

40 DAYS OF COMMISSION



GREAT

ROGER PATTERSON

STUDY GUIDE

40 DAYS OF COMMISSION

GREAT

ROGER PATTERSON



Copyright © 2023 by Roger Patterson

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

Published by CityRise

Copyright and use of the curriculum template is retained by Brett Eastman.

Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotes are taken from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version. ESV® Text Edition: 2016. Copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers, unless otherwise indicated.

ISBN 978-1-950007-78-3

Printed in the United States of America

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	5
Introduction	6
Using this Workbook	8
Outline for Each Session	9

SESSION 1	12
INTRODUCTION	

SESSION 2	28
G - GO	

SESSION 3	42
R - REPRESENT	

SESSION 4	56
E - ENABLED & EMPOWERED	

SESSION 5	70
A - ALL	

SESSION 6	84
T - TO THE END OF THE AGE	

APPENDICES

Frequently Asked Questions	101
Small Group Agreement	104
Small Group Calendar	106
Weekly Check In	107
Memory Verse Cards	109

SMALL GROUP LEADERS

Hosting an Open House	111
Leading for the First Time	112
Leadership Training	114
Small Group Roster	118
Prayer & Praise Report	119



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I want to take the time to thank a number of people who have made this project possible. First, I want to thank those who made time to be in our studio audience. You all gave up a Monday to come and hang out at our West University campus to shoot this project and we had so much fun together. Thank you for availing yourself for this and for sharing your stories and insights.

To the staff of our CityRise family: You all amaze me. Thank you for bringing your best day in and day out and for having a “can do” attitude. No task is too small, and you all are always ready to take the next hill.

Samantha Tallent, thanks for putting the make up on us all and always making sure I was ready for the next shot. I need to fix my shirt!

Jaime, Justo, and Rick: Thanks for making the Spanish version come to life! Well done brothers!

To our team at LifeTogether – Brett, Sean, Joel and the guys, you all are a joy to work with and we have grown so much because of our journey together.

A special thanks to our production team, led by Aaron Senseman and Wes Mathew. I know you are a part of our staff, but you all deserve a special shout out.

Antonetta Russo and Wanda Wong, you all brought so much together to make this come alive. Thank you for managing all of the details.

To the beautiful body of Christ spread across three locations in Houston that we call CityRise: Thank you for your generosity, your desire to make Jesus known, and your willingness to be a GREAT people living a commissioned life! I am so honored to be your pastor.

To Julee, Brady, Cooper, and Carson, I love that you each love Jesus and represent Him so well.

Lastly, to our Lord Jesus: Thank you for dying in my place. You are worthy of it all!

PASTOR ROGER

INTRODUCTION

The great physicist Dr. Albert Einstein was once traveling from Princeton on a train, when the conductor came down the aisle, punching the tickets of every passenger. When he came to Einstein, Einstein reached in his vest pocket. He couldn't find his ticket, so he reached in his trouser pockets. It wasn't there. He looked in his briefcase but couldn't find it. Then he looked in the seat beside him. He still couldn't find it.

The conductor said, "Dr. Einstein, I know who you are. We all know who you are. I'm sure you bought a ticket. Don't worry about it." Einstein nodded appreciatively. The conductor continued down the aisle punching tickets. As he was ready to move to the next car, he turned around and saw the great physicist down on his hands and knees looking under his seat for his ticket.

The conductor rushed back and said, 'Dr. Einstein, Dr. Einstein, don't worry, I know who you are; no problem. You don't need a ticket. I'm sure you bought one.

Einstein looked at him and said, "Young man, I too, know who I am. What I don't know is where I'm going." ¹

How many people in our lives don't know where they are going? How many of our friends and family members are on a train bound for destruction but they don't even know it?

Over the next six-weeks we will be examining the greatest vision ever cast, the greatest story ever told, and the greatest catalyst for spiritual growth for every follower of Jesus Christ.

The vision is the Great Commission. The story is the cross of Jesus and His resurrection. The catalyst for growth is the people of God responding to the call of our Lord to share His good news of salvation by grace, through faith.

In Matthew 9, we see these words: When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.”

As we near the 2,000th anniversary of the death and resurrection of Jesus in 2033, we have the opportunity to propel the gospel further and wider than ever before. As evil seems to be intensifying and showing itself more and more, I can only conclude that God must really trust the generations of believers who are living today. Could it be that in this generation, we could truly advance the Great Commission to the ends of the earth? Could it be that the Bible will be translated into every tongue, a church will be started for every 1,000 people on the face of the earth, and that there will be an effective, trained believer witnessing to the death and resurrection of Jesus for every 6 people alive?

Over the next six weeks, we are going to study the Great Commission of Jesus. We are going to discover what living purposefully and intentionally for the advancement of the vision Jesus left us really looks like. This study will give you an overview of this grand vision. It will challenge you to think through your life and consider those you influence. It will call you to lay down your life at the cross, not just for your salvation, but for your usefulness in the hands of the Lord. It will give you a vision of the world, and how you can be a kingdom citizen to influence it for the glory of God. And it will equip you with the tools you need to confidently share your faith.

May God grant us great joy as we pursue this great vision given to us by Jesus!

Expectant,
Pastor Roger Patterson

OCTOBER, 2023

[1] COPIED FROM THE ANGLICAN CHRISTIAN PRAYING FACEBOOK PAGE, POSTED JULY 6, 2022.

USING THIS WORKBOOK



TOOLS TO HELP YOU HAVE A GREAT SMALL GROUP EXPERIENCE:

1. Notice in the Table of Contents there are three sections: (1) **Sessions**; (2) **Appendices**; and (3) **Small Group Leaders**. Familiarize yourself with the Appendices. Some of them will be used in the sessions themselves.
2. If you are facilitating/leading or co-leading a small group, the section Small Group Leaders, will give you some experiences of others that will encourage you and help you avoid many common obstacles to effective small group leadership.
3. Use this workbook as a guide, not a straightjacket. If the group responds to the lesson in an unexpected but honest way, go with that. If you think of a better question than the next one in the lesson, ask it. Take to heart the insights included in the Frequently Asked Questions pages and the Small Group Leaders section.
4. Enjoy your Small Group experience.
5. Pray before each session—for your group members, for your time together, and for wisdom and insights.
6. Read the outline for each session on the next pages so that you understand how the sessions will flow.



OUTLINE OF EACH SESSION

A typical group session for the Great study will include the following sections. Read through this to get a clear idea of how each group meeting will be structured:

WEEKLY MEMORY VERSES. Each session opens with a Memory Verse that emphasizes an important truth from the session. This is an optional exercise, but we believe that memorizing scripture can be a vital part of filling our minds with God's Word for our lives. We encourage you to give this important habit a try. The verses for our six sessions are also listed in the Appendices.

INTRODUCTION. Each lesson opens with a brief thought that will help you prepare for the session and get you thinking about the particular subject you will explore with your group. Make it a practice to read these before the session. You may want to have the group read them aloud.

SHARE YOUR STORY. The foundation for spiritual growth is an intimate connection with God and His family. You build that connection by sharing your story with a few people who really know you and who earn your trust. This section includes some simple questions to get you talking—letting you share as much or as little of your story as you feel comfortable doing. Each session typically offers you two options.

You can get to know your whole group by using the icebreaker question(s), or you can check in with one or two group members for a deeper connection and encouragement in your spiritual journey.

HEAR GOD'S STORY. In this section, you'll read the Bible and listen to teaching in order to hear God's story—and begin to see how His story aligns with yours. When the study directs you, you will watch a short teaching segment. You'll then have an opportunity to read a passage of Scripture, and discuss both the teaching and the text. You won't focus on accumulating information but on how you should live in light of the Word of God. We want to help you apply the insights from Scripture practically and creatively, from your heart as well as your head. At the end of the day, allowing the timeless truths from God's Word to transform our lives in Christ should be our greatest aim.

STUDY NOTES. This brief section provides additional commentary, background or insights on the passage you'll study in the Hear God's Story section.

CREATE A NEW STORY. God wants you to be a part of His Kingdom—to weave your story into His. That will mean change. It will require you to go His way rather than your own. This won't happen overnight, but it should happen steadily. By making small, simple choices, we can begin to change our direction. This is where the Bible's instructions to “be doers of the Word, not just hearers”

(James 1:22) comes into play. Many people skip over this aspect of the Christian life because it's scary, relationally awkward, or simply too much work for their busy schedules. But Jesus wanted all of His disciples to know Him personally, carry out His commands, and help outsiders connect with Him. This doesn't necessarily mean preaching on street corners. It could mean welcoming newcomers, hosting a short-term group in your home, or walking through this study with a friend. In this study, you'll have an opportunity to go beyond Bible study to biblical living. This section will also have a question or two that will challenge you to live out your faith by serving others, sharing your faith, and worshiping God.

FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY. If you have time and want to dig deeper into more Bible passages about the topic at hand, we've provided additional passages and questions, which you can use either during the meeting or as homework. Your group may choose to read and prepare before each meeting in order to cover more biblical material. Or, group members can use the additional study section during the week after the meeting. If you prefer not to do homework, this section will provide you with plenty to discuss within the group. These options allow individuals or the whole group to expand their study while still accommodating those who can't do homework or are new to your group.

