

week of prayer 2012
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junior youth week of prayer

follow

become a disciple today

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The Call To Follow

The life of a disciple is indeed the new kind of life of the Kingdom that Jesus came to offer.

BY GILBERT CANGY

Welcome to the 2012 Youth Week of Prayer. As we engage in this special week, I am reminded of the words of Nehemiah as he set out to rebuild the walls of the city: “I had not told anyone what my God had put in my heart to do for Jerusalem.” And so I ask, “What is it that God has placed on your heart to do for His Kingdom in 2012?” Our chosen theme takes us to the very heart of what Jesus has called us all to do, which is to make disciples. I read a book some time ago entitled ‘The Great Omission’ in which the author claims that over the years the church has altered the Great Commission from ‘making disciples’ to ‘making church members.’ He defines a

church member as someone who subscribes to a set of teachings and attends church regularly without necessarily being transformed; on the other hand, a disciple is one who, motivated by their desire to be like Jesus the Master, welcomes the life-transformation offered by the Spirit and gradually rearranges and reorganizes life to pursue that very purpose. By these decisions and actions, they enroll in Christ’s training and become His disciples. Our vision for this ‘Year of Discipleship’ is to see the emergence of a Global Youth Movement, transitioning from mere membership to authentic discipleship.

At the time that Jesus was on earth and was teaching and calling people to follow Him, discipleship was in a sense quite simple; primarily, it meant going with Him in an attitude of observation, study, obedience, and imitation. Disciples had to be with Him to learn how to do what He did. It was, in reality, a call to abandon whatever was necessary to follow Him. As costly as it was, that was the only possible access to discipleship (Mark 1:20; Luke 14:26, 33). Discipleship had a clear and straightforward meaning.

The circumstances and dynamics are not the same today. Followers of Jesus cannot literally be with Him in the same way as His first disciples could. But the priorities and intentions, the heart and inner attitudes of disciples are forever the same.

The life of a disciple is indeed the new kind of life of the Kingdom that Jesus came to offer. A young man ran up to Jesus, threw himself at His feet and asked Him the million dollar question: “Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?” (Matthew 19:16). The bottom line was simply, “Come, follow me.” Eternal life, this abundant kind of life offered by Jesus, is indeed life of another kind; it is the *Kingdom life*. It is made available to all those who accept the invitation to follow. The good news of God for humanity is that this eternal kind of life begins now on earth and is available to all who would follow Jesus. This new life in Christ is made possible through the supernatural power and presence of the Holy Spirit. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to bring the inward transformation of thought, feeling, and character. The invitation to discipleship is good news for our life now and will reach its climactic phase when Jesus, our Master, comes a second time to take us home.

I trust that indeed this week will be the beginning of a new journey for you and for all our young people.



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GENERAL LEADERSHIP SUGGESTIONS

These are some suggestions for those who will work to put on this Week of Prayer, especially for the speakers. The lessons are each arranged in three parts so that three different people can present each part, probably in about ten minutes. But if one person wants to do all three, you can do that, too.

PLAN AHEAD. The most important thing you can do is to read over your part several times in advance, or until you become familiar with it. PLEASE DO NOT READ! Most people find it boring to sit and listen to someone read. Study your part and keep it in front of you when you speak. Refer to it when you need to. Make lots of eye contact, move around, speak with expression, and make it yours.

MUSIC. Someone should pick out songs that you all like and which fit the topic of each evening. Where possible, involve your youth choir; if your church/school or group does not have a choir, this is the perfect time to get one started. Music can make a difference and help to set the tone to any service.

CONSECRATION SERVICE. Plan a consecration/dedication service at the end of the week.

NAMES. Another minor detail: If the names of people in the stories are the same as someone in your audience, it would be a good idea to change

them. These are “composite stories,” and the names can be changed to anything you like. Just keep them diverse and international, or make them appropriate for where you are.

SMALL GROUP STUDY. There are some discussion questions at the end of each section. These can be used in the whole group if it isn’t too big, but it’s best if the group is divided into small groups of three to eight people for the discussions. They can also be used as individual thought questions, such as for writing in a journal.

SCRIPTURE READINGS. Within each presentation, there are Scripture passages. The speaker can read them, especially if you are in a large room, like an assembly hall, but it is nice and makes everybody feel more a part of things if you can call on other people to read the texts, or take turns, a verse or two at a time, for longer passages. All passages used here are taken from the New International Version.

You may also want to make posters of the **eight topics** and hang the corresponding one each night.

DAY 1: Jesus. John 10:10. *Jesus turns your world upside down with His grace, forgiveness, peace, love and hope!*

DAY 2: Explore. John 1:35-42. *Tell God to show Himself to you. Give Him permission to work in your life. Check Him out!*

DAY 3: Come. Matthew 4:18-20. *Jesus calls anyone and everyone to be His disciple. Come to Him as you are – daily, in His Word and in prayer.*

DAY 4: Trust. Matthew 14:22-33. *Everyone lives in their “boat”. Step out of your comfort and walk towards Jesus no matter what the risk. Trust your life now...and in eternity with Him.*

DAY 5: Surrender. John 13:1-18. *The world sees surrender as defeat. The follower of Christ finds surrender – victory! Give God everything. Hold nothing back. Surrender leads to service.*

DAY 6: Ask. Acts 2:1-47. *The Main Player in the end is the Holy Spirit – not you...so ask Him to totally transform you, equip you and send you out on His mission.*

DAY 7: Love. John 13:35; Matthew 28:18-20; John 21:15-19; Acts 10. *Love others as God loves you. God’s love leads you to love and disciple everyone you meet to Jesus Christ.*

DAY 8: What If You Gave Christ Everything? Acts 3 & 4. *There is no limit to what God can do in you... and through your one life. Give everything you are and have to Jesus Christ – and see what He will do. Can you imagine the impact on your home, school, church – and your world?*

HELPFUL RESOURCE

A helpful guide is the book, ***Hey Youth! Preach The Word*** by James L. Black, Sr., Youth Director of the North American Division. It is available from AdventSource at <http://www.adventsource.org/as20/product.aspx?ID=35060>

SMALL GROUP CURRICULUM VALUES

1. Unconditional love of God
2. Salvation by grace
3. High priority of a daily personal relationship with Jesus Christ
4. Fosters daily relationship with Christ through God’s Word and prayer
5. God’s Word is the last word
6. Life-transformational by the Holy Spirit
7. Encourages identity with the message and mission of the Seventh-day Adventist movement
8. Spirit of Prophecy will provide timely, inspired, supplemental reading

9. Practical Christianity

10. Disciples are disciple-makers!

SMALL GROUP CURRICULUM CONCEPTS

Check-In

Connect with what God is doing with each other. Accountability. Care enough to support a peer in living each faith step

Talk About It

Links the participant’s heart to the relevancy of God’s Word. Talk about it.

