



# *FAKE NEWS*

A Six-Week Series



CALVARY BAPTIST CHURCH  
2022

## Introduction to the series: *Fake News*

It seems our headlines lately are full of accusations about Fake News. But historically, there has always been plenty of “truths” that were later disproved. There was a time when some sicknesses were believed to be caused by evil spirits and doctors would drill a hole in the patient’s skull to release them. Tapeworms were once sold as a means for weight loss. The trouble is this – the “truths” that we as humans create are often flawed and constantly changing.

On the other hand, God’s truth never changes, it remains true through all time. God’s truth provides a strong and stable foundation upon which to build our lives. Join us for this “Fake News” series as we explore the lies the world tells us, and how they differ from God’s Truth.

## Introduction To The 4G Guide

### *GATHER – GOD – GROUP – GIVE*

It's important that we *GATHER* each week as a church family. Stop and listen to what God has so much more for us! He wants us to take what He is teaching and apply it to our lives. This is the heart of the 4G Guide. These guides are written to encourage you in your personal *GOD TIME* and in your small *GROUPS*. They are designed to help you understand what God is teaching and apply it to your daily life. Understanding and application allows you to then take what God is teaching and *GIVE* it to others.

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture references are from the *Christian Standard Bible* (CSB Text Edition: 2020).



## USING THE 4G GUIDE

Each week is divided into four sections:



### **Gear Up**

Each week starts with the Gear Up section. This section introduces the weekly topic and expounds on Scripture. Also provided are some practical steps to putting the subject matter into practice.



### **God Time**

Personal time with God is vital to the Christian walk. Five daily devotionals are provided for each week’s topic. This is your one-on-one time in a guided devotional format. At the conclusion, we encourage you to pray, seeking direction for the day and the rest of the week.



### **Group Time**

We learn from one another! In small groups we meet to dig deeper into the weekly material. This booklet contains lesson outlines for discipleship discussion. For more information on available groups and forming a group, go to our Groups webpage:

[cbcfamily.net/groups](http://cbcfamily.net/groups).



### **Family Group Time**

Family worship glorifies God. Each week we have simple devotionals just for Families. Plan ahead though, as many of these lessons include fun experiments or video shorts to discuss.



## Gear Up: Fake News: I Am A Good Person

Sometimes people believe things that just aren't true. Yes, there's a lot of "fake news" out in the world today. Sometimes even you and I fall victim to it.

**Here's an example: did you know** that about half of Americans think we're better than everyone we know? And 81% of people believe humankind is inherently good. Humans tend to think that we are better than we are—smarter, nicer, or more honest than others. There are problems with this thinking. It's just not true! But even if our view of ourselves is accurate (which it probably isn't) are we really *good*? Jesus talked with someone about this.

### Is My Good Enough Good Enough?

#### Read Mark 10:17-21

<sup>17</sup>As he was setting out on a journey, a man ran up, knelt down before him, and asked him, "Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" <sup>18</sup>"Why do you call me good?" Jesus asked him. "No one is good except God alone." <sup>19</sup>You know the commandments: Do not murder; do not commit adultery; do not steal; do not bear false witness; do not defraud; honor your father and mother.", <sup>20</sup>He said to him, "Teacher, I have kept all these from my youth." <sup>21</sup>Looking at him, Jesus loved him and said to him, "You lack one thing: Go, sell all you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." <sup>22</sup>But he was dismayed by this demand, and he went away grieving, because he had many possessions.

**The man called Jesus "good."** Jesus explains that no person is truly good—only God is. (Spoiler alert! Jesus is truly good because Jesus is God in the flesh.) He then invites the man to come and follow Him. And because Jesus is God, He knew that this man would have a hard time putting Jesus first, thereby disobeying the first commandment: "you shall have no gods but me." The man's possessions got in the way of good obedience! But even if this man had sold everything, he wouldn't be good enough.

### We Are Not as Good as We Think We Are

**Romans 3:12** says "*All have turned away; all alike have become worthless. There is no one who does what is good, not even one.*" Romans 3:23 says, "*For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*" (Ouch, right?)

**In other words, no, we aren't as good as we think we are.** No matter what we do or how hard we try, like Jesus said, "*No one is good except God alone.*" We will always be sinful beings, and we cannot do anything to be good enough to earn eternal life.

### Jesus Showed Up, So, Confess and Believe

**But here's the good news!** Though sin earns us death and eternal separation from God (Romans 6:23), Jesus shows up to pay the penalty our sin deserves. The Bible says that even while we were sinners, Christ died for us! (Romans 5:8) Jesus came so that we, sinful beings that we are, can be reconciled with God.

#### Read Romans 10:9

<sup>9</sup>If you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

### Don't Measure Up; Give Up!

**No, we are not "good people." Nor can we earn eternal life.** But when we trust in who Jesus is and what He's done for us, He forgives our sin, washes us clean, and gives us His righteousness (or "goodness"). Don't try to *measure* up, just *give* up—give up control, give up your life, give up your "all" to Him. Receive His incredible grace!

God Time Day 1: I Am a Good Person



Read Romans 3:23.  
*For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*

Most people believe they are a good person. This assumption is typically made by comparing ourselves to others. But if God is the one who judges sin, then we should be living according to His standards. Let's give it a try.



- Have you ever told a lie? If so, that makes you a liar.
- Have you ever stolen something, no matter how small? Doesn't that make you a thief?
- Have you ever looked at someone with lust? According to Jesus, to do so makes you an adulterer.
- Have you ever treated anything or anyone as more important than God? Doesn't that make you an idol worshipper?

Do you still believe you are a good person?



Pray for God's mercy and give thanks for His forgiveness.

God Time Day 2: Is My Good Enough Good Enough?



Read Mark 10:17-18.  
<sup>17</sup> *As [Jesus] was setting out on a journey, a man ran up, knelt down before him, and asked him, "Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?"* <sup>18</sup> *"Why do you call me good?" Jesus asked him. "No one is good except God alone."*

Let's look at that last statement by Jesus.

Underline the answer: who does Jesus say is good?

Circle the answer: according to Jesus, who is the standard by which we should compare ourselves to judge if we are good or not?



So, if you compare yourself to God (since He is the standard), do you still believe you are a good person?

We need to realize that our good is not good enough, yet God still loves us and has provided "good news" for us.

God Time Day 3: We Are Not As Good As We Think We Are



Read Mark 10:19-21.  
<sup>19</sup> *You know the commandments: Do not murder; do not commit adultery; do not steal; do not bear false witness; do not defraud; honor your father and mother."* <sup>20</sup> *[The man] said to him, "Teacher, I have kept all these from my youth."* <sup>21</sup> *Looking at him, Jesus loved him and said to him, "You lack one thing: Go, sell all you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."*

In this conversation, Jesus lays out some basic expectations of goodness that everyone should follow. Based on the man's response, he would probably be considered a good person. But according to Jesus, there was still a problem.



What three things did Jesus ask the man to do in verse 21?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

Now, read the man's response in Mark 10:22.  
*But he was dismayed by this demand, and he went away grieving, because he had many possessions.*

Underline the man's reaction.

This man was a great follower of the law, but his possessions were his god. Remember the First Commandment: *"Do not have other gods besides me."* (Exodus 20:3)

Many people can follow the rules, and Christians do not have a monopoly on acts of kindness, charity, and compassion. We might think, it would be so easy if God would simply give us a checklist of dos and don'ts.

But God is calling us to more than being a follower of rules. God asks us to follow Him by having a relationship with Him, allowing Him to guide, lead, and grow us into being His people.



When we surrender to God's will and allow Him to be Lord over our lives, we end up following the rules for the right reasons.

God Time Day 4: Hope for the "Not Good Enough"



For the past few days, we have been taking an honest look at the fact that none of us are good enough. If we are going to find a solution, we must fully understand the problem.



Read Romans 3:12.  
*All have turned away; all alike have become worthless. There is no one who does what is good, not even one.*

So, the problem is sin. The problem is that no one is good enough. No matter how nice of a person we are, and no matter how well we follow the rules, everyone has turned away from God at some point. So, what is the solution?



Read Romans 5:8.  
*But God proves his own love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

Accepting the truth that we will never be good enough can make us feel helpless. AND THAT IS THE POINT. While we could never be good enough, God gave us Jesus to live the life we could not. Jesus was good enough for us all.

So, if Jesus saves us, what is asked of us?



Read Romans 10:9-10  
<sup>9</sup> *If you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.*  
<sup>10</sup> *One believes with the heart, resulting in righteousness, and one confesses with the mouth, resulting in salvation.*

The salvation we have in Jesus is a gift from God.

Accepting that gift takes two steps:

- 1) **Confession:** Admit your sin and failures to God, and publicly admit your relationship with God.
- 2) **Belief:** Trust that Jesus' sacrifice is sufficient and trust in God's will for your life.



Have you decided to accept the gift of salvation and follow Jesus? If not, you can watch this to find out more.



