throughout the day to declare the worthiness of God. "Sing unto the Lord, bless His name, show forth His salvation from day to day." Psalm 96: 2 "And my tongue shall speak of Thy righteousness and of Thy praise all day long." Psalm 35: 28

Literally speak His name, tell of His great work and provision, and express your love to Him throughout the day.

A worshipping person not only worships on a daily basis, they are eager to “bring the sacrifices of their praise into the house of the Lord”. I heard someone say, “It takes a crowd to make His praise glorious.” Sunday is that time of corporate worship that separates us from all other public gatherings ... Christians coming together to celebrate the Person and the work of God.

Become a student of worship; there is so much to learn about its Biblical foundations. Author Marva Dawn says there are three ways to move our churches and worshipers along in their understanding of worship – educate, educate, and educate.

We have just come through one of the greatest worship awakenings in recent history. Not only do we have an endless supply of worship music, we now have an inexhaustible list of worship books that we can all read and learn from.

Here are two books I would strongly recommend: WILL YOU WORSHIP? written by Ray Jones, and MY HEART’S DESIRE Living Every Day in the Wonder of Worship, written by David Jeremiah. Most people are uncomfortable with what they are unfamiliar with. Becoming a student of worship is a huge step to becoming a true worshipping person.

There is still yet another way to enhance your life of worship. Attend conferences and seminars on worship. Just as we have leadership conferences, marriage and financial seminars; there are quality worship conferences that offer an array of topics related to living a lifestyle of worship. While there are many trade shows and “how to” conferences for worship leaders and church musicians, there are also worship conferences that deal with the “why” of worship.

Ultimately, a worshipping person is someone who has an intimate, passionate relationship with God, who strives to live a pure and holy life, and is driven to advance God’s Kingdom at any price.

This fire of worship can only be stoked by the love of God on a daily basis, and will require constant attention throughout a lifetime.

Discuss

1. Based on what you have learned this week, what are you ready to do or change to help you grow as a worshipping person?

2. How can our class encourage one another to grow in the area of worship?

Week 3

A Praying Person?

*People in Scripture—
those who belonged to
God, believed God,
behaved His way—
prayed Scripture,
seeking the multi-faceted
blessing of God for
others.*

KEY SCRIPTURE

Genesis 32:9-12

KNOW

The 5 elements of
Scriptural prayer.

APPLY

Belong to the Father
Believe what He says
Behave as He directs
Bless others

LIVE

Embrace the practice of
praying Scripture.

*By: Rick Shepherd
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Warm up:

One of the advertising slogans of recent years “Got milk?” became very popular, especially when pointed at someone with a plate of warm chocolate chip cookies. That kind of question comes in many flavors. When you apply for a job—“Got experience?” When you want to go to school—“Got tuition money?” and “Got brains?” When we think of prayer, two questions come to mind—“Got needs?” (and who does not have needs?)...So the next question is “Got a prayer?” Maybe, the question should be “Got access?” That is, access to the One who can answer prayer?

Prayer usually starts with a sense of need. There are many kinds of prayer, but the one almost everyone thinks of most often centers around needs. Becoming a Praying Person certainly must deal with needs. But it is more than that. A praying person also prays in Praise, Thanksgiving, Confession of wrongs and receiving of forgiveness, Asking for the needs of others as well as asking for Personal needs.

So, how does one become a praying person? Let’s look at someone who became a praying person at a very needy time of life. His name is Jacob and what he encountered shows us a lot about becoming a praying person.

Discuss – What do you think keeps people from praying effectively?

KNOW: *Becoming a Praying Person*

Genesis 32 tells about Jacob coming back to Canaan after being gone for twenty years. He had run from his revenge-threatening brother Esau and now he was coming back. News reached him that Esau and 400 of his men, were coming to meet him. All Jacob could think about was Esau's revenge militia. Jacob thought of all kinds of things to do, and then he prayed. So many times, we try to think of all our options before we become serious and seriously pray. Jacob was that way.

When he did pray, he actually said several things the way God wanted. Jacob shows us five elements of real prayer and what it means to be a praying person.

Look at his prayer in Genesis 32:9-12

9 Then Jacob said, "God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac, the Lord who said to me, 'Go back to your land and to your family, and I will cause you to prosper,' 10 I am unworthy of all the kindness and faithfulness You have shown Your servant. Indeed, I crossed over this Jordan with my staff, and now I have become two camps. 11 Please rescue me from the hand of my brother Esau, for I am afraid of him; otherwise, he may come and attack me, the mothers, and their children. 12 You have said, 'I will cause you to prosper, and I will make your offspring like the sand of the sea, which cannot be counted.'" (HCSB)

There are Five elements in this prayer, five elements that are found in many of the prayers in Scripture.

1. All prayer starts with a personal **Relationship**, one of Belonging to God. Jacob spoke of his grandfather Abraham and his father Isaac who had a faith-obedience relationship with the Lord. Jacob then spoke of himself as one to whom God spoke and who obeyed by faith in coming back to Canaan. We enter a faith-obedience relationship with Jesus Christ when He calls us to repentance and faith and we obey, trusting Him as Lord and Savior.
2. The second element in prayer here is **Revelation** from God, referring to His Word which we can Believe. God had spoken His Word to Jacob and Jacob made that the basis of his prayer. He mentions God's Word in verse 9. You "said to me, 'Return...'" and in verse 12, "You said, 'I will surely prosper you...'" We too can read His Word and pray in line with His Word.
3. The third element is built on the second. Jacob made his **Request**. This is how believers Behave and how they Bless others by praying for them. Verse 11 says, "Deliver me, I pray, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau..." It is honest, simple, specific, to the point. He prayed exactly what was on his heart based on what God had spoken to him.

4. The fourth element goes with the second and third. It is also part of our faith Behaving. Jacob **Reasoned** with God, not arguing, not complaining or fussing or demanding. He reasoned, "You said... 'Return...'" and here I am about to face Esau and his 400 men. It does not look good. Jacob is not demanding, but speaks with humility. "I am unworthy" of Your mercy and faithfulness. I left here with only a staff and now I have a full family and many servants and hundreds of livestock. Also, Lord, I'm afraid—"I fear him" and the death that could come to all of us—Be honest with God about your thoughts and feelings. And You said You would prosper me and my descendants. I cannot have descendants if all my children are killed, so I ask You to protect us.
5. The fifth element is **Rejoicing** by Faith. There is the seed of rejoicing here. It is part of receiving the Blessing of God and Blessing others in prayer. If God hears and answers, then Jacob and all his family will rejoice exceedingly. In all Scripture-based, faith-based praying is the thought and expectation that God is going to answer according to His will. We pray trusting that we have understood His Word and that He will do what we have asked... believing we have asked what Jesus would want... what Jesus would say if He were here in this place at this time with this set of needs. That is what it means to pray "in Jesus' name"...and wait expectantly.

What happened? God answered his prayer in many different ways.