The Main Point

Introduction

Message

Study to know God’s Word for yourself

Try it Out!

Practice God’s Word

What if...?

Apply God’s Word to your own world

Check Out

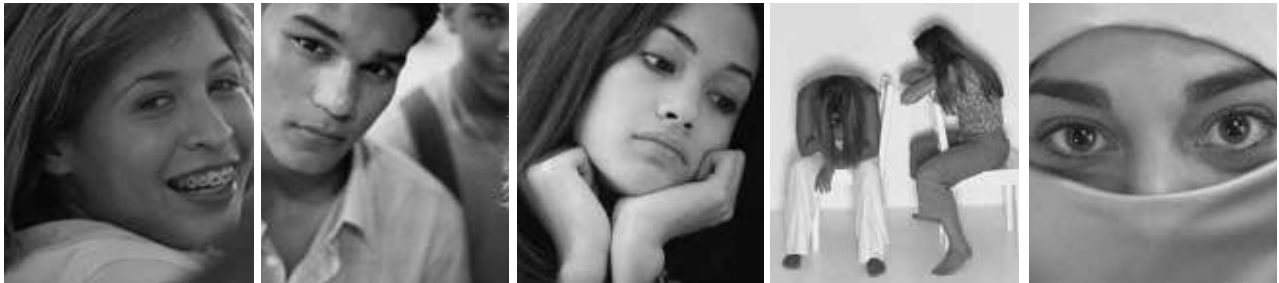
Summary
Choice

Faith Challenge

Follow through with the faith step during the next 23 hour

Prayer

PRAAYER IS OPEN TO EVERYONE WITHOUT EXCEPTION!



There are many verses in the Bible about prayer. We can see throughout Bible that the people who kept in touch with God in prayer were stronger spiritually than those who were not in touch with the Father.

Colossians 1:9, 10 is a good verse to begin with as we look at the reasons for having a week of prayer:

“For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God.”

1. **It is a great privilege to spend a special week in prayer.** The reality is that Christianity is about relationships, building bridges, and creating community. A week of prayer is the perfect time to meet with your

Christian family every day and to build a strong relationship by worshiping Jesus and praying together with your friends.

2. **We are in a fierce battle, and prayer is an essential tool to have by our side.** Think about Daniels’ prayer in Daniel chapter 9—it’s an extraordinary intercessory prayer—and after three weeks of waiting for an answer, he hears these words: *“Do not be afraid, Daniel. Since the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to them.”* There is a battle, and we are in the middle of it; prayer is one of the best tools we have for protection and peace.
3. **It is a preventive to sin in our lives.** When we are alone, in the quiet times of private and honest prayer, God holds a mirror up to our lives and show us the way we really are... so that we can repent. To repent is an

important part of prayer; we sometimes go to Jesus only for a request or to thank Him, but repentance is an important component of prayer and something we need to remember strongly during a week of prayer.

4. **Prayer makes a difference.** Many times circumstances change when people pray. Diseases are sometimes healed, guidance in life is given, needs are met, lives are spared (I have personal experience with this). *I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone* (1 Timothy 2:1). When we pray in faith, it makes a difference.

5. **Prayer opens the door to the secrets of God.** When you open your Bible with the intention of learning more about Jesus and His word, you need to start with a word of prayer. *'Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know'* (Jeremiah 33:3). Ask for Him to send you the Holy Spirit and help you understand. Our week of prayer is another step in our Christian life to learn

more about Jesus, to come close to Him.

6. **Prayer gives us courage.** Sometimes we feel alone in a society that does not believe in Jesus, and we are shy to talk about Him. Prayer plays an important role in our lives; it gives us courage to be proud of who we are and what we believe. *"While they were praying, the place where they were meeting trembled and shook. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak God's Word with fearless confidence"* (Acts 4:31).

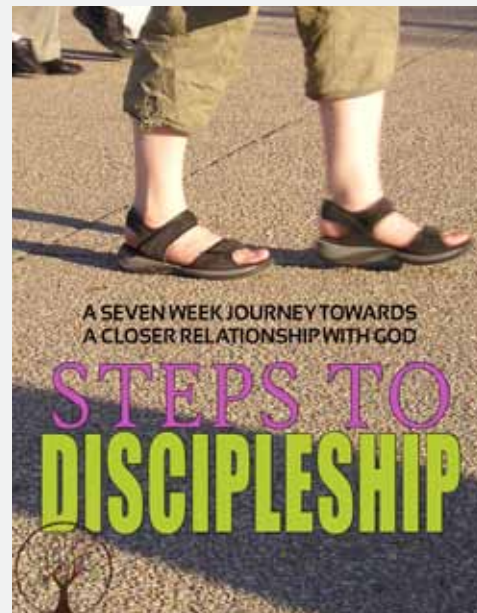
So, please, participate in the week of prayer. Remember the importance of prayer and enjoy the blessings of being in constant communication with your Friend, Creator, and Savior, Jesus Christ.

A WEEK OF PRAYER: A
TIME FOR INTERCESSORY
PRAYER!



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personal devotion



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THE POWER OF ONE

- Honoring Jesus
- Revealing His Kingdom
- Transforming His World
- Equipping His People
- Fulfilling Destiny



Youth Ministries Department



adventurer



pathfinder



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JESUS



BIBLE TEXT

John 10:6–10, *The Message*

Jesus told this simple story, but they had no idea what he was talking about. So he tried again. “I’ll be explicit, then. I am the Gate for the sheep. All those others are up to no good—sheep stealers, every one of them. But the sheep didn’t listen to them. I am the Gate. Anyone who goes through me will be cared for—will freely go in and out, and find pasture. A thief is only there to steal and kill and destroy. I came so they can have real and eternal life, more and better life than they ever dreamed of.

FOCUS

Jesus helps you really live your life!

