

**More  
Like  
Jesus**



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# Introduction

One of my favorite books on our Christian faith is *Mere Christianity*, by CS Lewis. This short volume is based on a series of radio talks Lewis gave during World War II. Herein he lines out a rational case for Christian belief, exploring morality, theology and the nature of faith. Lewis tells his readers (who were living in challenging times) why belief in Christianity is rational and defensible. The book is a classic in our faith and I consider it mandatory reading for any serious Jesus follower.

But this study is not like that.

This study is not a *defense of the life* of Jesus or just a *list of data* teaching you about him. The goal of this study is to help you *be more* like Jesus and the process laid before us involves more than just reading a book or memorizing some information. The ultimate goal here is not to passively *receive information*, but to activate *real life transformation*.

Perhaps the best way to phrase it is that we want each learner to develop an internal “Jesus Reflex.” This is done when we slowly, but steadily, absorb deep into our bones the mental disposition of Jesus. We train our minds around the person of Christ. This approach will start appearing in our personal reactions to the world around us. Our interactions with others will be shaped by Jesus’ compassion for the people in his world. Our passion for the marginalized will be motivated by Jesus’ example. Our hunger for our heavenly Father’s approval will become more centralized. Our commitment to truth will reflect Jesus’. The intent here is for us to develop an automated reflex-response to the world that is conditioned by the teachings of Christ.

One analogy that might be helpful is to think of a soldier in the military. While serving in the Army, we were repeatedly told that we were to always maintain our *military bearing*. This phrase refers to the way soldiers or sailors present themselves, with **professionalism, discipline and confidence**, both in and out of uniform. It’s not just about posture or appearance — though those matter. It’s about consistently embodying the values of the military: integrity, respect, duty and selfless service.



A person with a strong military bearing is someone who:

- Maintains composure under pressure
- Upholds standards and regulations
- Projects confidence and commands presence
- Acts with respect and discipline, even off duty

It's often described as the invisible armor that earns trust and sets the tone for leadership. In essence, it's how soldiers carry themselves in a way that reflects honor to their unit and country.

Likewise, a Christ follower must embrace the life and value system of Jesus. They must not only understand, but emulate his teachings. They begin to view all of his creation through his way of thinking. This is what Paul was talking about in Philippians 2, when he challenged the church to:

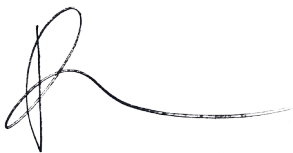
***“In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus” (2:3-5)***

Having the same mindset as Jesus is possible. To do this we must commit to more than just listening to a few sermons or memorizing some data about Jesus. We must commit to a plan.

**And here is the plan we are inviting you to follow. Over the course of the next eight weeks we are challenging you to invest in three phases:**

- 1) Time alone with Jesus**
- 2) Time obeying Jesus**
- 3) Time with others**

If this project works as I intend, you will be more like Jesus at the end than you were at the start.



Pastor Rusty



# The Three Phases

The three phases are relational and each one has an important function in your life. You will notice the development of each step - they are critical and described as follows:



## 1. Time alone with Jesus

*To become like Jesus we must be with Jesus.*

This phase is key as it requires you to spend time alone time with Jesus on a daily basis.



## 2. Time obeying Jesus

*To follow Jesus we must take active steps of faith in obeying Him.*

This phase calls you to live out your faith in the world around you by serving in your community or church every week.



## 3. Time with others

*To think like Jesus we must ponder on the ways of Jesus.*

This phase offers a time of weekly thought, reflection and discussion in a close-knit group, like a connection class or small group.

## Here is what a typical week would look like during this study:

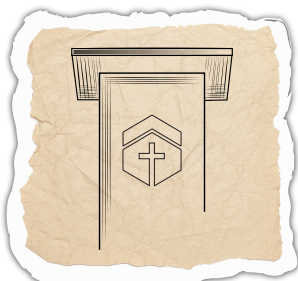
***You will begin by carving out daily time with Jesus.*** In these moments you are to speak to Him and allow Him to speak to you. We recommend that you do this at the very beginning of your day, inviting Jesus into all the details and demands the next 24 hours has for you.

***Next you are to step into obedience with a real, live action toward your church or broader community.*** This will look different for each person and vary from one week to the next. Our aim here is to give the reader a clear and specific, but attainable, action step to be implemented each week. This action step is derived from the previous week's sermon and based upon Jesus' own example displayed in the Gospels.

***Finally, you are to reflect weekly on these items in a small group setting.***

Speaking about your experiences with other Christ followers will provide a needed source of encouragement and camaraderie. Each follower should willingly share successes, as well as failures and struggles. When there is honesty in these groups, each person will receive the needed insight and motivation to carry on into the next week. Remember, personal growth can only happen when we are transparent.

Each week the sermon material will be broken down into three main categories and an application for the three phases. They are:



### **Sunday Sermon**

- o In this section you will find the typical outline, Bible verses and sermon notes. This means it will be extremely helpful for you to bring your workbook with you every Sunday.
- o *The goal of this section is to expose you to a Biblical understanding of Jesus.*




### **Personal Application/Time Obeying Jesus**

- o In this section you will be called to do something in the real world that reflects your personal devotion to Jesus. You will also have a place to chart your progress.
- o *The goal of this section is to have you act in obedience to Jesus.*



### **Small Group Discussion/Time With Others**

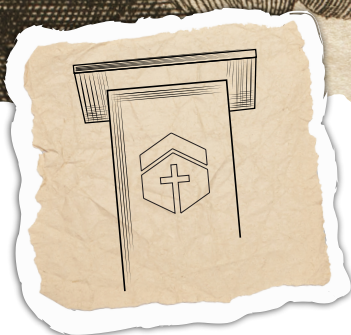
- o This section will contain discussion questions about the topic covered in the sermon, applicable bible verses as well as conversation prompts about the personal application.
- o *The goal of this section is to affirm and encourage your steps in following Jesus.*



So, you can see that this plan includes way more than just listening to a 35-minute sermon. The overarching objective is to see you grow in your allegiance to Jesus.

Becoming more like Jesus does not happen by accident. We must train well with a strategic plan. And, for this to work, consistency must be applied. But I am convinced that, over the next three months, your heart and mind will become aligned with this Jesus reflex Paul mentioned in Philippians 2.

Let's get started.



# Sermon: Introduction to More Like Jesus

## Introduction to the Sermon Series

Everyone follows someone or something. We all have some main influencer, coach or guide in our lives. Each of us is a learner from the world around us. Or, to say it another way, each of us is a disciple. So, the question is not “are you disciple?” The real question is “who or what is your Rabbi?”

And for the Christ follower, we are, by the very definition of our title, to be shaped and molded by the life, actions and teachings of Jesus. Yet, there are so many distractions that pull us away from this primary goal. Buzzing technology and glaring lights from screens yank our attention away from our life with God. Additionally, our nervous system vibrates with anxiety and restlessness, as our frontal lobes hunt for the next dopamine hit. Pile on top of all of this, a crammed schedule with pesky health problems and you have a perfect recipe for a weary soul.

The goal of this series is simple: to help you become a better follower of Jesus. The approach we will use in this 8-part series includes the three phases we outlined at the beginning of this book: 1) time alone with Jesus, 2) time obeying Jesus and 3) time with others.