Jacob went to sleep and slept in peace. He woke up the next morning and sent his brother a gift, several hundred head of livestock. Why? I think the Spirit of God gave him wisdom to give a gift that subdues anger (Proverbs 21:14 speaks of that). Twenty years before, Esau's anger was over things like livestock and property. Then, God met Jacob and wrestled with him about some issues in his heart. Jacob surrendered to the "Man" who wrestled with him (Genesis 32:24-32). It was actually "the Angel" of the LORD (Hosea 12:4-5), a "Christophany", an appearance of Christ before His incarnation in Bethlehem. He came to correct and bless Jacob, changing his character and his name to Israel. After that, Genesis 33 tells us that Esau came, they met, embraced, and wept together. Esau received the gifts, met Jacob's family, and went back to his home. Jacob came into Canaan in safety. Indeed, God answered prayer in many ways.

Discuss - Of the five elements of prayer, which do you find the most difficult to practice? Why?

APPLY: *Belong, Believe, Behave, Bless*

How does this relate to us today—to becoming a praying person? What can we apply to our family situations, to our workplace, to our church and the ministries we are involved in, to the daily needs in our lives? The one who Belongs, Believes, Behaves,

and Blesses can experience the Five elements of prayer—Relationship, Revelation, Requests, Reasoning, and Rejoicing.

First of all, make sure we **Belong** to the Father. We must have a personal Relationship with the Father through the Lord Jesus. In that relationship, we are walking with Him every day, reading and listening carefully to His Word, so that we are growing in that relationship. Just as any relationship grows only by time spent together, talking and listening and learning from one another, so we must do the same with our Heavenly Father.

Second, as we read and hear His Word, we must **Believe** what He says, the Revelation of His will. That is the basis for making our Requests to Him and for our Reasoning with Him, talking it out in prayer. As we read, we listen... and we talk. We talk through the Scriptures as we walk through the Scriptures. We pray for others based on the Scriptures and we pray the Scriptures as the Spirit of God leads us.

Third, if we really Belong to Him and we really Believe Him and His Word, we will **Behave** as He directs us. Someone has wisely said, "What we do tells what we really believe. All the rest is just religious talk." That is very true and very practical. Our behavior shows what we believe. If we believe in God and we believe God answers prayer, then we will pray. If we are not praying, we are not behaving Biblically. Something does not match up in our belonging or our believing.

Fourth, 1 Peter 3:9-12 speaks about those who desire "to love life and see good days"—a Rejoicing life. That person is one that God has called for the purpose of receiving a **Blessing**. That passage also talks about being a blessing, speaking blessings to others and praying for others. Luke 6:27-28 speaks about blessing those who curse us or who are our enemies and about praying for those who may mistreat us. We return a blessing, seeking God's Best for the person. That is behaving according to right believing, looking like we belong to God, as "sons of the Most High" (Luke 6:35-36). Blessing through praying can only come from someone who belongs to God, because only by His grace and power and wisdom can we do that.

Discuss

1. How can we know that we belong to the Father?
2. Why is it hard to always believe God's word? What personal practices help you grow in faith and believe more fully in God's word?
3. In all honesty, which of the following statements best describes your prayer life? 1. Couldn't be better. 2. Good but still room to grow. 3. Needs some work. 4. Unsatisfactory. Explain your choice.

4. Tell about a time you were blessed by another's prayer or a time when your prayers blessed someone.

LIVE: Pray Scripture

Here is a very practical application for every believer... People in Scripture—those who belonged to God, believed God, behaved His way—prayed Scripture, seeking the multi-faceted blessing of God for others. In Genesis 15:1-6, we hear Abram praying about having a son ("seed" or "descendants") based on what God said a few years back. What God had said a few years before to Abram is what we read today in Scripture in Genesis 12:2 and 13:15-16. In Genesis 32:9-12, Jacob prayed what God had said to him twenty years before at Bethel (Genesis 28:13-14) and a few weeks before in Haran (Genesis 31:3, 13) and what God said to his grandfather Abraham on Mount Moriah (Genesis 22:17). Daniel prayed based on what he read in the scroll of Jeremiah (Daniel 9:2-3). Even Jesus, whose every word was "red letter," the pure Word of God, when He prayed, prayed Scripture. In Hebrews 10:5-10, we find His prayer about going to the cross. He prayed from Psalm 40:6-8. On the cross, He prayed Psalm 22:1 and 31:5. People in Scripture prayed Scripture. Paul told believers in Ephesus to be dressed in the armor of God and wield "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit," under His control, led by Him (Ephesians 6:17b-18a). We should pray what God says to us in His Word.

I recently read a wonderful testimony of a praying person. Each morning he awakens with this prayer on his lips, "Today, Lord, glorify Yourself at my expense." Then, he submits himself to "walk in the Spirit" throughout the day and reads a chapter of Scripture, seeking to learn from it what it says about God, as well as any promises to believe or commands to obey. Here is a man who belongs to God, who believes His Word, and who seeks to behave accordingly. This man, Erwin Lutzer, testifies about what he calls "the most revolutionary and most meaningful of all the ideas I've learned." He prays Scripture for himself and for others whom the Lord brings to mind. His advice: choose a familiar passage and pray that, inserting the name of a person, so that you are praying the will of God as God has shown it in His Word. In that way he is blessed and blesses others. That is a good description of a praying person. (From: The "How-to" of Meeting with God Every Morning)

We can do that... every day. It's the start of a good day... and the start of becoming a praying person.

Discuss - What changes will you make this week grow as a praying person?

Week 4

A Biblical Person?

"Now if any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives to all generously and without criticizing, and it will be given to him."

James 1:5

KEY SCRIPTURE

Proverbs 4: 5-13

KNOW

The importance of Wisdom in the life of the believer

APPLY

The truths of Scripture supply wisdom for life

LIVE

Develop a plan for reading God's words daily

*By: Mark Sutton
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Warm up: Share 3 true stories

1) In 2007, some thieves in the Czech Republic attempted to steal scrap metal from an abandoned factory – in itself, a bad decision. Even worse, however, the steel girders they dismantled actually served as roof supports. You can imagine what happened next, even though the thieves couldn't. The roof fell on the hapless men. 2) In the Philippines, the same year, three "entrepreneurs" decided to profit by stealing scrap metal (see a theme here?) from an abandoned water tank. They began cutting the metal legs out from under the tank. Again, you've figured out the ending: the tank fell onto all three, flattening them. 3) Two teenagers, in 1997, decided to disassemble an electric tower with wrenches and steal the aluminum supports for scrap. Yes, a third unwise decision, but they made it even worse by starting with the legs of the 160-foot, 10,000 pound tower! One of the teens survived after pulling himself out from under the debris, a sadder, yet wiser man.

All of us have done some unwise things in our lives that we regretted afterwards.

Discuss - Ask the class to share something they did – possibly as teenagers – that probably wasn't the smartest decision? Allow time for several people to respond.

Then say: In reality, we live in a culture where most people have no idea how to make correct decisions on a daily basis. They have no moral authority that transcends their emotions or the pressure of their culture. Even many Christians, outside their church life on Sunday, live as if they are non-Christians. Like the thieves in the three stories that began this lesson, many people have cut the moral supports out of their lives, and the consequences of poor decisions have come crashing down upon them

The Biblical person, however, has a strong advantage in life. This person will not only know how to make wise decisions, he/she will have godly strength to go through trials that would flatten other people. Let's see how God's wisdom can make a difference for each of us in our daily lives, beginning today.