God Time Day 5: Don't Measure Up, Give Up



The story of Easter is not about cute bunnies, eggs, or decorated baskets. The Easter story is all about this truth:

We are all sinners and incapable of saving ourselves. So, God sent Jesus to live the life we could not. He died on the cross and rose from the grave defeating death. And if we trust Him, put all our faith in Him, He gives us a new life.

A struggle many people have with the gift of salvation is that it seems too easy. We want God to give us a to-do list so that we can earn our salvation – because that allows us to feel in control. But let's be honest, when we are in control, we tend to make a mess of things.

God asks us to do just one thing: Surrender control to Him.



Read Proverbs 3:5-6.  
<sup>5</sup> *Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not rely on your own understanding;* <sup>6</sup> *in all your ways know him, and he will make your paths straight.*

When we surrender to God, we give up trying to be good enough, we give up trying to be in control, and we give up living our lives in the ways that have led us into sin. When we give up, we surrender to God's will for our lives and trust Him to lead us into new life.



Write down two areas in your life where you struggle to surrender total control to God.

- 1) \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) \_\_\_\_\_

If you have asked Jesus to be Lord of your life, write down two things God is asking you to do in obedience to His will.

- 1) \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) \_\_\_\_\_

If you have not asked Jesus to be Lord of your life, watch this three-minute video.



What is God asking you to surrender?



**Group Time**

◀◀ LOOK BACK:



1. Each participant shares one praise and one prayer request. (Commit these to prayer for the coming week.)

2. ENCOURAGEMENT 1-on-1 (See last page for directions)

Y / N	Y / N	_____
_____	_____	

3. Starting a new series.



What do you hope to gain from this series?

▶▶ LOOK UP:

**Question:** Think back to a time when you participated in a competitive season (sport or otherwise). How motivated would you have been if your coach told you your performance was “good enough?”

While we may not profess to be perfect, most people think they are a “good person.” The problem with that is, in human terms, it’s a relative scale. We can always find someone worse, but we also can point to someone better. So, when it comes to heaven, where is the line?

The truth is, on our own, the line is unobtainable. This is what Jesus is trying to explain to the Rich Young Ruler in Mark 10:17-22. Based upon the basic rules for human interaction (Commandments 5-10), the young man was performing above the line. His performance was “good enough.” But unfortunately, his performance for godly interaction (Commandment 1) was below the line. His stuff was more important than his relationship with, or humility to, God.

**LOOK IN: Discussion**

If you’ve learned the *Three-Circles* evangelism tool, you know it defines sin as, “choosing our way over God’s ways.” Another tool is the *One-Verse* tool. How does One-Verse define sin? Is anyone “good enough?”



▶▶ LOOK FORWARD: Application

*Point:* We are not as good as we think we are. We all fall short.

**Don’t Measure Up, GIVE UP**

Continuing the story of the Rich Young Ruler. Read Mark 10:23-26.

In the first century, wealth was seen as a result or measurement of someone’s blessings. And blessings a result of being “good enough” to be saved. Do we still have this view today? Give an example.

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Continue further; read Mark 10: 27-29.

How high is the Jesus-bar for “good enough?”

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What are the promised blessings for following Jesus?

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Memorize the “Romans Road”

- Romans 3:12: *All have turned away; all alike have become worthless. There is no one who does what is good, not even one.*
- Romans 3:23: *For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*
- Romans 5:8: *But God proves his own love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*
- Romans 6:23: *For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*
- Romans 10:9-10: *If you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. One believes with the heart, resulting in righteousness, and one confesses with the mouth, resulting in salvation.*

## Family Time



## Main Idea:

## Jesus Is Who Makes Me Good



## Key Verse: Deuteronomy 6:5

*Love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.*



## Set it Up:

If someone showed up to our house with one of those super big checks and told us we just won \$50,000, what do you think we should do with the money? (Take turns answering this question.)



## Family Discussion:

Ask: “If the center of the home is where we hang out the most, where is the center of our home?”

Ask: “What is your favorite place in our house? Why?”

When we are together as a family, we should treat each other the same way we are told to love God. What does the key verse say about how we are to love God? Is it always easy to love each other this way?

If we love God completely, then it will show in how we treat one another, in the way we talk to each other, and in the way we do things for each other.

The only way we can do this is by living for Jesus. Jesus is the only one who can make us good enough to do these things.



## Activity:

Get out a piece of butcher paper (regular copy paper will also work). You will also need pencils, rulers, and crayons or markers.

Say: “Each of us is going to design our dream home. It can be anything you want it to be, but you only have four minutes to draw a picture of it. Everyone ready? Go.”

When the time is up, say: “You now have thirty seconds to describe your dream house to the rest of the family.” Take turns describing your drawing.

What makes a house become a home? (List things like love, patience, joy, happiness, respect, etc.)

Living for Jesus demands all those things of us and more. We need to remember that we cannot do these things on our own. We need to focus on Jesus and love Him with all our heart, soul, and mind.





## Gear Up: Fake News: You Can Follow Your Dreams to Happiness

**Everyone has dreams.** We Americans have been fed the fake news that pursuing and achieving those dreams will lead to happiness. It's a promising lie! We begin to desire success, material possessions, wealth, and more. Yet, as we chase our dreams, we often discover disappointment instead.

### Follow God to Your Dreams

**Instead of following our dreams to happiness,** instead, we must follow God to our dreams. An Old Testament story illustrates this concept. The Israelite nation was enslaved in Egypt for about 100 years. God rescued them by sending them a leader (Moses) who led them out of Egypt and to the Promised Land. God sent one miracle after another to demonstrate His power and show that He was on their side. But when they initially arrived after a short journey to the land, there was a problem. They were very afraid of the "giant" people there— they doubted that God could work a miracle to get them in.

#### Numbers 14:1-5 says:

*<sup>1</sup> Then the whole community broke into loud cries, and the people wept that night. <sup>2</sup> All the Israelites complained about Moses and Aaron, and the whole community told them, "If only we had died in the land of Egypt, or if only we had died in this wilderness! <sup>3</sup> Why is the Lord bringing us into this land to die by the sword? Our wives and children will become plunder. Wouldn't it be better for us to go back to Egypt?" <sup>4</sup> So they said to one another, "Let's appoint a leader and go back to Egypt."*

**God was right about this great land,** and He would help them conquer it. But they didn't believe Him. Rather than trust God, they gave up.

### Your Journey Will Lead to a Giant

**Because we have an enemy,** when we follow God's plan, there will be obstacles. But God is greater! We may face "giants" such as health problems, job or financial struggles, or relationship issues. Yet, if we are following God, we can trust that He will help us overcome.

### Giants Are an Opportunity for Faith to Grow

**We have a choice,** when we face such struggles. We can either give up, fight our own way, or trust in God. The Israelites focused on their own limitations and did not trust in God "*despite all the signs [He] performed among them*" (Numbers 14:11). We must beware of doing the same! Often, our faith grows strongest when we face obstacles.

### Faith Leads to the Promised Land

**After wandering for 40 years due to their lack of trust,** God brought them to the Promised Land again. They faced the same circumstances as before. But this time, they trusted and obeyed. God told Joshua, the leader who succeeded Moses, to be brave and follow His instructions. Through this demonstration of faith, God would give success to His people, bringing them into the land. (Joshua 1:6-7)

### Pursue God to His Promised Land

#### Read Matthew 6:33-34

*<sup>33</sup> But seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things will be provided for you. <sup>34</sup> Therefore don't worry about tomorrow, because tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.*

**We must pursue God**—look to God, trust Him, know who we are (that we have gifts, talents, and abilities to be used for His kingdom), and then go when and where He says go. We must follow God, instead of chasing our dreams to achieve happiness.

God Time Day 1: Don't Follow Your Dreams, Follow God



This "Fake News" series is about things we are told, and often believe, that are not true. We began last week by looking at the lie, "I am a good person." This week, we look at yet another lie.

We have all heard some saying related to this, "Follow your dreams." You may have been told, "You can be anything you want if you just work hard and pursue your dreams." It sounds nice when you're a child. Who hasn't dreamed about being a famous singer or sports star, only to discover that a lack of singing ability or physical talent is a rather large obstacle to overcome? (Ever watched American Idol auditions?)

But, while OUR dreams can be flawed, mistaken, or wrong, following GOD'S dreams for our lives is always a good idea.

Take the nation of Israel for example. The Hebrew people lived in Egypt for 400 years, the last 100 years as slaves. The people cried out to God for deliverance, and God answered. He unleashed plagues on Egypt, and the Hebrew people were set free. God blessed the people with miraculous assistance along their journey, and after a few months, they arrived at the land God promised to them.



But the land was occupied by giants.

Read Numbers 14:2-4.