SMALL GROUPS

1. Have congregation form groups of four or five.
2. Say: In your groups, one person should keep their eyes open while the rest of you close your eyes (or are blind folded).
3. Say: The person who keeps their eyes open will tap each group member in a random order. When you are tapped, say something in a disguised voice. Then the other group members will try to guess *who spoke*. *See if you can keep your group from figuring out who you are. Try it!*

TALK ABOUT IT

Was it easy or hard to figure out who a person was when you did not recognize their voice? What helped you recognize them when they were not talking in their normal voice? Does Jesus sometimes speak to us in ways we might not expect or recognize? What are some unexpected ways that Jesus might speak to you? Would you recognize His voice? Tonight, will you discover Jesus all over again—discover who He is? Maybe we know Him, but maybe there are things we don’t know.

INTRODUCTION

Many of you have grown up hearing the story of Jesus and who He is, but how well do you really know Him? Who is this Man who gave up His life so we could live? Today/ Tonight we will investigate who He is and what that means for us.

MESSAGE

“God is love.” So says the apostle John in 1 John 4:16. The Bible also tells us that Jesus is God: “In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1:1) Later in the same chapter, we read that “the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us” (John 1:14). Followers of Christ believe that Jesus is the Word and the Word is God, so we can conclude that Jesus is God. God is love, so Jesus, too, is love. Those who have a relationship with Jesus claim to know this for sure.

1 Corinthians 13:4-8 reads, “Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.”

Because Jesus is love, let’s read the text this way to better understand

who He is: “Jesus is patient, Jesus is kind. Jesus does not envy, Jesus does not boast, Jesus is not proud. Jesus is not rude, Jesus is not self-seeking, Jesus is not easily angered, Jesus keeps no record of wrongs. Jesus does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. Jesus always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Jesus never fails.”

This passage gives a clear picture of Jesus’ remarkable true identity.

In the chapter entitled, “As a

Jesus came to this world not only to save us, but also to demonstrate His true identity once and for all. Time and time again, God has proven Himself to be “compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in loving kindness and truth” (Exodus 34:6).

Child,” in the book *Desire of Ages*, Ellen White speaks about Jesus’ childhood and adolescence: “The life of Jesus was a life in harmony with God. While He was a child, He thought and spoke as a child; but no trace of sin marred the image of God within Him. Yet He was not exempt from temptation. The inhabitants of Nazareth were proverbial for their wickedness.

The low estimate in which they were generally held is shown by Nathanael’s question, “Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?” (John 1:46). Jesus was placed where His character would be tested. It was necessary for Him to be constantly on guard in order to preserve His purity. He was subject to all the conflicts which we have to meet, that He might be an example to us in childhood, youth, and manhood.”

Doesn’t this make you want to know Jesus?

Long ago, heaven witnessed a challenge to Jesus’ genuine character. Dissatisfied with his role in heaven, Lucifer led a rebellion, questioning God’s authority and His love for all of Creation. Although heaven operated under God’s law of perfect love, God was unwilling to force His perfect love on any of His creations.

The Bible tells us that we cannot love out of fear: “There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear” (1 John 4:18). Lucifer had a choice between God’s selfless love and his own selfishness, and he chose to challenge God’s law and character of love.

Satan’s only desire is to take the throne of God. Isaiah 14:13, 14 records Lucifer as saying, “I will ascend to the heavens; I will raise

my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of the assembly on the utmost heights of the north. I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.” Lucifer wants to have God’s power, but not His character. This struggle between God and Satan is described as a war in Revelation 12:7-9: “Then war broke out in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon...and his angels...and they lost their place in heaven.... The great dragon was hurled down...Satan, who leads the whole world astray.”

Adam and Eve, under the law of perfect love and free will, were given the power to make choices even in regards to whom to trust: God or Satan. Unfortunately, because they made the tragic mistake to engage the serpent in conversation, they were deceived and chose to believe Satan’s way. Since then, our world has been damaged with the curse of sin and the misery it brings. But God gives us hope. 1 Corinthians 15:22 states that while one man’s life brought the human race into sin, through another man’s life—Jesus’—we can be saved from sin.

Jesus came to this world not only to save us, but also to demonstrate His true identity once and for all. Time and time

again, God has proven Himself to be “compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in loving kindness and truth” (Exodus 34:6). Jesus is mighty, glorious, and majestic beyond all human understanding. Even more difficult to understand are the depths of His love and compassion.

Close your eyes and imagine with me.

Joshua sighed. Everything felt perfect today. As he walked through town on his way home, neighbors greeted him warmly and little children ran alongside him, for everyone loved Joshua. Striding through the door of his home, he was greeted by his father’s warm welcome.

Joshua and his father had always dreamed of having an ant farm. Finally, that dream had become a reality, and Joshua loved to take care of his ants. Much to Joshua’s dismay, however, shortly after he established his ant farm the ants ate a poisonous plant and contracted a deadly disease. The ants frequently grumbled to themselves that it was all Joshua’s fault. “If only he had taken better care of us.”

Joshua tried to ease their pain as much as he could, but no matter what he tried, the ants always

accused him of being overprotective and controlling. Neighbors whispered that Joshua should allow the poison to kill all of the ants so he could start over with a new set of ants. Or they suggested that he might accelerate the process by wearing his hiking boots and stepping in all of the ants. But Joshua was horrified by these suggestions. He would never do such a thing.

On the contrary, before he even began this ant farm, Joshua had realized the possibility that the ants might contract this disease, so he and his father had a plan to counteract its spread.

It happened to be on this particular day, as Joshua watched his ants with compassion, that he decided it was time to put his plans into action. As he watched his beloved ants ambling around so sickly and decrepitly, Joshua called his father into the room. “It’s time,” Joshua said without turning around.

“Are you sure you want to do this?” his father replied. “You don’t have to if you don’t want to.” “It’s the only way to save them, Dad,” Joshua countered. “You and I both know that. I love them so much. I have to do this.” The two of them sat in silence as they watched the ants. Joshua reviewed the plan in his head.

First, he would have to become an ant. He shuddered at the thought. “Become an ant? Give up who I am forever?”

Second, he would have to live as the ants, but avoid contracting the disease. He knew it was possible. But the plant’s fruit looked like it would taste delicious, so the ants were unable to resist tasting only once. And a single taste was all that was necessary. Joshua tried to warn the ants about the plant, but they hadn’t listened.