KNOW: *The importance of Wisdom in the life of the believer*

Proverbs 4:5–13

5 Get wisdom, get understanding; don't forget or turn away from the words of my mouth. 6 Don't abandon wisdom, and she will watch over you; love her, and she will guard you. 7 Wisdom is supreme—so get wisdom. And whatever else you get, get understanding. 8 Cherish her, and she will exalt you; if you embrace her, she will honor you. 9 She will place a garland of grace on your head; she will give you a crown of beauty." 10 Listen, my son. Accept my words, and you will live many years. 11 I am teaching you the way of wisdom; I am guiding you on straight paths. 12 When you walk, your steps will not be hindered; when you run, you will not stumble. 13 Hold on to instruction; don't let go. Guard it, for it is your life. (HCSB)

The over-arching theme of this passage is wisdom and its importance in the life of the believer. Many Christians know the promise from God in James 1:5: "Now if any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives to all generously and without criticizing, and it will be given to him." Since this is a promise from God, it must be true. But if it's possible for a believer to have wisdom, then why do so many Christians struggle with how to conduct their lives?

Proverbs 4:5-13 answers this question. It also opens a way for us to be sure wisdom is a prominent part of our lives.

In looking at this passage, be aware that "understanding" is a synonym for "wisdom." In addition, note:

- Wisdom is more important than any quality or possession a person can have (v.7).
- God, Himself, commands us to get wisdom (v.5).

Why is wisdom so important? These verses respond superbly to this question. Notice the benefits of acquiring wisdom.

- Wisdom will watch over your life and guide you through it (v.6);
- Wisdom will exalt and honor you (v.8);
- Wisdom will give you a beautiful life (v.9);
- You will live a longer life because of wisdom (v.10)
- Your path through life will be smoother and without unnecessary stumbles (vs.11-12).

With all these promises, who wouldn't want wisdom? The problem is, this wonderful quality of life doesn't come automatically. In other words, there is a price to be paid for attaining wisdom. The Bible emphasizes that your search for wisdom must be consistent ("don't forget or turn away from the words of my mouth;" v.5). Your search for wisdom must be intentional, intense, even passionate ("cherish her," "embrace her;" v.8).

This type of search for wisdom is a far cry from believers who proclaim their faith in Christ, but who live life on their own terms, letting their emotions or desires lead them daily. Simply praying for wisdom when in trouble, then reverting to former ways of behavior and thinking will not result in a life of godly wisdom! Instead, God tells those who want wisdom to look for it intentionally, putting it as the highest priority in life, keeping it close to them daily, cherishing it and never abandoning it.

Where is wisdom found?

- It begins with letting God have control of your life. Proverbs 1:7, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and discipline."
- It continues with discovering what God has said to you. Proverbs 2:6, "For the LORD gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding."

If wisdom comes from God's mouth, where do we have a record of God's words? The answer, of course, is in the Bible. However, again it must be emphasized that reading the Bible once a week, or just reading one or two verses a day, is not enough. This doesn't mean that every believer must spend hours in the scriptures every day, but it does demand intentional reading, meditating on what we've read, and regular application of the scriptures in our lives.

Proverbs 2:3-5 sums up how important and intentional the search for wisdom in the scriptures should be: "Furthermore, if you call out to insight and lift your voice to understanding, if you seek it like silver and search for it like hidden treasure, then you will understand the fear of the LORD and discover the knowledge of God."

Discuss - As we read Proverbs 2:3-5, do you think these verses describe the devotional life of the Christians you know? Why or why not? Do they describe your own devotional life? Again, why or why not? If you had to answer "no" to this question, what are you going to do to begin changing your devotional habits?

The believer who longs for godly wisdom and searches for it in this manner will be blessed by God, and will be the beneficiary of all the promises in Proverbs 4:5-13.

APPLY:

I was in a friend's home not long ago, drinking coffee with him. "Jim" (not real name) was complaining about the lack of good shows on television.

"There are only two or three I'd like to see, but they're showing while I'm at work. I can never get them."

I looked closer at his television setup. "You have satellite, don't you?" I asked. He nodded. "What does that have to do with anything?"

I turned on his set and began looking through the menu. "You have a DVR that can record any show you want, any time you want. Then you can play it back when it's convenient." I walked him through automatically recording all his favorite shows.

After we'd finished, he shook his head. "Imagine, I've had this thing for nearly a year, and never knew anything about what it could do."

Discuss: Ask if anyone in the group has a similar story? Give time for answers.

After some time of discussion, say: Every computer, entertainment center and smart phone has so much more potential than the average user ever realizes. The Bible, likewise, is full of knowledge about how a believer can handle every difficult situation, know how to make right choices, and be able to walk through life without self-destructing. But if you only dip your toe into the scriptures' vast waters from time to time, you'll miss most of what the Bible offers.

This is one of the reasons why acquiring wisdom is so important for the believer. In attaining godly knowledge and wisdom, you will be forced to read, meditate on, and apply the scriptures consistently. The key word in that last sentence is "consistently." A consistent devotional life will mean you are truly searching the scriptures and making them a powerful part of your life.

Let's look at some practical ways a good knowledge of the Bible can help you:

- Do you have a problem with being afraid of someone or of some situation? **Proverbs 29:25** "The fear of man is a snare, but the one who trusts in the LORD is protected." **Proverbs 1:33** "But whoever listens to me will live securely and be free from the fear of danger." (HCSB)

- What if you're in a difficult marriage, and you meet someone else who seems to care about you? **Proverbs 2:12** "Wisdom will save you from the ways of wicked men, from men whose words are perverse, **Proverbs 2:16-17** Wisdom will save you also from the adulterous woman, from the wayward woman with her seductive words, 17 who has left the partner of her youth and ignored the covenant she made before God" (NIV).
- Do you have a problem with your temper? Is it really wrong to get mad at others and let your feelings out by yelling, screaming, or using cutting remarks? **Proverbs 12:16** "A fool shows his annoyance at once, but a prudent man overlooks an insult." (NIV)

Notice that all these verses come from only one book of the Bible! There are 65 other precious, wisdom-packed books that make up the rest of the scriptures. Imagine what being familiar with what they teach, and applying all that wisdom to your daily life could do for you!

If you have children, being wise in a godly way will have even more impact. Believe it or not, your children are watching you. They will learn important lessons from you about how to handle the various problems of life. When you display wise choices, you plant those seeds of wisdom in the lives of your children. Years later, that wisdom will bear fruit as they grow to be adults, themselves.

Coworkers, neighbors, fellow church members – all will gain from your life of applied wisdom that comes from God. In other words, the Kingdom People who lead biblical lives will not only help themselves dramatically, they will also be "salt and light" wherever they go.

LIVE:

You might be asking yourself this question, or something like it: "Okay, I understand now that in order to have wisdom, I have to read and apply the Bible consistently in my life. But how can I do that with the schedule I have every day?"

