

Mission Ready

Ready or not, the mission is before you

A small group study about being ready for the mission of Jesus Christ - a mission everyone is invited to join.

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If you have any questions about the study, the topic, or Life's Journey Christian Fellowship, you may contact Life's Journey at 406-748-3302 or at lifesjourneymt@gmail.com.

The Vision of the Life Group ministry

Life's Journey Christian Fellowship exists to reach the world for Jesus, one person at a time. We feel that is best done in small, relational environments, where biblical disciples can be made. Small group ministry is the primary vehicle by which we carry out the vision and mission of Life's Journey Christian Fellowship.

LJCF VISION:

Reaching the world for Jesus, one person at a time.

LJCF MISSION:

Creating biblical disciples in relational environments.

LJCF Process:

Gather, Grow, Give and Go

Life Groups are small group ministry suitable for adults at any stage in life (even high school age students can find a fit). Life Groups are intended to offer a safe landing place for anyone looking to develop fellowship, friendship and a deeper life with God. Groups are not just a Bible study. Group get-togethers are anchored by bible study but the goal is to foster relationship among the family of God. Christians need other Christians to grow. To love God truly, we must learn to love others fully. To love others deeply, we must learn to love God intentionally.

The strategy of the Life Group ministry is anchored by the LJCF Vision, Mission, and Process and is further guided by the Life Group 4-Point Strategy:

Life Groups 4-Point Strategy:

1. Informational (bible study) yet Relational (fellowship)
2. United in format but responsive to personalities
3. Progressing from neighborly relationship to family-like relationships
4. Anticipating growth and willing to invite more people in

Life Group Guidelines – For Facilitators and Group Members

Setting some basic group guidelines for how we will honor one another in our group discussions is important.

- Ground rules give boundaries for people to operate within.
- They help with the flow and pace of the discussions.
- They help us value one another.
- They help people to be more comfortable sharing deep and meaningful things.

Guiding Principles:

1. **SAFE GROUP:** We will strive to create an environment where everyone can be real, open, and honest with their struggles and victories.
2. **CONFIDENTIALITY:** What is said in the group stays in the group.
3. **LISTEN:** Let's value one another during the discussions by listening to what is being shared. Try to avoid thinking about how you are going to respond, or what you are going to say next.
4. **PAUSE:** Allow a pause in conversation after someone shares. Give the person sharing the chance to finish and the group the opportunity to consider what was just shared before responding.
5. **SILENCE:** It is important to allow silence in the group as it provides an opportunity for someone to share and for members in the group to process the topic or question being considered.
6. **NO "CROSS TALK":** Be considerate of others as they are sharing. No side conversations.
7. **NO FIXING:** We are not here to fix each other. Jesus does that part. Give encouragement; speak truth, and point to Jesus. Don't try to solve or fix each other.
8. **NO RESCUING:** When people are sharing something deeply personal, there can be a tendency to try to make them feel better about themselves or the situation by providing immediate condolences. This will often cause them to stop sharing.

Resist the temptation to rescue people.

9. **SHARING:** Be sensitive about the amount of time you share.

10. **CONFLICT:** We will commit to resolve conflict biblically. When conflict or sin issues between group members arise, we want to make sure that we are honoring God and each other in the way we deal with these issues. The following are a few key Scriptures in this regard (there are many others).
 - a. If someone sins against you
 - i. Matthew 18:15-20
 - b. Restoring someone in sin
 - i. Galatians 6:1-5
 - c. Forgive a sinner
 - i. Colossians 3:12-13
 - d. Reconciling differences
 - i. Matthew 5:23-24, Matthew 7:1-5

11. **BE SELF-AWARE:** Be self-aware of how you are personally affecting the environment through your words, actions, and non-verbal communication.

12. **USE "I" STATEMENTS:** It's easy to talk about the issues of others, but for our purposes, we want you to put yourself on the table. Try to use "I" statements rather than "them", "the church", "us", "we", etc.

Facilitator Expectations:

1. You are a conversation guide (not a lecturer or bible teacher)
2. Seek to build relationships not just Bible knowledge
3. Be mindful of the time and honor the group meeting end time agreement you made with the host home
4. Look for ways to draw out shared experiences from everyone
5. Help foster a setting that is a safe place that honors God.
6. Encourage the group to pray and be in contact with one another throughout the week
7. Find someone in the group to help organize a snack rotation schedule

Host Home Expectations:

1. Help everyone feel welcome
2. Create a warm and welcoming environment
3. Think about where people will sit and how you might make them comfortable
4. Keep a relaxed attitude
5. Discuss group end time with Facilitator (let them know what works best for you and your family)

Facilitator Prep

Things to do before you meet with your Life Group:

1. Pray, pray, pray!
 - a. Thank God for the good things in your life this week.
 - b. Pray for and encourage your spouse (while together!)
 - c. Pray that you will learn something new in the meeting
 - d. Pray that your group members will be encouraged by the meeting
 - e. Pray that God will guide the people who need Life Group fellowship to a Life Group
2. Read the Main Passage ahead of time
 - a. nothing fancy. Just read it or listen to it 2 or 3 times before you arrive at group
3. Read the lesson plan at least one time before you arrive at group
 - a. take note of any announcement for future weeks.
 - b. Take a look at the questions. See if there are any you want to skip
 - c. Consider some new questions you might want to add (questions that come up during your personal prep time)
4. Pray, pray, pray!
 - a. Remember, Life Groups isn't just a hangout for Life's Journey members. It is also a Spirit filled opportunity to which you and others can invite non-Christian friends so they can see what Christian-family fellowship is all about. And for them to meet Jesus.