Next, he would offer the ants the cure. He knew they would make fun of him, mock him, laugh at him while he was one of them. He would never fit in. He would never receive the love he received in his current home. The glory, the admiration—all would cease to be.

Joshua’s father interrupted his thoughts.

“They will kill you,” he said. “Many of the ants will reject you and the cure you bring. They will label you as an intruder, and they will kill you.”

“Yes,” said Joshua, “I know, but some will accept me after I’m gone. If just one—” Joshua’s eyes filled with tears as he turned around and looked into his father’s eyes. “If just one of them believes me and accepts the cure I bring, this mission will

be a success. I really want to do this.”

By now you’ve realized that, in this story, Joshua represents Jesus, while the ants represent you and every other human being who has ever lived (or will live) on earth. As part of the heavenly plan, Jesus left a world of awesome glory and perfect love beyond imagination. He risked everything to save even just one person and prove His character of love. He left behind the life that He has designed for us. Can you imagine how much love Jesus has for each of us if He was willing to die the death that we deserve? And He died so that we can someday live the life that He left behind and receive the reward He deserves. Did you get that?

[Reader/speaker, please repeat this slowly to enhance comprehension.]

He died so that we can someday live the life that He left behind and receive the reward He deserves.

Compared to His majesty and splendor, we are less than the size of Joshua’s ants. But He became one of us to save us and show His love for us. He loves us so much that He has even laid out a plan for us to follow so that we can become more like the wonderful Being He is. In John 10:10, Jesus

tells us that unlike a thief that comes to steal, kill, and destroy, He came so that we could have life—and not just any life, but a life beyond our imagination!

Jesus wants us to live a life that really matters, just as He did when He was here on this earth. He offers us a life of unshakeable joy—joy that fills our being, regardless of the circumstances of today or the worries of tomorrow.

He offers us a life of peace—peace through Him when our world is crashing down all around us.

He offers us a relationship with Him that allows us to talk with Him, through prayer, about anything and know that He won’t judge us or hurt us.

He offers us identity in being His beloved, accepted child—but not just any child, the child He gave His life for.

He offers us purpose in life—not in the future when we’re older, smarter, and more experienced; He offers us purpose now.

Does this sound appealing to you? Is this something you would want to have? This week we will be talking about how you can have this kind of relationship with Jesus. It’s time to take time and cry out to see Jesus for who He is and who He wants us to be.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

What do you think about all of this? It's time for you to use your voice. For this portion of tonight's meeting, let's form groups of three or four. (Ideally these groups will not change throughout this week.) Start with a prayer (one person or many can pray) and ask God to come into your group and lead your discussion. Ask Him to reveal Himself to you. Then start talking.

1. Read 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 again, replacing the word "love" with "Jesus." Which description of Jesus is your favorite? Why? Share a short story of a time in your life when you experienced Jesus' love in some way.
2. Did you learn anything new about Jesus? If so, what? Did you like this description of Jesus? Why or why not?
3. How might the things that Jesus offers you change your life if you choose to accept them (joy, peace, acceptance, identity, and purpose)? What other things from the Bible can you find that God wants to give you?
4. We are like bugs. Even we agree that squishing a bug is easier than attempting to save it. We would never even

He died
so that
we can
SOMEDAY
live the
life that
He left
behind
and
RECEIVE
the
REWARD
He
deserves.

consider becoming a bug and sacrificing our lives so they could live. Yet, Jesus became a human for us. How does this realization affect you? How does this change the value you place on yourself and others?

5. Think of an example of the most unselfish love you have ever experienced. What was it? How was it demonstrated? How did it make you feel? (Have a few people share if they want to.) How can you show this kind of love to those with whom you come in contact?

FAITH CHALLENGE

Each night we will give you a "faith challenge." Each night when you return, you will be given an opportunity to check on each other and hold each other accountable for doing it. Tonight's faith challenge is this:

1. Spend five to ten minutes at home reflecting on what you heard and discussed tonight.
2. Think about someone who may want to hear the things you're learning.
3. Come back tomorrow night and bring a friend if you want to.

CLOSING

Close together with a prayer. Break off from your small group into groups of two. Together, pray and praise God for who He is and what He has done for you. Then pray for each other. Ask your partner if there is anything they want prayer for specifically (struggles, family, friends, requests). Pray for God to speak through this week of prayer in a powerful way. Finally, pray that God will help you accomplish the faith challenge.

EXPLORE



BIBLE TEXT

John 1:35-42, *The Message*

The next day John was back at his post with two disciples, who were watching. He looked up, saw Jesus walking nearby, and said, “Here he is, God’s Passover Lamb.”

The two disciples heard him and went after Jesus. Jesus looked over his shoulder and said to them, “What are you after?”

They said, “Rabbi” (which means “Teacher”), “where are you staying?” He replied, “Come along and see for yourself.”

They came, saw where he was living, and ended up staying with him for the day. It was late afternoon when this happened.

Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, was one of the two who heard John’s witness and followed Jesus. The first thing he did after finding where

Jesus lived was find his own brother, Simon, telling him, “We’ve found the Messiah” (that is, “Christ”). He immediately led him to Jesus.

Jesus took one look up and said, “You’re John’s son, Simon? From now on your name is Cephas” (or Peter, which means “Rock”).

FOCUS

To find out who Jesus *really* is, we must open our minds to explore while opening our hearts to God.

CHECK-IN

Say: *Tonight, we’re going to be spending some time in groups of eight to twelve people. These groups offer a chance to get together and discuss questions and study the Bible. (Allow time for group organization.) Now, within your groups, meet with two or three other people of the same gender and ask each other if anything from the previous night impacted them. Why did it stick in your mind? Did you agree or disagree with it? Did you try the faith challenge? Listen respectfully as everyone recalls what was said last night.*

TALK ABOUT IT

1. Have the congregation stay in their small groups of two or three.
2. **Say:** *Have you ever wanted to get to know all that you possibly could about a specific person? Maybe that person was a celebrity or a new student at school. What sparked your interest in them? What did you have to do in order to find out what they were really like? Did you ask around? Did you try to hang out with them yourself? Discuss this within your groups for a few minutes.*
3. After giving a few minutes for discussion, ask for one or two volunteers to share their thoughts on how they try to get to know someone new.
4. **Say:** *What are some similarities and differences between exploring the character of a person and exploring the character of Jesus? Do we take on other people's opinions about Him as our own, or do we go out and search for more about Him? What makes us want to pursue Him?*

INTRODUCTION

The lady stood at her table covered with brochures and called loudly to passersby on the street: "Do you know Jesus? Who is God to you? Do you thirst for the truth? Come, 'taste and see that the Lord is good!'"