*<sup>2</sup> All the Israelites complained about Moses and Aaron, and the whole community told them, "If only we had died in the land of Egypt, or if only we had died in this wilderness! <sup>3</sup> Why is the Lord bringing us into this land to die by the sword? Our wives and children will become plunder. Wouldn't it be better for us to go back to Egypt?" <sup>4</sup> So they said to one another, "Let's appoint a leader and go back to Egypt."*



Here is the true news: Following God's will does not mean there will be no obstacles (giants) along the way. Write down two big obstacles you have encountered in your life.

- 1) \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) \_\_\_\_\_

God Time Day 2: Giants and Growing Faith

Reread Numbers 14:2-4 from yesterday.



So, the Hebrew people are led out of slavery in Egypt, struggle through the desert, see miracles of all types along the way, and when they arrive at the Promised Land, they give up. Sounds silly, but the truth is that many of us do this all the time. We face trials of all kinds, but the moment we encounter an obstacle that seems too big to overcome, we want to escape back to our former life. After all, it may not be good or healthy, but at least it is familiar.



Read James 1:2-4.

*<sup>2</sup> Consider it a great joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you experience various trials, <sup>3</sup> because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance. <sup>4</sup> And let endurance have its full effect, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking nothing.*

Underline the word "trials."

Circle the word "joy."



According to verse 3, what does "the testing of your faith" produce?

Too often, people ask the question, "Why does God let bad things happen to me?" Unfortunately, the question is flawed. There are times when things we experience in life may be painful, uncomfortable, and possibly require a great deal of effort to go through, but that doesn't mean that the experience is "bad."

As we go through life, we are going to experience trials and hardships of all kinds. If we spend our time and energy hiding away from or avoiding these experiences, then whenever we encounter an obstacle that cannot be avoided, our faith will be too weak to carry us through.



Share with someone about a struggle you've experienced that ended up deepening your faith and trust in God.

## WEEK 2: FOLLOW YOUR DREAMS TO HAPPINESS

### God Time Day 3: Faith Leads to the Promised Land



After that first incident at the Promised Land (reread Numbers 14:2-4 from Day 1 as a reminder of the first attempt to enter the land), the Hebrew people wandered in the desert for 40 years. An entire generation has died off, and with Joshua in charge, God is now leading the people back into the Promised Land a second time. He gives the people these instructions.



Read Joshua 1:6-7.

<sup>6</sup> *“Be strong and courageous, for you will distribute the land I swore to their ancestors to give them as an inheritance. <sup>7</sup> Above all, be strong and very courageous to observe carefully the whole instruction my servant Moses commanded you. Do not turn from it to the right or the left, so that you will have success wherever you go.*

Underline both times it says to be *“strong and courageous.”*



Share with someone today about a time when you trusted God and experienced a blessing for it.

### God Time Day 4: Pursue God to His Promised Land



There are people who will tell you that if you are faithful to God, He will bless you with whatever you want. Fake News or truth?



Read Matthew 6:33-34.

<sup>33</sup> *But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be provided for you. <sup>34</sup> Therefore don’t worry about tomorrow, because tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.*

Underline what we are supposed to seek in verse 33.

Seeking first God’s kingdom and righteousness means that our desires and dreams will be for God’s will to come true in our life.



The truth is, if you are faithful to God, He will bless you with whatever you want, because what you want is what He wants: more of His kingdom and righteousness.

### God Time Day 5: Four Practical Ways to Follow God



God calls us into a relationship with Him. That relationship is intended for God to be our Lord and for us to follow Him. Therefore, troubles come when we pursue our dreams and then expect God to follow our lead by flexing His divine muscles to give us what we want.

Here are four practical steps you can take to help you follow God’s will and pursue His desires:

#### 1) **Look to God First:** Reread Matthew 6:33 from Day 4.

Begin by asking God to reveal His will to you and trust that He will answer. While you wait, give Him your best and trust that He will use your efforts for His purposes.

#### 2) **Trust In This Moment:** Reread Matthew 6:34 from Day 4.

We are going to experience ups and downs in life. Too often we make plans for some distant, imagined future only to be filled with anxiety when life does not go according to our plan. Even if you don’t know how, simply trust and know that God is in control and will guide you as you need.

#### 3) **Know Who You Are:**

Psalm 139:14. *I will praise you because I have been remarkably and wondrously made. Your works are wondrous, and I know this very well.*

God has given you gifts, talents, abilities, and experiences. Trust God and use them for His kingdom. Take the Spiritual Gifts Survey!



#### 4) **Go When He Says Go** (or Stop When He Says Stop):

Listen intently to God’s voice and be prepared to respond and adjust when you hear it.

Romans 10:17 (NKJV) *So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*

WEEK 2: FOLLOW YOUR DREAMS TO HAPPINESS

Group Time

LOOK BACK:



1. Each participant shares one praise and one prayer request. (Commit these to prayer for the coming week.)

2. ENCOURAGEMENT 1-on-1 (See last page for directions)

Y / N	Y / N	_____
_____	_____	

3. **Point:** *We are not as good as we think we are. We all fall short.*

Share the Romans Road with one another.

LOOK UP:

**Question:** When you were in grade school, what did you want to be when you grew up? Why do you think you wanted to be that?

**Recap:** We may have been convinced by Disney that if we just “wish upon a star” our dreams will come true. Successful celebrities keep telling us to, “just follow your dreams.” But the reality is that any pursuit of a dream takes work and is going to require overcoming obstacles/giants along the way. But here’s the kicker: even if we achieve our dreams, it doesn’t mean we’ll be happy.

The key is not to follow our dreams, but to follow God to the dreams He has for us. The giants will still come, and when they seem undefeatable, they are an opportunity for our faith to grow and for us to rely on God. Such faith will lead us to the ultimate success and place of eternal happiness – God’s promised land (eternity with Him). To do this we must look to God first, trust Him in the moment, know who we are, and go when God says go!

LOOK IN: Discussion

Read Matthew 6:25

- What do people stress or dream about having today that they might consider essential, essential as food and clothing?

Read Matthew 6:33

- What does it mean for us to “seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness?” How would you explain it to a new believer?

LOOK FORWARD: Application

**Point:** *Happiness doesn’t come by pursuing our dreams – it comes by pursuing God’s.*

Pursue God To His Promised Land

1. Look to God first!

Are you giving God your best or are you holding back? How could you step-up your game?

- Daily: \_\_\_\_\_
- Weekly: \_\_\_\_\_
- Monthly: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Trust in the moment.

What is one worry you need to let go of right now and just trust God for both where you are and what you are called to do?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. Know who you are.

What gifts, talents, and resources do you possess that you could be using for God’s kingdom?

Need help? Download the *Personality and Spiritual Gifts Assessments* from our website’s Go2 page or pick up a *Remarkably and Wondrously Made* booklet at your campus Foyer.



Family Time



Main Idea:

Following Our Dreams To Happiness Will Not Bring True Happiness



Key Verse: Hebrews 11:1

*Now faith is the reality of what is hoped for, the proof of what is not seen.*

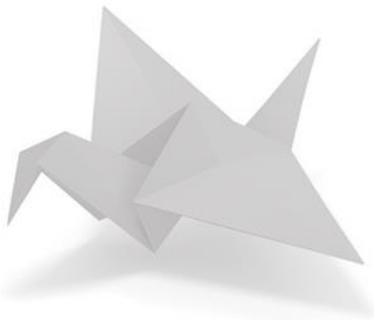


Set it Up:

You will each need a piece of paper before watching the video. Say: “Today we are going to watch a video that shows us how to make a paper crane. Make sure to follow the directions really well.” Show video.



Watch: Week 2 Video:



Talk about it:

How did everyone’s crane turn out? Do you think we all followed the directions given to us by the video?

If we missed a step on the video, we were not able to complete the crane properly.

Some people think that our faith in God is like watching a video and thinking we can make something perfect the first time. We try doing it and hope that it is going to work out. But God is like the guy who is leading the video. He has done it so many times it is easy for him to make the crane. God knows how to get the best out of our faith.

Read Hebrews 11 to hear about many different people who completely trusted God.



Activity:

Grab a chair and have one of the kids hover just above the chair as if they are trying to sit, but afraid to put any weight on it.



Would it be hard to stay in this position after a while?

As hard as it is to “half-way” trust in the chair, we cannot halfway trust in God.

Having faith in God means we completely trust Him to lead us in the right direction. It goes beyond just believing with our minds; it means being willing to pray to Him and trust Him to do what is right.



### Gear Up: Only God Can Judge Me

This bit of fake news is one we hear often, especially when people are doing things they know deep inside that they shouldn't be doing. But oftentimes, it is a reaction to having been misjudged in the past. It doesn't feel good to be judged, especially when you feel the judgment is wrong! But what's fake about the saying "only God can judge me?"

#### Our Fruit Reveals Our Vine

The dangerous thing about this fake news is that it's partially true. But partially true also means partially wrong. Yes, only God can judge our value and eternity, but it's wrong here: our fruit (what we do) is on display for everyone to see. Others will see; Believers are able to make Spirit-led discernments about our actions. This is an invitation for us to pause and examine ourselves!