I'm glad you asked that question! Here's a plan that can fit into your busy life and still allow you to put into practice what you've learned today. It involves asking yourself several questions.

The Plan:

- Divide the Bible into sections, and consistently read through those sections. The goal is not to read the Bible fast. Instead, you want to understand what you've read.
- One way (though certainly not the only way) of dividing the Bible into sections is: Genesis to Psalms; Ecclesiastes to Malachi; Matthew to Acts; Romans to Revelation. Then, read a couple of verses from Proverbs every day. You may want to read a chapter from each section. However, that's not necessary. If only four or 5 verses "grab you" in the chapter, just focus on those for that particular day.
- After reading a passage, ask yourself first: "What did I just read?" Try to remember the essence of the passage. If you can't remember, then read it again until you can.
- Next, ask yourself: "Is there a principle in these verses I need to obey? If so, what will I change about my life today to begin putting this principle into practice?"
- Finally, ask yourself: "Is there a promise from God I need to claim? Also, what is the condition of the promise being fulfilled in my life?" For example, Psalm 16:8 says, "I keep the LORD in mind always. Because He is at my right hand, I will not be shaken." The promise is that nothing life throws at me will be able to shake my faith or make me sin. However, the condition of that promise being fulfilled is that I put God uppermost in my mind and life consistently.

Undoubtedly, there will be times when you can't, for some reason, read from every section. On those occasions, (and they should be few!) read from one section and also a verse or two from Proverbs. Again, the goal is not to read a lot, but to understand and apply what you've read.

Discuss - Say to the class: Before leaving today, let's review the promises given to us in today's passage. Allow time for them to list the promises. (To help you in the review, here are the promises once again):

- Wisdom will watch over your life and guide you through it (vs.6);
- Wisdom will exalt and honor you (vs.8);
- Wisdom will give you a beautiful life (vs.9);
- You will live a longer life because of wisdom (vs.10)
- Your path through life will be smoother and without unnecessary stumbles (vss.11-12).

After some time of discussion, say: Let's make sure we put into practice what we've learned. I'm going to ask each of you to bow your heads and silently pray something like this: "Heavenly Father, I want to be a biblical person who has godly wisdom. Help me to order my schedule and priorities so that I will be able to read, understand and apply your scriptures to my life. In Jesus' name, Amen."

Week 5

A Serving Person?

KEY SCRIPTURE

Matthew 25:31-46

KNOW

The certainty of eternal life, the expectations of righteousness, the motivation of love.

APPLY

We serve God by serving others.

LIVE

Every day we are given opportunities to serve others.

*By: Lewis Miller
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Warm up:

A kingdom person is a serving person; someone who is continuously loving their neighbor by pleasing them and hoping to cultivate a heart open to seeing and hearing the Gospel. Christian businessman Jason Hughes shared in his blog www.figliving.com a story of his plans being interrupted and how that led him to think more about serving others, and especially who it is that has called us to serve. Read this story on the following page, then discuss the question below.

Discuss - What motivates you to set aside your desires, or interrupt your schedule to serve others?

What You Do To Others You Do To Jesus

Memoirs of a Christian Entrepreneur: How I met Jesus in Ft. Worth Texas. By: Jason Hughes

"This was an awesome experience I had in Texas while attending a three day swimming pool construction course.... I wrote the following story the night it happened. It will always remain an experience that's near to my heart.

It was about 9:00 pm and I was walking down Houston Ave in downtown Fort Worth, Texas desperately seeking a hot meal. It had been a hectic day of travel that included a full blown sprint to catch a flight, lost luggage, "misplaced" hotel reservations, and no food. It was cold, I was tired, and my quest for an authentic Tex-Mex meal was looking bleak, so I compromised and settled for some restaurant chain Tex-Mex wanna-be.

By this time I had reached caveman hunger status so I grabbed a seat and ordered way too much food. While anxiously awaiting the arrival of my meal I tried to distract myself by reflecting on the purpose of my trip. I had traveled to Texas to attend a three-day course to be further trained in the arts of high-end residential swimming pool construction.....and I was pumped. An opportunity to learn, meet new people, and...never mind here comes my food.

My meal finally hit the table and I was ready to dig in when some dirty guy taps on the window, points to his wide open mouth and lips the word "homeless". So I kind of look down at my food for a split second and think, 'this is awkward', but instantly look up again to gaze at the man.

But when I did it wasn't the same person. In my eyes his appearance had completely transformed. You see, in that split second I looked down, I remembered something I had read in the Bible that changed the way I saw the world as well as everyone around me. It is one of Jesus' teachings found in Matthew chapter 25.

He taught "what you have done to the least of these your brethren you have done unto me". When I looked out of the window the second time the person I saw was Him.....literally. So, let's pause to ask ourselves an honest question: If Jesus tapped on your window and asked you for help how would you respond? Here is what I did. I got up, went outside and talked to Him. After we exchanged a few words I gave Him some money (I mean come on, it was Jesus, the least I could do was give Him ten bucks!). At that point his eyes welled up with tears and he said "I just want to give you a hug". Then we embraced. So not only did I meet Jesus in Fort Worth, but He gave me a hug as well!

This was an experience I will always treasure. It has little to do with giving to the homeless and everything to do with the little opportunities we have on a daily basis to serve others. It's been rare occasions like this, when I completely forget my own selfish desires and see Jesus' face in those I serve, that I find anything close to real joy, which is the kind of happiness that endures. Serving others is not about the why, the where, or the how....it is about the Who." Matthew 25 leads us to consider further, Who has called us to serve others. It likewise begs the question; "How will I respond when the opportunity to serve others presents itself in my daily life?" What biblical teaching is there to guide us?

Know: The Certainty of Eternal Life, The Expectations of Righteousness, The Motivation of Love

Who's Your King? Matthew 25:31-46

31 "When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. 32 All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, just as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. 33 He will put the sheep on His right and the goats on the left. 34 Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed by My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. 35 For I was hungry and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty and you gave Me something to drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; 36 I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you took care of Me; I was in prison and you visited Me.' 37 "Then the righteous will answer Him, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You something to drink? 38 When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or without clothes and clothe You? 39 When did we see You sick, or in prison, and visit You?' 40 "And the King will answer them, 'I assure you: Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of Mine, you did for Me.' 41 Then He will also say to those on the left, 'Depart from Me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the Devil and his angels! 42 For I was hungry and you gave Me nothing to eat; I was thirsty and you gave Me nothing to drink; 43 I was a stranger and you didn't take Me in; I was naked and you didn't clothe Me, sick and in prison and you didn't take care of Me.' 44 "Then they too will answer, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or without clothes, or sick, or in prison, and not help You?' 45 "Then He will answer them, 'I assure you: Whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for Me either.' 46 "And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life." Matthew 25:31-46 (HCSB)

While Matthew 25:31-46 focuses on the final judgment that Jesus, The King; will make of all people, we can learn something of the King's expectations of His people as it relates to serving.