A hurried-looking man threw a sideways glance at the table. The lady jumped at this chance, stopping to address him directly with, "Excuse me, sir, would you like to know more about God and who He is, exactly?"

The man listened to her before replying, "No. I've got better things to do than sit around and read all your literature."

"But it's not just that, sir, it's an all-out quest, seeking to discover the truth about God."

He crossed his arms and pursed his lips. "Actually, I don't really care about that sort of thing. So maybe God exists, maybe He loves us, maybe He doesn't, or maybe there isn't a God, and we're all alone in the universe." He shrugged and continued, "Either way, it doesn't matter to me — I've got my own life to deal with, and I don't see any value in chasing after fuzzy ideas of some higher power. Now, if you'll excuse *me*, I have some errands to run."

The woman's face fell as she realized that there was no way she could persuade him of the importance of seeking God. As he strode away, she looked at the rest of the people filling the street. How many of them were like that man, secure and content with their everyday lives? Or how many believed they had the truth all figured out and were not looking for other possibilities? She silently prayed that they might all take the first step and explore just who God was.

MESSAGE

The Bible deals a lot with exploration and explorers, from the Israelites exploring new territory to a woman looking for a simple coin. You can become explorers too! Jesus wants us to pursue Him and to get to know Him better. In God's Word, we can find several examples of people exploring just who Jesus was.

A simple, personal testimony may be all it takes to spark an interest in further exploring Jesus. This is all it took for two of John the Baptist's disciples to decide that they wanted to explore the Son of God.

Read John 1:35-39. In the previous verses, we find John the Baptist preaching about the soon-to-come Messiah and how He takes away the sins of the world. He was practically giving a stirring personal testimony as to what he knew about Jesus from exploring Him. John's disciples heard his testimony, and the possibilities of it being true grabbed their attention and held it fast

while they had a bit of time to think over and ponder what John proclaimed. So by the time Jesus came, their curiosity was stirred up, and they immediately followed Him to try to learn more about Him.

For some people, exploring Jesus takes time, but the first step is done almost on the spur of the moment. Simon Peter was like that. Read John 1:40-42. Andrew's announcement, "We have found the Messiah," must have struck something within Peter for him to be willing to be led to Jesus. Little did Andrew know that he had ignited a small but sure flame that would inspire Peter to go out and explore who Jesus really was.

Facts cannot always persuade a person to explore Jesus on a deeper level. This next piece of Scripture is an excellent example of a group of people, the Pharisees, whose hearts and minds were not changed by the facts. In John 9:1-34, we see Jesus walking with His disciples one fine Sabbath afternoon when they spot a man who had been blind since birth. Jesus spat on the ground, made some mud, smeared it on the man's eyes, and then told him to go wash off the mud in the Siloam Pool. The man did as he was told and his sight was restored! Most people were amazed and astonished, but the Pharisees weren't thrilled about

Exploration never starts while sitting around doing nothing—you must take the first step. First, choose to commit to discovering the truth about Jesus. Then, decide where you are going next.

this happening at all. They accused Jesus of breaking the law by healing on the Sabbath day. They questioned the former blind man and his parents, but the answers they received did not agree with their way of thinking, so they refused to believe in Jesus.

As we explore, other people's opinions can have quite the influence on ours. In Matthew 16:13-16, Jesus asks His disciples what others think of Him, but He didn't stop there. He then asked them who *they* personally thought He was. Simon Peter, without hesitation, answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."

People today should become more like Peter in this aspect. Peter had been exploring Jesus. He had been exploring so much that he was now comfortable with what he believed, regardless of what others' opinions

were. Getting to know Jesus for himself, Peter had discovered that Jesus was the one true God and Messiah.

It is not too difficult to start out exploring who Jesus is. As Ellen G. White said in her book, *Steps to Christ*, "God never asks us to believe, without giving sufficient evidence upon which to base our faith. His existence, His character, the truthfulness of His word, are all established by testimony that appeal to our reason; and this testimony is abundant. Yet God has never removed the possibility of doubt. Our faith must rest upon evidence, not demonstration. Those who wish to doubt will have opportunity; while those who really desire to know the truth will find plenty of evidence on which to rest their faith" (p. 105). Now, read what Jesus says Himself in Luke 11:9-10. If we look about and actually do some seeking and exploring, we are guaranteed to find Jesus and His true character. Read Jeremiah 29:12-13. In order for us to find what we are searching for, we must seek for it wholeheartedly; we must want it more than anything.

Exploration never starts while sitting around doing nothing—you must take the first step. First, choose to commit to discovering the truth about Jesus. Then, decide

where you are going next. Will your plan involve using Bible studies to deepen your knowledge of Christ, or will it focus on learning to just sit and listen to Jesus? Also, take lots of time just to talk with Him through prayer. How else are you going to get to know Him if you don't spend time with Him? Peter's small step to follow Jesus early on led to him proclaiming with assurance that Jesus was the Son of the living God. What a transformation! Just imagine! It's possible for you too.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

Meet back in the earlier groups of two or three and discuss:

1. If you had to give up everything in order to explore Jesus, with nothing holding you back, no distractions, would you be willing to do it? What would exploring Jesus look like in your life?
2. If you encountered something in the Bible that you found disagreeable, that just rubbed you the wrong way, would you reject it? What would you do? Why?
3. What if you gave God the chance to work 100 percent in your life? What do you think would happen?

FAITH CHALLENGE

Examine the way you see God. What is your perception of God in relation to what actually is the truth? Then, take time to explore who He really is. Your exploration will last much longer than one night, but start your journey now by earnestly seeking Him in His Word, the Bible, through His created world, and through the experience of those who have entered into a living relationship with Him.

Becoming a disciple of Christ—giving up everything and following Him—can be hard. So don't feel pressured to say yes to Him quite yet. Just take tonight as a time to not say no to Him, a time to open up His word and open your mind and heart to the possibility that God could be showing you something beyond what you're used to!