#### Read John 15:5-6

<sup>5</sup>I am the vine; you are the branches. The one who remains in me and I in him produces much fruit, because you can do nothing without me. <sup>6</sup>If anyone does not remain in me, he is thrown aside like a branch and he withers. They gather them, throw them into the fire, and they are burned.

**Jesus is the Vine, and we are the branches.** A branch connected to the vine will produce fruit! If a branch isn't producing fruit, that means it isn't connected. This passage is not talking about salvation, but is an illustration for Believers with a warning about the seriousness of being fruitless. Jesus challenges us to be honest: do we have fruit?

#### Look At Your Fruit

#### Read Galatians 5:19-21

<sup>19</sup>Now the works of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, moral impurity, promiscuity, <sup>20</sup>idolatry, sorcery, hatreds, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambitions, dissensions, factions, <sup>21</sup>envy, drunkenness, carousing, and anything similar. I am warning you

*about these things—as I warned you before—that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.*

Paul tells us that we are either walking *with* Jesus, or we are opposed to Him. While this is not an exhaustive list of the works of the flesh, it is a descriptive list that helps us see what types of things that result from a "me-centered" life versus a "God-centered life."

#### Read Galatians 5:22-25

<sup>22</sup>But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup>gentleness, and self-control. The law is not against such things. <sup>24</sup>Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. <sup>25</sup>If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.

**Believers will never be able to show all of these aspects perfectly,** but if the Holy Spirit dwells inside of us, then He is transforming us into the image of Christ and growing this fruit in us. This is a result of being "in the vine."

#### "Change Your Fruit"

**Only God can judge me, but others will see our fruit, too.** They can see if we "practice what we preach." While only God can grow fruit in us, we have the responsibility to draw near Him in a submissive relationship. We must submit, obey, and draw near.

**Once we examine our lives,** if we don't like the fruit we see, we must start *pruning, repent, and live clean*. In other words, we need to cut the things out of our lives that don't belong, then repent (turn away from sin and turn to Jesus), and commit to living in such a way that we stop filling our lives with "fruit killers." After all, our fruit is a reflection of our hearts, and we want it to glorify our vine!

**God Time Day 1: Our Fruit Reveals Our Vine**



You may have heard the saying, “Only God can judge me!” You may have even said it yourself. But is it entirely true? Why do people say it?

The truth is that this news is mostly fake. Yes, only God can indeed judge our value and eternity. But it’s also fake news because what we do (our fruit) is on display for all to see.



Read Jesus’ words in Luke 6:43-44  
<sup>43</sup>For a good tree does not bear bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. <sup>44</sup>For each tree is known by its own fruit. Figs aren’t gathered from thornbushes, or grapes picked from a bramble bush.



What are you “known by?” Do people see only good fruit?

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**God Time Day 2: Who is Your Vine?**



Read John 15:5-6  
<sup>5</sup>I [Jesus] am the vine; you are the branches. The one who remains in me and I in him produces much fruit, because you can do nothing without me. <sup>6</sup>If anyone does not remain in me, he is thrown aside like a branch and he withers. They gather them, throw them into the fire, and they are burned.

Underline the word “remain/s” each time it is used.

Circle what the branch (person) does who *remains* in Jesus.

Draw a ~~line through~~ what happens to the branch (person) who does not *remain* in Jesus.

The word “*remain*” means “close relationship to.” Jesus is challenging our usefulness. Only through a close relationship with Him can we be used by Him to produce good fruit in ourselves and others.



How do you, or can you, “*remain*” in Jesus?

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**God Time Day 3: Look at Your Fruit: Works of the Flesh?**



Read Galatians 5:19-21  
<sup>19</sup>Now the works of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, moral impurity, promiscuity, <sup>20</sup>idolatry, sorcery, hatreds, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambitions, dissensions, factions, <sup>21</sup>envy, drunkenness, carousing, and anything similar. I am warning you about these things — as I warned you before — that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Look carefully at the sins (“works of the flesh”) listed above. Which sin do you think is the worst? That’s a “trick question,” so don’t answer it!

The fact is all are bad; Jesus died to cover all sin. While some sins may have greater social, personal, or spiritual impact, all sin is bad.

Look again at the last half of verse 21.

Underline the words “those who practice such things.”

Circle what they “will not inherit.”

The words “practice such things” means living in a sinful pattern without ever being sorry for what you do. Sadly, sometimes those who call themselves Christians don’t act much different. And we should!

Grab a piece of paper. On the left side write a downward list of all the sins listed above. Then draw an arrow from each and write a word or words that are the opposite of that sin. (Use the antonyms in a dictionary or thesaurus if needed.)

Examples:

- |                   |   |                  |
|-------------------|---|------------------|
| Sexual Immorality | → | Sexual Fidelity  |
| Hatred            | → | Love             |
| Drunkenness       | → | Sober Mindedness |

Circle the ones on your paper you need to work on.



Confess your sins to God and ask Him to help you do the opposite things!

God Time Day 4: Look at Your Fruit: Walk with Jesus!



Read Galatians 5:22-25  
<sup>22</sup>But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup>gentleness, and self-control. The law is not against such things. <sup>24</sup>Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. <sup>25</sup>If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.

If you haven't, consider memorizing Galatians 5:22-23.



Whose fruit is this? (Hint: the beginning of verse 22.)

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Underline the "fruit of the Spirit" listed above.

When we become Christians, God's Holy Spirit comes to live in us. As we submit to God, obey Him, and draw nearer to Him, the Spirit grows fruit in us that we bear for God's glory.

Look at the "opposites" list you made yesterday. On the arrow for each pairing, list an aspect of the fruit from the list above that will help you move from left to right.

Example:



While we may show more of one aspect of fruit than another, and we may not show any of the aspects perfectly, they are in us and will grow more and more by the power of the Holy Spirit working in our lives.

But verse 25 is the key.

Spiritual growth and maturity is about keeping "in step with the Spirit" (walking with God).



What can you do to better "keep in step with the Spirit?" (E.g., read my Bible, pray more, confess and repent, etc.)

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Be a bearer of good fruit. Let the Holy Spirit become the most influential person in your life!

God Time Day 5: Change Your Fruit



When we evaluate our fruit and find it lacking, we may need to "change our fruit."



Read Ezekiel 18:30-31b  
<sup>30</sup>"Therefore, house of Israel, I will judge each one of you according to his ways." This is the declaration of the Lord GOD. "Repent and turn from all your rebellious acts, so they will not become a sinful stumbling block to you. <sup>31</sup>Throw off all the transgressions you have committed, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit..."



What does God tell His people to do in the passage above?

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There are some powerful images in the verses above. *Repent, turn... so sin won't be a stumbling block. Throw off transgressions. Get a new heart and spirit!* (I.E., Become and behave like God's people.)

Essentially, God is telling His people to change their fruit and follow Him. Here are three ways you can do the same:

- 1) Start pruning. What things do you need to cut out of your life? (What transgressions do you need to throw off?) What do you need to stop doing? Pruning allows the good fruit to grow. This means that we must stop filling our lives with "fruit killers."
- 2) Repent. What will you repent of today? Repentance simply means telling God you are sorry and then turning 180 degrees away from sin and towards God.
- 3) Live Clean. What clean-living choices will you make? Is there something you need to start doing? Like the people in the passage above, we must choose to behave like God's people.

Remember:



While only God can judge your eternity, your fruit is on display for all to see. Let them see God's Spirit in you!

WEEK 3: ONLY GOD CAN JUDGE ME

Group Time

LOOK BACK:



1. Each participant shares one praise and one prayer request. (Commit these to prayer for the coming week.)

2. ENCOURAGEMENT 1-on-1 (See last page for directions)

Y / N	Y / N	_____
_____	_____	

3. **Point:** Happiness doesn't come by pursuing our dreams – it comes by pursuing God's.

What dream is God calling you to? Can our group help?

LOOK UP:

**Question:** Ever heard the saying, "The apple doesn't fall far from the tree?" Was it used positively or negatively?

In Genesis chapter one, we learn one of nature's truths: things beget their kind. As Jesus teaches His disciples in the upper room, the same is true in the spiritual world. Jesus tells us that if we remain in Him, we will bear His fruit.

But how do we know we are "in" Him? He tells us we will know by looking at our fruit, and Paul gets pretty specific about what that looks like in Galatians chapter five.

So, what can we do to bear good or better fruit? Start pruning yourself of anything leading to bad fruit. Repent of bad habits and bad choices that move us away from Jesus. Start living the way God intended us to live. Make new choices and start new habits that move us closer to Jesus.

LOOK IN: Discussion

Read Galatians 5:19-21. Make a list of these "works of the flesh." Then go around the group and share instances you've seen of any of these in the last 24 hours, in person or on any type of media.