DAILY DEVOTIONS. Each week on the Daily Devotions pages, we provide Scriptures to read and reflect on between sessions. This provides you with a chance to slow down, read just a small portion of Scripture each day, and reflect and pray through it. You'll then have a chance to journal your response to what you've read. Use this section to seek God on your own throughout the week. This time at home should begin and end with prayer. Don't get in a hurry; take enough time to hear God's direction.



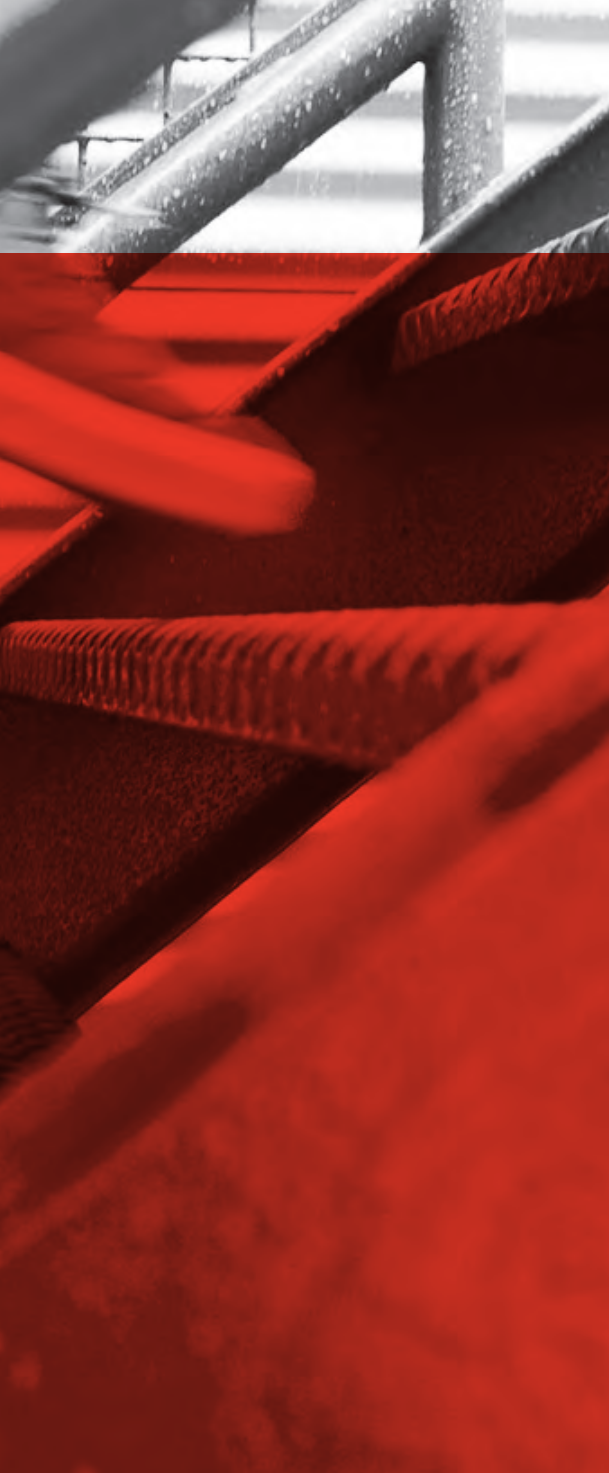
MEMORY VERSE

So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

ROMANS 10:17

SESSION 1

INTRODUCTION



What does it mean to be great? What does it mean to accomplish great things? The answers to these questions depend on your definition of great. If you were great in the eyes of the world, then you would be great in terms of money, power, possessions, and accomplishments. But, being great in God's eyes is a different thing. The path to greatness in God's Kingdom is found in the Great Commission to "go and make disciples." Let's be great as God sees things.

SHARE
YOUR
STORY



Each of us has a story. The events of our life—good, bad, wonderful or challenging— have shaped who we are. God knows your story, and He intends to redeem it—to use every struggle and every joy to ultimately bring you to Himself. When we share our stories with others, we give them the opportunity to see God at work.

When we share our stories, we also realize we are not alone—that we have common experiences and thoughts, and that others can understand what we are going through. Your story can encourage someone else, and telling it can lead to a path of freedom for you and for those you share it with.

Open your group with prayer. This should be a brief, simple prayer, in which you invite God to give you insight as you study. You can pray for specific requests at the end of the meeting, or stop momentarily to pray if a particular situation comes up during your discussion.

Before you start this first meeting, get contact information for every participant. Take time to pass around a copy of the Small Group Roster on page 119, a sheet of paper, or pass around your Study Guide, opened to the **Small Group Roster**. Ask someone to make copies or type up a list with everyone’s information, and email it to the group during the week.

Then, begin your time together by using the following questions and activities to get people talking.

- **Finish this sentence:** I spend most of my time _____.
- **Finish this sentence:** I spend most of my money on _____.

- Whether your group is new or ongoing, it's always important to reflect on and review your values together. On page 104 is a Small Group Agreement with the values we've found most useful in sustaining healthy, balanced groups. We recommend that you choose one or two values—ones you haven't previously focused on or have room to grow in—to emphasize during this study. Choose ones that will take your group to the next stage of intimacy and spiritual health.
- If your group is new, welcome newcomers. Introduce everyone—you may even want to have name tags for your first meeting.
- We recommend you rotate host homes on a regular basis and let the hosts lead the meeting. Studies show that healthy groups rotate leadership. This helps to develop every member's ability to shepherd a few people in a safe environment. Even Jesus gave others the opportunity to serve alongside Him (Mark 6:30-44). Look at the FAQs in the Appendices for additional information about hosting or leading the group.
- The Small Group Calendar on page 106 is a tool for planning who will host and lead each meeting. Take a few minutes to plan hosts and leaders for your remaining meetings. Don't skip this important step! It will revolutionize your group. If anyone is hesitant, simply tell them to think about it, and you'll get back to them.




HEAR GOD'S STORY

READ MATTHEW 9:35-38.

And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction. ³⁶ When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. ³⁷ Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; ³⁸ therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.”

- Why did Jesus have compassion on the crowd?
- What did Jesus mean by “the harvest is plentiful?”
- How does the lack of laborers affect the harvest?
- Describe the “harvest field” around you in your neighborhood or workplace?



STUDY NOTES

harassed and helpless, verse 36,

Also translated “confused and aimless”

proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction, verse 35, Jesus’ approach to winning people to His Kingdom was through meeting their practical needs and showing compassion not by condemning them.

The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few, verse 37.

Jesus saw the great need and the great potential of turning people who were far from God toward God. The only thing missing were believers who were willing to do His work and share His gospel.

CREATE
**A NEW
STORY**



God wants you to be part of His kingdom—to weave your story into His. That will mean change—to go His way rather than your own. This won't happen overnight, but it should happen steadily. By starting with small, simple choices, we begin to change our direction. The Holy Spirit helps us along the way—giving us gifts to serve the body, offering us insights into scripture, and challenging us to love not only those around us but those far from God.

In this section, talk about how you will apply the wisdom you've learned from the teaching and Bible study. Then think about practical steps you can take in the coming week to live out what you've learned.

- What are non-Christians' attitudes toward the church and the gospel?
- Does anything intimidate you about sharing the gospel with others? Why or why not?
- In the video, Roger said, "Jesus saw in them what they didn't see in themselves or in one another. And I believe Jesus sees in you those very same qualities and gifts." What do you believe Jesus sees in you?
- In the video, Roger asked, "Do you count yourself as numbered as a worker into the harvest field?" What is your response? Why or why not?

CIRCLES OF LIFE

Take a look at the Circles of Life diagram below and write the names of two or three people you know who need to know Christ. Commit to praying for God's guidance and an opportunity to share with each of them. Perhaps they would be open to joining the group? Share your lists with the group so you can all be praying for the people you've identified.

The diagram consists of five white circles arranged in a pentagonal pattern on a red background. Each circle contains a category name, a brief description, and four horizontal lines for writing names.

- FAMILY**
IMMEDIATE OR EXTENDED
- FAMILIAR**
NEIGHBORS, KIDS' SPORTS TEAMS, SCHOOL, ETC.
- FRIENDS**
- FUN**
GYM, HOBBIES, HANGOUTS
- FIRM**
WORK

- Also consider someone—in this group or outside it—that you can begin going deeper with in an intentional way. This might be your mom or dad, a cousin, an aunt or uncle, a roommate, a college buddy, or a neighbor. Choose someone who might be open to “doing life” with you at a deeper level and pray about that opportunity.
- This week, how will you interact with the Bible? Can you commit to spending time in daily prayer or study of God’s Word (use the Daily Devotions section to guide you)? Tell the group how you plan to follow Jesus this week, and then, at your next meeting, talk about your progress and challenges.
- Commit together to taking a risk and going deeper in your group and in your relationships with each other.
- Ask, “How can we pray for you this week?” Invite everyone to share, but don’t force the issue. Be sure to write prayer requests on your Prayer and Praise Report on page 119.

Close your meeting with prayer.





FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY ▶▶▶

If you feel God nudging you to go deeper, take some time before the next meeting to dig into His Word. Explore the Bible passages related to this session's theme on your own and jot your reflections in a journal or in this study guide. A great way to gain insight on a passage is to read it in several different translations. You may want to use a Bible app or website to compare translations.

▶ **READ REVELATION 20:11-15.**

- What will people be judged by according to this passage?
- When you think about people you know, how do you think they'll fair on this judgment day in Revelation 20?
- What concern do you have regarding the Day of Judgment?