CLOSING

Within your mini-groups of two or three people, ask for prayer requests and pray over them and for each other. Pray also for tonight's faith challenge and ask God to bless each person as they explore Him.

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EXPLORE:

Study Guide for Small Group option

CHECK-IN

Say: *Tonight, we're going to be spending some time in groups of eight to twelve people. These groups offer a chance for us to get together and discuss questions and study the Bible. (Allow time for group organization.) Now, within your groups, meet with two or three other people of the same gender and ask each other: Did anything in last night's meeting stand out to you? Why did it stick in your mind? Did you agree with it or not? Did you try the faith challenge? Listen respectfully as everyone recalls what was said last night.*

TALK ABOUT IT

1. Give each group a sufficient amount of paper and writing utensils for Step 3.
2. Have each individual write three characteristics about themselves (non-physical characteristics, i.e. hobbies, personality traits, age, etc.).
3. Fold each paper and stick them in a bag and mix them up, then have each person draw one. If you draw your own, put it back and re-draw.
4. Have everyone look at their paper and, based on the listed characteristics, try to find the person so described by asking each person if those characteristics are theirs.

5. **Ask:** *How do the methods you used to find the person (reading the traits written on the paper, asking around, asking the person themselves) relate to how you can explore who Jesus is?*

TALK ABOUT IT (alternative):

Ask for a volunteer to take off their shoes and place them (or any other object) where everyone in the group can see them easily.

1. Give everyone one minute to carefully study the shoes and make every mental observation they can about them.
2. Remove the shoes from the group's sight.
3. Ask everyone to share their observations.
4. **Ask:** *Which observations surprised you and why? How did the observations differ from one another? What does this activity show us about exploring who Jesus really is?*

FOCUS

To find out who Jesus *really* is, we must open our minds to explore while opening our hearts to God.

INTRODUCTION

Imagine the following scene:

The lady stood at her table covered with brochures and called out loudly to passersby on the street:

“Do you know Jesus? Who is God to you? Do you thirst for the truth? Come, ‘taste and see that the Lord is good!’”

A hurried-looking man threw a sideways glance at the table. The lady jumped at this chance, stopping to address him directly with, “Excuse me, sir, would you like to know more about God and who He is, exactly?”

The man listened to her before quickly replying, “No. I’ve got better things to do than sit around and read all your literature.”

“But it’s not just that, sir, it’s an all-out quest, seeking to discover the truth about God.”

He crossed his arms and pursed his lips. “Actually, I don’t really care about that sort of thing. So maybe God exists, maybe He loves us, maybe He doesn’t, or maybe there isn’t a God, and we’re all alone in the universe.” He shrugged and continued, “Either way, it doesn’t matter to me--I’ve got my own life to deal with, and I don’t see any value in chasing after fuzzy ideas of some higher power. Now, if you’ll excuse *me*, I have some errands to run.”

The woman’s face fell as she realized that there was no way she could persuade him of the

importance of seeking God. As he strode away, she looked at the rest of the people filling the street. How many of them were like that man, secure and content with their everyday lives? Or how many believed they had the truth all figured out and were not looking for other possibilities? She silently prayed that they might all take the first step and explore just who God was.

As for us, let’s examine the topic of exploring Jesus from a biblical perspective.

THE WORD

Continuing in your main group of eight to twelve, read and discuss the following passages.

1. Read John 1:35-39. Why did the two disciples of John follow Jesus? What do you think they were searching for?
2. Read on to verses 40-42. In your opinion, what made Andrew decide so soon that Jesus was the Messiah? What do you think Peter thought when Andrew told him of his discovery? Why did Peter allow himself to be led to Jesus? Why do you think Peter stayed to become one of Jesus’ disciples? What would you have done?

3. Read John 9:1-34. The Pharisees explored Jesus’ healing for themselves. What was their conclusion, and what made them come to that conclusion? Why do you think they were not open-minded in their examination of Jesus’ actions?

4. Read Matthew 16:13-16. Who did people say Jesus was? Why might those people have said those things? Who did Peter say Jesus was? What do you think convinced him to identify Jesus in this way?

5. Read Luke 11:9-10. What do you think Jesus means by “asking and receiving,” “seeking and finding,” “knocking and having the door opened to you”? Now read Jeremiah 29:11-14. What does it mean here to “seek and find” the Lord? How does this divine promise to the Israelites also apply to us today?

TRY IT OUT!

“Who is God?” Ask the people around you this question, and you’ll soon discover that there is a wide variety of perspectives on the matter. But have you ever thought about it yourself? Likewise, opinions on the exact identity of Jesus are all over the map, but what do YOU think about Him?

Who is He to you? Maybe you find it hard to care about this issue, like the man in the illustration, or feel that you already have all the truth you need. But what if there's more? It all comes down to this: Are you ready to seek God?

Wanting to explore Him is just the first step. The real key to this quest consists of two parts: opening our minds to explore and opening our hearts to God. Opening our minds means being willing to consider every possible truth, no matter how strange or uncomfortable it may be. It's a commitment to investigate what's out there, whether we find it in the Bible or hear it from the opinionated people around us. Opening our hearts means approaching the exploration in a spiritually humble way, avoiding a critical attitude, and giving God permission to work in our lives. You don't have to be a disciple to pray to God and request the help of the Holy Spirit of truth. Think of it as not saying yes to Christ, but not saying no to Him either. Jesus doesn't force us to pursue Him; He does, however, provide helpful evidence should we choose to explore Him.

"God never asks us to believe, without giving sufficient evidence upon which to base our faith.

His existence, His character, the truthfulness of His word, are all established by testimony that appeals to our reason; and this testimony is abundant. Yet God has never removed the possibility of doubt. Our faith must rest upon evidence, not demonstration. Those who wish to doubt will have opportunity; while those who really desire to know the truth will find plenty of evidence on which to rest their faith" (*Steps to Christ*, p. 105).

Let's stop and relate all this to ourselves. Some deep soul-searching is in order. Ask yourself: What's my view of God right now? How did I get to see Him that way? Have I taken time to really explore God's word and character? How open-minded and open-hearted have I been in doing that?

Please form groups of two or three people. Within each group, ask:

What kind of value is there in exploring Jesus?

Is there something in particular you want to know about God? How would you go about finding the answer?