Read Galatians 5:22-23. Make a list of the "fruit of the Spirit." Then go around the group and share instances you've seen of any of these in the last 24 hours, in person or on any type of media.

Where should we be spending our time?

LOOK FORWARD: Application

**Point:** Stop filling your life with fruit killers and start bearing good fruit.

Your Fruit Reflects Your Heart

Read John 15:1-8

**Verse 1:** What does Jesus mean when He says, "I am the true vine?"

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**Verse 2:** How might God prune us? What is the purpose of pruning?

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**Verse 3:** How has Jesus made you clean?

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**Verse 4:** How do we remain in Jesus.

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**Verse 5:** Write this verse in your own words.

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**Verse 6:** Do you think Jesus is speaking figuratively or literally? Why?

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**Verse 7:** If we remain in Jesus, what will we ask for?

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**Verse 8:** Based upon this verse, how would you define a disciple?

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## Family Time



## Main Idea:

## What Fruit Are You Bearing?



## Key Verse: Galatians 5:22-23

<sup>22</sup> But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup> gentleness, and self-control. The law is not against such things.



## Set it Up:

With your cell phone camera, take 8-10 photos of packaged food ingredient labels. Do not let the photo give away the food item.



## Game:

Give out a piece of paper to each family member and have them number the paper 1 to 8 or 10 (depending on the number of photos you took).

Show the photo to everyone and have them write down what food item they think each ingredient label is from.

After you have gone through all the photos, you can then reveal the food identity of each label.



## Talk:

Packaged foods often contain additives and chemicals that prevent spoilage or enhance the flavor.

Were there any surprises to what ingredients it takes to make a certain food?

Were there more ingredients or fewer ingredients than you expected?



## Discussion Questions:

- 1) What would happen if we removed one ingredient from the label? (*The food would not be the same. Every ingredient helps make the food what it is supposed to be.*)
- 2) Write down the ingredients that make up a Believer in Jesus
- 3) Re-read Galatians 5:22-23.  
  
God gives every Believer fruit of the Spirit. What things does this verse say should be a part of our ingredient label?
- 4) What would happen if we removed one part of the Spirit's fruit from our life? (*We wouldn't be all that God wants us to be.*)



Pray to God and ask Him to help you and your family to show the fruit of the Spirit.



### Gear Up: My Life Is Not That Important!

We live in a culture that loves “special” people. The thing is, everyone wants to be extraordinary, but most of us are ordinary people. And that’s not bad! But it is bad when we allow ourselves to feel like, because we aren’t extraordinary, our lives aren’t important. Then we’ve entered the territory of harmful, *fake news*.

#### God Loves To Do The Extraordinary Through The Ordinary

God does extraordinary things, and He often uses ordinary people to accomplish those things. We see this in many Bible stories; the story of Ruth is one example. Ruth doesn’t seem special at all—she was not royalty, she wasn’t educated or influential, and she wasn’t even an Israelite. No, Ruth was a Moabite (a people group who were enemies of God’s people). But God used her anyway.

Ruth’s story ends when she marries an Israelite man named Boaz and had a son named Obed. Later, Obed had a son named Jesse and he had a son named David. King David became the most important King that the nation of Israel ever knew. So, though Ruth wasn’t an extraordinary woman, God had an extraordinary plan for her life!

Many of us have heard that God has a great plan to use us in His kingdom work, but what truths can we hold onto when we have trouble believing it? What should we do when we start feeling like we aren’t that important?

#### When I Can’t See God’s Plan

Let’s back up a bit with Ruth’s story to look at her beginning. The Bible doesn’t describe all the details, but at some point after moving from the Promised Land to Moab to escape a famine, an Israelite man named Mahlon married Ruth. After a while, he, his married brother, and his father all died, leaving his wife (Ruth), his mother Naomi, and his sister-in law alone together. Naomi suggested that the women go home.

#### Look what Naomi says in Ruth 1:8-9

<sup>8</sup>Naomi said to them, “Each of you go back to your mother’s home. May the Lord show kindness to you as you have shown to the dead and to me. <sup>9</sup>May the Lord grant each of you rest in the house of a new husband.” She kissed them, and they wept loudly.

#### Read Ruth’s reply in Ruth 1:16-17

<sup>16</sup>But Ruth replied: “Don’t plead with me to abandon you or to return and not follow you. For wherever you go, I will go, and wherever you live, I will live; your people will be my people, and your God will be my God. <sup>17</sup>Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. May the Lord punish me, and do so severely, if anything but death separates you and me.”

Though she was free to turn and leave, Ruth stayed faithful and focused. She was faithful to her mother-in-law and God. She focused on being who God wanted her to be, even in an incredibly difficult situation. She knew what mattered most in her life. We can all be encouraged by her story!

#### A Life Lived For Jesus Has Eternal Value

Her story helps us identify two important questions: Do you know what really matters? Are you faithful where you are? Rather than comparing ourselves to extraordinary people, we need to talk to God about what should be important in our lives, then we need to evaluate if we are being faithful to Him, wherever He has us. Someday, likely in eternity, God will reveal all the ways He works through us. Remember: your life is important because it has eternal value for His kingdom. Let Him work His extraordinary plan through you!

WEEK 4: MY LIFE IS NOT THAT IMPORTANT

God Time Day 1: God Does Extraordinary Things



God used an ark to save a family during a worldwide flood. He parted the Red Sea for His people to walk through. He healed lepers, made the lame walk, and gave the blind their eyesight. He loves to do extraordinary things!



Read Luke 18:27  
He replied, "What is impossible with man is possible with God."

What have you experienced God do that was absolutely extraordinary? How did it affect your life?

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\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



Who can you share that good news with?

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God Time Day 2: Extraordinary Things Through Ordinary People



Read Ruth 1:1-5  
<sup>1</sup>During the time of the judges, there was a famine in the land. A man left Bethlehem in Judah with his wife and two sons to stay in the territory of Moab for a while. <sup>2</sup>The man's name was Elimelech, and his wife's name was Naomi. The names of his two sons were Mahlon and Chilion. They were Ephrathites from Bethlehem in Judah. They entered the fields of Moab and settled there. <sup>3</sup>Naomi's husband, Elimelech, died, and she was left with her two sons. <sup>4</sup>Her sons took Moabite women as their wives: one was named Orpah and the second was named Ruth. After they lived in Moab about ten years, <sup>5</sup>both Mahlon and Chilion also died, and the woman was left without her two children and without her husband.

Talk about hard times– famine, death, widowhood, loss of provision, and loss of protection. But God was about to do something extraordinary.



If you are facing something very hard, begin asking God to do something extraordinary!

God Time Day 3: When I Can't See God's Plan?



Naomi decides to leave the land of the Moabites and return home. She sends off her daughters-in-law with this blessing:



Read Ruth 1:8-9  
<sup>8</sup>Naomi said to them, "Each of you go back to your mother's home. May the Lord show kindness to you as you have shown to the dead and to me. <sup>9</sup>May the Lord grant each of you rest in the house of a new husband." She kissed them, and they wept loudly.



Who does Naomi pray will show kindness to the young women? \_\_\_\_\_

Who does she pray will grant them rest (security)? \_\_\_\_\_

As Moabites, these young women wouldn't have known the Lord. But Naomi shared her faith with them, and God used her to do something special. Look at Ruth's reply.



Read Ruth 1:16-17  
<sup>16</sup>But Ruth replied: Don't plead with me to abandon you or to return and not follow you. For wherever you go, I will go, and wherever you live, I will live; your people will be my people, and your God will be my God. <sup>17</sup>Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. May the Lord punish me, and do so severely, if anything but death separates you and me.

Underline the second sentence in verse 16.

This is Ruth's strong declaration of commitment to both Naomi and God. Ruth may not seem that special; this young, new Believer's life is empty and broken. But God thinks she is important, and He will fill her life again.

Naomi's life, too.

The true news is that sometimes we can't see God's plan, but He still has a great one!



Continue praying for God to do something extraordinary in your life.

## WEEK 4: MY LIFE IS NOT THAT IMPORTANT

### God Time Day 4: Staying Faithful and Focused



When Ruth said “yes” to staying with Naomi (and following God), she showed that she was faithful and focused.



Reread Ruth 1:16b

*For wherever you go, I will go, and wherever you live, I will live; your people will be my people, and your God will be my God.*

Imagine the faithfulness that it would take to say something like that! Ruth was about to follow Naomi (and God) back to the land of the Israelites. She was going to move away from her family, her community, and everything she ever knew. ...all because she was committed to Naomi.

But she wasn't only committed to Naomi. Ruth also stayed focused on God. She was willing to follow this God who was foreign to her — and follow Him into the unknown.

God gave her a redeemer, a second husband, Boaz, who would provide for Ruth and Naomi. Boaz and Ruth had a child who would be the grandfather of King David. That means that Ruth was chosen by God to be in the lineage of Jesus Christ!

God does extraordinary things through the ordinary!