▶ **READ ROMANS 3:23, 6:23, 5:8, 6:5, 10:9-10.**

- How would you explain to someone the consequences of sin?
- How would you share the hope they can find in Christ? How is the hope in Christ better than what they are currently experiencing?
- If someone was ready to receive Christ, how would you guide them?



DAILY DEVOTIONS

DAY 1

READ JOHN 3:17.

For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

Respond: Who do you think negatively about? How could your thoughts toward them affect your ability to win them to Christ?

DAY 2

READ ROMANS 3:23.

for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

Respond: How have you fallen short? What do you need to repent?

DAY 3

READ ROMANS 5:8.

but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Respond: Take a moment to reflect on God's love for you.

DAY 4

READ ROMANS 6:5.

For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.

Respond: How does the thought of resurrection impact how you live?

DAY 5

READ ROMANS 10:17.

So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

Respond: Who do you know who needs to hear the gospel? Take a moment to pray for them right now.

DAY 6

Reflect on the verses from this past week, and use the following space to write any thoughts God has put in your heart and mind about the things we have looked at in this session and during your Daily Devotions time this week.

MEMORY VERSE

For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ
shall all be made alive.

1 CORINTHIANS 15:22

SESSION 2

GO

A staircase with a black metal railing is visible in the lower right portion of the image. The background is a solid red color, and the overall design is minimalist and modern.



All leadership and movement begins with a burden. During our time together today, we are going to look at the call to GO with the gospel. As we consider this call to GO, let's first seek to understand God's plan. As we examine the Great Commission it's important to first ask, "Okay, how did we get to this point in the story?"

SHARE
YOUR
STORY



As we said last week, when we share our stories with others, we give them the opportunity to see God at work. Your story is being shaped, even in this moment, by being part of this group. In fact, few things can shape us more than community.

When we share our stories, we can encourage someone else, and learn. We experience the presence of God as He helps us be brave enough to reveal our thoughts and feelings.

Open your group with prayer. This should be a brief, simple prayer in which you invite God to be with you as you meet. You can pray for specific requests at the end of the meeting, or stop momentarily to pray if a particular situation comes up during your discussion.

Begin your time together by using the following questions and activities to get people talking:

- **On a scale of 1 to 10, what is your attitude toward lost people? (1 represents anger; 10 represents compassion).**
- **Why do you believe most people are lost?**

In the last session we asked you to write some names in the **Circles of Life diagram**. Who did you identify as the people in your life who need to meet Jesus? Go back to the **Circles of Life diagram** on page 22 to help you think of various people you come in contact with on a regular basis; people who need to know Jesus more deeply. Consider ideas for action and make a plan to follow through on one of them this week.





WATCH THE VIDEO

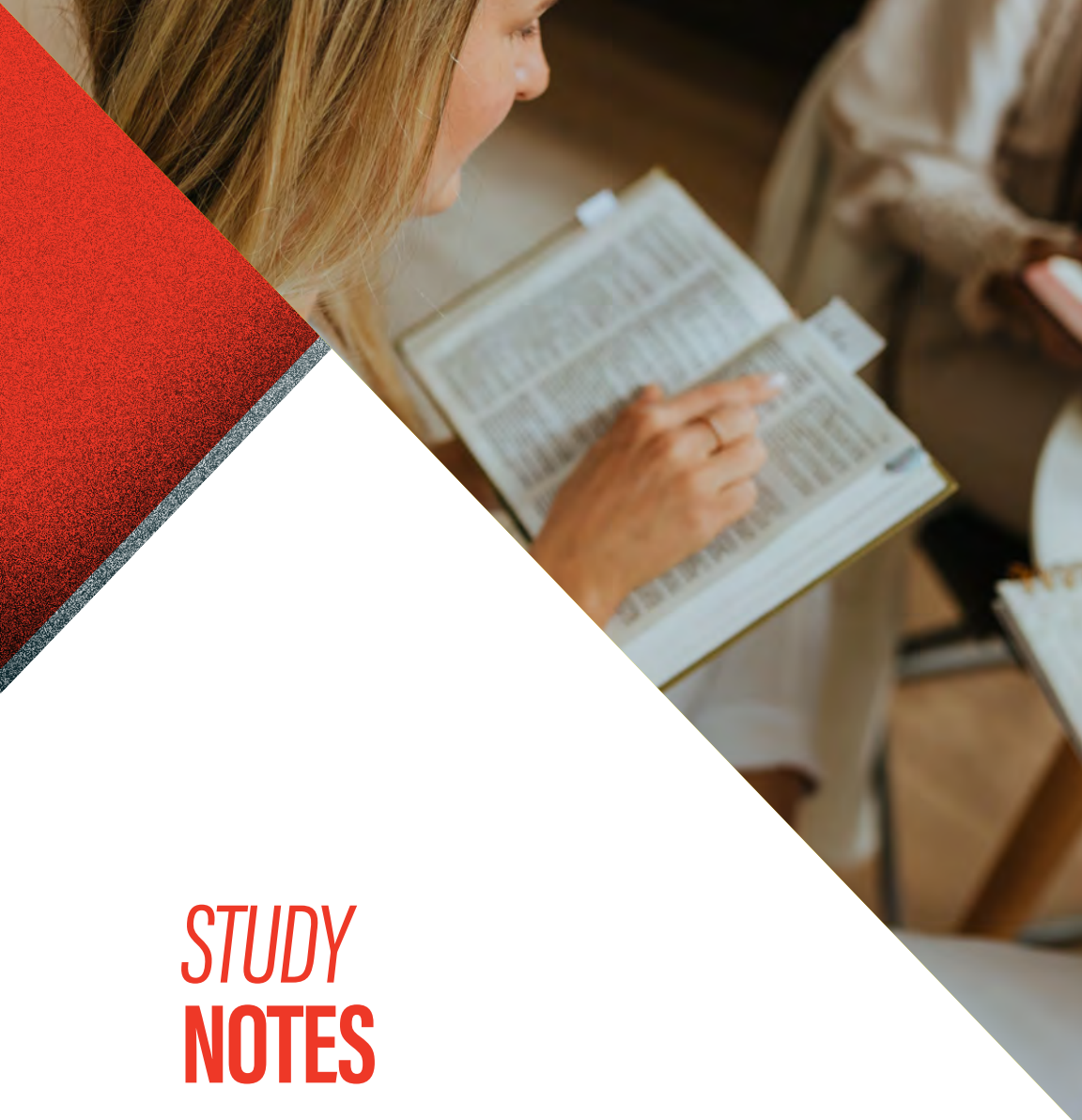
Use the Teaching Notes space provided to record key thoughts, questions and things you want to remember or follow up on. After watching the video, have someone read the discussion questions in the **Hear God's Story** section and direct the discussion among the group. As you go through each of the subsequent sections, ask someone else to read the questions, and direct the discussion.

HEAR GOD'S STORY

READ GENESIS 3:1-7.

Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God actually say, ‘You[a] shall not eat of any tree in the garden?’”² And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden,³ but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.’”⁴ But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die.⁵ For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”⁶ So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.⁷ Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.

- How did the serpent call God’s command into question?
- How did the serpent’s persuasion change the woman’s view of the tree (verse 6)?
- How does the devil persuade people to see evil as good today?
- How did shame affect Adam and Eve?



STUDY NOTES

You, verse 1, In Hebrew you is plural in verses 1–5.

to make one wise, verse 6, or give insight.

neither shall you touch it, verse 3, Eve maximized the restriction by adding this phrase, which is not in God's original command recorded in Genesis 2:16-17.

CREATE
**A NEW
STORY**



In this section, talk about how you will apply the wisdom you've learned from the teaching and Bible study. Then think about practical steps you can take in the coming week to live out what you've learned.

- In the video, Roger said, “God’s purpose for our lives is that we would carry this name and this message to the ends of the earth and to the end of the age. It’s the greatest vision ever pursued, the greatest effort that can be required of us, and the greatest calling we will ever receive.” When you consider the focus of your life, how committed are you to this vision?
- When you compare Jesus’ vision and the current focus of your life, what is blurry for you right now?
- In the video, Roger told the story of Walter. Walter said, “I believe that because the workers remain few, it means that those of us willing to be his witnesses have to get more and more creative to get the message of Jesus out as far and wide as we can.” What are some creative ways to get the message out? (It’s probably not internet memes).
- For whom has he burdened you? Who would be difficult for you?

Here are some simple ways to connect with God. Tell the group which ones you plan to try this week, and talk about your progress and challenges when you meet next time.

- **Prayer.** Commit to personal prayer and daily connection with God. You may find it helpful to write your prayers in a journal.
- **Daily Devotions.** The Daily Devotions provided in each session offers an opportunity to read a short Bible passage five days a week during the course of our study. In our hurry-up world, we often move too quickly through everything—even reading God’s Word! Slow down. Don’t just skim, but take time to carefully read and reflect on the passage. Write down your insights on what you read each day. Copy a portion of Scripture on a card and tape it somewhere in your line of sight, such as your car’s dashboard or the bathroom mirror. Or text it to yourself! Think about it when you sit at red lights or while you’re eating a meal. Reflect on what God is saying to you through these words. On the sixth day summarize what God has shown you throughout the week.

Ask, “How can we pray for you this week?” Invite everyone to share, but don’t force the issue. Be sure to write prayer requests on your Prayer and Praise Report on page 119.

Close your meeting with prayer.



FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY ▶▶▶

If you feel God nudging you to go deeper, take some time before the next meeting to dig into His Word. Explore the Bible passages related to this session's theme on your own and jot your reflections in a journal or in this study guide. A great way to gain insight on a passage is to read it in several different translations. You may want to use a Bible app or website to compare translations.

▶ **READ 1 CORINTHIANS 15:22-25.**

- What is the implication of Adam's sin on everyone else?
- What is the end result of every rule and every authority and power? In view of this conclusion, how much should a Christian's effort go toward battling these rulers, authorities, and powers?
- What should be the focus of believers' efforts?

▶ **READ MATTHEW 28:18-20.**

- How are you making disciples?
- What does it mean to "teach them to observe (or obey) all that [Jesus] commanded them?"
- What is the significance of Jesus' power (all authority) and presence (I am with you always) in obeying the Great Commission?

DAILY DEVOTIONS



DAY 1

READ 1 PETER 3:15.

but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect,

Respond: What is the reason for your hope? How would you explain it to someone?

DAY 2

READ 1 CORINTHIANS 9:22.

To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some.

Respond: Think about someone who is very different from you. What might you have in common with them? Pray for that person.

DAY 3

READ MARK 16:15.

And he said to them, “Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation.”

Respond: How could you proclaim the gospel in your part of the world? What’s one thing you could do this week?

DAY 4

READ JAMES 1:27.

Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.

Respond: How does this verse impact you? What does it prompt you to do?

DAY 5

READ LUKE 8:39.

“Return to your home, and declare how much God has done for you.” And he went away, proclaiming throughout the whole city how much Jesus had done for him.

Respond: If Jesus spoke these words directly to you, who would you tell about how much God has done for you?

DAY 6

Reflect on the verses from this past week, and use the following space to write any thoughts God has put in your heart and mind about the things we have looked at in this session and during your Daily Devotions time this week.



MEMORY VERSE

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

2 CORINTHIANS 5:21

SESSION 3

REPRESENT



Diplomats, also known as ambassadors, serve as representatives of their nations' government to represent the interest and concerns of their government and its citizens. Without significant diplomacy efforts, many people, caught up in trouble in foreign lands, might never be able to be set free and return home. The Scripture uses similar language to speak of being a representative of Jesus Christ and the Kingdom of God.

SHARE
**YOUR
STORY**



Open your group with prayer. This should be a brief, simple prayer in which you invite God to be with you as you meet. You can pray for specific requests at the end of the meeting, or stop momentarily to pray if a particular situation comes up during your discussion.

Sharing personal stories builds deeper connections among group members.

Begin your time together by using the following questions and activities to get people talking:

- In addition to Christ, who or what do you represent? (Think about family, associations, business, etc.)
- Looking back over the last week, in what ways did you surrender your life for God's plan?





HEAR GOD'S STORY

READ 2 CORINTHIANS 5:19-21.

that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.²⁰ Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.²¹ For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

- According to verse 19, what was Jesus' focus?
- Why wasn't Jesus counting their trespasses against them?
- The dictionary defines reconciliation as "the act of coming to an understanding and putting an end to hostility." How does reconciliation with Christ put an end to hostility?
- How do you see God making his appeal through you?



STUDY NOTES

in Christ God was reconciling, verse 19,

or God was in Christ, reconciling

reconciliation, verse 19, “the restoration of friendly relations.” In the Bible, reconciliation involves a change in the relationship between God and a person or between two people.

we might become the righteousness of God, verse 21,

The righteousness that counts is the righteousness that is imparted from Christ. Any righteousness that believers “achieve” on their own is regarded as filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6).



CREATE
**A NEW
STORY**

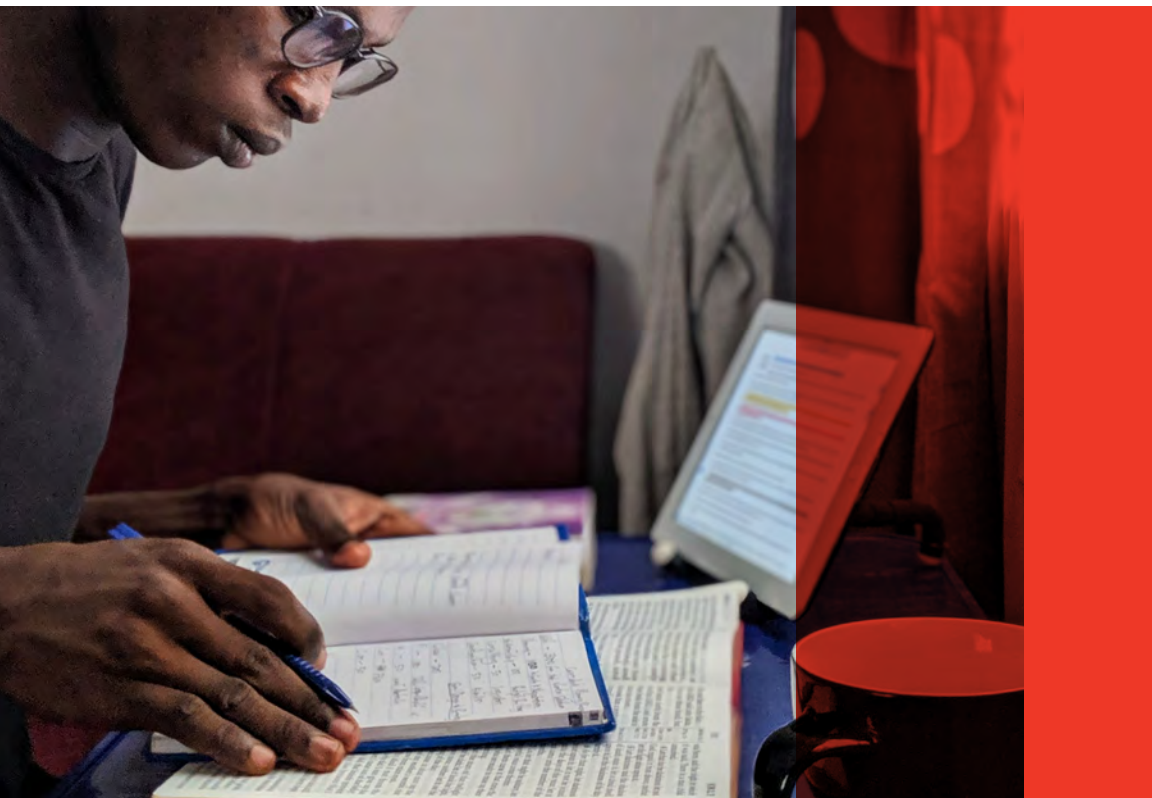
God wants you to be part of His Kingdom—to weave your story into His. That will mean change. It will require you to go His way rather than your own. This won't happen overnight, but it should happen steadily. By making small, simple choices, we can begin to change our direction. The Holy Spirit helps us along the way, by giving us gifts to serve the body, offering us insights into Scripture, and challenging us to love not only those around us but those far from God.

In this section, talk about how you will apply the wisdom you've learned in this session.

- **How willing are you to be sent? Why?**
- **How are you sending others? Have you stepped into the offering plate, laying yourself down as a living sacrifice?**
- **How are you letting fear keep you from the life that Christ has for you?**
- **In the video, Roger quoted the Selfer's Prayer from Dr. Charles Solomon: "Total commitment...is an act of the will by which we tell our Father that we want more than anything else in this world to have his will accomplished in our lives., whatever that means. We may not know his specific purpose for our lives, but after we have wholly committed our lives to him, he begins to bring it to pass." Do you need to pray the selfer's prayer, where you bring yourself to Christ and allow him to live through you?**

- What steps will you take this week to grow in your relationship with God? If you've focused on prayer in past weeks, maybe you'll want to direct your attention to Scripture this week. If you've been reading God's Word consistently, perhaps you'll want to take it deeper, and try memorizing a verse. Tell the group which one you plan to try this week, and talk about your progress and challenges when you meet next time.
- Ask, "How can we pray for you this week?" Invite everyone to share, but don't force the issue. Be sure to write prayer requests on your Prayer and Praise Report on page 119.

Close your meeting with prayer.



FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY ▶▶▶

If you feel God nudging you to go deeper, take some time before the next meeting to dig into His Word. Explore the Bible passages related to this session's theme on your own and jot your reflections in a journal or in this study guide. A great way to gain insight on a passage is to read it in several different translations. You may want to use a Bible app or website to compare translations.

▶ **READ ROMANS 8:5-6.**

- What does it mean to “set your mind?”
- How is your mind set on the things of the flesh?
- How can you set your mind on the things of the Spirit?

▶ **READ GALATIANS 2:20.**

- What in your life remains uncrucified or not surrendered to Christ? Why are you holding onto this?
- What is the evidence of Christ living in you?
- How much of Christ living in you is based on your performance? How much is based on your surrender?



DAILY DEVOTIONS

DAY 1

READ EPHESIANS 5:10.

and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord.

Respond: What in your life is please to the Lord?

DAY 2

READ JAMES 2:24.

You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone.

Respond: How is God pleased by what you do?

DAY 3

READ ROMANS 8:8.

Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

Respond: What about your life is not pleasing to God?

DAY 4

READ

COLOSSIANS 3:16-17.

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Respond: How does this verse impact you? What does it prompt you to do?

DAY 5

READ COLOSSIANS 4:5.

Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time.

Respond: How are you representing Christ among non-Christians?