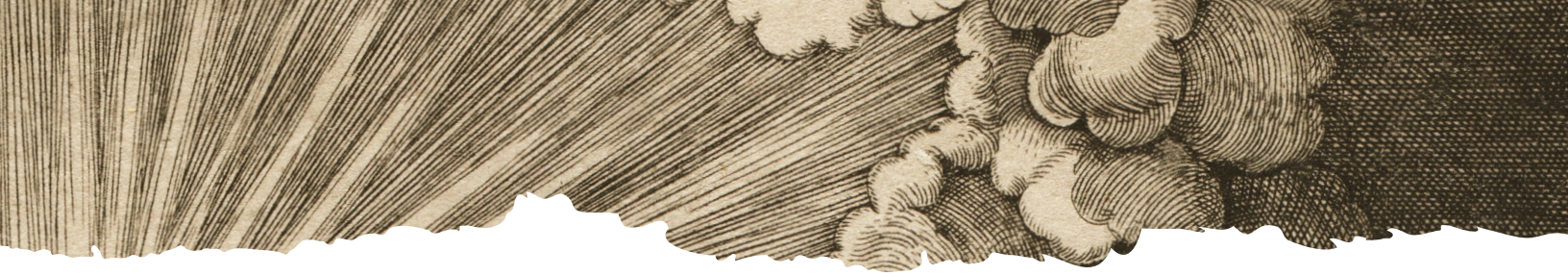


### **The Big Idea:**

The primary sources for understanding the life of Jesus are the four gospels. But, are these trustworthy documents? Knowing the answer to this is no mere idle speculation. For if these pages are not trustworthy, then the foundation of our trust in Jesus would be damaged irreparably.

But, if they are trustworthy, then we can conclude that we have dependable sources to explore the person of Jesus. Let’s review some well-used arguments against the Gospels.





## Outdated Arguments *Against* the Gospels

- They are late
- They have an agenda
- They contain the miraculous
- They contain differences

## Arguments *for* the Gospels' Reliability:

### 1. Early Dating:

Many scholars date the Gospels to the first century, within the lifetime of eyewitnesses, allowing for a degree of historical accuracy and the potential for eyewitness accounts to be checked.

### 2. Corroborating Evidence:

- a) Archaeological finds corroborate details like place names (e.g., Pool of Bethesda) and the existence of figures like Pontius Pilate.
- b) Extra-Biblical Sources: Non-Christian sources from the ancient world, like those by Josephus and Tacitus, mention Jesus and align with some of the Gospel accounts, providing independent confirmation of certain historical facts.

### 3. Nature of Ancient Biography:

The Gospels are considered a form of ancient biography, a genre that sought to capture the essence and key events of a person's life. While they have a theological aim, it doesn't automatically mean they are not historical documents.

### 4. Oral Tradition:

The oral tradition that preceded the written Gospels was likely more stable in oral cultures, with a focus on memorization and accurate transmission of teachings.

### 5. The Resurrection:

The disciples' willingness to face persecution, and even martyrdom, for their belief in Jesus' resurrection suggests sincerity in their conviction and belief in the events they witnessed.



## Personal Application

### *Introduction to More Like Jesus*



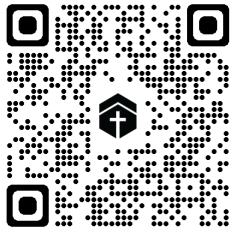
#### **Be with Jesus (Alone):**

This week spend some time just thanking God for His revealed word, and ponder how these sacred writings have been a blessing to millions of believers throughout history and the world. If it's helpful, grab a physical copy of the scriptures and place it in your lap. Share with God how much you treasure this book.



#### **Act Like Jesus (In the Church/Community):**

Prepare your mind today to respond to outdated criticisms of the Gospels. Scan the QR code below to watch a helpful video that equips you for this discussion ("New Testament Bible Reliability" by Daniel Wallace, PhD).



*If you followed through with your Act Like Jesus assignment, write about your experience in the Notes section on the following page. Provide any interesting or memorable moments during this exercise.*



## Week 1 - Introduction to More Like Jesus

	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
Time Alone with Jesus							
Time Obeying Jesus							
Time Spent with Others							

### Notes:

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## **Small Group Discussion**

### *Introduction to More Like Jesus*

#### **Review Last Week's Sermon**

- o Review the sermon notes from last week's sermon. What impacted you the most?

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- o Review the five defenses Pastor Rusty gave for the Gospels. Which of these seems to be the strongest? Which one is the most vulnerable to attack?

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#### **Talk it Out**

- o Have you ever heard someone criticize the trustworthiness of the Bible? How did you respond?

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- o Have you had your own doubts about the Bible? If so, what were they?

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- o How did you do with the Personal Application assignment? If you watched some or all of the video, what do you remember about the material covered?

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## Dive into the Scriptures

- **Read the following passages:**

- Matthew 5:17

- “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.”

- Luke 24:27

- “And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.”

- John 10:34-35

- “Jesus answered them, ‘Is it not written in your Law, ‘I have said you are “gods?”’ If he called them ‘gods,’ to whom the word of God came—and Scripture cannot be broken.’”

- **Discuss with your group the following.**

- Based upon these verses, how would you describe Jesus’ relationship with the Old Testament?

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- If Jesus had a high view of the Scriptures, what does that mean for us?

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- Did Jesus correct wrong or misguided interpretations of the Scripture?

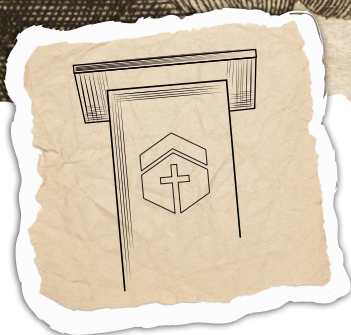
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- In what way should Jesus’ view of Scripture affect our own view?

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# Sermon: Prayer, Spending Time with Jesus



## The Big Idea:

The most basic definition of prayer is active participation in God's presence. Prayer happens when we foster a positive awareness of God and our need for His power in our lives. Even Jesus' divinity did not insulate him from the need of regular and intense moments of prayer. Today, we will learn how to pray by examining how Jesus taught his disciples to pray.

## Answer the following:

### *Where are you in your prayer life right now?*

- I am a prayer warrior who prays regularly, and with great passion
- I am new to the faith and want to get started in meaningful prayer
- I've been a Christ follower for a long time, and I need a refresher
- I am bored and frustrated with prayer
- I am cynical about the whole thing

### *Prayer is hard for many reasons:*

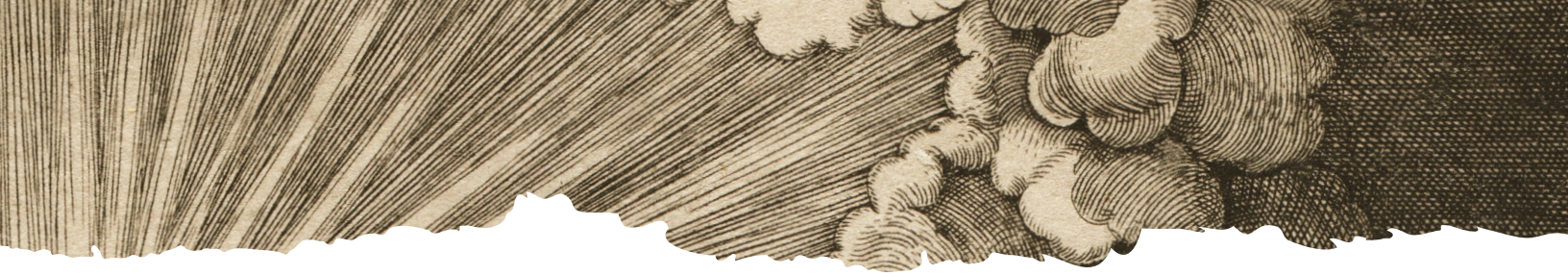
- Busy Schedules
- Entertaining Distractions
- Social Media
- Prior Obligations
- Theological Questions

## Into the Text

### General Observations about Jesus and Prayer

- Jesus established routine alone time with God (Luke 11:1, 5:16, 9:28, 11:2-4)
- Jesus' power came from God (Luke 8:46)
- Jesus was very open to teaching his disciples about prayer (Luke 11:1)





### **1. God is our Dad (Luke 11:1)**

- a) There is not a single use of “abba” for God in all of the Jewish literature of that era
- b) God loves us and wants to provide for us

### **2. God is closer than you think (Luke 11:1, Matthew 6:9)**

- a) Some manuscripts add “in heaven”
  - i. “heaven (οὐρανός ouranós), meaning sky, air, any place above the earth
  - ii. Notice how biblical authors tie together the clouds and heaven
    - » Exodus 24:15-18, Daniel 7:13, Acts 1:9-11, Revelation 1:7, 10:1
  - iii. What if you started viewing God as being as close as air around you, or living just behind the clouds?