Session 1

Start the Group Conversation:

If someone asked you what a Missionary is, what would you tell them?

Main Idea: Do you hear God calling? At every turn of Scripture, we find God calling someone. Calling someone by name, calling someone to repentance, calling a people to reconciliation, calling someone to a mission. A mission is a task assigned to a group or a person to complete. He called Adam and Eve to care for the earth and rule it. He called Cain to humble himself. He called Noah to save animals and humans from destruction. He called Abram to go into a new country. He called Jacob to move to Egypt. He called Moses to rescue a nation. He called Gideon to defend that nation. He called David to kingship. He called Jeremiah to prophesy. He called John the Baptist to prepare the way of the Lord. He called Jesus his Son and he gave him the mission of salvation. Get the idea? A mission from God is not only for these far and away heroes of the Bible; he has also called you. He calls you to know Jesus as the way, the truth and the life. He calls you to a life of repentance; to go and sin no more by the power of the Holy Spirit. Through Jesus, he calls you his friend and gives you a mission to complete. He's not looking for perfect people, he's looking for someone who will say, "Yes, Lord." He desires someone who will say, "I'll trust you and I'll lean on you when the road gets rough". From the beginning God had a mission in mind for humans. God wants each person, including you, to be involved in his plans and purposes for the earth. During the coming weeks, the goal of this study is to set our minds on the idea of being Mission Ready. Not everyone is called to be a full-time Missionary in the traditional sense, but every person is called to join a mission with God. In this first session, we'll look at a few different missions that God has called all people to participate in. Maybe you or someone in the group might not yet know Jesus as Lord and Savior, but you are still called to a mission. You might not feel adequate or ready. You might not know what the mission is, but God is calling. Ready or not, the mission is before you.

Main Story

Genesis 1:26-28; Psalm 96:1-3; Ecclesiastes 12:13; Matthew 22:37-40; Matthew 28:18-20; 2 Corinthians 5:18-21

Have different members of the group read the passages.

Head level.

These questions help us to examine what the Word shows.

1. List the missions given to people?
2. Are these missions for Christians only or for everyone?
3. In 2 Corinthians, Christians are called “ambassadors”. Ambassadors of what?

Heart level.

These questions help us wrestle with what we believe.

1. Do you think the idea of mission is only a religious thing? Do you have to be a “Missionary” to be on mission for God?
2. Which of the missions from the Main Story verses stand out to you? Which one catches your attention the most?
3. Can you complete these missions while working at your day job?

Hands level.

These questions help us live the truth in our everyday lives.

1. If you answered “yes” to Heart Level question 3, how are you or how can you participate in the mission? If you answered “no”, why do you think you can’t participate in the mission?
2. Thinking about your answer to Heart Level question 2, do you have an idea (even an inkling of an idea) of how you might apply the mission to your daily life?
3. If you are doing any of these missions, how have other Christians encouraged you to keep going or to get better at it?

Start practicing: Ideas to try this week.

Choose one suggested practice to try this week or develop some of your own.

1. This week, read again or listen to the verses for this session. Reflect on how you are called to be involved with these missions. In a notebook or journal, write down ways you can participate in each one.
2. A Missionary is a Christian given to a specific mission of God. Have you ever thought of yourself as a missionary? In a notebook or journal, write a short description of what you think a Missionary is and what they do. Could you be a missionary in your hometown or does it require you to leave? Make a list of some missions that you think God has invited you to join in with him.
3. If you don't think God has called you to a mission, set aside time this week to pray and ask God to show you what task he has called you to participate in.

Notes, Praises and Prayer Requests

Session 2

Start the Group Conversation:

Would you rather live in the wilderness far from civilization or live on the streets of a city as a homeless person?

Main Idea: In every major story of the Bible, God calls a person or a group of people to complete a task of enormous proportion. Think Adam and Eve subduing the whole Earth. Think Noah building the ark. Think Moses confronting Pharaoh. Think the Apostles taking the gospel to every tribe and tongue. Think Jesus saving the world. In the previous session, we saw that God calls us to the missions of: taking care of creation, openly praising Him, obeying Him, loving our neighbor, making disciples for Jesus, and being an ambassador of reconciliation to anyone. The mission is big. The mission is overwhelming. The mission is scary. That's the way it is supposed to be. In every mission of God, the people tasked with the mission cannot complete the mission without God's help. A peculiar mystery; God says to us, "Work as hard as you can, don't quit even when there is blood, sweat and tears. Enjoy the joys, endure the burdens, and then stand still and watch Me save the day." The Christian who tries to save the day in their own strength isn't acting like a "little Christ" (the meaning of the word "Christian"). Jesus relied on the power of God. Jesus worked hard to fulfill his responsibility, but he never forgot that God is the source of his power and the master of the plan.

Main Story

Psalm 46:1-11; John 15:4-8; Romans 8:31

Read the passages as a group. You might even try having someone retell the passages in their own words.

Head level.

These questions help us to examine what the Word shows.

1. List some ways Psalm 46 describes God?
2. When is God available to help?
3. What action does the Psalmist instructed the reader to do in times of trouble?

Heart level.

These questions help us wrestle with what we believe.

1. God says to be still and know [meaning to remember, accept as true, reflect upon, focus on] that he is God. How can being still and believing in who God is possibly help during a time of trouble when action seems to be needed?
2. In John 15, Jesus says we are to bear fruit (meaning do certain things) but we cannot do things things without abiding (or resting) in him. Do you think it is helpful or confusing that God expects personal responsibility while at the same time expecting us to rely on him?
3. Thinking of the missions talked about in the previous session, which ones require you to be still and rely on God's power or help? (the missions included: taking care of creation, praising God, obeying God, loving your neighbor, making disciples for Jesus, and being an ambassador of reconciliation to anyone)

Hands level.