DAY 6

Reflect on the verses from this past week, and use the following space to write any thoughts God has put in your heart and mind about the things we have looked at in this session and during your Daily Devotions time this week.



MEMORY VERSE

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.

ACTS 1:8

SESSION 4

**ENABLED &
EMPOWERED**



One of the reasons we don't share our faith isn't because we don't know the message. One of the reasons we don't share the good news of Jesus is because we see ourselves as the disciples in the upper room, scared and intimidated versus the disciples who are empowered by the Holy Spirit. Let's look at what it means to be enabled and empowered by the Holy Spirit.

A vertical composition featuring a person's legs in blue jeans and grey sneakers walking on a wooden plank. The image is split into three horizontal sections. The top section shows the upper leg and the top of the shoe. The middle section is a solid red band containing the text 'SHARE YOUR STORY' in white. The bottom section shows the lower leg and the bottom of the shoe. The background is a light, hazy sky.

SHARE
**YOUR
STORY**

Open your group with prayer. This should be a brief, simple prayer, in which you invite God to be with you as you meet. You can pray for specific requests at the end of the meeting or stop momentarily to pray if a particular situation comes up during your discussion.

As we have said in previous lessons, sharing our personal stories builds deeper connections among group members. Your story may be exactly what another person needs to hear, and listening to others' stories is an act of love and kindness to them—and could very well help them to grow spiritually.

Begin your time together by using the following questions and activities to get people talking:

- **Have you ever witnessed to someone? Tell the group about it.**
- **Think about the Selfer's Prayer from last week. How did you allow Jesus to live through you this past week?**

Share one prayer request and one thing you want to thank God for. Spend some time praying about what you've shared.

Take some time for each person to share about how they're doing on the challenge of inviting the people on the **Circles of Life diagram** to church or your small group. What specific conversations are you praying about for the weeks to come?



HEAR GOD'S STORY



READ LUKE 24:45-49.

Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures,⁴⁶ and said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead,⁴⁷ and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.⁴⁸ You are witnesses of these things.⁴⁹ And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.”

READ ACTS 1:8.

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.

- What did Jesus do before He spoke in Luke 24:45?
- What is “the promise of my Father” that Jesus talks about in verse 48?
- Why did Jesus instruct them to stay in the city?
- What did the Holy Spirit empower the disciples to do?

STUDY NOTES

he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, verse 45,

Jesus enabled the disciples to understand in a different way following His resurrection. While Jesus had spent three and a half years with His disciples, the revelation of His mission (and their mission) was unfolded to them in stages.

Thus it is written, verse 46, Jesus' statement is not a direct quote from the Old Testament, but is a reference to Abraham offering Isaac as a sacrifice in Genesis 22.

Jerusalem, Luke 24:47 and Acts 1:8, Jesus and the disciples were in Jerusalem when Jesus spoke these words. Their mission started from the place where they were standing. The account of the disciples receiving power from the Holy Spirit and proclaiming the gospel in Jerusalem is recorded in Acts 2.

CREATE
**A NEW
STORY**



- In the video, Roger said, “To accomplish the greatest mission ever given...Jesus gave us a strategy and power source for its accomplishment.” How does the Holy Spirit empower believers to accomplish the mission?
- What does it mean to you to have 24 hour a day, seven day a week access to the Holy Spirit?
- In the video, Roger quoted John Bevere, who said, “The Holy Spirit longs to be our closest friend.” How comfortable do you feel about this statement? Tell the group why.
- What might cause believers to be reluctant when it comes to approaching the Holy Spirit?
- How are you allowing the Holy Spirit to enable and empower you?

- Each of you in the group has different gifts and abilities. And every small group has tasks and roles that need to be done. How could you serve this group—perhaps with hospitality or prayer, by organizing an event, research or study of a topic, or inviting new people?
- Spend some time praying about those you know who might respond to a simple invitation: to come to a church service, to join your small group, or even to just have coffee and talk about spiritual matters. Ask the Holy Spirit to bring to mind people you can pray for.
- Groups grow closer when they serve together. How could your group serve someone in need? You may want to visit those who are homebound from your church, provide a meal for a family who is going through difficulty, or give some other practical help to someone in need. If nothing comes to mind, spend time praying and asking God to show you who needs your help. Have two or three group members organize a serving project for the group, and then do it!



FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY ▶▶▶

If you feel God nudging you to go deeper, take some time before the next meeting to dig into His Word. Explore the Bible passages related to this session's theme on your own and jot your reflections in a journal or in this study guide. A great way to gain insight on a passage is to read it in several different translations. You may want to use a Bible app or website to compare translations.

▶ **READ JOHN 16:8-11.**

- According to this passage, what is the Spirit's work?
- Why does the Holy Spirit do this work?
- What partnership should you have with the Holy Spirit to fulfill Christ's mission?

▶ **READ JOHN 14:21-23.**

- According to Jesus, what is proof that someone loves Him?
- In verse 21, what does it mean for Jesus to "manifest myself to him?"-
- Based on this verse, how well are you loving Jesus?



DAILY DEVOTIONS

DAY 1

READ JOHN 8:28.

So Jesus said to them, "When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he, and that I do nothing on my own authority, but speak just as the Father taught me."

Respond: What are you attempting to do on your own authority?

DAY 2

READ JOHN 14:10.

"Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works."

Respond: How does God dwelling in you impact your thoughts, words and actions?

DAY 3

READ MATTHEW 4:1.

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

Respond: Some people think the Spirit is leading them to where they want to go. Sometimes the Spirit leads us into difficult places. Where is the Spirit leading you?

DAY 4

READ ROMANS 8:27.

And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

Respond: The Spirit knows your heart and intercedes on your behalf. What comfort (or discomfort) do you find in this verse?

DAY 5

READ 1 CORINTHIANS 12:11.

All these [spiritual gifts] are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.

Respond: What spiritual gifts have you received from the Holy Spirit? How does He use those gifts through you?

DAY 6

Reflect on the verses from this past week, and use the following space to write any thoughts God has put in your heart and mind about the things we have looked at in this session and during your Daily Devotions time this week.



MEMORY VERSE

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, teaching them to
observe all that I have commanded you.

MATTHEW 28:19-20

SESSION 5

ALL



The word, “ALL” is a small word, but it has a massive impact. Is there a smaller word with a bigger reach? Are there words with fewer letters in the English language that describe more than the word all does? When it comes to the Great Commission, I want you to think about all authority, all that Jesus taught, and taking that message to all nations, because that’s what the word all conveys where we find it in the Great Commission.

SHARE
**YOUR
STORY**



Open your group with prayer. This should be a brief, simple prayer, in which you invite God to be with you as you meet. You can pray for specific requests at the end of the meeting or stop momentarily to pray if a particular situation comes up during your discussion.

Telling our personal stories builds deeper connections among group members. Begin your time together by using the following questions and activities to get people talking. Sharing our stories requires us to be honest. We can help one another be honest and open by creating a safe place; be sure that your group is one where confidentiality is respected, where there is no such thing as “stupid questions,” where you listen without criticizing one another.

- **Looking back over your life, what have you given your all to?**
- **Thinking about last week’s lesson on the Holy Spirit, how have you experienced the Holy Spirit empowering you this week?**





WATCH THE VIDEO

Use the Teaching Notes space provided to record key thoughts, questions and things you want to remember or follow up on. After watching the video, have someone read the discussion questions in the **Hear God's Story** section and direct the discussion among the group. As you go through each of the subsequent sections, ask someone else to read the questions, and direct the discussion.

HEAR GOD'S STORY



READ EPHESIANS 1:19-23.

and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might²⁰ that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places,²¹ far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.²² And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church,²³ which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

- What is the role of the word “all” in this passage?
- In verse 20, what’s the significance of where Jesus was and where Jesus went?
- In the video, Roger said, “Jesus Christ is Lord. He is Lord of heaven. He is Lord of earth. He is Lord of the spiritual realm. He is Lord of the physical realm. He is Lord over the grave. And it is this one, the head of the Church who commissions us to go, to teach to all nations. Are you being obedient to our Lord to go?” What is your response?
- In the Great Commission, Jesus starts with “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore...” What are the implications of Jesus’ authority on your part in fulfilling the Great Commission?



STUDY NOTES

all rule and authority and power and dominion, verse 21, also translated any ruler or authority or power or leader or anything else.

above every name that is named, verse 21, refers to people with authority or fame including kings, presidents, emperors, and others.

put all things under his feet, verse 22, or under the authority of Christ.



CREATE
**A NEW
STORY**

God wants you to be part of His kingdom—to weave your story into His. That will mean change. It will require you to go His way rather than your own. This won't happen overnight, but it should happen steadily. By making small, simple choices, we can begin to change our direction. The Holy Spirit helps us along the way— giving us gifts to serve the body, offering us insights into Scripture, and challenging us to love not only those around us but those far from God.

In this section, talk about how you will apply the wisdom you've learned in this lesson.