### **3. God is Holy**

- a) God is a loving Father, but He is also totally separate in His power, majesty and significance
- b) Consider our sun
  - i. Size: About 865,000 miles (1.392 million km) across, making it 109 times wider than Earth
  - ii. Mass: It contains 99.86 percent of the total mass of the solar system
  - iii. Temperature: The core reaches 27 million degrees Fahrenheit (15 million degrees Celsius), while the surface (photosphere) is around 9900 degrees Fahrenheit (5500 degrees Celsius)
  - iv. Lifespan: Estimated to last about 10 billion years, with roughly 4.6 billion years already passed
- c) This sun is 92 million miles away from earth and if you look at it for too long it will burn your retinas. There is nothing on this planet that can withstand the very intense heat of this sun. If the sun is this powerful and dangerous, what makes us think the Creator of it is any less so?
- d) We must constantly be mindful of and reverential toward the immense power of God in His holiness.

### **4. Because God is Dad and is powerful, He provides**

- a) God is Abba and absolutely powerful
- b) God meets our needs
- c) God forgives our sins



## **Personal Application**

### ***Prayer, Spending Time with Jesus***



#### **Be with Jesus (Alone):**

In your prayer time, picture God as a loving Father that is present with you. If it helps, go outside and pray. Think of God's presence filling the breeze from your deck or backyard. How does this change your view of prayer? Of God?



#### **Act Like Jesus (In the Church/Community):**

Jesus prayed for the city of Jerusalem (Matthew 23:37). How can you best pray for your church or community? Are you part of any of the prayer gatherings we have at Concord? Would you consider joining one?

***If you followed through with your Act Like Jesus assignment, write about your experience in the Notes section on the following page. Provide any interesting or memorable moments during this exercise.***



## Week 2 - Prayer, Spending Time with Jesus

	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
Time Alone with Jesus							
Time Obeying Jesus							
Time Spent with Others							

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## **Small Group Discussion**

### *Prayer, Spending Time with Jesus*

#### **Think Like Jesus (Small Group):**

Share with one another your prayer time experiences. Also, share some of the struggles and hang-ups you might have with prayer.

#### **Talk it Out**

- Which one best describes your prayer life right now:
  - o I am a prayer warrior who prays regularly and with great passion
  - o I am new to the faith and I want to get started in meaningful prayer
  - o I've been a Christ follower for a long time and I need a refresher
  - o I am bored and frustrated with prayer
  - o I am cynical about the whole thing
  
- What are some of the hindrances that you face when engaging in a quiet moment of prayer?  

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- Do you think technology is a help or hindrance to your prayer life? Explain.  

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- What is one way in which you would like to grow in your prayer time?  

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## Review Last Week's Sermon

- Review the sermon and notes from last week's sermon. What impacted you the most?  
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\_\_\_\_\_
- How does viewing God as your Father affect the way you view your relationship with God?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Do you often think of God's holiness while you are praying? How do you balance His Holiness with His Fatherliness?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Last Week's Action Steps

- How did your alone time with Jesus go? What are some of the distractions that infiltrate your mind during this time? What are some ways to overcome these distractions?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Dive into the Scriptures

### Read Luke 11:1-13

- What is striking to you about Jesus' teaching about prayer?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- How does Jesus' direct teaching about this subject challenge some of your current notions about prayer?  
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\_\_\_\_\_

## Discuss with your group the following:

- Based upon Jesus teaching, how should you begin your prayers?

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- What do you think it means to ask for God's kingdom to come (or be revealed) in your real world today?

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- How does Jesus teach us to begin our prayers?

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- What are some ways that you hallow the name of God in your everyday life? How might you enhance this reality?

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- In verse 3, how does Jesus teach us to ask for our needs? Jesus mentions that we should ask "each day." Why do you think daily prayer is important to Jesus?

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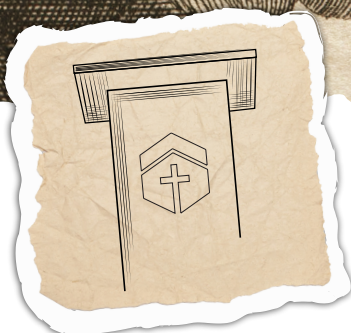
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- In your own prayer life, how do you balance the tension between God as a Father and God being extremely holy?

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# Sermon: Fasting, Suffering Like Jesus



## The Big Idea:

The average American adult sees almost 4000 advertisements per day. This barrage of logos and bylines is designed to do one thing: stir up our dissatisfaction. Then this dissatisfaction drives our consumeristic habits, and there seems to be no limit to our desire for stuff. Some economists estimate that almost 70 percent of the entire U.S. economy is fueled by consumer goods (as opposed to fuel, housing and transportation). Our hearts seem to be little machines programmed to want more. Advertisers are locked into this wiring of our brains and we can feel like we are trapped.

But there is an ancient reset button. This reset button cost us nothing, is easy to install and is amazingly effective. It's fasting. Pushing the fasting button activates a deeper sensitivity to God's activity in His creation and how we might respond to that. Thankfully, Jesus sets the example for us, providing an unobstructed path forward.

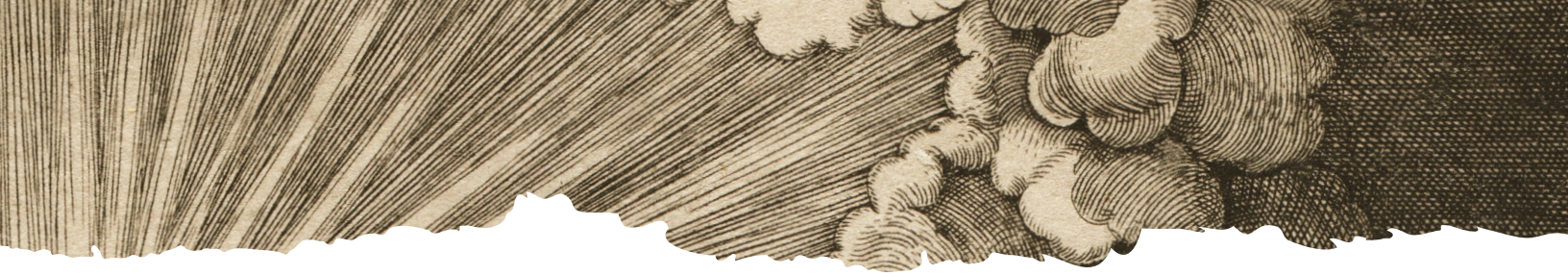
## Consider the Following

- We possess Infinite Desire + We exist as Finite Human = This results in restlessness
- Thomas Aquinas once asked himself what it would take to satisfy the soul and his conclusion was that one human would need to experience everything
- Song of Solomon put it this way: "The eye is not satisfied with seeing"
- Mick Jagger sang it this way: "I can't get no satis-faction"

## Type of Desires

- Power/Control/Influence/Notoriety
- Money/Consumerism/Display of Wealth
- Pleasure/Entertainment/Leisure/Sexual Experiences





*How do we manage this churning surge of infinite desire when an entire ecosystem has been built to keep pumping out the waters of temptation? **Answer: Fasting.***

## **Fasting is mentioned around 30 times in the Scriptures.**

*Why do we have this infinite desire? Because we were made for the infinite.* Desire is infinite partly because we were made by God, made for God, made to need God and made to run on God. We can be satisfied only by the one who is infinite, eternal and able to supply all our needs: we are only at home in God. When we fall away from God, the desire for the infinite remains, but it is displaced on things that will certainly lead to destruction. (Dallas Willard)

### **What fasting is not:**

- Getting God's attention through suffering
- A weight loss program
- A legalistic standard to gain holiness
- Not always results-oriented

## **Into the Text**

### **1. Jesus began his ministry with fasting (Matthew 4:1-2)**

- a) If Jesus fasted, then it's important for us to fast, too (v. 2)

