

This guide is an invitation to follow Jesus with greater purpose and hope. It will help you to explore the scriptures and challenge you to live out your faith. Each week we'd love for you to think about how you relate: **Up** (with God), **In** (with church) and **Out** (with neighbors).



Weekly Questions:

- How is God getting my attention? For help, think about these areas:
- How are you living up with God?
- How are you living in community with other followers of Jesus?
- How are you living out on mission with your neighbors?
- What are you going to do about it?

From Garden to Garden: New Creation 2 Colossians 1:15-20

The Counter-Cultural Claim: Jesus is Lord, Not Caesar In the ancient Roman Empire, peace (*Pax Romana*) was promised through military force, economic dominance, and imperial propaganda. Images of Caesar were everywhere, claiming he was the son of God and the sole source of prosperity and order. But in Colossians 1:15–20, Paul writes a revolutionary—even treasonous—hymn: Jesus is the true image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. Powers, thrones, and corporate or political structures do not possess ultimate authority; all things were created *through* Christ and *for* Christ. While worldly empires demand submission to maintain control, Jesus reveals God's true character through self-giving love. In a culture saturated with modern logos and promises of self-fulfillment, we are called to declare that Jesus—not culture, success, or empire—is Lord of our lives.

- What "imperial" promises of success, security, or peace (e.g., career, consumerism, control) compete most strongly for your trust today?
- How does viewing Jesus as the true "image of the invisible God" redefine how you understand power, leadership, and humility?
- Where in your daily routine can you consciously choose allegiance to Christ's Kingdom over the narrative of personal independence or cultural dominance?

Holding All Things Together: Finding Your Place in Christ Life is often full of beauty, yet deeply complex and painful. From unexpected tragedies and loss to daily stresses, there are times when it feels impossible for things to hold together. Yet Paul reminds us that Christ "is before all things, and in him all things hold together" (Col. 1:17). As Eugene Peterson translates, Christ is so roomy and spacious that every broken and dislocated piece of the universe—and our lives—finds its proper place in him without crowding. God does not discard our struggles, trauma, or mistakes; instead, through the cross, Christ reconciles all things to himself. No matter how fractured a situation may seem, nothing is outside the reach of God's restoring presence.

- In what areas of your life right now does it feel like things are unraveling or difficult to hold together?
- How does the promise that Christ "holds all things together" bring comfort, relief, or perspective to those heavy burdens?

- How can remembering that God's story is "roomy enough for everyone" change how you view people with whom you disagree or struggle to relate?

The Resurrection Parade: Living Resurrection Now Paul describes Jesus as "the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead" (Col. 1:18). Leading the resurrection parade, Jesus transforms our tears into joy and invites us to join in his march of renewal. This isn't just a future hope for heaven; it is a reality we live out today. Whether through social enterprises like Argrow House providing healing and employment for women surviving abuse, or community partnerships like Congregations in Action walking alongside families to break cycles of poverty, the church is called to host the party and spread resurrection life. When we share meals, serve food-insecure neighbors, build friendships, and practice hospitality, we invite others to take their place in Christ's ongoing parade.

- Where have you seen glimpses of the "resurrection parade"—restoration, healing, or new life—at work in your community or church family?
- How can you or your small group act as "party hosts" of resurrection hope to those who feel isolated, broken, or left out?
- Who in your life (a neighbor, coworker, or friend) might need a simple invitation to find their place in God's story this week?

- **Practice: Embodying The Resurrection Parade Today**

To live as citizens of the New Creation and followers in Christ's resurrection parade, put this hope into action through three simple rhythms this week:

1. **The Pocket Promise (Grounding in the Story):** Write down Colossians 1:17 (*"In him all things hold together"*) or Peterson's phrase (*"He is leading the resurrection parade"*) on a card or phone screen. Whenever you feel overwhelmed or anxious this week, pause and pray: *"Lord Jesus, You hold all things together, and I place my life in Your parade."*
2. **Spacious Hospitality (Making Room for Others):** Embody Christ's "roomy" love by extending an intentional invitation. Invite a neighbor, coworker, or friend for coffee, a meal, or a walk. Listen to their story and offer encouragement without any agenda other than reflecting Christ's welcoming grace.
3. **Resurrection Action (Bringing Healing and Relief):** Identify a tangible way to participate in local restoration—whether by volunteering with local food access, supporting neighborhood initiatives, or stepping in to help a friend carrying a heavy burden. Let your actions demonstrate that death and suffering do not have the final word.

Will you join the resurrection parade in your everyday life—letting Jesus' peace, reconciliation, and spacious love flow through you to the world?