These questions help us live the truth in our everyday lives.

1. Saying that God is a powerful helper is different than relying on God during times of trouble. Do you remember a time you had to rely on God? What happened?
2. Doing the work God gives you will bring challenges. How can a verse like Romans 8:31 help you?
3. The mission from God is important, so important that he came to earth to insure its completion. This week, how can you continue the mission(s)?

Start practicing: Ideas to try this week.

Choose one suggested practice to try this week or develop some of your own.

1. On the internet, go to [Youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com) and search for the song "Control" by Tenth Avenue North. Listen to it and reflect on this idea of God's desire to partner with you in the mission.

You can use this link to find the song:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kFfztu8-bBQ>

2. Read Isaiah 64:4. In a notebook or journal answer the question "Who or what do I most often rely on when in trouble or need?" Is there a challenge in your life right now in which you should rely on God? There is no god like God.
3. Pray and ask God to help you understand what "abiding" in him looks like. After you pray, in a notebook or journal write down any ideas that come to mind. Some of the ideas might random, meaningless thoughts, but some might also be ideas the Holy Spirit is speaking to you.

Session 3

Start the Group Conversation:

What was your favorite subject or class in school?

Main Idea: In the previous session, we've talked about the idea that God is the savior. He is always in control of the plan and yet we still have a responsibility to act. This creates a controversy. You've heard the arguments and may have asked the same questions. Questions like, "If God is so powerful, then why won't he fix the problem?", or "If God already knows the future, then why do I have to act?" and maybe "If God knows my thoughts, why do I need to pray?". The mission of God is BIG and you can't complete it without God. At the same time, the job doesn't get done without God partnering with his people. In one sense, God doesn't need you or me to do what he wants to do, yet in another sense he does. When the mission gets difficult or uncomfortable, we must resist the temptation to stop. If you quit, the plans of God will still be accomplished, but you'll be missing out. Taking a break is never a problem, but getting too cozy on the bench is. You must lean into God during the relative easy times so you prepared to hold onto him during the hard times. He not only calls you to a mission, he calls you to a partnership - him living in you and you living with him. The Scriptures present God as the all mighty God who can do anything he desires. At the same time, God has the habit of giving jobs to his creations; you and me. Throughout all of the stories of this partnership, the Bible writers never try to explain why a sovereign God delegates certain duties. They simply accept that God is independent of them and that this independent God has given them a job to do - so they do it. When the mission starts to feel overwhelming, instead of asking, "What things can God do without me?" start asking, "What things does God want me to do with Him?"

Main Story

Proverbs 16:9; Job 42:2; Isaiah 46:9-10; Jeremiah 32:27; Exodus 31:1-11; 1 Corinthians 3:5-9

Read the passages as a group. You might even try having someone retell the passages in their own words.

Head level.

These questions help us to examine what the Word shows.

1. How is God described in these verses?
2. In Exodus 31:1-11, what did God want the Israelites to do and whom did God appoint to do the tasks?
3. In 1 Corinthians 3:5-9, what task did Paul and Apollos do and what task did God do?

Heart level.

These questions help us wrestle with what we believe.

1. If God came to you, face to face, and said, "I have a big task for you and it will be tiring to complete. You can do it with my help or I can do all of it while you enjoy a break." Which option are you most likely to pick?
2. Has the truth of God's control and your responsibility ever confused you? Why do you think it is difficult to live with both ideas in mind?
3. Even though God can accomplish his plan without you, what benefits have you experienced when you co-partner with God? Or, why do you think it important to partner with God when he invites you to do it?

Hands level.

These questions help us live the truth in our everyday lives.

1. Think of someone you know in town; the first person who comes to mind. What can do to this week to encourage this person in the love of Jesus? Is this something another person could do if you don't?
2. Give an example of a job or a task God inspired you to do? An experience in which you knew God specifically wanted you to do it?
3. What have you done in the past when a God given job seems too big for you to start or finish?

Start practicing: Ideas to try this week.

Choose one suggested practice to try this week or develop some of your own.

1. Pick your favorite person of the Bible. This week, read some of the stories about them. In a notebook or journal, list reasons why they are your favorite. As you read their story, take note if they ever ask why they should be doing something if God could do it on his own. Do they more often question God's decision or do they more often do what God has spoken to them?
2. Read and reflect upon Romans 8. Make a list of the things this chapter says God has done for you. Write down what you become as a result of Jesus' sacrifice. Does it make you feel more confident or less confident to join a mission of God when you understand what he has already done for you?
3. Think about people in your life or people you often see in a month. List the five people that first come to mind. Which ones are not Christians? You might be the only Christian these people regularly interact with. If they are distant family, you might be the only one or one of the few Christians they have some connection with. Pray and ask the Holy Spirit to show you ways you can encourage them in the love of Jesus. He might not have a task for each person, but he might have you placed in their life because you are the only one who has an opening to show Jesus' love in a real way.

Session 4 - Fellowship Night

Fellowship Night.

Take a break from the Bible study and do something together. Play games, eat a meal, go to the movies, do a mission task, sing worship songs, whatever! You decide. The goal of the night is to get to know one another by doing life together.

The Christian life is more than book study and word definitions. Life is laughing, having fun, eating together, and getting to know each other in a real way. We must learn how to have fun and not over spiritualize everything.

If we are to help one another, we must get to know each other.