### **2. Fasting prepares you for what is next (Matthew 4:12-25)**

- a) Moses fasted before receiving and sharing the 10 Commandments (Exodus 34:27-28)
- b) Elijah returned to ministry after a season of fasting (1 Kings 19)
- c) Antioch sends out Paul on his first missionary journey after fasting (Acts 13:2)
- d) Likewise, after Jesus' fast, he did the following:
  - i. Preached
  - ii. Called his first disciples
  - iii. Healed sick people
  - iv. Preached the greatest sermon in the world



### 3. Fasting reveals to you what is inside (v. 1)

- a) Notice Satan's approach (If..., then...)
  - i. If you have the power to do something that benefits you, then do it.
- b) Fasting highlights our human desires that may be natural and God-given (e.g., hunger)
  - i. "Not by bread alone" - defeating temptations requires us to look beyond the desire/satisfaction loop.
- c) Fasting says, "I will surrender even my most natural cravings to God's word and way"
  - i. "With the Holy Spirit's power and direction, I can control my desires"

### 4. Fasting lifts us out of the cycle of desire and satisfaction to God's larger operation throughout the world

*Fasting interrupts our small world of pleasure and comfort, helping us see a bigger view of God's plan. Today we will examine how one man's comfort was interrupted and how fasting prepared him for a critical role for a nation.*

#### **Notice:**

- **What is so easy to see and diagnose?**  
Other people's habits, outsized cravings and super-charged addictions.
- **What is not so easy to see and diagnosis?**  
Our own habits, outsized cravings and super-charged addictions.







## **Personal Application**

### ***Fasting, Suffering Like Jesus***



#### **Be with Jesus (Alone):**

During your time alone with Jesus, commit to fast from a personal pleasure for a set period of time.

- Pick the item
- Pick a duration of time

Here are some suggestions:

- Fast from my phone for one evening
- Fast from food for 24 hours
- Fast from social media for 24 hours
- Fast from entertainment sources for 48 hours
- Fast from news sources for 48 hours
- Fast from snack food for 3 full days
- Other types of fasting



#### **Act Like Jesus (In the Church/Community):**

One of the benefits of fasting is that it can help create sympathy for those who are in dire need. Fasting from food helps you better understand the hungry. Fasting from sexual pleasure helps you better understand the celibate person. Fasting from shopping helps you better understand the poor. Fasting allows you to enter into their lived experience with the commonality of suffering.

***If you followed through with your Act Like Jesus assignment, write about your experience in the Notes section on the following page. Provide any interesting or memorable moments during this exercise.***

## Week 3 - Fasting, Suffering Like Jesus

	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
Time Alone with Jesus							
Time Obeying Jesus							
Time Spent with Others							

### Notes:

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## **Small Group Discussion**

### *Fasting, Suffering Like Jesus*

#### **Talk it Out**

- What are some of the benefits of fasting?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- What prohibits most people from experiencing the benefits of fasting?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

#### **Review Last Week's Sermon**

- Review the sermon and notes from last week's sermon. What impacted you the most?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- How does fasting help regulate our desires?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- If you fasted, what personal tensions or frustrations surfaced? What was the primary emotion you felt during this time?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Is fasting something you would consider doing regularly? Why or why not?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



- What is the connection between fasting and overcoming temptation?

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## Review Last Week's Action Steps

- Share with your group one thing that you fasted from. If you chose not to fast, share how this commitment is difficult for you.

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- Also, share how fasting might have helped you regulate a particular desire or craving that you struggle with on a weekly basis.

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## Dive into the Scriptures

### Read Matthew 4:1-2

- Jesus was clearly the Messiah. What does his willingness to endure a period of fasting indicate to you?

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- How long would you be willing to fast? What are you willing to fast from in order to hear from God?

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**Discuss with your group the following:**

- How can fasting influence your desires?

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- When you fast are there any negative thoughts that surface?

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- What are the things God can teach you in this moment of deprivation?

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- When you are fasting, what are the thoughts or emotions that are registering during this event?

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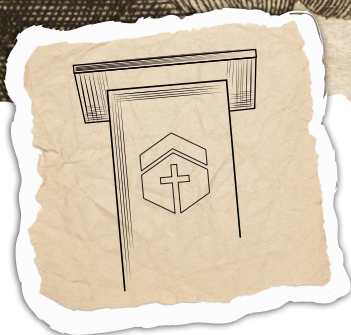
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- Can a legalistic heart creep in when we fast? How so? How can we prevent this from happening?

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# Sermon: Solitude, Focusing on Jesus



## The Big Idea:

We live in an age of constant distraction. We are never more than three feet away from a high-tech device expertly designed to tug at our attention. At our fingertips, quite literally, we have instant 24/7 access to streaming music, videos and entertainment. Everything, from the latest dance craze to the latest crazed shooter, is pouring off of our screens into our neural network. This omnipresence of information has not led to security, calm or joy. Most watching experts would suggest the opposite. We are more anxious, unsettled and dissatisfied than ever.

And this is the new normal.

But Jesus has not called us to this. To follow Jesus, we must examine how he handled the pressures of his calling. Here we will pay close attention to the rhythm of his ministry, hoping to learn how his steady pursuit of quiet is a healthy strategy for our own souls.

## Into The Text

1. **Jesus begins his ministry with being alone (Matthew 4:1)**
  - a) Eremos: “Wilderness, desolate place, solitary place, the quiet place”
2. **Jesus regulates his ministry by being alone on a regular basis (Mark 1:38-39)**
  - a) This is not a break from life. This is the source of his life.
  - b) Stop seeing alone time as a break from your life and more as a wellspring for your life. You’re not stopping life; you are fueling it.



### **3. Jesus invites his followers to do the same (Mark 6:30-33)**

- a) Life can get very busy.
- b) Notice the mention of quiet (not a distraction, not entertainment, quiet).
- c) There is always something knocking at the door, a need that must be met, a meeting that must be attended.
- d) Jesus sent them away.

### **4. Jesus did this regularly (Luke 5:13-15)**

“There is a difference between isolation and solitude. They may contain similar characteristics, but in reality they are worlds apart. Solitude is a chosen separation for refining your soul. Isolation is what you crave when you neglect the first.”

- Wayne Cordeiro

### **Benefits**

- You hear from God (this is why I avoid taking pain medicine after a long run)
- You heal
- You feel your soul





## **Personal Application**

### ***Solitude, Focusing on Jesus***



#### **Be with Jesus (Alone):**

In this week's devotional time, take some time to not speak. Quiet your heart before God. Slow your breathing down, sit still and calm your mind. In this moment, let God's voice gently speak. Do not rush this moment. If it helps, go outside and pray. Think of God's presence filling the breeze from your deck or backyard. How does this change your view of prayer? Of God?

#### **Pro Tip**

If you are struggling with this, or have intrusive thoughts interrupting your attempts at solitude, consider this:

Place a pen and paper by your side. When a spurious thought or worry intrudes, write down and think to yourself: "I will deal with that later." Then continue with your exercise of focused attention. If helpful, use meditative or instrumental music in the background to help quiet your mind.



#### **Act Like Jesus (In the Church/Community):**

During your alone time with Jesus, consider how this discipline helps fill your soul. Reflect on how this alone time might fuel your public life and work.

***If you followed through with your Act Like Jesus assignment, write about your experience in the Notes section on the following page. Provide any interesting or memorable moments during this exercise.***

## Week 4 - Solitude, Focusing on Jesus

	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
Time Alone with Jesus							
Time Obeying Jesus							
Time Spent with Others							

Notes:

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## **Small Group Discussion**

### *Solitude, Focusing on Jesus*

#### **Talk it Out**

- Ponder for a moment on how “alone time” can be a benefit to you personally.
- What are real-world challenges to carving out alone time?
- What are some of the distractions that can rob us of our alone time?
- Can technology help or hinder our alone time?
- Does alone time seem selfish? Explain why.
- Define how your time alone can help you address the deeper concerns or issues that are weighing down your soul.