WHAT IF....?

Within your small groups (2-3), discuss these questions:

1. What if....you had to give up everything in order to explore Jesus, with nothing holding you back, no distractions? Would you be willing to do it?
2. What if....you came across something in the Bible that bothered you, that just rubbed you the wrong way? Would you reject it on account of its unpleasantness?
3. What if....you gave God the chance to work in your life? What do you think would happen?

CHECK-OUT

Peter was willing to explore who Jesus was for the possibility that Jesus was the true Messiah, just like what his brother Andrew said. What Peter found was definitely worth his while, as evidenced by his declaration some time later that Jesus was indeed the Messiah, the very Son of God. Jesus went on to transform Peter's life, turning him into a powerful vessel of divine truth, preaching the gospel to lands near and far. But that transformation wouldn't have happened had Peter not taken that first step to seek Jesus.

Choice: Will you open your mind and heart to God today?

Will you explore who He is and not say no just yet?

FAITH CHALLENGE

Becoming a disciple of Christ—giving up everything and following Him—can be hard. So don't feel pressured to say yes to Him quite yet. Just take tonight as a time to not say no to Him, a time to open up His word and open up your mind and heart to the possibility that God could be showing you something beyond what you're used to!

1. First, determine if you are willing to set out on an exploration of who God really is.
2. Next, find a way to apply your exploration to your daily life. You may want to begin searching the Scriptures for evidence of God's identity and character, and for answers to questions or struggles you may be facing. You may decide to talk to others who might be able to help you in your spiritual quest—your peers, a pastor, a teacher, a parent, or another trusted individual.
3. Finally, pray and ask God to help you in your search for Him. Ask that He reveal Himself to you in the right way, at the right time. Pray earnestly for a humble seeker's heart and talk to Him about your findings—or your confusion and frustration! Request the Holy Spirit of truth to guide you and keep you open-minded and open-hearted.

PRAYER

Within your mini-groups of two or three people, ask for prayer requests and pray over them and for each other. Pray also for tonight's faith challenge and ask God to bless each person as he or she explores Him.

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Sunday

COME

day 3 (Monday)



BIBLE TEXT

Matthew 4:18-20, *The Message*

Walking along the beach of Lake Galilee, Jesus saw two brothers: Simon (later called Peter) and Andrew. They were fishing, throwing their nets into the lake. It was their regular work. Jesus said to them, “Come with me. I’ll make a new kind of fisherman out of you. I’ll show you how to catch men and women instead of perch and bass.” They didn’t ask questions, but simply dropped their nets and followed.

FOCUS

Come to Jesus

CHECK-IN

Ask: *Did you explore anything last night?*

Why or why not?

What did you find through your exploration?

Get in same gender groups of two or three and discuss the previous night’s Faith Challenge. Discuss how it went, why they did or didn’t do it, and how it could become a regular part of their life. Pray with each other about what’s discussed.

SMALL GROUPS

1. Ask the congregation to continue in their groups of two or three.
2. **Say:** *Each group has a few minutes to come up with what they would do or say if they were trying to convince all of us to follow them out the door right now.*
3. Call for three teams to come up front and demonstrate their idea of how to convince everyone to follow them out the door.
4. *Talk about it: It’s not easy to convince people to follow is it? But many of Jesus’ followers came to Him with only a simple call. In your groups, discuss these questions: What would Jesus have to say or do to convince you to come through the door? What if all He said to you was “come”? Would you come? Would it be hard to follow Him? Why or why not?*

INTRODUCTION

Sometimes“coming” to Jesus means stepping out into the unknown! Jesus calls us to step out in faith! He wants you to open the door now! Are you ready to find out what Jesus has waiting for you? Are you ready to follow Him through the door?

MESSAGE

Let’s look at what the Bible has to say about coming to Jesus. In Matthew 4:18-20, we find Peter’s experience with coming and following Jesus. [Read text.] When Jesus approaches Peter, in this story, He comes with a very simple call! He says, “*Come, follow me!*”

In those days, being chosen as a disciple was an extreme honor. Therefore, becoming a disciple was a very difficult process. Only the best and smartest people were chosen to work for the rabbis (or the leaders of the church). However, Jesus’ process for choosing disciples was very different from the normal process. Jesus did not wait for men to come find Him, instead, Jesus CAME to His disciples! It is ironic to think that Jesus only asked His disciples to do what He did for them! He came to them and asked that they simply come to Him in

return! But, isn’t it interesting that during the process of finding disciples Jesus didn’t go to a king, priest, or other important looking person? Instead, He went to the most common men. Nothing was very special about Peter, right? But Jesus knew his heart and his potential, and somehow that was all that really mattered! The call that Jesus made to Peter, He also makes to each one of us, but not because of our position, strengths, or talents. Rather, He does this because He sees the true condition of our hearts! “*We must not wait for stronger persuasions, for better opportunities, or for holier tempers. We can do nothing of ourselves. We must come to Christ just as we are*” (*Steps to Christ*, p. 30). He knows that each one of us can benefit His kingdom!

So, we can see through Scripture that Jesus called even the most unqualified men to come follow Him. In the same way, Jesus calls us to come follow Him no matter how unqualified we may feel! But often times, we try to make up excuses and reasons why we cannot come and truly follow God. We find it easier to pass off becoming a follower of Jesus for another day, or for another person! Yet, Christ calls each one of us, today!

Luke 9:57-62 shows an example of how many people respond to Christ’s call. [Read text.] In these verses, Jesus makes it clear that when we come to Him we should come with 100 percent dedication to His call! We come fully committing our lives to Him! This means we do not make excuses or put off our commitment, but rather we come when He calls us. We come with all that we are! That is all God asks of us. He doesn’t ask us to make a million changes before we come, He does not even ask us to make even one change, He just asks us to come whole heartedly! This is how Peter responded to Jesus’ call. He never even second guessed his actions. Jesus said, “Come,” and Peter came! He didn’t let anything, anyone, or any of his private plans hold him back! Something about Jesus was so interesting and real that Peter didn’t need any persuading—he was already convinced! Peter came 100 percent!

[You can replace my story with your own personal story if you have one!]