What better way to know someone than through fun, laughter, food, and time spent together doing the things of life?

Session 5

Start the Group Conversation:

Tell about a memorable Christmas gift you remember receiving?

Main Idea: Who are you to say that the Almighty God has a plan for you? Who are you to think that you could do something that might change the world? Or change the life of one person? Who are you to try such an important mission? You know the feeling. Feelings of doubt and insecurity are common especially when an important task is before you. This is how most heroes of faith started their journey. Adam and Eve doubted who they were and lost Eden. Moses tried to talk God out of choosing him. Gideon needed extra proof that God was speaking to him. Peter ran away when Jesus was confronted by the enemy. The big names of the Bible were confronted with big fears even though they served a bigger God. Fear tries to make you forget who you are. Many times when a person fails to accomplish a God-given mission it is because they forgot who they are. They forgot how big and awesome God is and they doubted who God said they are. Satan tries to steal your identity by making you doubt who you are. God wants you to accept who he says you are and walk into any situation with the confidence of your identity in Christ. Who are you to say God has a plan for you? You are God's handiwork, chosen to do good works (Ephesians 2:10). Who are you to think you might change the world? You are a light unto a dark world and light always chases away the darkness (Matthew 5:14-16). Who are you to try such an important mission? You are a child of God and co-heir to His kingdom alongside Jesus Christ (Romans 8:17). Godly courage isn't the absence of fear, it is the ability to silence the fear so you can do what God has created you to do. The next time the spirit of fear starts to fill your mind with doubt, tell it who you are and make it be silent.

Main Story

Matthew 4:1-11; Romans 8:1, 14-17, 28-30, 37-39; 1 Peter 2:9-10

Read the passages as a group. You might even try having someone retell the passages in their own words.

Head level.

These questions help us to examine what the Word shows.

1. When Jesus was tempted, how did Satan phrase the first two temptations?
2. When Jesus was tempted, how did he respond to Satan? On whose authority did he stand?
3. How does Paul and Peter describe a Christian in Romans and 1 Peter?

Heart level.

These questions help us wrestle with what we believe.

1. Thinking about the answers to question three above, do you believe these descriptions about yourself?
2. Men, if God called you brave and confident, would you feel confident at work tomorrow? (see Romans 8:31)
 - a. Women, if God called you accomplished, valuable and beautiful, would you believe it when facing your peers tomorrow? (1 Peter 3:3-4)
3. Satan attacked Jesus at a time of extreme physical weakness (after 40 days without food or drink!). Satan said, "If you are the Son of God...", but how did Jesus respond? Did Jesus take the bait?

Hands level.

These questions help us live the truth in our everyday lives.

1. In frustration and in joke, we can belittle other people for mistakes they've made by naming them with words to highlight their failure or incompetence. What might happen if instead you speak over them who God says they are? (even when they make big mistakes)
2. What stops you from believing you are who God says you are?
3. How can knowing who you are help you face a difficult task this week?

Start practicing: Ideas to try this week.

Choose one suggested practice to try this week or develop some of your own.

1. Go to Youtube.com and search for the song titled "Who You Say I Am" by Hillsong. Reflect on the message of this song. Praise God along with the song rejoicing in the identity God has given you in Christ.

You can also use the Youtube shortlink to get there:

<https://youtu.be/lKw6uqtGFfo>

2. In a notebook, write down the following sentences (with the space at the beginning). Write the word "Christians" in the blank. Read the sentences out loud. Next, write the lines again, this time writing your name in the blank. Read them out loud. Next, write the lines again, this time writing "I" in the blank. Read them out loud. Rejoice in who you are!

- a. _____ are/is/am a child of God. (John 1:2)
- b. _____ are/is/am a friend of God. (John 15:14-15)
- c. _____ are/is/am more than a conqueror with Jesus.
(Romans 8:37)
- d. _____ are/is/am free from condemnation. (Romans 8:1-4)
- e. _____ are/is/am a chosen and a special possession of God. (1 Peter 2:9-10)
- f. _____ are/is/am loved by God. (1 John 4:10)
- g. _____ are/is/am a co-heir with Jesus Christ, inheriting all the good things he inherited. (Romans 8:17)
- h. _____ are/is/am free from the sting of sin and death. (1 Corinthians 15:55-57)

3. If you have kids at home, at least once each day this week practice saying who they are in Jesus. (Ex. Emma, you are a child of God. Johnny, you are more than a conqueror in Jesus. Sammy, you are chosen, not forsaken.)
4. If you are married, do the same as number three, but with your spouse.

Notes, Praises and Prayer Requests

Session 6

Start the Group Conversation:

Is there time you remember when you laughed uncontrollably?

Main Idea: Listen to the following list of questions and answer them (to yourself) with the first option that comes to mind.

What job do you think is more important: Street corner preaching or private Bible study? Traveling to a foreign country to feed homeless children or being known in town as a person of self control? Working a typical day job or preaching to a few hundred people once a week? Being a traveling missionary or being a parent who teaches their kids about Jesus? Winning hundreds of souls for Jesus or being intentionally kind to one person you meet at the store?

The truth is that each one of these is important in its own context. Each action described fits into the mission God gives to every Christian. Not every Christian will do each task listed, but there is not one that is more important than the other. When you think about accomplishing the mission of Jesus, it will be tempting to think the only valid work a committed Christian does are the tasks that seem to have the biggest impact. You could easily think that you should always be speaking to strangers on the street corner, but then forget to speak love to the people you know. You might focus so much on the ministry group you lead; but less on your spouse and kids at home. You might elevate the role of a Bible teacher to a star celebrity; while dismissing the work of the Sunday morning nursery worker. The mission given to us by God is not made only of the seemingly big tasks. Big impact or small influence, the mission is lived out in the everyday affairs of life around you.