#### **Review Last Week’s Sermon**

- Review the sermon and notes from last week’s sermon. What impacted you the most?

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- How does solitude help foster a heart of peace and tranquility?

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- Share with your group any difficulties you discovered when trying to pursue solitude. And be honest with yourself and the group. Do you feel this is unnecessary? Unhelpful? Share why you feel this way.

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## Last Week's Action Steps

- Last week's action step was all about solitude. Did you choose to be alone this week? Why or why not? Are you comfortable with solitude or does it make you more anxious or unsettled?

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- What did you learn during this season? How can being alone with God invite God's voice into your daily rhythms?

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## Dive into the Scriptures

### Read the following passages:

- Matthew 14:23: "After he had dismissed the crowds, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone."
- Luke 6:12: "One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God."
- Mark 1:35: "Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed."

## Discuss with your group the following:

- Based upon Jesus' actions, how important is alone time with your heavenly Father?

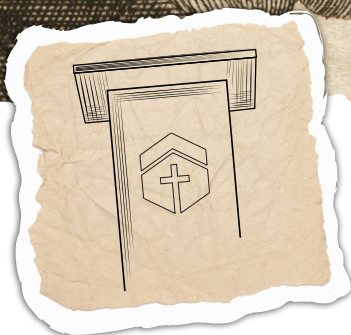
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- What distractions in your regular day keep you from discerning the Father's voice?

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# Sermon: Scripture, Learning from Jesus



## The Big Idea:

At the center of all three goals (Being with Jesus, Following Jesus and Thinking Like Jesus) is the Bible. We cannot proceed in growing in likeness of Christ without a high respect for the Bible.

### Consider

- The story of William Tyndale (“Our current Bible comes to us at a great cost”)
- The story of modern times (“Our current Bible is often ignored at a great cost”)

## Into the Text

### 1. Jesus held and maintained a high view of Scripture and so should we (Matthew 5:17-20, c.f. John 10:35, Mark 12:30 and 24, Luke 24:32)

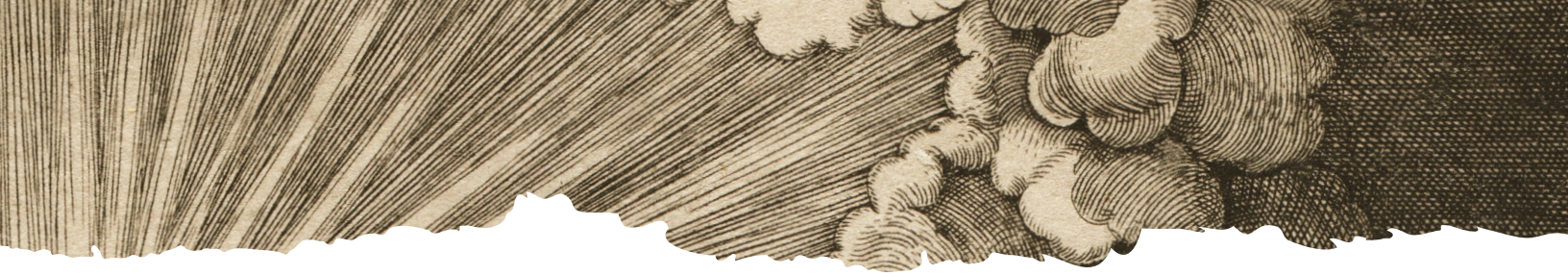
#### a) Jesus explained his relationship with the law

- i. “Do not think” (an aorist verb) means, don’t even start thinking it
- ii. Law and Prophets (a short-handed way to speak of the sacred Jewish Scriptures)
- iii. “Abolish” (καταλύω, katalýō) - destroy, demolish or annul as in a rule or an institution
- iv. “Fulfill” (πληρόω, plērōō) - to complete, fulfill; used here in Matthew about Jesus’ life, completing the Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah
- v. As long as the present world exists, the Old Testament is valid

### 2. Jesus expects us to have a high view of Scripture

- a) To disregard these commands is to be small or trivial, as it relates to the Kingdom of God
- b) To be great is to:
  - i. Practice
  - ii. Teach
  - iii. With the goal of right living





### **3. Jesus view of the Scriptures was passed on to the church.**

a) Paul instructed the church to do three things

- i. Avoid all talk that is not helpful (2 Timothy 2)
  - » “... warn them before God against quarreling about words; it is of no value and only ruins people who listen...” (v. 14)
  - » “... avoid godless chatter, because those who indulge in it will become more and more ungodly...” (v. 16)
  - » “... don’t have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments because you know they produce great quarrels ...” (v. 23)
  - » “... and the Lord’s servant must not be quarrelsome but must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful...” (v. 24)
  - » “... opponents must be gently instructed, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to the knowledge of the truth...” (v. 25)

b) Embrace [handle] the word of truth correctly (2 Timothy 2:14-15)

- i. Historically accurate
- ii. Culturally nuanced
- iii. Grammatically sensitive

c) Respond by personally continuing in the Scriptures (Timothy 3:10-17)

- i. Do you read the Scriptures in such a way that its message is:
  - » Teaching you?
  - » Rebuking you?
  - » Correcting you?
  - » Training you in righteousness?



## **Personal Application**

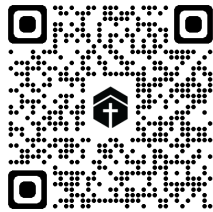
### *Scripture, Learning from Jesus*



#### **Be with Jesus (Alone):**

Make sure that, during your alone time with Jesus, you are incorporating regular doses of Bible reading. There are dozens of Bible plans available. Choose one that matches your goals and stick to it. Read to understand first, then engage more deeply with the author's thoughts.

If you are curious to know more about the Bible's foundation, scan the QR code to check out this helpful video, "What is the Bible" by BibleProject.



#### **Act Like Jesus (In the Church/Community):**

Take one biblical concept that you have learned over the past six weeks and seek to live it out this week.

*If you followed through with your Act Like Jesus assignment, write about your experience in the Notes section on the following page. Provide any interesting or memorable moments during this exercise.*

## Week 5 - Scripture, Learning from Jesus

	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
Time Alone with Jesus							
Time Obeying Jesus							
Time Spent with Others							

### Notes:

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## **Small Group Discussion**

### *Scripture, Learning from Jesus*

#### **Think Like Jesus (Small Group):**

In your interaction with your small group, share what God is showing you in your Bible study time. Also, share any helpful tips, apps or Bible reading plans that have increased your faithfulness in reading Scripture.

#### **Talk it Out**

- When you think about the Bible, what thoughts or emotions come to mind?

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- Have you carried doubts, or frustrations, about the Bible in your adult life? What are those?

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#### **Review Last Week's Sermon**

- Review the sermon and notes from last week's sermon. What impacted you the most?

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- How would you describe Jesus' relationship with the Old Testament?

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- How should Jesus' relationship with the Scriptures impact our relationship with it?

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- Pastor Rusty shares a story about William Tyndale and the sacrificial way he brought the Bible to the English-speaking world. How does this historical event change your view of the Bible?

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## **Last Week's Action Steps**

- Do you have a Bible reading plan? How does it work for you? What are some tricks or methods that have helped you stay on a consistent Bible reading plan?

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## **Dive into the Scriptures**

### **Read the following passages:**

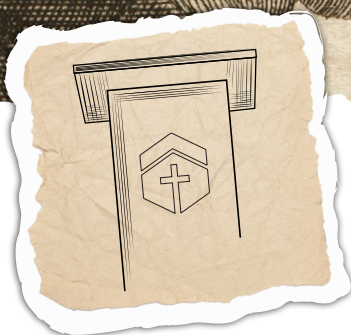
Matthew 5:17-20, John 10:35, Mark 12:30 and 24, Luke 24:32

- How does Jesus handle the sacredness of Scripture in these passages?