- **The second use of the word “all” in the Great Commission is “making disciples of all nations” (or ethnic groups). What type of people do you feel compassion toward?**
- **In the video, Roger quoted Warren Wiersbe, who said, “Since Jesus Christ today has all authority, we may obey Him without fear. No matter where He leads us, no matter what circumstances we face, He is in control. By His death and resurrection, Jesus defeated all enemies and won for Himself all authority.” What assurance do you find from this quote?**
- **How might God use this season to prepare you to deploy? How might He expose to you a greater need for your own discipleship?**
- **If you knew you couldn't fail, what would you attempt to do for God?**

- Spend some time praying about those you know who might respond to a simple invitation: to come to a church service, to join your small group, or even just to have coffee and talk about spiritual matters. Ask the Holy Spirit to bring to mind people you can pray for.
- A strong group is made up of people who are all being filled up by God, so that they are empowered to love one another. What specific steps will you take this week to connect with God privately, so He can “fill you up?” If you’ve focused on prayer in past weeks, maybe you’ll want to direct your attention to Scripture this week. If you’ve been reading God’s Word consistently, perhaps you’ll want to take it deeper and try memorizing a verse. Tell the group which one you plan to try this week. Then, at your next meeting, talk about your progress and challenges.
- Ask “How can we pray for you this week?” Invite everyone to share, but don’t force the issue. Be sure to write prayer requests on your Prayer and Praise Report on page 119 .

Close your meeting with prayer.



FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY ▶▶▶

If you feel God nudging you to go deeper, take some time before the next meeting to dig into His Word. Explore the Bible passages related to this session's theme on your own and jot your reflections in a journal or in this study guide. A great way to gain insight on a passage is to read it in several different translations. You may want to use a Bible app or website to compare translations.

▶ **READ DANIEL 7:13-14.**

- Who are the son of man and Ancient of Days in this passage?
- What was the extent of the dominion given to the son of man?
- Compare this passage to the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-20. What similarities do you see?

▶ **READ 2 TIMOTHY 2:1-2.**

- Who poured into your life spiritually as a believer?
- Who are you investing in spiritually?
- How could these efforts be multiplied? What's holding you back?



DAILY DEVOTIONS

DAY 1

READ JOHN 5:30.

I can do nothing on my own. As I hear, I judge, and my judgment is just, because I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me.

Respond: Do you seek God before you take initiative? Why or why not?

DAY 2

READ JOHN 20:21.

Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you."

Respond: What does it mean to you that Jesus is sending you?

DAY 3

READ
2 CORINTHIANS 5:14.

For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died;

Respond: How do you feel about the love of Christ controlling you?

DAY 4

READ
1 THESSALONIANS 2:8.

So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us.

Respond: The Spirit knows your heart and intercedes on your behalf. What comfort (or discomfort) do you find in this verse?

DAY 5

READ ROMANS 6:10-11.

For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Respond: Think about the transformation God's power made in your life. Spend a minute thanking God for saving you.

DAY 6

Reflect on the verses from this past week, and use the following space to write any thoughts God has put in your heart and mind about the things we have looked at in this session and during your Daily Devotions time this week.

MEMORY VERSE

I am with you always, to the end of the age.

MATTHEW 28:20B

SESSION 6

TO THE END OF THE AGE





As we come to the end of our study, I want us to keep in mind the timing of this great mission. This is the “when” of the vision to reach the world with the Gospel that Jesus has given to us. As we near the 2,000th anniversary of Jesus’ death and resurrection, we are still as relevant in pursuing this vision as we have ever been. During the time we have remaining, I want to us to talk about “time” and then I want us to talk about the age in which we live.



SHARE
**YOUR
STORY**

Open your group with prayer. This should be a brief, simple prayer, in which you invite God to be with you as you meet. You can pray for specific requests at the end of the meeting, or stop momentarily to pray if a particular situation comes up during your discussion.

As we have said in previous lessons, sharing our personal stories builds deeper connections among group members. Your story may be exactly what another person needs to hear to encourage or strengthen them. And listening to others' stories is an act of love and kindness to them—and could very well help them to grow spiritually.

Begin your time together by using the following questions and activities to get people talking.

- **What has surprised you most about this group? Where did God meet you over the last six weeks?**
- **What has God been showing you through these sessions? What positive changes has your group noticed in you? Check in with each other about the progress you have made in your spiritual growth during this study. Make plans about whether you will continue your relationship after the group has concluded.**
- **Which social media platforms do you use?**
- **Take some time for each person to share about how they've done with inviting the people on the Circles of Life diagram to church or your small group. What specific conversations are you praying about for the weeks to come?**



HEAR GOD'S STORY

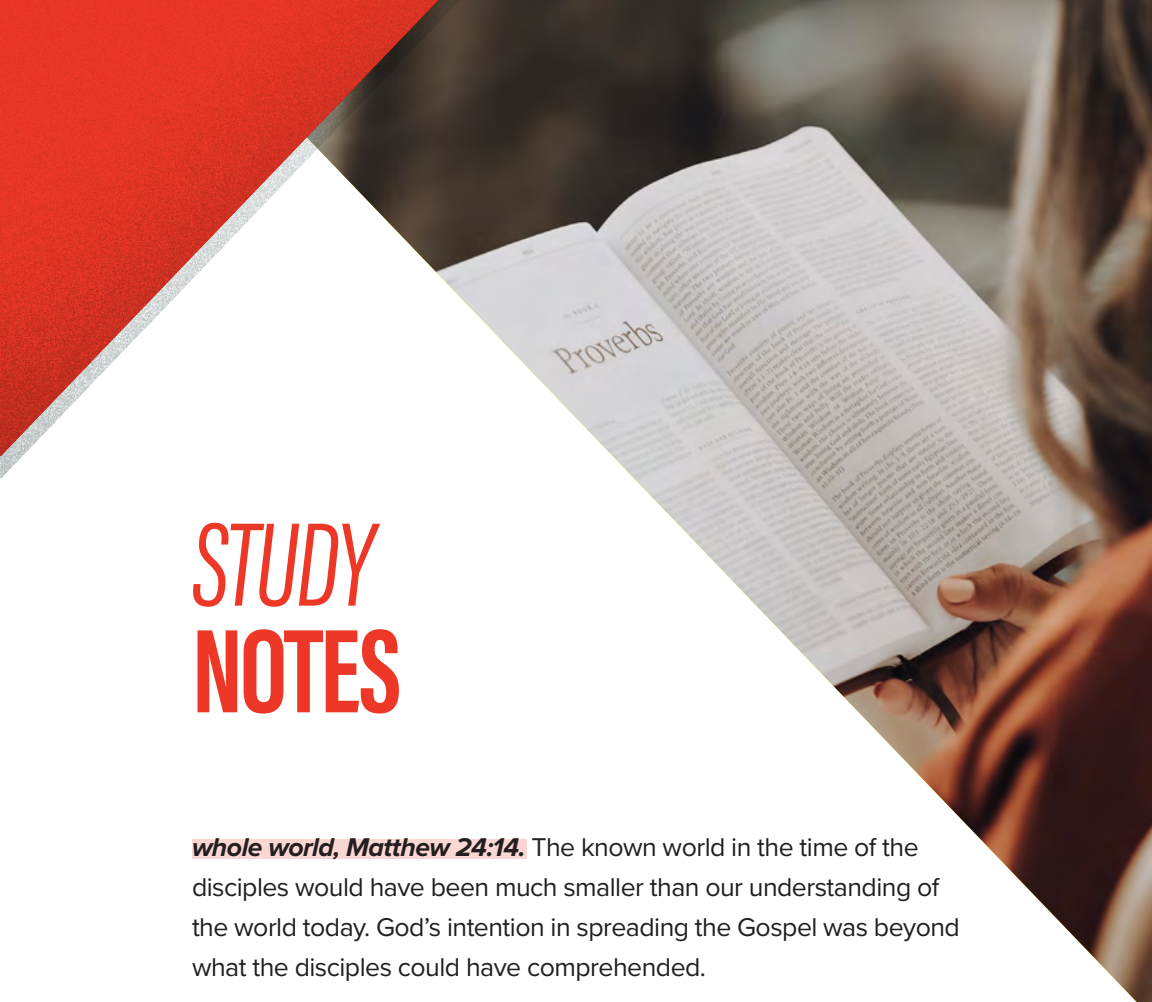
READ MATTHEW 24:14 & 28:20.

And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

MATTHEW 24:14

teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age. MATTHEW 28:20

- In the video, Roger said, “In the New Testament, there is a contrast between “the present age” (an “evil age,” Gal 1:4) and “the age(s) to come” when in God’s judgment wrongs will be righted and his people will come into their full inheritance. Using this definition of an “age,” what is the time period Jesus is referring to in Matthew 28:20?
- What does it mean to you personally that Jesus is with you always?
- What are believers to do in this present age?
- According to Matthew 24:14, what will happen once the Gospel is proclaimed throughout the whole world?



STUDY NOTES

whole world, Matthew 24:14. The known world in the time of the disciples would have been much smaller than our understanding of the world today. God’s intention in spreading the Gospel was beyond what the disciples could have comprehended.

and then the end will come, Matthew 24:14. For the disciples hearing these words, they would have understood this as the end of the Jewish state along with the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. But, there is also a meaning for believers today relating to the end of the age and spreading the Gospel in the modern world.

The end of the age, Matthew 28:20. Age(s): A long, but indefinite, period of time, past or future. The ages, past and future, make up the whole of time. God is spoken of as existing and planning “before the ages” (1 Cor 2:7); He is the “King of ages” (1 Tm 1:17) and has a purpose that embraces the ages (Eph 3:11). The Bible speaks of what God will do at the close or consummation of the age(s) (Mt 13:39, 49). Taken from the Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible.

CREATE
**A NEW
STORY**



How has God changed your story during this six-week study? What new things is He asking you to do? What truth has transformed your heart? Think about specific steps you want to take to live a new story, to walk more closely with God so you can be part of His story and engaged in His kingdom.