Main Story

1 Thessalonians 4:1-12; Acts 2:36-41

Read the passages as a group. You might even try having someone retell the passages in their own words.

Head level.

These questions help us to examine what the Word shows.

1. What was God's will for the people at the Thessalonian church?
2. In the 1 Thessalonians story, how are the Christians instructed to live?
3. Summarize, in your own words, what happened in the Acts 2 story.

Heart level.

These questions help us wrestle with what we believe.

1. What do you think is more important: preaching to a crowd of three thousand OR living "a quiet life"? Is one more important than the other?
2. Holiness and sanctified mean "to be set apart"; to be dedicated to a way of life different from the norm. How might holy, sanctified living "win the respect of outsiders"? (1 Thess 4:12)
3. As a group, read 1 Corinthians 12:12-27. Do you view certain Christians as more important than others? Do you think you are less important if you don't do certain big jobs for Jesus?

Hands level.

These questions help us live the truth in our everyday lives.

1. Thinking about the instructions listed in 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12, did any of them catch your attention? If so, which ones? (this might be something the Holy Spirit wants you to focus on this week)
2. How might focusing on the everyday disciplines (like those in 1 Thessalonians 4) prepare you for an experience where people might believe in the gospel because of you?
3. As a group, pray for one another that the Holy Spirit will show you how to live out the great mission of God in your ordinary life. That you will be encouraged and know you are doing the will of God even when what you're doing seems of little significance.

Start practicing: Ideas to try this week.

Choose one suggested practice to try this week or develop some of your own.

1. Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-27. In a journal or notebook, list out the parts of the Christian body. What part do you think you are? If it is one of the less noticeable parts, why do you feel that way? (there's nothing wrong with being confident in a role of lesser notice, but check if it's because you feel less valuable than others)
2. On Youtube.com (or your favorite music service) find the song "Do Everything" by Steven Curtis Chapman. Reflect on the message of the song and how everything you do, if done for the glory of God, has lasting significance.

You can use this short link to find the song:

<https://youtu.be/uVTelMursb8>

3. Read 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12. List some things you can do this week that can fulfill the will of God as described in this passage.

Session 7 - Fellowship Night

Fellowship Night.

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The Christian life is more than book study and word definitions. Life is laughing, having fun, eating together, and getting to know each other in a real way. We must learn how to have fun and not over spiritualize everything.

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Session 8

Start the Group Conversation:

When you were a child or teenager, what did you want to be when you grew up?

Main Idea: When you became a Christian you became a friend of Jesus and a partner in his work. It is like he invites you to become a co-owner in his business of shining light on the world. The agreement you make with him is that you will do what he does and you will go where he goes. Most of the time, the going involves you staying in the area he has already placed you; your local community. You do what he would do in the community and you go into the local areas he would go into to. Sometimes, however, he will re-assign you to a new area. All of the time, he wants you to be ready and willing to go where he says to go. A big hindrance to the Christian mission is financial debt. The modern American economy thrives on debt. Taking it to an extreme, some highly influential economists and business owners teach that without debt businesses and individuals cannot reach their full potential. An idea believed by many is that debt-free is unhealthy or abnormal. Yet, when Jesus puts it on your heart to give money to a person or group, he expects you to give. When Jesus calls you to change careers, he expects that you will do it. If Jesus calls you to serve in a ministry in a far away country, he wants you to follow him where he leads you. At the same time, Jesus wants you to honor the commitments (or pledges) you've already given to others. When it comes to money, can you see the problem? If you're indebted to other people, then your resources become tied down and so can you. Debt doesn't mean you're a failure as a Christian, but it does bind you to commitments that will keep you from other tasks. The best position to be in is debt free so that you can give fully from the wealth God has given you and be free to go where God says to go. If you are in debt, talk to God about it, seek advice from other low debt and debt free Christians, and then make a plan to reduce it and get out of it if possible. Always be listening for Jesus' call to follow (debt or no debt) and always be preparing yourself to be ready to do what he tells you to do.

Main Story

Proverbs 22:1-9

Proverbs 3:9-10; Matthew 6:24; Matthew 19:21-22; Romans 13:8; 1 Timothy 5:8; Hebrews 13:5

As a group, read the different passages.

Head level.

These questions help us to examine what the Word shows.

1. What does Proverbs 22:1-9 say about riches and wealth?
2. How is money or wealth described in the other passages?
3. What warnings does God give about debt?

Heart level.

These questions help us wrestle with what we believe.

1. In the verses above, does God condemn people for being in debt or does he warn against it? Have you ever felt condemned because of your debt?
2. Most Americans live some level of debt and most people in debt do not enjoy being in debt. What are some reasons why you have debt (examples: you need a bigger house, medical bills, wanted a luxury item, wanted certain leisure items, you were taught debt was normal)
 - a. Do you believe you could, one day, be free of debt?
3. Have you ever felt inspired by God to do something, but you knew a financial debt would make it impossible or difficult to do?

Hands level.

These questions help us live the truth in our everyday lives.

1. Whether or not you have debt, have you ever attended a financial planning class (like Financial Peace University)? If so, what benefits did you receive from it?
2. Proverbs 3:9-10 says that honoring the Lord with your wealth will cause some kind of overflow of provision. Have you experienced this in your life?
3. If you didn't have debt, what are some things you would want to do with your money for God's mission?

Start practicing: Ideas to try this week.