Many things can make us feel unimportant. Mundane lives, loss, broken relationships, social media, the comparison trap, poverty, tireless serving, etc. What is one thing that makes you feel like your life isn't that important?

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When you are tempted to feel this way, remember God wants to be your Redeemer; He'll take you in, provide for you, and invite you to participate in His great plans!



Who can you invite to join you? By doing so you become a part of their spiritual lineage.

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### God Time Day 5: A Life Lived for Jesus Has Eternal Value



Ruth and Naomi had no idea that God planned to use their story to bless the entire world. By being in the direct lineage of Jesus, Ruth was important. But the fact is, we are all important because we are all God's workmanship and can be a part of the lineage of others being saved by Him.



Read Ephesians 2:10

*For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared ahead of time for us to do.*

What does the verse above say we are created in Christ Jesus to do?

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These “good works” don't save us. Instead, they are just what saved people do. They are part of His great plans and things He does through us. These good works have eternal value!



Read Matthew 6:20

*But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves don't break in and steal.*

There will come a time when we'll get to see how God worked through us and how valuable our lives are now. It may not be on this side of heaven, but we'll certainly see it someday.

Here are two things that will help us stay on track while we're living life, waiting for the day that all is revealed:



- 1) Ask God: What should I be living for? What matters most in my life? (Then ask yourself: What do my actions show that I'm living for?)
- 2) Evaluate: Am I being faithful where God has me now? (As a parent, in my career, serving at church, etc.?)

Remember:



God sees you where you are. Faithfully follow Him to become the person He wants you to be!

WEEK 4: MY LIFE IS NOT THAT IMPORTANT

Group Time

LOOK BACK:



1. Each participant shares one praise and one prayer request. (Commit these to prayer for the coming week.)

2. ENCOURAGEMENT 1-on-1 (See last page for directions)

Y / N	Y / N	_____
_____	_____	

3. **Point:** Stop filling your life with fruit killers and start bearing good fruit.

Share how you wrote John 15:5 in your own words.

LOOK UP:

**Question:** Ever been to a family or social gathering where there was the one set of parents who could find no fault in their child, even though everyone else saw many?

**Recap:** We live in a world where almost everyone is told, at least in the Western world, that they are special, that they are extraordinary, even when they and mostly everyone else knows it's not true. In a world of nearly eight billion people, very few are going to be extraordinary. But there's good news for us ordinary ones; God loves to do the extraordinary through the ordinary.

God does have a great plan for us to follow, but what happens when we can't see God's great plan? It becomes a test of faith and focus – having *faith* that God has a plan for us and putting our *focus* on what we do right now and what our next step needs to be. This comes from relationship with Jesus and knowing that lives lived for Him have eternal value. When we are faithful in the moment, God will work out His plan through us, even when we can't see it.

LOOK IN: Discussion

• In a world that measures special and extraordinary on likes and followers, how do you (or have you, or would you) make your child

feel valuable, but at the same time teach them humility and to embrace their ordinariness?

- How would you teach a child to know what really matters?
- How would you teach a child to be faithful in the moment?

LOOK FORWARD: Application

**Point:** A life lived for Jesus has eternal value.

Know What Really Matters

How are you going to live out God's plan over the next 90-days?

Be specific. Include dates, times, and names. Be prepared to share your 90-day plan with your group at the next meeting.

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Family Time



Main Idea:

In The Hands Of God Your Life Has Eternal Value



**Key Verse:** 2 Corinthians 5:17

*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, and see, the new has come!*



**Set it Up:**

What does the word identity mean? (The fact of being who or what a person or thing is.) We all have different identities. What are identities that each of us have? (i.e. Dad, mom, son, daughter, friend, loved. etc.)

Let's watch this video together and see what our identity in Christ is all about.



**Watch: Week 4 Video:**



providing  
identity. now  
being who  
being the



**Game:**

Say: Today we are going to play a game where we are going to guess the identity of a famous person. I am going to announce a category of famous people that you all know (historical figure/presidents, TV personalities, cartoon characters, singers, animal, etc.)

One at a time we will pick a person from that category, but you can't tell anyone who you have picked. The rest of us are going to ask yes and no questions to try and figure out the identity of the person you have chosen.

Play the game as many rounds as you would like to.



**Talk:**

Re-read 2 Corinthians 5:17.

When a person accepts and follows Jesus, he is a new creation. He/she has a new identity. You do not get a new name or a new body, but you are different on the inside. God forgives your sin and makes you a part of His family. We are to live in ways that honor God and our new family.

We now have an eternal value in the hands of God. The old ways we acted are gone and now we focus on being faithful to God wherever we are.



### Gear Up: God Won't Give Me More Than I Can Handle

**We've all heard the saying before:** "God won't give you more than you can handle." Usually, it's not that encouraging because it comes at a time when we are feeling exactly that way! It's one of those sayings that sound good on the surface, until the doctor says, "There's nothing more I can do" or you lose everything you own, or when you have been hurt emotionally or physically past your breaking point. Then, the words "God won't give you more than you can handle" just don't feel appropriate. Is this fake news? Let's look at what the Bible says.

#### The Banks of the Red Sea

One of the stories where we see this bit of fake news played out is in the story of the Exodus. God's people had been enslaved in Egypt for about 100 years and God had miraculously set them free to return to the Promised Land. Their very first stop was at the edge of the Red Sea. With the sea before them and the Egyptian army coming behind them, they were trapped between what looked like certain death by drowning or by war.

#### Exodus 14:11

*<sup>11</sup>They said to Moses, "Is it because there are no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? What have you done to us by bringing us out of Egypt?"*

These civilian people are sure that death is coming. They can't move forward with the sea in the way, they can't run fast enough to escape, and they can't fight a powerful army. They were in despair because their deaths seemed imminent. This was more than they could handle!

But this sort of experience isn't limited to the Old Testament. Paul expressed a similar experience in 2 Corinthians 1:8-9 where he says that he and his helpers were "*completely overwhelmed—beyond our strength—so that we even despaired of life itself.*" In that passage, Paul explains that this helped them trust in "*God who raises the dead.*" Their only hope was God! The Israelites' only

hope was God, too.

#### Exodus 14:15-16

*<sup>15</sup>The Lord said to Moses, "Why are you crying out to me? Tell the Israelites to break camp. <sup>16</sup>As for you, lift up your staff, stretch out your hand over the sea, and divide it so that the Israelites can go through the sea on dry ground."*

While the situation *was* more than they could handle, it wasn't too big for God. He had a plan, and He did exactly what He said He would do. Moses obeyed, lifted his staff, and God divided the sea. The Israelites walked through the middle of the sea on dry ground!

#### Too Big for Me Reveals the Greatness of God

**God allows "more than we can handle" for His glory.** We (and others) can see his greatness displayed in our lives. This builds faith and hope.

#### Read Exodus 14:18

*<sup>18</sup>The Egyptians will know that I am the Lord when I receive glory through Pharaoh, his chariots, and his horsemen.*

#### Read 2 Corinthians 1:10

*<sup>10</sup>He has delivered us from such a terrible death, and he will deliver us. We have put our hope in him that he will deliver us again.*

#### When You Are Faced with More Than You Can Handle...

**While you may at times experience more than you can handle *on your own*,** go ahead and step toward the water (i.e., face your difficulties); He is with you. Raise your hands in surrender and praise. God loves you immensely and cares about you; He will lift you up. (1 Peter 5:6-7) He is faithful and worthy of your trust and hope!

God Time Day 1: God Won't Give Me...



Read 1 Corinthians 10:13  
*No temptation has come upon you except what is common to humanity. But God is faithful; he will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation he will also provide the way out so that you may be able to bear it.*

Underline the statement after “But God is faithful.”

While this passage addresses temptation, many people have misused it to apply to any kind of difficulty. The truth is that God often gives us more than we can bear on our own, so that we must rely on Him.



Tell God how you feel about this true news. Remember that His plans are always for your good. What was the result of this prayer time?

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God Time Day 2: Paul's Despair



Read 2 Corinthians 1:8-9  
*<sup>8</sup> We don't want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, of our affliction that took place in Asia. We were completely overwhelmed—beyond our strength—so that we even despaired of life itself. <sup>9</sup> Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death, so that we would not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead.*

Circle the last six words of verse 8.

Does this description of Paul's difficulty sound like it was more than he felt he could bear?

Underline the last half of verse 9.



In your own words, write why God allows such trials:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

God Time Day 3: The Banks of the Red Sea



Read Exodus 14:10-14  
*<sup>10</sup> As Pharaoh approached, the Israelites looked up and there were the Egyptians coming after them! The Israelites were terrified and cried out to the Lord for help. <sup>11</sup> They said to Moses, “Is it because there are no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? What have you done to us by bringing us out of Egypt? <sup>12</sup> Isn't this what we told you in Egypt: Leave us alone so that we may serve the Egyptians? It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness.” <sup>13</sup> But Moses said to the people, “Don't be afraid. Stand firm and see the Lord's salvation that he will accomplish for you today; for the Egyptians you see today, you will never see again. <sup>14</sup> The Lord will fight for you, and you must be quiet.”*

Just imagine these former slaves in the grip of fear as they are about to be recaptured! They had already suffered great punishment for even asking to leave and now – how much worse will it be for actually leaving?