1. The certainty of eternal life. For faithful servants of the King He announces; “. . . Come, you who are blessed by My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (v.34). Likewise for the self-absorbed and unfaithful He declares; “Depart from Me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the Devil and his angels!” (vv.41, 46). These verses remind us that our life here on earth is to be lived with purpose and meaning. We will give an account to the King for the life we live here and now. All people are given the opportunity to respond to God’s saving grace, mercy, and love and begin living a transformed life. God desires this life for everyone. (Romans 5:8, 10:13, John 10:10, 2 Peter 3:9)

Have you started this journey of faith walking daily with Jesus Christ? Once we’ve begun our journey of faith with Jesus Christ and as we grow in our understanding of that relationship with Him, our life takes on meaning and purpose beyond ourselves.

“Do you not know that your body is a sanctuary of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, 20 for you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body” 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 (HCSB).

2. The expectations of righteousness. In our text we see Jesus refer to ways that demonstrated the faithfulness of servants of the King. He lists six physical needs that were met. The emphasis in this passage is not to communicate that meeting these needs specifically is all that is expected of a kingdom person.

What does Jesus note as different between these two groups of people? One group has the heart and mind of humble servants focused on serving others, and the other seems to only be focused on themselves. This primary difference is seen in the response of the two groups when addressed by the King; both groups gave a similar response but notice the difference; ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? 38 And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? 39 And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?’ (vv.37-39). The first group responds with humility, not focused on recognition, but rather focused on meeting needs with love. They have embraced God’s love, and have now allowed that love to motivate them to serve others.

Notice the response of the second group; ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?’ (v.44). Their response seems a bit more defensive or self-absorbed. It is given by people who fail to make the connection between the parallel love we should have for Jesus and others. This response resembles the response Cain gave to God in Genesis 4:9 “...am I my brother's keeper?” Kingdom people serve others hoping to cultivate a heart open to seeing and hearing the Gospel. Jesus said; “By this all people will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” John 13:35 (HCSB)

3. The Motivation of Love. The love we have received from God should motivate us to serve others and thus encourage them to begin their journey of faith with Him.

Sometimes we must first meet the physical needs of people before they will open their lives to hear about our Savior who can meet their greatest need.

Imitate the King: Matthew 20:25b-28

When Jesus walked this earth He debriefed life through conversations with His disciples. Once such conversation He had with His disciples was concerning status and serving.

25 But Jesus called them over and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles dominate them, and the men of high position exercise power over them. 26 It must not be like that among you. On the contrary, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, 27 and whoever wants to be first among you must be your slave; 28 just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life—a ransom for many." Matthew 20:25-28 (HCSB)

In this passage we are challenged to live like Jesus. He is our model for serving. Rick Warren reminds us, "Jesus...measured greatness in terms of service, not status. God determines your greatness by how many people you serve, not how many people serve you." Jesus teaches that He does not expect any more from His kingdom servants than He Himself lived. His commands are clear, and His expectations are clear also;

15 For I have given you an example that you also should do just as I have done for you. 16 " I assure you: A slave is not greater than his master, and a messenger is not greater than the one who sent him. 17 If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them. John 13:15-17 (HCSB)

Discuss

We must move from knowledge of the teachings of Jesus to application that actually impacts our lives on a daily basis. What would living like Jesus look like for you?

Apply: We serve God by serving others.

We serve God by serving others and thus bring glory to His name. Do you find yourself spending your time and energy helping or serving others? Paul reminds us...

Do nothing out of rivalry or conceit, but in humility consider others as more important than yourselves. 4 Everyone should look out not [only] for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. 5 Make your own attitude that of Christ Jesus, 6 who, existing in the form of God, did not consider equality with God as something to be used for His own advantage. 7 Instead He emptied Himself by assuming the form of a slave, taking on the likeness of men. And

when He had come as a man in His external form, 8 He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death—even to death on a cross. Philippians 2:3-8 (HCSB)

Someone once said; “The difficult part of life is that it is so daily!” Life in the kingdom is every day! We have opportunities every day to serve. Serving your family is one way to honor God in your home. Your spouse observes your willful serving and this strengthens your relationship. Your children see the contrast between parents who serve and a culture that seems determined to communicate self-satisfaction and instant gratification, and leads them to inquire about that difference. The first “disciple-making” responsibility we’ve been given is within the relationships of our family.

One young mother shared how she was blessed by taking her young daughter to a feeding center where she served meals for those with needs. She replied “It is a joy to see my four year old daughter serving with such a generous spirit.” Serving God by serving others must be taught and lived in our homes on a daily basis. I believe this was the intent behind God’s teaching to Israel when He commanded them “...these words that I command you today shall be on your heart.

These words that I am giving you today are to be in your heart. 7 Repeat them to your children. Talk about them when you sit in your house and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Deuteronomy 6:6-7 (HCSB)

Discuss – What are some practical ways we can serve God by serving others?

LIVE: Every day we are given the opportunity to serve others.

Judith Haughton an Atlanta Workplace Examiner for the web based examiner.com writes, “Serving others is a fundamental concept within any team dynamic. It strengthens the team as well as provides an opportunity for team members to put the needs of others before their own. It also allows people to be sacrificial and selfless while fulfilling the needs of other people.

Do you put the needs of others ahead of your own personal needs at work? Are you a solid contributor to your team?” Isn’t this the model that Jesus prayed for us?

I have given them the glory You have given Me. May they be one as We are one. 23 I am in them and You are in Me. May they be made completely one, so the world may know You have sent Me and have loved them as You have loved Me. John 17:22-23 (HCSB)

Our unity brings glory to God as we serve others. Haughton gives some ideas for serving others in the workplace.

1. Provide training on a new system feature
2. Share your knowledge/expertise
3. Offer to help out during busy work times
4. Fetch a cup of coffee
5. Offer to make a lunch run when others are swamped with work
6. Review each other's work and provide constructive feedback
7. Volunteer to help out when someone is out of the office
8. Pass information along to others who may benefit from it

Francis Chan said, "God isn't concerned with your "spiritual life." He is concerned with ALL of your life." We have the opportunity to bring glory to God by serving others in our homes, and our workplace every day of our lives. What steps will you take to become the kingdom person who serves others?

R-U-N 4 the King

A pastor was talking to a friend about how the friend's church was planning a month-long service project. The pastor recalled, he was venting to me about one of the Sunday School classes at his church; how after hearing about the service project they began to place all sorts of parameters on how and when they could serve based on their personal schedule and preference. The friend asked the Pastor; "Is it too much to ask a group of people to just show up and serve?" This really got me to thinking about serving and what it means to serve.

1. Is serving never about me?
2. Is it painless, or is serving sometimes painful?
3. Is serving disruptive, or is it easy?
4. Why do I serve? Is it to feel better about myself, or to help others?
5. What does it mean to be a servant? Is it a project? Or not a box I check off or a life that I live?
6. What does it really mean to serve others in the name of Jesus Christ?

These questions are provided for your consideration, and to guide you in answering the question.... R-U-N [Are You In] 4 the King?

Discuss - Share with the group the action(s) you will take based on what you've learned from scripture today?

Week 6

A Generous Person

KEY SCRIPTURE

Luke 16: 1-13

KNOW

What does God expect from His followers?