- **In the video, Roger defined the term age as “a long, but indefinite period of time, past or future. The New Testament speaks of the contract between the present age (an evil age) and the age to come when in God’s judgment wrongs will be righted and his people will come into their full inheritance.” How are we to understand the age we are in?**
- **Given current technology, how can the Gospel be proclaimed throughout the whole world?**
- **What can you do to proclaim the gospel throughout the whole world?**
- **What is one thing you can do this week to proclaim the Gospel locally or globally?**

- Spend some time praying about those you know who might respond to a simple invitation: to come to a church service, to join your small group, or even just to have coffee and talk about spiritual matters. Ask the Holy Spirit to bring to mind people you can pray for.
- Since this is the last meeting in this study, take some time to celebrate the work God has done in the lives of group members. Have each person in the group share some step of growth they have noticed in another member. (In other words, no one will talk about themselves. Instead, affirm others in the group.) Make sure each person gets affirmed and noticed and celebrated in some way.
- If your group still needs to make decisions about continuing to meet after this session, have that discussion now. Talk about what you will study, who will lead, and when you will meet.
- Review your Small Group Agreement on page 104 and evaluate how well you met your goals. Discuss any changes you want to make as you move forward. If you plan to continue to meet, and your group starts a new study, this is a great time to take on a new role or change roles of service in your group. What new role will you take on? If you are uncertain, maybe your group members have some ideas for you. Remember you aren't making a lifetime commitment to the new role; it will only be for a few weeks. Maybe someone would like to share a role with you if you don't feel ready to serve solo.
- Close by praying for your prayer requests and take a couple of minutes to review the praises you have recorded over the past five weeks on the Prayer and Praise Report on page 119. Spend some time thanking God for all He's done in your group during this study.

FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY ▶▶▶

If you feel God nudging you to go deeper, take some time before the next meeting to dig into His Word. Explore the Bible passages related to this session's theme on your own and jot your reflections in a journal or in this study guide. A great way to gain insight on a passage is to read it in several different translations. You may want to use a Bible app or website to compare translations.

▶ **READ ROMANS 11:25-27.**

- Why would God allow Israel to be hardened?
- How could this hardening of Israel make Gentile believers “wise in your own sight?”
- What does verse 27 imply?

▶ **READ MATTHEW 13:24-30, 36-43.**

- What would happen if the weeds were separated from the wheat before harvest? What implication does this have for living in today's culture?
- When will the weeds be removed?
- Who received the parable? Who received the explanation? What does this say about the disciples?

A close-up photograph of a woman with long dark hair, smiling warmly. She is wearing a light-colored top and is holding an open Bible. The Bible is open to a page with yellow highlights. The lighting is soft and warm, creating a peaceful atmosphere.

DAILY DEVOTIONS

DAY 1

READ

1 CORINTHIANS 2:11-12.

For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God.

Respond: How does the Spirit help you to understand the things of God?

DAY 2

READ 1 TIMOTHY 1:16

But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life.

Respond: How has God displayed his perfect patience toward you?

DAY 3

READ MARK 10:29-30

Jesus said, "Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life."

Respond: How will your investment in God's Kingdom show benefits to you both now and in the age to come?

DAY 4

READ ROMANS 10:14

How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?

Respond: Who do you need to share the Gospel with? Pray about an opportunity to share.

DAY 5

READ ROMANS 10:15

And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!"

Respond: What can you do personally to send someone to share the good news with others?

DAY 6

Reflect on the verses from this past week, and use the following space to write any thoughts God has put in your heart and mind about the things we have looked at in this session and during your Daily Devotions time this week.





APPENDICES

Resources to make your Small Group
experience even better!



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What do we do on the first night of our group?

Like all fun things in life—have a party! A "get to know you" coffee, dinner, or dessert is a great way to launch a new study. You may want to review the Group Agreement (pages 104) and share the names of a few friends you can invite to join you. But most importantly, have fun before your study time begins.

Where do we find new members for our group?

This can be troubling, especially for new groups that have only a few people or for existing groups that lose a few people along the way. We encourage you to pray with your group and then brainstorm a list of people from work, church, your neighborhood, your children's school, family, the gym, and so forth. Then have each group member invite several of the people on his or her list. Another good strategy is to ask church leaders to make an announcement or allow an insert in the Welcome Guide.

No matter how you find members, it's vital that you stay on the lookout for new people to join your group. All groups tend to go through healthy attrition—the result of moves, releasing new leaders, ministry opportunities, etc.—and if the group gets too small, it could be at risk of shutting down. If you and your group stay open, you'll be amazed at the people God sends your way. The next person just might become a friend for life. You never know!

How long will this group meet?

Most groups meet weekly for at least their first six weeks, but every other week can work as well. We strongly recommend that the group meets for the first six months on a weekly basis if at all possible. This allows for continuity, and if people miss a meeting they aren't gone for an entire month.

At the end of this study, each group member may decide if he or she wants to continue on for another study. Some groups launch relationships for years to come, and others are stepping-stones into another group experience. Either way, enjoy the journey!

Can we do this study on our own?

Absolutely! This may sound crazy, but one of the best ways to do this study is not with a full house, but with a few friends. You may choose to gather with another couple who would enjoy some relational time (perhaps going to the movies or having a quiet dinner) and then walking through this study together. Jesus will be with you even if there are only two of you (Matthew 18:20).

What if this group is not working for us?

You're not alone! This could be the result of a personality conflict, life stage difference, geographical distance, level of spiritual maturity, or any number of things. Relax. Pray for God's direction, and at the end of this six-week study, decide whether to continue with this group or find another. You don't typically buy the first car you look at or marry the first person you date, and the same goes with a group. However, don't bail out before the study is up—God might have something to teach you. Also, don't run from conflict or prejudge people before you have given them a chance. God is still working in your life, too!

Who is the leader?

Most groups have an official leader. But ideally, the group will mature and members will rotate the leadership of meetings. Healthy groups usually rotate hosts/leaders and homes on a regular basis. This model ensures that all members grow, give their unique contribution, and develop their gifts. This study guide and the Holy Spirit can keep things on track even when you rotate leaders. Christ has promised to be among you as you gather. Ultimately, God is your leader each step of the way.

How do we handle the childcare needs in our group?

Very carefully. Seriously, this can be a sensitive issue. We suggest that you empower the group to openly brainstorm solutions. You may try one option that works for a while and then adjust over time. One approach is for adults to meet in the living room or dining room and to share the cost of a babysitter (or two) who can watch the kids in a different part of the house. This way, parents don't have to be away from their children all evening when their children are too young to be left at home. A second option is to use one home for the kids and a second home (close by or a phone call away) for the adults. A third idea is to rotate the responsibility of providing a lesson or care for the children either in the same home or in another home nearby. This can be an incredible blessing for kids. Finally, the most common solution is to decide that you need to have a night to invest in your spiritual lives individually or as a couple and to make your own arrangements for childcare. No matter what decision the group makes, the best approach is to dialogue openly about both the problem and the solution.

SMALL GROUP AGREEMENT

OUR PURPOSE

To provide a predictable environment where participants experience authentic community and spiritual growth.

OUR VALUES

- **Group Attendance:** To give priority to the group meeting. We will call or email if we will be late or absent. (Completing the *Small Group Calendar* on page 134 will minimize this issue.)
- **Safe Environment:** To help create a safe place where people can be heard and feel loved. (Please, no quick answers, snap judgments, or simple fixes.)
- **Respect Differences:** To be gentle and gracious to people with different spiritual maturity, personal opinions, temperaments, or “imperfections” in fellow group members. We are all works in progress.
- **Confidentiality:** To keep anything that is shared strictly confidential and within the group, and to avoid sharing improper information about those outside the group.
- **Encouragement for Growth:** To be not just takers but givers of life. We want to spiritually multiply our life by serving others with our God-given gifts.
- **Shared Ownership:** To remember that every member is a minister and to ensure that each attender will share a small team role or responsibility over time.
- **Rotating Hosts/Leaders and Homes:** To encourage different people to host the group in their homes and to rotate the responsibility of facilitating each meeting. (See the *Small Group Calendar* on page 134.)

OUR EXPECTATIONS

- Refreshments/mealtimes

- Childcare

- When we will meet (day of week) _____
- Where we will meet (place) _____
- We will begin at (time) _____ and end at _____
- We will do our best to have some or all of us attend a worship service together. Our primary worship service time will be: _____
- Date of this agreement _____
- Date we will review this agreement again _____
- Who (other than the leader) will review this agreement at the end of this study? _____

SMALL GROUP CALENDAR

	Meeting Date	Discussion Leader	Meeting Host	Prayer Leader	Refreshments
SESSION 1					
SESSION 2					
SESSION 3					
SESSION 4					
SESSION 5					
SESSION 6					

WEEKLY CHECK-IN

	OUR PLANS	OUR PROGRESS
SESSION 1		
SESSION 2		
SESSION 3		
SESSION 4		
SESSION 5		
SESSION 6		



MEMORY VERSE
CARDS



SESSION ONE

So faith comes from hearing,
and hearing through the word
of Christ.

ROMANS 10:17

SESSION TWO

For as in Adam all die, so in
Christ all will be made alive.

1 CORINTHIANS 15:22

SESSION THREE

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

2 CORINTHIANS 5:21

SESSION FOUR

But you will receive power
when the Holy Spirit has
come upon you, and you will
be my witnesses in Jerusalem
and in all Judea and Samaria,
and to the end of the earth.