Read again what they say in the second sentence of verse 12.



Does that sound like they trust God very much? \_\_\_\_\_

In verse 13, who will bring about their salvation? \_\_\_\_\_

In verse 14, is there any effort they must make? \_\_\_\_\_

When we face seemingly overwhelming challenges, a false sense of security in worldly things like a regular income, social acceptance, or feelings of self-accomplishment is stripped away. We can then choose to be just like the Israelites: ready to go back to our old ways, or choose to risk moving forward with God.

Knowing that sometimes God does give us more than we can bear for His good purposes is important news to know so that we can choose to respond in faith instead in fear.



Write an affirmation (good news) of God's faithfulness on a notecard and put it where you can see it daily.

God Time Day 4: The Greatness of God



The whole point of rejecting the fake news that God will not give us more than we can handle is to affirm our confidence in the greatness of God rather than our abilities. Read the following passages explaining God's greatness when we are facing great challenges:



2 Corinthians 1:9b - *...so that we would not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead.*

Exodus 14:18 - *The Egyptians will know that I am the Lord when I receive glory through Pharaoh, his chariots, and his horsemen.*

Exodus 15:11 - *Lord, who is like you among the gods? Who is like you, glorious in holiness, revered with praises, performing wonders?*

Psalms 35:10 - *All my bones will say, "Lord, who is like you, rescuing the poor from one too strong for him, the poor or the needy from one who robs him?"*

Psalms 71:19 - *Your righteousness reaches the heights, God, you who have done great things; God, who is like you?*

Romans 8:15 - *For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear. Instead, you received the Spirit of adoption, by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father!"*

Romans 8:31 - *What, then, are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us?*



Rewrite the passage which best speaks to you.

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Anytime you begin to feel anxious and overwhelmed, remind yourself of this good news: there is nothing greater than God's faithfulness and His love for you.

God Time Day 5: Step in the Water; Raise Your Hands



When the Israelites were terrified of the Egyptian army catching up to them at the shores of the Red Sea, God commanded them to pack up and start walking towards the water. He told Moses to lift his staff and stretch out his hand over the sea. In the same way, rather than becoming paralyzed with fear, we need to take active steps toward the good God has promised so that our faith can be realized.



Read 2 Corinthians 1:10-11

<sup>10</sup> *He has delivered us from such a terrible death, and he will deliver us. We have put our hope in him that he will deliver us again* <sup>11</sup> *while you join in helping us by your prayers. Then many will give thanks on our behalf for the gift that came to us through the prayers of many.*

Underline how the Christians in Corinth would help Paul face his challenges (beginning of verse 11).



Read Hebrews 10:39 (CEV)

*We are not like those people who turn back and get destroyed. We will keep on having faith until we are saved.*

What is the opposite of turning back?

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Read 1 Peter 5:6-7

<sup>6</sup> *Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, so that he may exalt you at the proper time,* <sup>7</sup> *casting all your cares on him, because he cares about you.*

Put a **box around** the attitude we need to adopt in verse 6

**Circle** the action Peter then tells us to take in verse 7.

As you face challenges, commit to press forward into the difficulty and raise your hands to God.



Surrender yourself to God's faithful care and praise Him for His greatness. That's good news.





## Family Time



## Main Idea:

## We Must Persevere Through The Hard Times



## Key Verse: Exodus 14:13-14

<sup>13</sup> But Moses said to the people, "Don't be afraid. Stand firm and see the LORD's salvation that he will accomplish for you today; for the Egyptians you see today, you will never see again. <sup>14</sup> The LORD will fight for you, and you must be quiet."



## Set it Up:

Fill a box with books, and tape it shut. (Make sure that no one knows that you have put books in the box.)

Place the box on the floor and ask the question: "What will happen if I stand on the box?"

After the family members answer the question, tell them that the box will not cave in and ask them to trust you, to believe that you are telling the truth. Invite someone in the family to stand on the box.

Why didn't the box cave in? Show them the books inside that were holding them up. Say: Even though you did not know there were books in the box, you trusted me.



## Read:

Exodus 14:15-28



## Talk it out:

The Lord protected the Israelites to make sure the Egyptians could not come any closer. And then the people saw the power of God as Moses stretched out his staff over the water. The water parted, and all of Israel walked straight across. What an experience it must have been!

The Lord not only saved His people, but He also displayed His glory before the world. They would stand in awe of God for centuries to come because of what God did that day.

Today, we can trust that God will still act on behalf of His people. He will make a way where there is no way, and He will do it in such a way as to show His power and glory.



## Ask:

1. How do you think the people felt when they first saw the sea in front of them and the Egyptians behind them?
2. How did God display His glory for the world?
3. Why should the story of the Red Sea encourage us when we are going through tough times?



## Pray:

Thank you, God. Thank you that you are a God of power and might. Help us to trust You even when we can't see a way forward.



## Gear Up: If I Have Enough Faith, God Will Make My Life Easy

It's a common belief that if we just have enough faith, then God will make our life easier. If we believe (or pray) hard enough, maybe the cancer will go away, the money will come, or the broken relationship will be restored. Is this true? Or is it fake news that suggests all of our problems hinge on us? What does God's Word say?

### God Loves You Enough to Let You Hurt

#### Let's start here: 2 Timothy 3:12

*In fact, all who want to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.*

This verse shows that it's fake news to believe that God promises an easy life to those with enough faith. We who pursue godliness as Believers in Jesus are promised *persecution*, not ease. Does this mean that God doesn't love us? Of course not.

#### Read what Paul says in 2 Corinthians 12:6-7a (NLT)

*<sup>6</sup>If I wanted to boast, I would be no fool in doing so, because I would be telling the truth. But I won't do it, because I don't want anyone to give me credit beyond what they can see in my life or hear in my message <sup>7a</sup>even though I have received such wonderful revelations from God.*

Paul had great faith! God even revealed wonderful things to Him. Did that guarantee him an easy life? Nope.

#### 2 Corinthians 12:7b-8

*<sup>7b</sup>Therefore, so that I would not exalt myself, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to torment me so that I would not exalt myself. <sup>8</sup>Concerning this, I pleaded with the Lord three times that it would leave me.*

Paul experienced a *"thorn" in his flesh*. You've likely had a thorn and know that they are unpleasant to say the least! But this thorn was not a naturally occurring thorn. This one was from Satan, meant to attack Paul and his ministry work. It was painful, so he asked God to remove it. Yet, God didn't. Instead, God allowed it to stay put and graciously allowed Paul to learn humility from it.

### Pain Leads to Power

**Yes, the thorn had a purpose.** Though an uncomfortable and painful experience could have taken Paul out, instead it humbled him so he wouldn't *"exalt himself"* and gave him reason to rely on God. What Satan meant for defeat, God turned into a strength. Instead of removing it, He helped Paul see His grace and power in Paul's weakness. He does the same for us! It's often when we hurt and are uncomfortable that we turn to God and rely on His power in our lives!

#### 2 Corinthians 12:9

*<sup>9</sup>But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is perfected in weakness."*

**God's grace sustains us, His power is perfected in weakness, and He has an eternal purpose**—even in our trials, "thorns", and pain. We must remember that *God is enough*. He is all that we need, and more. Our faith is not a guarantee that life will be easy, but when we turn to Him, our burden does lighten because He is there to share it.

### When Life Is Not Easy...

#### When life is not easy for you, pray that God removes the pain.

That's what Paul did first. God may answer your prayer in just the way you are hoping. But He may have a different answer. Either way, trust that He knows best, rely on Him, and let Him work through you. Your struggle just may help you witness and minister to someone else!

WEEK 6: IF I HAVE ENOUGH FAITH GOD WILL MAKE LIFE EASY

God Time Day 1: God Loves You Enough To Let You Hurt



The Apostle Paul fully dedicated his life to spreading the gospel. Many of the books in the New Testament were written by him. One might think that God would give him an easy life for his heroic efforts, but – in fact – the opposite was true. He suffered a lifetime of persecutions. And, as if that was not enough, the Bible tells us that he had another struggle – a secret “*thorn in the flesh*” which was meant to torment him.



Read 2 Corinthians 12:7b-8  
*7b Therefore, so that I would not exalt myself, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to torment me so that I would not exalt myself.<sup>8</sup> Concerning this, I pleaded with the Lord three times that it would leave me.*

Underline the source of this “*thorn.*”

Even though Paul pleaded with God to relieve him of this torment, God allowed it. Why?



Rewrite the first eight words of verse 7b.

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Paul obviously had an issue with pride (don’t we all) and God needed him to be focused on the mission – so that God’s good purposes could be fulfilled in Paul.