APPLY

Followers of Christ are genuinely concerned for the needs of others

LIVE

Learning to be generous.

*By: David Moore
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Warm up:

In one episode of the television program "Home Improvement," The lead character, Tim Taylor, heads out the door for work and then returns after just a few minutes. He looks at his wife and asks, "How long has the oil light been on?" Tim's wife responds by saying, "Two or three days." Her response leads to a discussion about the importance of oil in a car. Cars are complex machines, so manufactures have installed gauges and warning lights to remind us when they need service or when they are not working properly. While cars have warning lights, life does not. How are we to know when our lives are pleasing to the Lord or when they are not?

The Bible teaches us God's principles for living. His plans are often very different from the principles by which the people of the world live. This lesson is about "The Parable of the Dishonest Manager." The parable is a surprise for two reasons: First, it has a surprise ending. Jesus uses a dishonest man's actions as a positive example. The second surprise is that Jesus points out that how we handle money reveals a great deal about our walk with the Lord. In the story, the dishonest manager uses money as a means to build or strengthen relationships that he will need later. Jesus wants his disciples to be generous with their financial means so they build relationships that will still be in place when they reach heaven. This view of wealth does not come naturally. For this reason, the way a person uses money is an indicator of the health of his or her spiritual walk.

Discuss - Show the "Home Improvement" video discussed above. It can be found at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DMzBaeJqBPU>

Or you can search for the video by going to youtube.com and searching for "Home Improvement Oil Light."

Ask, "What are some aspects of the Christian life which, if ignored, can lead to difficulties?"

KNOW: What Does God Expect From His Followers?

Luke 16:1-13 (HCSB)

1 He also said to the disciples: "There was a rich man who received an accusation that his manager was squandering his possessions. 2 So he called the manager in and asked, 'What is this I hear about you? Give an account of your management, because you can no longer be [my] manager.' 3 "Then the manager said to himself, 'What should I do, since my master is taking the management away from me?' I'm not strong enough to dig; I'm ashamed to beg. 4 I know what I'll do so that when I'm removed from management, people will welcome me into their homes.' 5 "So he summoned each one of his master's debtors. 'How much do you owe my master?' he asked the first one. 6 " 'A hundred measures of oil,' he said. " 'Take your invoice,' he told him, 'sit down quickly, and write 50.' 7 "Next he asked another, 'How much do you owe?' " 'A hundred measures of wheat,' he said. " 'Take your invoice,' he told him, 'and write 80.' 8 "The master praised the unrighteous manager because he had acted astutely. For the sons of this age are more astute than the sons of light [in dealing] with their own people. 9 And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of the unrighteous money so that when it fails, they may welcome you into eternal dwellings. 10 Whoever is faithful in very little is also faithful in much, and whoever is unrighteous in very little is also unrighteous in much. 11 So if you have not been faithful with the unrighteous money, who will trust you with what is genuine? 12 And if you have not been faithful with what belongs to someone else, who will give you what is your own? 13 No household slave can be the slave of two masters, since either he will hate one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You can't be slaves to both God and money."

The story may be difficult to interpret if one focuses on Jesus' use of an unrighteous person as an example. The dishonest manager however, is being commended for being strategic in how he used money, not for his lack of honesty. Parables generally convey a single particular truth and one should not try to infer deeper meanings from every detail. In verses 8-10 Jesus explains the purpose of the story: that the sons of this age (the people of this world) tend to do a better job using money to accomplish worldly purposes. And, that the "Sons of Light" should follow this example with a slight modification. Instead of using worldly money for worldly purposes, the "sons of light" should strategically use money to accomplish eternal purposes by investing in people.

Jesus also explains that how we use money in this life is a test for how well we will manage real wealth in the next. Why should God entrust His riches to us in the next life, if in this life we spend all we have only on ourselves?

In verse 13, Jesus alerts His followers to the fact that they have a difficult choice to make. They can serve the Lord or they can serve wealth, but they cannot serve both. A Christian is called to submit every area of life—even finances—to the Lord.

Discuss

1. In this parable who are the "Sons of this age?"
2. Who are the "Sons of Light?"
3. What is "Unrighteous Money?"
4. What in this story really sticks out in your mind? Why?
5. What do we learn from this story about the use of money?

APPLY: Followers of Christ are genuinely concerned for the needs of others.

Materialism is rampant in our culture. Television, radio, Internet, and magazine advertisements are constantly trying to convince us that we need whatever product the manufacturer is selling. Advertising is based on the belief that things make us happy. The problem is that life lived for the purpose of making ourselves happy prevents us from seeing the needs of others. Scripture teaches that money and possessions are neither good nor bad, but that the desire to increase one's standard of living causes people to focus on the benefits of money while neglecting the needs of those around them. "For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, and by craving it, some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pains." 1 Timothy 6:10 (HCSB)

The perspective on money Jesus presents in this parable is as counter cultural to today's world as it was to the Pharisees of the first century. Jesus encouraged His followers to use their money and possessions for more noble purposes than their wants and desires. His principle of generosity is based upon the second great command, "The second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself" Matthew 22:39 (HCSB). God wants His people to use their resources to help others. When Christians share with one another they are demonstrating Christ's love within God's family. When Christians share with unchurched people, they are building bridges that may afford an opportunity to share the gospel. Any time believers share their resources with others, there is an investment that may have eternal returns. Christians never look more like their master than when they are demonstrating a concern for the needs of others.

Discuss Take a moment to point out the link between the second greatest command and generosity. While this is not a major jump in logic, it is important for people to recognize that generosity is an outflow of God's character in our lives. Many Christian leaders have used the example of the "horizontal" and "vertical" relationships as the essence of the Christian faith. The vertical relationship is love relationship expressed between a person and the Lord. This relationship is marked by total surrender of one's life to the Lord. The horizontal relationships are the relationships we have with one another. Once we come to know Christ, we will relate differently to others. A mark of a healthy relationship with the Lord is a generous spirit towards those in need.

1. What are some examples of how people demonstrate that they value wealth more than people?
2. What are some negative effects of self-centered uses of wealth?
3. Review some other scriptures that teach about being generous?
Mark 10:25
Matthew 25
Acts 4:32
4. If Christians were more generous, how might this affect the perceptions of the outside world toward Christianity?
5. What are some practices that may help Christians focus their resources on someone other than themselves? (i.e.: tithing, living on less than we make so that we can share with others who are in need, giving to charity, etc.)

LIVE: *Learning to be generous.*

The great truths of the Christian Faith are often easy to know, but difficult to practice. Learning to be generous is no exception to this rule. Becoming a generous person requires a commitment to be more like Jesus, which will result in people becoming more important to us.

When people make a decision to change, they often benefit from setting goals and establishing accountability. The following activities have been included to help your group think together about becoming more generous people.

Discuss

1. Have the group plan an activity to demonstrate generosity to some person or group in your community.
2. What lifestyle changes would make it easier for you to share with others?
3. What could you do to regularly remind yourself of the needs of others?
4. What specific changes will you make this week?
5. (Optional) Have each person write a note to his or herself with suggestions that will help promote generosity to others. Next have group members address envelopes to themselves and place their notes inside. Wait one week and mail the envelopes to group members.