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# Sermon: Community, Growing in Jesus



## The Big Idea:

We are digitally connected but relationally deficient. We possess a long list of social media friends, but few close friends we see face to face. And even fewer we communicate with heart to heart. Most sociologists and psychologists would agree that we are more lonely, afraid and anxious than any other generation before. Once again, the life of Jesus offers us good and healthy solutions for our current discontent and disconnectedness. His life and ministry call us to more than a “personal relationship with Jesus.” Jesus calls us to a life-giving network of family bonds where mutual love and compassionate truth-telling is the norm.

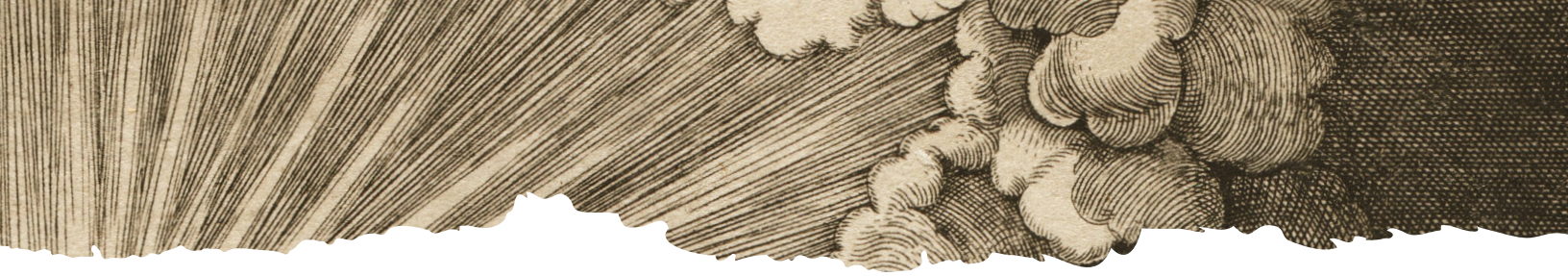
## Into the Text

### 1. Jesus has always existed in Community (Genesis 1:26-27)

- a) The “us” is an early reference to the Trinity
- b) The Holy Trinity
  - i. Is full of life
  - ii. Is always communicating
  - iii. Is creative

### 2. Jesus operated his public ministry within an established network of relationships

- a) Inner circle (1-3 people, Peter, James & John)
- b) Family (12 Disciples)
- c) Village (70-120 Followers)
- d) Tribe (The Church)
- e) We should pursue healthy relationships at all of these stages
  - i. Each is important
  - ii. But we only heal and grow in the first two
- f) Jesus’ way of relating was implemented in the church (Matthew 16:13-18)



- 3. Family and connectivity are widely used throughout the New Testament**
  - a) Paul use the word brother (adelphi, can also mean sibling) 139 times
  - b) Family is the most repeated metaphor for the bonds between believers
- 4. Paul also illustrates the church as a “body” with each member working together (1 Corinthians 12)**



## Personal Application

### *Community, Growing in Jesus*



#### **Be with Jesus (Alone):**

This week, thank God for the gift of community. Evaluate where you are in your circles. Compare your circles with Jesus' circles (see graph on the following page).

On a scale of 1-10, rate your engagement and how well you are giving and receiving meaningful contributions within each of these circles of relationships:

Inner circle: \_\_\_\_\_

Family: \_\_\_\_\_

Village: \_\_\_\_\_

Tribe/Church: \_\_\_\_\_

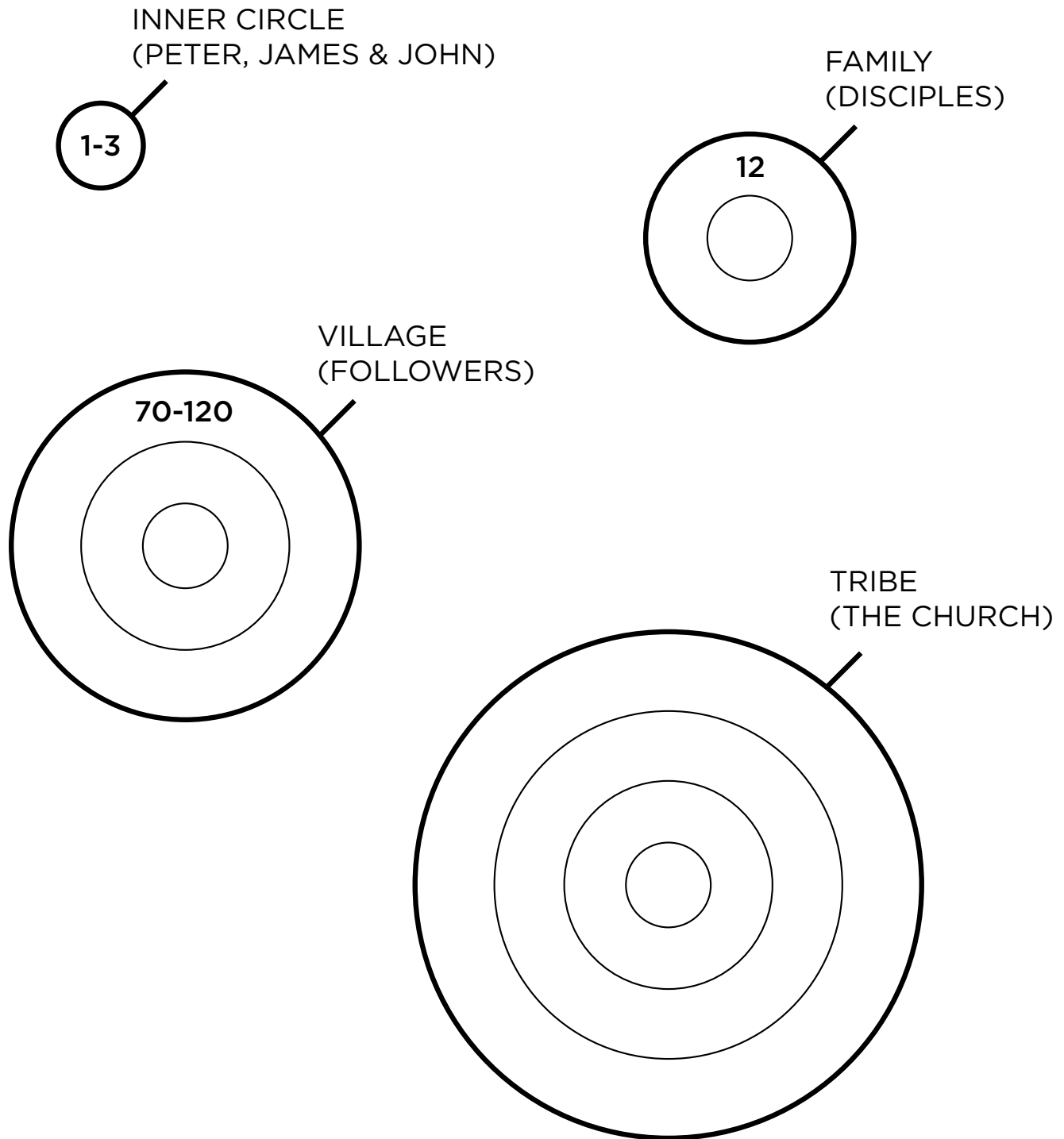


#### **Act Like Jesus (In the Church/Community):**

Invite someone into our community. No matter their beliefs, people can belong to a community as they are figuring out how to follow Jesus.

*If you followed through with your Act Like Jesus assignment, write about your experience in the Notes section on page 48. Provide any interesting or memorable moments during this exercise.*

## *Jesus' Circles of Relationships*



## Week 6 - Community, Growing in Jesus

	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
Time Alone with Jesus							
Time Obeying Jesus							
Time Spent with Others							

Notes:

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## **Small Group Discussion**

### *Community, Growing in Jesus*

#### **Think Like Jesus (Small Group):**

Share the benefits and struggles to being in a Connection Class or small group. What are some ways you could enhance this experience?

#### **Talk it out**

##### **Do you have connections with people in the following circles?**

- Intimate Friendships/Inner Circle (1-5)
- Kin/Family (6-50)
- Village (50-150)
- Tribe/The Church (150+)
- How would you gauge the health of each of these circles?