Choose one suggested practice to try this week or develop some of your own.

1. Wherever you're at in your debt free journey, consider attending a Financial Peace University class in your area.
2. In a notebook or journal, answer the question, "Why do I have debt?" Some of your debt may be unavoidable, some may seem unavoidable (but might not be) while other debt may be avoidable and you've never noticed it before. How can you eliminate (or stop growing) the avoidable debt?
3. This week, take a look at DaveRamsey.com. Read some of the articles and look at some of the free resources Dave Ramsey offers to help you take control of your finances.
4. In a notebook, write a short list (3-5 ideas) of what you want to be doing in the next five years. This might include travel plans, career change, Christian ministry involvement, etc. Next, make a short list of what you want to be doing in the next ten years. After the lists are completed, ask yourself "Am I in a financial situation that would allow me to do these?" If you're married, make these lists with your spouse.

Notes, Praises and Prayer Requests

Session 9

Start the Group Conversation:

If you could eat any meal you can imagine, what would it be?

Main Idea: How do you feel when someone tells you that you are wrong? Is it easier to be corrected by someone who is humble or someone who is prideful? The Christian mission involves helping other people. As a Christian you have the special opportunity to shine light into a dark world. You are an ambassador helping people come back to God. You have the truth of life and are tasked with telling other people about it. Many of the people you'll help have lived much of their life believing something opposite to the gospel of Jesus. If they aren't a Christian, then much of what they've been taught about religion and God says that Christianity is either false or just one of the many ways to God. Then you come along and challenge their understanding of the world. The truth you bring confronts the way they've seen the world up until that point. Sometimes the change is minor (maybe they grew up around Christianity) while other times the change will be major (maybe they've never heard about God and Jesus). If little corrections can make you frustrated, but think about major, life altering corrections. When the gospel of Jesus first confronts us, Jesus brings the jarring revelation that we've been wrong about the most important aspects of life and we've been living in a wrong way - that's there is a more complete way to live. The longer you are a Christian, the harder it is to remember what life was like without Jesus. You don't think like you used to think. You don't act like you used to act. You don't see the problems of life with the same perspective. You might assume that everyone knows what you know, forgetting that at one time you had no clue who Jesus really is. As you bring the good news of Jesus to other people, an attitude of humility is key. You can speak all of the truths of God, but without humility (without love) you'll sound like a noisy gong - irritating and untrustworthy. You are not only calling someone to trust Jesus, but you are asking them to trust you; to trust you enough to listen to what you have to say. Learn to be humble so that you can help others transition from darkness into light.

Main Story

Philippians 2:3-8; 1 Peter 3:8; Colossians 3:12; 1 Corinthians 13:1-7

Read the passages as a group. You might even try having someone retell the passages in their own words.

Head level.

These questions help us to examine what the Word shows.

1. What does the Scripture say about humility? About love?
2. According to Colossians 3:12, why are Christians supposed to be humble and loving?
3. Without love, what you are?

Heart level.

These questions help us wrestle with what we believe.

1. What difference is there between humility and love? Can someone be humble not loving? Or, loving but not humble?
2. Have you ever thought non-Christians are stupid in the way they think? Have you ever noticed yourself rolling your eyes or scoffing at the way non-Christians talk about God?
3. Describe a time when you were challenged by someone to change the way you think about God. Did they seem humble or prideful? Did you change your mind?

Hands level.

These questions help us live the truth in our everyday lives.

1. Describe a time when you talked to/with people about Jesus? Did you have success with humility?
2. How is it possible to talk about truth with humility? You think you have the truth, they think you don't, so doesn't this immediately bring up feelings of superiority or arrogance?
3. As a group, pray that the Holy Spirit will give you opportunities to practice speaking truth with love and humility. Ask him to teach you to recognize when you aren't acting humble (even in the small actions).

Start practicing: Ideas to try this week.

Choose one suggested practice to try this week or develop some of your own.

1. On Youtube.com, find and listen to the song "Open the Eyes of My Heart" by Paul Baloche. Reflect on how this song of prayer builds humility for other people.

You can use the shortlink <https://youtu.be/ViBNqNukgzE>

2. Think of a time you spoke to someone with a prideful attitude. How well did the conversation go? If you had a chance to do it over, how might you change the way you spoke?
3. Read Luke 14:8-11 and Luke 18:10-14. In a dictionary, find the definition of the word humble. From the context of the story, how does Jesus define humility? Does Jesus' definition and the dictionary definition differ? Are the two similar or the same?

Session 10

Start the Group Conversation:

Name a vacation you still remember years after you went?

Main Idea: Do you think you could do more for Jesus? That you have abilities that help make the mission of the local church more effective or an idea that could benefit people in the community? As you join in the mission with God he will begin to put ideas into your mind, stir passions in your heart, and give you a vision that matches his vision. You should expect to have more and more desires to do Kingdom focused work. An important principle to remember is that having an idea doesn't mean you are ready to implement the idea. The bigger the vision, the bigger the responsibility. Sometimes God gives a yearning to do a work before you are ready so that you have time to prepare for the work. In the present, he will give you tasks that might seem unrelated or too small compared to the vision you see. Yet, the seemingly small tasks are training to build your faith, endurance, and sense of responsibility. If you choose not to participate in the tasks which seem small to you, why do you think God would give you the tasks which seem big? God's not looking for celebrities, he is looking for co-laborers in his harvest field. He is the director of the operation and he knows how best to prepare you for the tasks he has planned for you. As Sherry Benner once said, "He is preparing you for what he has prepared for you". You must start small to go big. The story for this session illustrates this point, but with a jarring conclusion. God is portrayed as a shrewd businessman who rewards the responsible workers and fires the irresponsible. Jesus' point is not that God hates it when we fail. The point is to take God seriously; to take his mission seriously. God is a good father and a friend. Whatever he tells us to do, it is always for our benefit and for the benefit for those around us. Don't be discouraged if you try and fail. God calls you to get involved. Don't be like the unfaithful worker with what God gives to you. It may not be time to implement the full vision you see, but it is time to start working with what you already have. Start with what seems like the little jobs so you can prepare for the bigger ones.