Week 7

A Reproducing
Person

KEY SCRIPTURE

Matthew 4:18-25

KNOW

The call to follow Jesus is a call to be a fisher of people.

APPLY

Respond to the call,
Grow in maturity and
skill, Go fish.

LIVE

Every day we are given
the opportunity to serve
others.

*By: Tony Hoffman
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Warm up: *Fishing*

Discuss

Ask the group: Who enjoys fishing or who has ever been fishing? Ask for volunteers to share a fun story about fishing and something that can be learned about life by fishing.

Read: **Matthew 4:18-25 (HCSB)**

As He was walking along the Sea of Galilee, He saw two brothers, Simon, who was called Peter, and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the sea, since they were fishermen. 19 "Follow Me," He told them, "and I will make you fish for people!" 20 Immediately they left their nets and followed Him. 21 Going on from there, He saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee, and his brother John. They were in a boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets, and He called them. 22 Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed Him.

KNOW: *The call to follow Jesus is a call to be a fisher of people.*

The first thing Jesus said to his disciples was, "Follow Me and I will make you fish for people." For the first disciples, it was clear that a call to follow Jesus was a call to become fishers of people. For Peter Andrew, James and John this was a very significant invitation that required a measured and reasoned response.

Read Matthew 4:18-22

Matthew 4:18-22 (HCSB)

As He was walking along the Sea of Galilee, He saw two brothers, Simon, who was called Peter, and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the sea, since they were fishermen. 19 "Follow Me," He told them, "and I will make you fish for people!" 20 Immediately they left their nets and followed Him. 21 Going on from there, He saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee, and his brother John. They were in a boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets, and He called them. 22 Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed Him.

These men were fisherman, and their lives were spent in the pursuit of catching fish. They invested their time, energy, and skills to make a living by fishing.

When the first disciples answered the call to follow Jesus and fish for people, it required that they do three things: 1. Change the way they used their time, 2. change the way they used their energy, and 3. change the way they used their skills. Instead of using their time, energy, and skills to accomplish their own agendas, they would be required to use their time, energy, and skills to accomplish Christ's agenda; which is reaching people with the message of the Gospel.

Throughout the Gospels, whenever Jesus called people to follow Him, he called them to surrender their own agendas and embrace His agenda of reaching people.

Read Luke 5:27-28

Luke 5:27-28 (HCSB)

After this, Jesus went out and saw a tax collector named Levi sitting at the tax office, and He said to him, "Follow Me!" 28 So, leaving everything behind, he got up and began to follow Him.

Levi understood what it meant to follow Jesus. When Jesus invited him to follow, Levi left everything to accept the Lord's invitation.

The call of Jesus to follow Him is a call to trade in one life for another. It is a call to embrace Jesus' agenda of reaching the world with the good news of the gospel. Today, that call has not changed. If we want to follow Jesus, we must be willing to embrace His agenda of reaching our world with the gospel regardless of the cost to our own goals and ambitions.

Read Matthew 28:16-20

Matthew 28:16-20 (HCSB)

The 11 disciples traveled to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had directed them. 17 When they saw Him, they worshiped, but some doubted. 18 Then Jesus came near and said to them, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 19 Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

The first thing Jesus said to His disciples was, "Follow me and I will make you fish for people." The last thing He said was, "Go and make disciples."

These two statements encompass Jesus' plan for reaching the world with the Gospel through spiritual reproduction. Fishing for people involves sharing the good news of God's forgiveness and redemption by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. Making Disciples involves leading people to develop their faith to the point that they are able to lead others to reach people and make disciples. This is God's agenda—to reach people with the Gospel and help them become disciple makers.

Discuss

1. If the call to follow Jesus includes a call to reach people with the Gospel and make disciples, is a person who is not reaching people and making disciples really following Jesus?

Apply: Responding to Jesus' call

When Jesus told his disciples that He would make them fishers of people He was calling them to join in His work of inviting people into God's Kingdom by sharing the good news of the Gospel. For the first disciples, this call required that the disciples commit themselves to Jesus' agenda of making disciples, learn the skills of disciple making, and be actively involved in making disciples.

Discuss

1. What changes could you make in your life to better demonstrate a commitment to Jesus' agenda of making disciples?
2. What disciple making skills do you need to develop?
3. What could you do to be more actively involved in making disciples?

Live: How will you respond?

Re-read Matthew 28:16-20.

Discuss

Talk about ways your class can respond to the words of Jesus in the Great Commission?

Week 8

Living the Kingdom Life

KEY SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 4:17-32

KNOW

Becoming a Kingdom Person is a Life-long Journey.

APPLY

Can we really change?

LIVE

Review: Where are you on your journey to become a Kingdom Person?

*By: Tony Hoffman
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Warm up: Review the 6 dimensions of a Kingdom Person.

A Worshipping Person – lives worship by surrendering his or her own agenda and embracing God’s agenda.

A Praying Person – has learned to hear the Father’s voice and respond to His mission, just as Jesus modeled.

A Biblical Person – is developing a healthy Biblical framework for living and is committed to following Jesus in every area of life.

A Serving Person - demonstrates love to one’s neighbor through willingness to put the needs of others above oneself and live out the truths of the Gospel.

A Generous Person – invests extravagantly in the Kingdom of God and the well-being of His body.

A Reproducing Person – is a disciple maker who leads others to lead others to live like Jesus.

Discuss

What difference might it make if your life more clearly demonstrated a commitment to the 6 dimensions of a Kingdom Person: In your family? Your church? Your community?

KNOW: Becoming a Kingdom Person is a life-long Journey.

The journey to become a Kingdom Person must continue beyond the duration of this study. It is an ongoing process that will never be fully completed in this life. Each day however, we should be intentional about continuing our journey to become Kingdom People.

Read Ephesians 4:17-32

Ephesians 4:17-32 (HCSB)

¹⁷ Therefore, I say this and testify in the Lord: You should no longer walk as the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their thoughts. ¹⁸ They are darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them and because of the hardness of their hearts. ¹⁹ They became callous and gave themselves over to promiscuity for the practice of every kind of impurity with a desire for more and more. ²⁰ But that is not how you learned about the Messiah, ²¹ assuming you heard Him and were taught by Him, because the truth is in Jesus: ²² you took off your former way of life, the old man that is corrupted by deceitful desires; ²³ you are being renewed in the spirit of your minds; ²⁴ you put on the new man, the one created according to God's [likeness] in righteousness and purity of the truth. ²⁵ Since you put away lying, Speak the truth, each one to his neighbor, because we are members of one another. ²⁶ Be angry and do not sin. Don't let the sun go down on your anger, ²⁷ and don't give the Devil an opportunity. ²⁸ The thief must no longer steal. Instead, he must do honest work with his own hands, so that he has something to share with anyone in need. ²⁹ No rotten talk should come from your mouth, but only what is good for the building up of someone in need, in order to give grace to those who hear. ³⁰ And don't grieve God's Holy Spirit, who sealed you for the day of redemption. ³¹ All bitterness, anger and wrath, insult and slander must be removed from you, along with all wickedness. ³² And be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving one another, just as God also forgave you in Christ.