When God refuses to take away our deepest pain, we might begin to question if He is really good, if He is really there, or if He is really able to save.

The truth is that God’s purpose is not to make your life “easy.” It is to expand His kingdom. Struggle keeps us from becoming proud and compassionless; pain keeps us from pretending that we can handle life on our own. Struggles and pain force us to choose whether or not to follow the path Jesus took when He accepted the cross as God’s will.



What thorn are you facing right now? It’s OK to plead with God for relief, but start preparing to use it for His glory.

God Time Day 2: Sustaining Grace



Our world applauds the people who make it big because of how hard they work and reveres those who achieve great things by sheer willpower. But it despises those who seem helpless to change their situation. We even hear fake news like, “God helps those who help themselves.”

The story of Paul’s “*thorn in the flesh*” reveals this false way of thinking. God deliberately let Paul struggle with “*torment*” from this “*messenger of Satan*” because He had a higher purpose. This thorn pricked Paul’s pride. He said, “*so that I would not exalt myself.*” And God told Paul that “*My grace is sufficient (enough).*” The thorn in the flesh would not be Paul’s undoing, but instead an important part of his sanctification (spiritual growth towards holiness).

God did something better for Paul than removing his “*thorn in the flesh.*” God showed Paul that His grace is enough.

Reread yesterday’s verses and then read God’s response to Paul’s pleading.



Read 2 Corinthians 12:9  
*But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is perfected in weakness.”*

Underline what God said about His power.



Explain in your own words what you think God means by “*my power is perfected in weakness.*”

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We cannot know the full extent of God’s grace and kindness until we find ourselves helpless and weak. God promises that in such moments we will see the perfection of His power to accomplish His purposes in us.



How is your thorn forcing you to surrender to God’s grace and allowing Him to exhibit His power?

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## WEEK 6: IF I HAVE ENOUGH FAITH GOD WILL MAKE LIFE EASY

### God Time Day 3: Perfect Power



In the Book of Judges, God deliberately thins out the Israelite army to ensure that they would know victory wasn't through their military strength, but His power.



Read Judges 7:2

*The Lord said to Gideon, "You have too many troops for me to hand the Midianites over to them, or else Israel might elevate themselves over me and say, 'I saved myself.'*

Then God gave Gideon instructions to whittle down the army from 22,000 to 10,000, then down again to a mere 300 to fight against an army whose camels were *"as numerous as the sand on the seashore."* He was serious about making sure it was clear whose power was at work.



For God's power to work through you today, how can you set aside reliance on your own strength and abilities?

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### God Time Day 4: Eternal Purpose



Like we've seen with Paul, sometimes God is at work in the pain. We don't always know why, but in times like these, it helps to remember that we are not the only ones.

Chapter 11 of the Book of Hebrews includes a well know list of "Heroes of Faith." These Heroes saw amazing miracles and victories. But check out this lesser-known list of heroes:



Read Hebrews 11:36-38a

*<sup>36</sup> Others experienced mockings and scourgings, as well as bonds and imprisonment. <sup>37</sup> They were stoned, they were sawed in two, they died by the sword, they wandered about in sheepskins, in goatskins, destitute, afflicted, and mistreated. <sup>38</sup> The world was not worthy of them.*

It's vitally important to remember that you are not alone, and your struggle can be both a witness and a ministry.



How can you use your struggle, your thorn, to minister?

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### God Time Day 5: When Life is Not Easy



This week has made clear that a Godly life is not promised to be an easy life. How we manage when life is hard, and it hurts, is important to our witness and ministry.

In addition to remembering that God's grace sustains us through our suffering, God's power is made perfect in our weakness, and God has an eternal purpose for our struggles and pains, there are some practical things we can do:

- Pray – Like Paul, we can and should ask God to remove the torment. What parent would be angry with their child for asking to make the pain stop? God wants us to *"cast all our cares"* on Him, and sometimes He does change the situation and give us relief.
- Listen – When the answer to our prayers is not what we want, we should listen and trust His answer for the moment. Sometimes God is saying "not yet" instead of "no." It may be that it will take some time before His purpose is accomplished.
- Yield – Even if nothing changes, we can still allow God's power to be revealed through us. By praising Him in the midst of pain and hardship we witness His glory to others and minister to those in similar circumstances.



Read Ecclesiastes 3:11 (CEV)

*God makes everything happen at the right time. Yet none of us can ever fully understand all he has done, and he puts questions in our minds about the past and the future.*

When everything has been said and done, it all boils down to one question: will we trust that God knows best?

Look back at the note card you wrote from Week 5, Day 3 and the verse you rewrote on Week 5, Day 4.



How have they impacted your understanding of God's faithfulness in times of struggle or suffering?

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Group Time

LOOK BACK:



1. Each participant shares one praise and one prayer request. (Commit these to prayer for the coming week.)

2. ENCOURAGEMENT 1-on-1 (See last page for directions)

Y / N	Y / N	_____
_____	_____	

3. **Point:** Things “too big for me” reveal the greatness of God.

Did God reveal anything during your prayer time?

LOOK UP:

**Question:** What is the definition of *faith*? Look up the Merriam-Webster definition. Would you classify *faith* as more passive or aggressive, as active or reactive?



**Recap:** While the Bible promises many blessings for those who seek after God and obey His commands, it is also clear that this life won't be easy – for example, read what Jesus promised His first disciples in Matthew 10:16-22. If it was easy, everybody would be doing it, but God loves us enough to allow us to exhibit our faith and perseverance when it's not easy. It is in these times that we fully experience His power and glory.

But what about when that not easy time is painful and scarring? It then becomes an opportunity to experience and testify of God's grace, His power, and His purpose for us and others. Yes, pray for the pain to subside and scars to heal, but also trust Him in the moment and allow Him to work His eternal plan through each of us.

LOOK IN: Discussion

- In the context of 2 Corinthians 12:7-9, what is a thorn?
- Though it's not known for certain, some speculate that Paul's thorn was the guilt he carried from his pre-conversion persecution of

Christians (leading to many of their deaths). What are some “*thorns*” that people wrestle with today?

- How have you, or others you've known, used something painful (a thorn) to minister to others?

LOOK FORWARD: Application

**Point:** *Life's pain points us to God's power.*

*Often Your Greatest Pain Points To Your Greatest Need*

- Name a few of your thorns. Are they a distraction from God's grace or do they help you focus on God's grace? How so?

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*(To receive help in accepting God's grace in your pain, contact our staff or office today.)*

- How can you use your experience as a testimony of God's grace?

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- How can you use your experience to help others work through the pain and heal the scars of their thorns?

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Family Time



Main Idea:

Faith Means I Want What God Wants



Key Verse: Hebrews 11:1

*Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.*



Set it Up:

God wants us to make choices that reflect our relationship with Him.



Activity:

Say: God is everywhere we go even if we can't see Him or feel Him.

(You'll need a water bottle, the juice from a lemon, a balloon, and baking soda for this next part.)

Here is an easy experiment that we can do to show how this works. Grab a water bottle and fill it with  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup of water. Sprinkle 1 tsp. of baking soda into the bottle and stir it with a straw. Pour approximately the juice of one lemon in the water and quickly put a balloon on the mouth of the bottle.



Talk it out:

Say: We don't "see" anything inside the bottle that could make the balloon inflate. But we can have faith that there is something in there.

Watch as the balloon inflates.

We can't see the gas, but we know that it is there.

This is like how we can have faith that God is everywhere and that He knows what is best for us.

Since He knows best, it's important for us to want what God wants.



## The 3-Step "1-on-1 Encouragement" Process

*Let us hold on to the confession of our hope without wavering, since he who promised is faithful. And let us consider one another in order to provoke love and good works, not neglecting to gather together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging each other, and all the more as you see the day approaching.*

Hebrews 10:23-25

1. Partner-up: Partners should be of the same gender. If there is an odd number, three is OK, but work swiftly.
2. Partners ask each other these five questions:

	1) Did you spend specific personal time in the <b>BIBLE</b> <u>each day</u> this past week?	These are "Yes" or "No" questions.
	2) Did you spend specific time in <b>PRAYER</b> <u>each day</u> this past week – not just for meals?	Any hesitations or "Well..." responses are circled "No."
	3) Did you do something specific to show Godly <b>LOVE</b> to someone this past week?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If so, the partner briefly shares the encounter(s) with their partner and, on the provided line, writes the name(s) of the person(s) they showed love to, shared the gospel with, or disciplined.</li> <li>• If not, leave the line blank.</li> </ul>
	4) Did you intentionally share the <b>GOSPEL</b> with anyone this past week?	
	5) Did you <b>DISCIPLE</b> anyone this past week? (Ex: Sharing with others from any of the Gathering, God, Group, or Family Times)	

3. Each partner prays for the other: No matter how or what the partner has done over the past week, this is an intentional prayer of **encouragement** for the coming week!