ACTS 1:8

SESSION FIVE

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, teaching them to observe
all that I have commanded you.

MATTHEW 28:19-20A

SESSION SIX

I am with you always, to the
end of the age.

MATTHEW 28:20B

SMALL GROUP **LEADERS**

KEY RESOURCES TO HELP YOUR LEADERSHIP
EXPERIENCE BE THE BEST IT CAN BE.

HOSTING AN OPEN HOUSE

If you're starting a new group, try planning an "open house" before your first formal group meeting. Even if you have only two to four core members, it's a great way to break the ice and to consider prayerfully who else might be open to joining you over the next few weeks. You can also use this kick-off meeting to hand out study guides, spend some time getting to know each other, discuss each person's expectations for the group and briefly pray for each other. A simple meal or good desserts always make a kick-off meeting more fun.

After people introduce themselves and share how they ended up being at the meeting (you can play a game to see who has the wildest story!), have everyone respond to a few icebreaker questions:

- **What is your favorite family vacation?**
- **What is one thing you love about your church/our community?**
- **What are three things about your life growing up that most people here don't know?**

Next, ask everyone to tell what he or she hopes to get out of the study. You might want to review the Small Group Agreement and talk about each person's expectations and priorities.

Finally, set an open chair (maybe two) in the center of your group and explain that it represents someone who would enjoy or benefit from this group but who isn't here yet. Ask people to pray about inviting someone to join the group over the next few weeks. Hand out postcards and have everyone write an invitation or two. Don't worry about ending up with too many people; you can always have one discussion circle in the living room and another in the dining room after you watch the lesson. Each group could then report prayer requests and progress at the end of the session.

You can skip this kick-off meeting if your time is limited, but you'll experience a huge benefit if you take the time to connect with each other in this way.

LEADING FOR THE FIRST TIME

- **Sweaty palms are a healthy sign.** The Bible says God is gracious to the humble. Remember who is in control; the time to worry is when you're not worried. Those who are soft in heart (and sweaty palmed) are those whom God is sure to speak through.
- **Seek support.** Ask your leader, co-leader, or close friend to pray for you and prepare with you before the session. Walking through the study beforehand will help you anticipate potentially difficult questions and discussion topics.
- **Bring your uniqueness to the study.** Lean into who you are and how God wants you to uniquely lead the study.
- **Prepare. Prepare. Prepare.** Go through the session several times. If you are using the video session, listen to the teaching segment and Leadership Lifter. Consider writing in a journal or fasting for a day to prepare yourself for what God wants to do. Don't wait until the last minute to prepare.
- **Ask for feedback.** Perhaps in an email or on cards handed out at the study, have everyone write down three things that went well and one thing that could be improved on. Don't get defensive. Instead, show an openness to learn and grow.

- **Prayerfully consider launching a new group.** This doesn't need to happen overnight, but God's heart is for this to take place over time. Not all Christians are called to be leaders or teachers, but we are all called to be shepherds of a few someday.
- **Share with your group what God is doing in your heart.** God is searching for those whose hearts are fully his. Share your trials and victories. We promise that people will relate.
- **Prayerfully consider who you would like to pass the baton to the next week.** It's only fair. God is ready for the next member of your group to go on the faith journey you just traveled. Make it fun, and expect God to do the rest.





LEADERSHIP **TRAINING 101**

Congratulations! You have responded to the call to help shepherd Jesus' flock. There are few other tasks in the family of God that surpass the contribution you will be making. As you prepare to lead, whether it is one session or the entire series, here are a few thoughts to keep in mind. We encourage you to read these and review them with each new discussion leader before he or she leads.

- 1. Remember that you are not alone.** God knows everything about you, and He knew that you would be asked to lead your group. Remember that it is common for all good leaders to feel that they are not ready to lead. Moses, Solomon, Jeremiah and Timothy were all reluctant to lead. God promises, “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you” (Hebrews 13:5). Whether you are leading for one evening, for several weeks, or for a lifetime, you will be blessed as you serve.
- 2. Don’t try to do it alone.** Pray right now for God to help you build a healthy leadership culture. If you can enlist a co-leader to help you lead the group, you will find your experience to be much richer. This is your chance to involve as many people as you can in building a healthy group. All you have to do is call, and ask people to help. You’ll probably be surprised at the response.
- 3. Just be yourself.** If you won’t be you, who will? God wants you to use your unique gifts and temperament. Don’t try to do things exactly like another leader; do them in a way that fits you! Just admit it when you don’t have an answer, and apologize when you make a mistake. Your group will love you for it, and you’ll sleep better at night!
- 4. Prepare for your meeting ahead of time.** Review the session and the leader’s notes, and write down your responses to each question. Pay special attention to exercises that ask group members to do something other than engage in discussion. These exercises will help your group live what the Bible teaches, not just talk about it. Be sure you understand how an exercise works, and bring any necessary supplies (such as paper and pens) to your meeting. If the exercise employs one of the items, be sure to look over that item so you’ll know how it works. Finally, review Outline for Each Session so you’ll remember the purpose of each section in the study.

- 5. Pray for your group members by name.** Before you begin your session, go around the room in your mind and pray for each member by name. You may want to review the prayer list at least once a week. Ask God to use your time together to touch the heart of every person uniquely. Expect God to lead you to whomever He wants you to encourage or challenge in a special way. If you listen, God will surely lead!
- 6. When you ask a question, be patient.** Someone will eventually respond. Sometimes people need a moment or two of silence to think about the question. Keep in mind, if silence doesn't bother you, it won't bother anyone else. After someone responds, affirm the response with a simple "thanks" or "good job." Then ask, "How about somebody else?" or "Would someone who hasn't shared like to add anything?" Be sensitive to new people or reluctant members who aren't ready to say, pray or do anything. If you give them a safe setting, they will blossom over time.
- 7. Provide transitions between questions.** When guiding the discussion, always read aloud the transitional paragraphs and the questions. Ask the group if anyone would like to read the paragraph or Bible passage. Don't call on anyone, but ask for a volunteer, and then be patient until someone begins. Be sure to thank the person who reads aloud.
- 8. Break up into smaller groups each week or they won't stay.** If your group has more than seven people, we strongly encourage you to have the group gather sometimes in discussion circles of three or four people during the Hear God's Story or Change Your Story sections of the study. With a greater opportunity to talk in a small circle, people will connect more with the study, apply more quickly what they're learning and ultimately get more out of it. A small circle also encourages a

quiet person to participate and tends to minimize the effects of a more vocal or dominant member. It can also help people feel more loved in your group. When you gather again at the end of the section, you can have one person summarize the highlights from each circle. Small circles are also helpful during prayer time. People who are unaccustomed to praying aloud will feel more comfortable trying it with just two or three others. Also, prayer requests won't take as much time, so circles will have more time to actually pray. When you gather back with the whole group, you can have one person from each circle briefly update everyone on the prayer requests. People are more willing to pray in small circles if they know that the whole group will still hear all the prayer requests.

- 9. Rotate facilitators weekly.** At the end of each meeting, ask the group who should lead the following week. Let the group help select your weekly facilitator. You may be perfectly capable of leading each time, but you will help others grow in their faith and gifts if you give them opportunities to lead. You can use the Small Group Calendar to fill in the names of all meeting leaders at once if you prefer.

- 10. One final challenge (for new or first time leaders).** Before your first opportunity to lead, look up each of the five passages listed below. Read each one as a devotional exercise to help yourself develop a shepherd's heart. Trust us on this one. If you do this, you will be more than ready for your first meeting.
 - **Matthew 9:36**
 - **1 Peter 5:2-4**
 - **Psalms 23**
 - **Ezekiel 34:11-16**
 - **1 Thessalonians 2:7-8, 11-12**

PRAYER & PRAISE REPORT

	PRAYER REQUESTS	PRAISE REPORTS
SESSION 1		
SESSION 2		
SESSION 3		
SESSION 4		
SESSION 5		
SESSION 6		

In this six week study of the Great Commission of Jesus, we are going to discover what living purposefully and intentionally for the advancement of the vision Jesus left us really looks like. This study will give you an overview of this grand vision. It will challenge you to think through your life and consider those you influence. It will call you to lay down your life at the cross, not just for your salvation, but for your usefulness in the hands of the Lord. It will give you a vision of the world, and how you can be a kingdom citizen to influence it for the glory of God. And it will equip you with the tools you need to confidently share your faith.

We are going to look at what makes this mission G.R.E.A.T.

G - Go
R - Represent
E - Enabled and Empowered
A - All
T - To the End of the Age

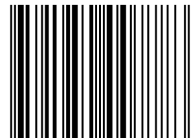
God has not only given a great mission to fulfill, He has given all of the resources that believers need to fulfill it. What's holding you back?

Let's get started!

ROGER PATTERSON is the Lead Pastor of Cityrise, a multiside congregation of West University Baptist Church, Crosspoint Church Bellaire, and Cityrise Missouri City, located in the heart of Houston, Texas. Through Cityrise, Roger has created the Cityrise Network, a network of churches, ministries, non-profits, and global partners whose vision is to lift the city and the world by generously giving the gospel of Jesus Christ. He is a husband to Julee and father to Brady, Cooper, and Carson. He is the author of *A Minute of Vision for Men*, *Fight for It*, and co-author of *Leading from the Second Chair*.



ISBN 978-1-950007-78-3



9 781950 007783