The Christians in Ephesus were living in a very worldly and sinful environment. Many in the church there had practiced a life-style that was contrary to the teachings of Christ. Paul warned the Ephesian Christians that they were no longer to live according to the patterns of their former life, but should live in a new way that demonstrated a life transformed by the power of Christ.

Discuss

Review Ephesians 4:17-32 and respond to the following questions.

1. What does Paul say about life without the knowledge of Christ? (Eph. 4:17-18)
2. According to this passage, what characteristics are evident in the life of a person who does not know Christ? (Eph. 4:19)

3. What does Paul say is the appropriate way to live once a person knows and accepts the truth of Christ? (Eph. 4:20-24)

4. According to this passage, what types of behaviors should be evident in the life of a person that knows Christ? (Eph. 4:25-32).

APPLY: *Can we really change?*

Read 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 (HCSB)

9 Do you not know that the unjust will not inherit God's kingdom? Do not be deceived: no sexually immoral people, idolaters, adulterers, male prostitutes, homosexuals, 10 thieves, greedy people, drunkards, revilers, or swindlers will inherit God's kingdom. 11 Some of you were like this; but you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

Paul encouraged the Corinthian Christians that they could change, and indeed some had changed and were no longer destined to live according to the sinful patterns of their former way of life. This same encouragement is valid for believers today. Regardless of the nature of the sin, there is hope to change and become like Jesus: having been washed, sanctified, and justified in His name.

Discuss

1. Can a person really change? Why or why not?
2. Describe what it mean to you to be washed, sanctified, and justified in Jesus' name?
3. In what ways does 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 encourage you to live as a kingdom person?

LIVE: *Where are you on your journey to become a Kingdom Person?*

In Week One, we began by asking the question, "Where are you on your journey to become a Kingdom Person?"

Go back and review your responses to the Kingdom Person Evaluation that you completed during Week One.

Discuss

What are the challenge areas in your life that you discovered in Week One?

In what ways have you grown in those areas during the course of this study?

What are some things that helped you in this area?

What are a few things you will do to continue to grow in these challenge areas?

Appendix: The Journey Life Cycle

Spiritual Development Stages of 1 John 2:12-14

A clear understanding of the spiritual development process is essential for developing Kingdom People. Mature disciples are not created overnight, but begin as new believers who reach maturity by growing through a developmental stage process. We call this the Journey Life Cycle because the spiritual development life cycle is a journey to become like Christ.

1 John 2:12-14 (HCSB)

¹² I am writing to you, little children, because your sins have been forgiven on account of His name. ¹³ I am writing to you, fathers, because you have come to know the One who is from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men, because you have had victory over the evil one. ¹⁴ I have written to you, children, because you have come to know the Father. I have written to you, fathers, because you have come to know the One who is from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, God's word remains in you, and you have had victory over the evil one.

Spiritual Stages in the Journey Life Cycle

1. Connect Stage (Spiritual Infant) - 1 John 2:12 I am writing to you, little children, because your sins have been forgiven on account of His name.

Primary Characteristic: *Watcher/Receiver*

The connect stage in the Journey Life Cycle is the beginning phase for new Christians. During this spiritual life stage, the primary activities of an individual are watching and receiving. Just as a newborn child learns about the world by watching others in the world, so a new Christian learns about the Christian life by watching other Christians. In addition, the life of a new Christian is characterized by receiving Christian care and nurture from other more mature Christians.

Primary Spiritual Needs in the Connect Stage

- a. Spiritual nurture and care by mature Christians in the context of Biblical relationships.
- b. Spending time, outside of church programming and events, with mature Christians to see the 6 dimensions modeled in healthy ways.
- c. Opportunities to begin exploring and understanding the 6 dimensions of a kingdom person.

2. Grow Stage (Spiritual Child) – 1 John 2:14a I have written to you, children, because you have come to know the Father.

Primary Characteristic: *Learner/Tester*

When new Christians progress in their spiritual lives, they move into the Grow stage. This phase of the Journey Life Cycle is characterized by learning new concepts and skills that help young Christians mature in their faith. During this spiritual life stage, the young Christian is learning to read and understand Scripture, pray, deal with temptation, and relate to others in a way that honors God. An individual in the Grow stage is also a tester. He or she is beginning to test the truths being learned and apply them to his or her own life. Through testing, growing Christians learn how to live out the basics of the Christian life.

Primary Spiritual Needs in the Grow Stage

- a. Encouragement to begin meeting some spiritual needs for self within the context of Christian relationships.
- b. Learn basics of living out the 6 dimensions of a kingdom person through experimenting with the concepts they have learned.
- c. Christian relationships as a foundation of unity, edification, and accountability.
- e. Opportunities to learn basic Christian concepts and skills.

3. Serve Stage (Spiritual Adult) - 1 John 2:14b I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, God's word remains in you, and you have had victory over the evil one.

Primary Characteristic: *Doer/overcomer*

The Serve Stage in the Journey Life Cycle is the initial stage of Christian maturity. In this phase of spiritual life, the individual takes spiritual responsibility for self. He or she has learned to be consistent in living out the 6 dimensions of a Kingdom Person. A person in the Serve Stage is a doer in that he or she is actively engaged in living out the truths of Scripture. This person has also learned how to overcome the snares and entanglements of the world that would hinder Christian living.

Primary Spiritual Needs in the Serve Stage

- a. Encouragement to assume responsibility for own spiritual needs within the context of Christian relationships.
- b. Support in consistently living out the 6 dimensions of a kingdom person.
- c. Mature Christian relationships as a continuing foundation of unity, edification, and accountability.
- d. Encouragement and guidance in discovering place of kingdom service.

4. Lead Stage (Spiritual Parent) – 1 John 2:13a I am writing to you, fathers, because you have come to know the One who is from the beginning.

Primary Characteristic: *Giver/Reproducer*

The Lead stage of the Journey Life Cycle is the stage of spiritual reproduction. During this phase, an individual is ready and able to take spiritual responsibility for others. A person in the Lead Stage is committed to living out the 6 dimensions of the Kingdom Person as a model for others, actively sharing the Gospel, and nurturing other Christians toward spiritual maturity.

Primary Spiritual Needs in the Lead Stage

- a. Encouragement to assume the responsibility for the spiritual needs of others as well as self within the context of Christian relationships.
- b. Support in consistently living out the 6 dimensions of a kingdom person as a model for others to follow.
- c. Ongoing Christian relationships as a foundation for equipping others to grow in the 6 dimensions of a kingdom person and become equippers themselves.
- e. Ongoing equipping for effectiveness in leading others toward Christian maturity.

Using the Spiritual Development Stages

A good way to employ the Journey Life Cycle is to guide individuals in identifying their current spiritual stage. Then work with them to develop a plan for growing toward the next spiritual stage. ***Journey: A Kingdom Person Resource*** developed by Sunday School, Groups, and Discipling Ministries of the Florida Baptist Convention can provide an effective plan that will guide you through this process.