#### **Review Last Week's Sermon**

- Review the sermon and notes from last week's sermon. What impacted you the most?

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- When you think of the Trinity, do you think of a loving community? If Jesus has always existed in community, then what does that say about its value for us?

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- Even though he was divine, Jesus fostered meaningful relationships while here on earth. What does that fact say about the power of friendship?

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## Last Week's Action Steps

- Have you invited someone into our church community? What makes that so hard to do sometimes?

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## Dive into the Scriptures

### Read the following passages:

John 1:12, Romans 8:15-17, Galatians 6:10, Ephesians 2:19

- How does each passage convey a familial tone to our relationship with each other?

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- What are the strengths, benefits and hardships of having a spiritual family?

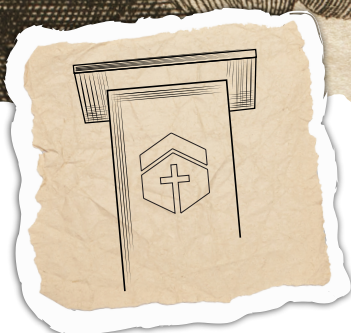
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- Ponder for a moment that you will spend eternity with your spiritual family. How should that affect the way you treat each other?

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# Sermon: Service, Helping Others Like Jesus



## The Big Idea:

Jesus has just closed out his public, three-year ministry. His death under Pontius Pilate is imminent. So, Jesus used the Passover Celebration as the platform to announce his new covenant with humanity. During this meal, Jesus not only states theologically how we are to interact with God - he goes a step further and demonstrates how we are to interact with our fellow man. This touching act of humility and servitude coming from the King of Creation is wrapped in simple beauty. Before Jesus was temporarily nailed down to a Roman cross, he forever nailed down how we are to treat one another. If you are a Jesus follower, then you must embrace your title as servant.

Serving others sounds easy. But it can also be complicated when the people receiving your kindness could be viewed as enemies or traitors. Jesus sets a high bar for serving others, one that is inspiring but often difficult to reach. His model is this: serving others humbly even though we may disagree with them greatly.

## Into the Text (John 13:1-16)

### 1. Jesus had a lot on his mind (13:1)

- a) His violent death was about to transpire
- b) He kept loving his disciples to the end

### 2. Jesus had enemies (13:2-3)

- a) Sometimes enemies are inside your group
- b) Jesus remained calm in the presence of an enemy because he was exactly where the Father wanted him
- c) Jesus' treatment of Judas is a fulfillment of Jesus' teaching on love
  - i. Teaching people to love their enemies is vastly different than actually loving an enemy



### **3. Jesus' foot washing had a two-fold meaning**

- a) Jesus does what only he can do: make us clean (13:6-11)
  - i. Foot washing by a Jew was extremely rare
  - ii. Foot washing by a Rabbi was unheard of
- b) Jesus commissions us to do what we can do: to be an example (13:12-18)
  - i. Jesus makes a distinction between knowing something and doing something (v. 16)





## **Personal Application**

### ***Service, Helping Others Like Jesus***



#### **Be with Jesus (Alone):**

In your prayer time, picture your sin as dirt on your feet. If it's helpful to your prayer time, take your shoes and socks off. Stare at your feet and imagine Jesus stooped over them with a basin and towel in hand. How does this image strike you?



#### **Act Like Jesus (In the Church/Community):**

What is one act of kindness you can do for your church or community this week? Write it out, speak it to yourself and then place the item on your calendar.

***If you followed through with your Act Like Jesus assignment, write about your experience in the Notes section on the following page. Provide any interesting or memorable moments during this exercise.***

## Week 7 - Service, Helping Others Like Jesus

	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
Time Alone with Jesus							
Time Obeying Jesus							
Time Spent with Others							

Notes:

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## **Small Group Discussion**

### *Service, Helping Others Like Jesus*

#### **Think Like Jesus (Small Group):**

Reflect on how hard it is to serve others. What are some of the barriers that keep us from having an attitude of a servant?

#### **Talk it Out**

- What are some of the benefits of serving other people?

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- What are some of the real-life complications of serving other people?

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- What are some of the risks of serving other people?

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- What are some pitfalls?

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## Review Last Week's Sermon

- Review the sermon and notes from last week's sermon. What impacted you the most?

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- Jesus washed his disciples' feet as a servant. How does this action strike you emotionally? How does Jesus' willingness to do this challenge your view of Jesus?

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## Review Last Week's Action Steps

- Last week's action step was all about serving others with practical acts of kindness. How did you attempt to implement this into your weekly schedule? If you could not do this in an intentional way, what are some obstacles that made this action difficult?

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## Dive into the Scriptures

### Read the following passages: John 13:1-16

- Jesus knew that the Father had given him all authority (13:3). How does this idea contrast with Jesus' willingness to wash the disciples' feet?

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- When you read the passage, do you detect that Judas is present during the feet washing? How does this impact you?

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- How do you treat other people when you have authority over them? How does Jesus' action impact your view of personal authority?

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**Discuss with your group the following.**

- Based upon Jesus' actions, how should you use your power toward those under your leadership?

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- Jesus finished washing all the disciples' feet (13:12). Picture that entire scene in your mind. How does that reality impact your own power or authority over others? Think about what is implied when Jesus washed:
  - o Peter's feet - even though he was about to deny him
  - o Judas' feet - even though he was about to betray him
  - o Thomas' feet - even though he would doubt him
  - o James' and John's feet - even though they asked for special favors from him
  - o Nathaniel's feet - even though he was initially a skeptic about him

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**Read verse 13:17 again.**

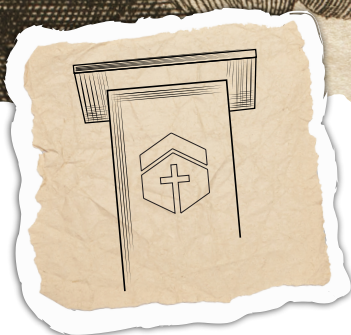
- Did you notice how Jesus distinguishes between knowing and doing? What is his point here? What are some consequences if we you choose to only know Jesus' teaching, but not do them?

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# Sermon: Obedience, Resisting Like Jesus



## The Big Idea:

Jesus rebelled against Satan in his famous showdown with him in the desert. These verses are thick with theological insight about how we can defeat our temptations. When we pause in the middle of a temptation, and remove our mind from the flow of desire, we can achieve victory over sin's gravitational pull.

## Into the Text

### Introduction to Temptation

- You will be tempted to sin
- It is not wrong to be tempted toward sin
- Temptation often comes after a season of victory
- The tempter knows you
- Our ability to overcome temptation is one thing that sets us apart from the animal kingdom
- There is more at stake with each temptation than you may realize, because this is war and we must rebel (Satan is trying to manipulate the situation)

### 1. Jesus teaches us that we can have a reasonable need and meet that need in an unrighteous way (Luke 4:1-4).

- a) It stands written. Jesus was affirming the abiding nature of God's instructions to us.
  - i. The form of the Bible has changed over time (the Bible developed over time). The function of the Bible has remained the same (the Bible is authoritative every time).
  - ii. Based upon my understanding of God's word and what He is doing in my life right now, this desire is not to be met in this way and at this time.



**2. Jesus teaches that behind the temptation toward power is a potential change of loyalty.**

- a) Ultimately, Jesus completed his mission and, thus, rightfully fulfilled his position of authority. (Matthew 28:18)
- b) “God’s plan does not need the approval or ascent of man’s authority.”  
- Philip Yancey
- c) Don’t try to use God for selfish gain.
- d) Will I worship God, or will I worship the thing that God can do for me?

**3. Jesus confronts the false notion that we can take whatever risks we want and be rescued by God in the end.**

- a) It often looks like this: “I made a bad decision and now I need God to reverse all the consequences.”
- b) You cannot pray your way out of something you have acted your way into.