Main Story

Matthew 25:14-30; Hebrews 12:1-3; Ephesians 2:10

Read the passage a couple of times. You might even retell the passage together as a group using your own words to summarize it.

Head level.

These questions help us to examine what the Word shows.

1. In the parable of the gold bags, what is the Master like?
2. What does the Master say the unfaithful servant should have done with the money? Is that task more difficult than what the unfaithful servant did with the money?
3. What does Hebrews 12:1-3 encourage us to do?

Heart level.

These questions help us wrestle with what we believe.

1. What do you think about the idea of God giving more responsibility to someone after they accomplish the smaller tasks? Does this encourage you to be more engaged in the little tasks or does this make you feel less interested in doing the smaller tasks?
2. Does the parable of the bags of gold make God seem like a strict, uncaring Master? If so, does the parable encourage you or scare you to be active for God?
3. What are some "few" things or small tasks God has entrusted to you? (maybe praying for someone, helping with church cleanup, encouraging someone at work, regularly attending a fellowship meeting, etc)

Hands level.

These questions help us live the truth in our everyday lives.

1. Have you received a big idea in the past and were able to complete it? If so, briefly describe what the idea was and how long it took you to get from the original idea to the completed state.
2. What does Ephesians 2:10 tell you about yourself? Have you ever asked God to show you what works he is preparing you for?
3. Thinking about the parable of the bags of gold, notice that the first two servants did some kind of active business trade to increase their profit yet the Master told the third servant that simply placing the gold in the bank would have been good enough. Bigger is not always better; faithfulness in what you know and what you've been given is the key. What is something small that you can do this week to be more invested in God's work?

Start practicing: Ideas to try this week.

Choose one suggested practice to try this week or develop some of your own.

1. On Youtube.com find and listen to the song “Transfiguration” by Hillsong. In a journal or notebook, ask yourself, “How does knowing how great and holy God is increase my desire to serve him?” If it doesn’t, should it?

You can use the short link to find the song: <https://youtu.be/jjeE1wzLfjI>

2. In a notebook, make a list of ideas you have for Christian ministry. Remember, ministry isn’t just professional, full time work. Ministry can be small tasks. Is there anything you’ve ever thought that you should do because you are a Christian? Write these down.
 - a. Are any of these ideas something you can do this month?
 - b. Are any of these ideas something you could talk to your pastor about? Or Life Group leader?

Session 11

Start the Group Conversation:

Would you rather eat a salty snack or sweet snack?

Main Idea: Christianity is sometimes criticized as a religion of “don’t”. People think God is always saying, “Don’t do this. Don’t do that.” While the Bible contains many verses that instruct various versions of “thou shall not” it also contains more encouragements to “Do”. Whenever God commands “don’t” he follows it with a command of “Do”. For example, the command of “thou shall not murder” implies the greater command of “thou shall respect life and love your neighbor”. The command “thou shall not steal” teaches the positive command of “be content with what you have and trust God to provide for your needs”. When God instructs you to say “No” it is always an invitation to say “Yes” to better things. Saying no to lust is a pathway to say yes to genuine love. Saying no to idolatry is a step towards saying yes to relationship with the living God. Saying no to pride is an invitation to the humble attitude Jesus displayed. When you say no to sin you learn to say yes to God. Being on mission with God is all about saying yes to whatever God says. Jesus’ decisions were always based on one question, “Do I see My Father doing it?”. Jesus’ life was defined by saying “Yes” to God. If you desire to be involved in the life changing, world saving mission of God, then you must learn to say yes to him more and more. This means you must start practicing saying no to sin or anything else that hinders you from saying yes to the desires and stirrings God gives you. You learn to say no to the seemingly trivial matters so that you can learn to perceive God’s will, provision, and blessing in all matters. Saying no to sin prepares you to recognize God’s voice for the times he will ask you to say no to a good thing in exchange for something better he has planned. You might want to buy a personal item, but he might want you give that money away. You might desire to settle in a favorite city, but he might desire you to go to another country. You could want a job at one company, but he might whisper to go to a different one. Even to normally good desires, God might ask you to say no. Ultimately, God wants you to release your own desires so you can receive his desires; something good for something better. Learning to say “no” teaches how to say “yes”.

Main Story

Colossians 3:1-17; Acts 16:6-10; John 5:19-20; Psalm 37:4-6

Read the passages as a group. You might even try having someone retell the passages in their own words.

Head level.

These questions help us to examine what the Word shows.

1. In Colossians 3, what are Christians supposed to say “no” to? What are Christians supposed to say “yes” to?
2. Doing good will be difficult. What reasons are listed for why we should do good instead of evil?
3. In Acts 16, where did Paul and Timothy want to go? Where did God want them to go?

Heart level.

These questions help us wrestle with what we believe.

1. Have you ever thought Christianity was a religion of “don’ts”? That God was a cosmic killjoy?
2. How important do you think it is to practice the list of “do’s” found in Colossians 3:12-17? Do you intentionally practice any of these?
3. In Acts 16, Paul and Timothy desired to do something good (preach the gospel to Asia minor), but God said no. What do you think about this idea of God saying no to something which is normally good?

