

# Leader's Guide

Strengthening the Family

The Letter of Your Life

2 Corinthians 2:14 - 3:2

Jim Black

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## Conversation Goal

To help group members reflect on the journey of the sermon series, recognize that their everyday lives are a witness to the world around them, and prayerfully consider whether their relationships, choices, and treatment of others are communicating the character and love of Jesus.

The goal isn't simply to ask, *"Did I learn something from this series?"* but:

"Has this series changed the way I live, and what is my life communicating about Jesus?"

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## Synopsis

In the final message of the series, Jim Black reminded us that the church is not primarily a building, institution, or Sunday activity. It is a community of people whose lives together are meant to display Jesus to the world. Drawing from 2 Corinthians 3 and Colossians 3, Jim challenged us to become "living letters" of Christ whose lives demonstrate the transformation He brings, held together by three things: our love for Jesus, our love for God's Word, and our love for one another.

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## 1. What has God been teaching me?

### Discussion Question

Looking back over this series, what truth, idea, Scripture, or challenge has stayed with you most? Why?

### Teaching Point

Jim intentionally connected this final sermon to everything that came before it. The series moved outward from coming to Christ and finding our identity in Him into marriage, family, conflict, forgiveness, and ultimately the way our lives together witness to the world.

This first question gives people permission to remember and celebrate rather than immediately jumping into another challenge.

The important follow-up is not simply, "*What did you like?*" but "What has actually stayed with you?"

### **Follow-Up Prompts**

- Was there something you initially resisted but later found yourself thinking about?
- Did God reveal something about yourself that you hadn't recognized before?
- Where have you seen God at work in you during these months?

### **Additional Scripture**

Philippians 1:6 — God continues the work He begins in us.

James 1:22-25 — Don't merely hear the Word; put it into practice.

2 Corinthians 3:18 — We are being transformed into Christ's image.

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## **2. What does my life communicate?**

### **Discussion Question**

Jim asked, "What is the letter of your life saying to the world?" What do you think people who regularly interact with you would say your life communicates about Jesus?

### **Teaching Point**

This is the central question of the sermon.

Paul describes believers as letters written by Christ, not with ink but with the Spirit of God. Jim takes that image and makes it intensely practical: people are reading our lives. They may never attend our church, listen to a sermon, or open a Bible, but they encounter Jesus (or fail to encounter Him) through the way we live.

Jim's point isn't that we earn the gospel through perfect behavior. Rather, a transformed life becomes evidence of the gospel we proclaim.

### **Follow-Up Prompts**

- Who are the people who see the most unfiltered version of you?
- Would the people closest to you describe you as loving, forgiving, patient, humble, and peaceful?

- Is there a difference between the person people see at church and the person they experience at home?
- What do your reactions under pressure communicate about Jesus?
- What do your marriage and family relationships communicate about your faith?
- What does the way you handle disagreement communicate?
- What might people learn about Jesus simply by watching how you treat people?

### **Additional Scripture**

- Matthew 5:14-16 — Let your light shine before others.
- John 13:34-35 — The world recognizes Jesus' disciples by their love.
- 1 Peter 2:12 — Live such good lives among unbelievers that they may see your good deeds and glorify God.

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## **3. What needs to change?**

### **Discussion Question**

If your life is a "letter" that people are reading, is there anything about that letter you would want the Holy Spirit to rewrite?

### **Teaching Point**

This is where the conversation becomes more personal.

Jim's message isn't saying that Christians should merely look good for the sake of our witness. The series has been about genuine transformation, becoming people who are more loving, forgiving, spiritually mature, and Christlike.

So the question isn't, *"How can I make people think I'm a better Christian?"* It's, *"Where is Jesus still transforming me?"*

That may be an attitude, relationship, habit, wound, response to conflict, marriage dynamic, family pattern, or area of spiritual neglect.

### **Follow-Up Prompts**

- Where do you still find yourself responding in ways that don't reflect Jesus?
- What happens to your Christlikeness when you're tired, stressed, angry, or disappointed?
- Is there a relationship where God is still inviting you to grow?
- What would your family say is one area where you have grown?
- What might it look like to invite someone you trust to speak honestly into your life?

## **Additional Scripture**

- Psalm 139:23-24 — Invite God to search your heart.
  - Galatians 5:22-23 — The fruit of the Spirit.
  - Colossians 3:12-17 — The characteristics Jim highlights throughout the sermon.
  - Ephesians 4:22-24 — Put off the old self and put on the new.
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## **4. What holds us together?**

### **Discussion Question**

Jim identified three "knots" that strengthen the church: our common love for Jesus, our love for God's Word, and our love for one another. Which of these is strongest in your life right now, and which one could use strengthening?

### **Teaching Point**

This is one of the most memorable structures in Jim's sermon.

The church doesn't remain healthy simply because we have programs, buildings, schedules, or organizational structures. We remain healthy when we're increasingly connected to Jesus, His Word, and one another. Jim emphasizes that these are the things that hold the body together even when preferences, personalities, leadership, and circumstances change.

The third "knot" - love for one another - is particularly important because Jim connects it to Jesus' words in John 13. The love Christians show one another becomes a visible demonstration of Jesus to outsiders. His own experience of being cared for by his church family illustrates this beautifully.

### **Follow-Up Prompts**

#### **Love for Jesus**

- What does your relationship with Jesus look like outside of Sunday morning?
- What helps you remain anchored in Him when circumstances change?
- Where might you need to deepen your relationship with Christ?

#### **Love for God's Word**

- What role does Scripture actually play in your week?
- Is there a difference between reading the Bible and allowing the Bible to shape you?
- What Scripture from this series do you need to continue practicing?

#### **Love for One Another**

- Who has demonstrated Christ's love to you recently?
- Who might God be asking you to intentionally love or encourage?
- What does "finding the sweet spot" in our relationships look like?
- Where might you need to move toward someone rather than wait for them to move toward you?

## Additional Scripture

- Colossians 3:12-17 — The primary text for Jim's three knots.
- John 13:34-35 — Love as the witness of discipleship.
- Acts 2:42-47 — A community whose shared life testified to Jesus.
- Hebrews 10:24-25 — Encourage one another toward love and good works.

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## 5. What will my letter say this week?

### Discussion Question

What is one specific change in your mindset, habit, relationship, or action that you believe the Holy Spirit is inviting you to make as you finish this series?

### Teaching Point

The series doesn't end with the sermon. Jim explicitly says that our witness continues Monday through Saturday, wherever we live, work, study, play, and interact with people.

That's an important distinction for the group: **The church doesn't stop being the church when Sunday ends. Our "letter" is being read all week.**

So rather than ending with a vague commitment to "do better," invite people to identify one concrete response.

### Follow-Up Prompts

- What is one thing you want to keep doing?
- What is one thing you need to stop doing?
- What is one thing you need to start doing?
- Is there a relationship where you need to demonstrate Christlike love?
- Is there a spiritual habit you need to strengthen?
- Is there a conversation you need to have?
- Is there someone you need to forgive or encourage?
- What would make this change difficult?
- How can this group pray for and encourage you?