## **Personal Application**

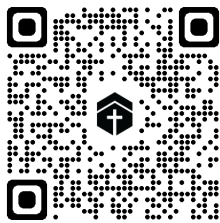
### *Obedience, Resisting Like Jesus*



#### **Be with Jesus (Alone):**

Bring your temptations (both those you have successfully defeated, and those that have defeated you) into Jesus' presence. Celebrate your wins and confess your failures.

If you have ever asked why God brings temptation our way, you are not alone. Scan the QR code to watch a helpful explanation by the BibleProject about why God allows us to be tested.



#### **Act Like Jesus (In the Church/Community):**

How does your desire for power and revenge spill out into your community? Have you disobeyed God by disrespecting other people? Have you cheated a legal or recognized system for personal gain—even when this will be a loss for others? How has radical individualism led you to neglect care for others?

*If you followed through with your Act Like Jesus assignment, write about your experience in the Notes section on the following page. Provide any interesting or memorable moments during this exercise.*

Week 8 - Obedience, Resisting Like Jesus							
	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
Time Alone with Jesus							
Time Obeying Jesus							
Time Spent with Others							

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## **Small Group Discussion**

### *Obedience, Resisting Like Jesus*

#### **Talk it Out**

- Although it may be a little embarrassing, share your temptations (big or small) that you have faced this week.

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- Discuss: “why is it not a sin to be tempted?”

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#### **Review Last Week’s Sermon**

- Review the sermon and notes from last week’s sermon. What impacted you the most?

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- Pastor Rusty mentioned that temptation can come after a season of victory. Can you recall a time you faced a temptation or testing that came after a high point or victory in your life?

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- Pastor Rusty mentioned that our ability to overcome temptation is something that sets us apart from animals. Do you agree with this idea? What else would you add to this?

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## Last Week's Action Steps

- Did you confess your temptations to Jesus in your alone time?

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## Dive into the Scriptures

**Read the following passages and discuss:**

Luke 4:1-4

- How does Jesus interrupt his own desire for food and not yield to this temptation?

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- What does Jesus' reliance upon Scripture say to you about Jesus' belief about Scripture?

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- Pastor Rusty mentioned this phrase as a way to engage something that could be a temptation toward sin. Share your thoughts about it:

“Based upon my understanding of God’s word and what He is doing in my life right now, this desire is not to be met in this way and at this time.”

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#### Luke 4:5-8

- Notice how Jesus did not disagree with Satan's ability to fulfill this temptation. What does this say about the Devil's power here on earth?

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- How can a temptation for power and glory weaken your affection and worship of God? Do Christ followers today pursue political or social power? How does that impact their trust relationship with Jesus?

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#### Luke 4:9-13

- Pastor Rusty mentioned that you cannot pray your way out of a situation that you behaved your way into. Do you agree or disagree?

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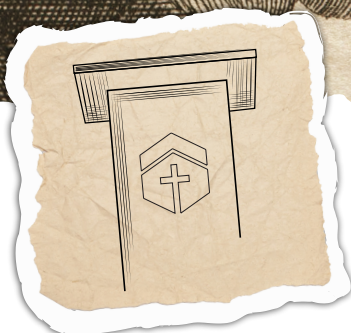
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- Have you ever tried to rationalize a bad/sinful decision with bad theology (for example "God's got this" or "God's in control")? How is this tempting God?

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# Sermon: Generosity, Giving Like Jesus



## The Big Idea:

Jesus spoke frequently about money, and how our use of money is directly tied to our capacity for generosity. This means that personal generosity is certainly related to how well we handle our money.

But money is more than a budgetary item. Jesus reveals to us a deeper understanding about our basic desires around money. By taking on Jesus' wisdom with this topic, we will be a blessing to many. And we ourselves will be extremely blessed.

## Conversation Starter:

*Remember a time when you saw a need and wanted to meet it. What are some tensions or emotions that rose up in that moment?*

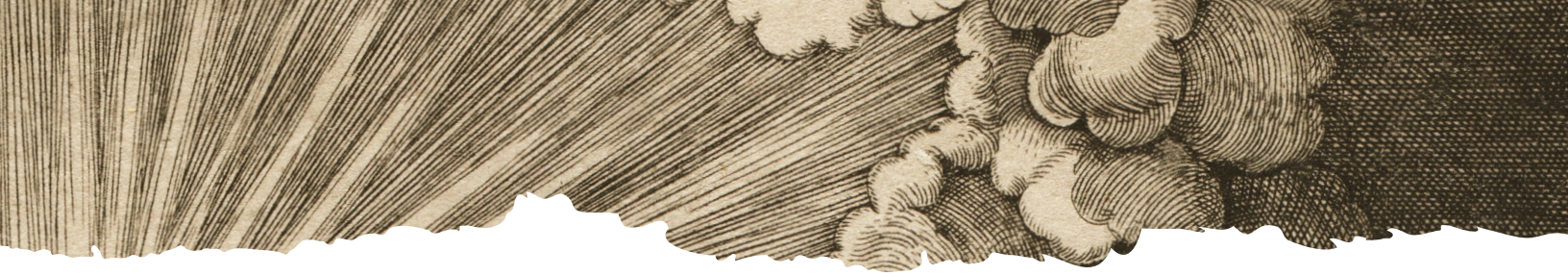
## Into the Text

### Background

Jesus wraps up some of his most important teachings with parables. Parables are relatable stories that often have an unexpected twist. In this story, Jesus illustrates the dangers of having extra and gives a harsh rebuke for those who are chasing after more.

1. Jesus was not interested in helping people enrich themselves (Luke 12:13-14)
2. This interaction led to a warning (v. 15)  
Greed can sneak up in all kinds of ways





### **3. Jesus follows up with a parable (vv. 16-21)**

Is God against me gaining financial success? No. God is against fostering selfishness.

- o He thought to himself (closed off from outside influence)
- o His wealth was for his pleasure alone

### **More Stuff = More Stress**

#### **Here is what is missing:**

- Supporting God's Causes
- Helping God's People



## **Personal Application**

### ***Generosity, Giving Like Jesus***



#### **Be with Jesus (Alone):**

In your alone time with Jesus, bring your personal finances into the conversation. What are some ways you are honoring God with your money? What are some areas where God may lead you differently? How might God be convicting you about a certain spending habit?



#### **Act Like Jesus (In the Church/Community):**

Are you currently tithing? Do you give regularly and faithfully? If you fail to plan your generosity, then you are planning to fail at generosity. The only way to succeed at being generous is to make a plan and then do it.

***If you followed through with your Act Like Jesus assignment, write about your experience in the Notes section on the following page. Provide any interesting or memorable moments during this exercise.***

## Week 9 - Generosity, Giving Like Jesus

	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
Time Alone with Jesus							
Time Obeying Jesus							
Time Spent with Others							

Notes:

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## **Small Group Discussion**

### *Generosity, Giving Like Jesus*

#### **Talk it Out**

- Discuss in your group how finances create stress for you and your family.  

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- What are some ways that your current financial picture affects your faith in God? What are some important tools that can be used to help better control the use of money?  

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- In your view, what is the connection between following Jesus and being generous?  

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#### **Review Last Week's Sermon**

- Review the sermon and notes from last week's sermon. What impacted you the most?  

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- Jesus was not wealthy, nor was he interested in pursuing wealth. How should that reality touch on how we treat our own wealth?  

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- Pastor Rusty mentioned that greed can sneak up on us. What does that look like for the modern Jesus follower?

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## Last Week's Action Steps

- Do you have a plan for generosity? If not, what's keeping you from doing that?

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## Dive into the Scriptures

**Read the following passages and discuss.**

### Luke 12:13-15

- Why do you think Jesus steered away from answering this person's question?

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- What is Jesus' warning?

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### Luke 12:14-21

- Is this a historical account or a parable?

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- What are the prideful statements the rich man makes in this parable?

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Luke 12:14-21 (continued)

- Do you think Jesus is teaching that we should never strive to make more money?

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- In Jesus' parable, God said that his life "this very night" will be demanded of him. How does the fact that we will die impact our view of our personal finances?

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- How can you be rich toward God?

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