Hands level.

These questions help us live the truth in our everyday lives.

1. Has abstaining from sin (or anything else) in one situation ever helped you do good in another? How so?
2. Fasting is a spiritual discipline that teaches the “say no to learn yes” principle. Have you ever fasted something and if so what benefit did it bring you?
3. How have you been able to discern/recognize when God wants you to do one thing instead of another? Have you ever had a feeling that God wants you to do something?

Start practicing: Ideas to try this week.

Choose one suggested practice to try this week or develop some of your own.

1. Read Colossians 3:5-11. In a notebook or journal, write down one or two sins listed in these verses that stand out to you. Next, read verses 12-17. Write down one or two positive commands that stand out to you. Are any of these something you feel challenged to stop doing or start doing? If so, list some ideas of way you can stop or start. Sometimes, a verse or idea in Scripture stands out to us because the Holy Spirit is trying to bring it to our attention.
2. On Youtube.com, find and listen to the song "When You Walk into the Room", written by Jesus Culture. Reflect on how this song invites you to say yes to God. Particularly, meditate on the lyric "come and consume God all we are, we give you permission our hearts are yours, we want You." How does this lyric teach the say no to learn yes principle? Are there things you will need to say "no" to so that God can come into your heart more fully?

You can use this shortcut to find the song:

https://youtu.be/8Zqg5k_GUx4

3. Think about a time you felt God wanted to you say yes to one thing over another. In a notebook or journal, write a description of this event. What made you think God was communicating with you about that thing? Did you say yes to what you thought God was directing you to? Why or why not?
4. If you struggle saying no to a particular sin, make a list of each day of the week. Leave space between each listed day. Mark on the list the times you've said yes to the sin in the past week (use approximate times like morning, afternoon or evening if you don't remember exact times). Review the list and notice if there is a pattern in the activity (maybe you always do it in the evening hours or always do it on certain days). Is there anything about the time that you could change to help avoid the temptation of the sin?

Session 12

Start the Group Conversation:

If you could be involved in any kind of Christian ministry, what would it be? (think of anything, not just opportunities offered at your home church)

Main Idea: When you become a Christian, you immediately become a citizen of God's kingdom. You were created from the "dust of the earth", but the earth is no longer your home. Your allegiance shifts from earthly kings to the universal King. This doesn't mean you should ignore the world around you or rebel against the governing authorities God has placed over you, but it means that you are free from whatever binds you as a citizen of the world. The mission of God will bring many joys and bring many challenges. Moving forward on a daunting path is always harder if you're looking back to the last comfortable place you came from. It is easier to endure if you are looking forward to the next, better stop along the way. The way of a Christian will be difficult and sometimes dangerous, but the final destination makes it worth the travel. If you've ever admired a Christian from the past for their dedication and faith, then you've admired someone who understood they were not citizens of earth. Their kingdom was a heavenly one, they learned to keep their eyes focused on what lay ahead rather than what lay behind. If you doubt you have the faith to change a generation, ask yourself "To what kingdom do I belong?" Just as being a citizen of an earthly kingdom brings certain privileges and power, so does being a citizen of Jesus' kingdom grant you power and authority from on high. Remember, you are caretaker of the earth, you are a servant of God, you are an instrument of praise, you are a vessel of love to your neighbor, you were created to make disciples for Jesus, and you are an ambassador of reconciliation able to call anyone back to God. The mission of God is the most important out of any mission of earth you will receive. God wants you to live well while on earth and he always wants you to remember who you are and where you are going. Ready or not, the mission is before you. Be encouraged to be mission ready for the adventure God has created you to fulfill.

Main Story

Philippians 3:20-21; Hebrews 11:13-16; Luke 9:57-62

Read the passage a couple of times. You might even retell the passage together as a group using your own words to summarize it.

Head level.

These questions help us to examine what the Word shows.

1. As a Christian, to what country do you truly belong?
2. What do these verses teach about looking back?

Heart level.

These questions help us wrestle with what we believe.

1. Does being a citizen of Heaven mean that you cannot be a dedicated citizen of an earthly country? How can you do both?
2. How might looking back on the comfortable experiences of the past hinder your journey forward with God?
3. Have you ever said "no" to God because what he wanted you to do was less comfortable than what you were already doing?

Hands level.

These questions help us live the truth in our everyday lives.

1. Does Jesus' answer to the potential disciples in Luke 9 discourage you or encourage you to follow him? Why?
2. How has believing you are a citizen of Heaven ever helped you through a difficult time?
3. What ideas presented in this Mission Ready study have helped you focus on the road ahead?

Start practicing: Ideas to try this week.

Choose one suggested practice to try this week or develop some of your own.

1. On Youtube.com (or your favorite music service) listen to the song "All In" by Matthew West. Reflect on Jesus' call to be all in to his mission.

You can also use this short link to find the son:

<https://youtu.be/0RwDpnKlvUI>

2. Do you feel like you've not given your full attention to Jesus? If so, this feeling might be condemnation whispered to you by the Devil or it might a loving conviction from the Holy Spirit. In a notebook or journal, write down what you feel guilty about. Pray and ask the Holy Spirit to show you why you are feeling this way and what to do about it.

God's desire is for you to feel encouraged and inspired to live in his love for you. The Devil's desire is to make you feel worthless and guilty.

3. Think about the previous Sessions you attended for this study. What lesson still stands out in your mind as encouraging. What can you do to continue reflecting on and practicing this idea(s)?