I remember a couple years ago I received an invitation I could not pass up! My friend Lynnelle and I were discussing our summer plans during one of our last classes at the end of the school year. I could

Monday

hear the excitement in her voice as she told me of her favorite summer tradition; every year her family would travel to Alabama for a week and bring along their motor boat! They would camp along a lake's edge and spend all week soaking in the summer sun and the cool lake water. She told me about all of the adventures they would go on and the activities they would do! The more she talked the more I realized how exciting that journey would be! I got lost in my imagination as I pictured the scenes she described. "Come!" she said, breaking into my thoughts! I stared at her blankly for a second. The word she had just said didn't register in my brain. Come? Was she really inviting me to join her on such an incredible adventure! "Come with me!" she repeated! Finally, I realized she truly was inviting me to join her on the vacation! I felt excitement race through my body as we began to discuss our trip together!

That summer Lynnelle took me on a vacation like I had never experienced before! I was able to swim in the refreshing lake and relax in the warmth of the sun while still learning new skills. She taught me how to ride boards on top of the water as her boat pulled me along, and we had many experiences observing the beautiful sunlight sparkling on the water as it slipped

beneath the horizon. The journey was not all perfect but the adventure was well worth any stumbling block along the way! You see, my friend gave me the opportunity to come with her for an experience I would never forget!

God calls us to COME with Him today on a life journey that we will not only never forget, but that we will never lose. That whole trip highlighted old hobbies and new beginnings in my life. I have gone on many vacations before, many of which I have loved, others of which I have not, but the difference between the journeys I love always depends on my heart. When I truly want to be where I am going, then my whole journey reflects that desire. When Christ invites us on a life journey with Him, He calls us to come 100 percent with our heart desiring that journey. When you do this you open yourself up for an unimaginable, unforgettable journey.

When we say yes to God's call, we choose to come the same way Peter did! We follow not merely in action, but in heart! We come 100 percent! If you want to come and begin a new life journey in Christ, then now is the time to make that choice—the time to stop saying “no,” “maybe,” or “I’ll think about it”—the time to say yes! “Yes, I believe!” “Yes, I want You (God) to be the

foundation I set my life on! Yes, when You lead me, I will follow!”

But what comes next? What makes the simple “yes” response become a reality in our lives? God wants us to grow in knowing Him so that we can better understand what it means to follow Him! In James 4:8 we are told that when we come near to God He comes near to us! When you accept God's call, you continually come near to Christ, and in return He does the same for you! One way of coming nearer to God is through TAG, which is Time Alone with God! To start this only takes three simple steps:

1. Choose a time. Choose a time that would work best for you to connect with God every day—morning, afternoon, or evening. Start with a few minutes and let God grow that time as your friendship grows.
2. Choose a place. It helps you make T.A.G. a priority if you have a place set aside to meet with God. Think of a place that would be most free of distractions—your bedroom, a quiet corner somewhere in your house, outside in nature, etc.
3. Choose a plan. Think of T.A.G. as having two great priorities: prayer and God's Word. Decide what you will read and study in God's Word. If you are just

beginning, one of the four Gospels or Genesis is a great place to begin. Just talk to God like you talk to your friends... because that is what He is.

No matter how you come to God, the most important thing is that you do come. God wants you to come to Him today. If you're ready to give Him the opportunity, He is eager to get to know you personally. Now is your time to say yes to God's pleading! Now is the time to come!

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

Now let's get back in the small groups you met with earlier and discuss some questions on coming and following Christ! Start your session by asking God to come into your group and lead your discussion. Ask Him to give you an honest heart and an open mind to what each person may say.

1. What if you told Jesus Christ you would come to Him as you are? What would that look like in your life?
2. What if you told Jesus Christ you would follow Him wherever He leads? What kind of places could He take you? What has He already done in your life to let you know you can trust following Him?

3. What if you invested in a relationship with God on a daily basis? Have you ever applied something like T.A.G. in your life? If so, how was your experience? What would make T.A.G. a powerful time for your friendship with God?

FAITH CHALLENGE

Would you like to grow in your faith journey with God? Your faith challenge over the next 23 hours before we meet again is to apply TAG in your life. Here is how you can start:

- Read and reflect on Matthew 4:18-20 and Luke 6:46-49.
- Talk to God about your choice to follow Him and ask Him to help guide you in the new life you have started by coming to Him!

CLOSING

Close together with a prayer. Pray for the person on your right. Pray that he/she may be able to accept the challenge they received today and that God could begin to lead them into a whole new life. Pray for any specific situation he/she mentioned or just for their T.A.G. time with God.

Close with a group prayer.



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The manual includes all honors currently recognized at the General Conference level of Youth Ministry, and it also includes those specialized honors recognized by various divisions. Each honor is designed to be a course of study that introduces a subject. This subject should have practical value and should enhance the lifestyle of the person pursuing the honor. Honor study should assist the person in his/her development as a well-rounded Christian by directly affecting the social, emotional, physical, and spiritual aspects of life. The study of an honor should direct the person to a deeper love of the Creator and should increase their interest in committing their life in service to God and to the community. We pray that this handbook will lead you into many new adventures as you discover the world around you, and we hope that these very enjoyable activities will prepare yo/ung people for the world to come.

download at

<http://gcyouthministries.com/Ministries/Pathfinders/Resources/tabid/89/Default.aspx>

COME:

Study Guide for Small Group option

CHECK-IN:

Ask: “Did you explore anything last night?” “Why or why not?” “What did you find out through your exploration?”

Get in groups of two or three of the same gender. Discuss the previous night’s Faith Challenge—how it went, why you did or didn’t do it, and how you could make it a regular thing in your life. Pray with each other over what was discussed.

TALK ABOUT IT

1. Ask participants to stay in their groups of two or three (according to how many people are in the main group).
2. **Say:** *Each group has a few minutes to come up with what they would do or say to convince the whole group to follow them through the door.*
3. Give each team about thirty seconds to convince the whole group to follow them through the door.

4. Discuss:

Which group was most convincing?” “Which group was the least convincing?

Why were these groups either convincing or not convincing?

How do these ways relate to how Jesus called people to follow Him?

FOCUS:

Jesus Calls You!

INTRODUCTION:

After Jesus had spent forty days of fasting in the wilderness, He came to the point in His life where He needed disciples to carry on His work and to spread the Good News to all.

One day, He was strolling along the Sea of Galilee. An old man fixing a fishing net watched Jesus as He walked barefoot through the sand. He saw Jesus wave to the children swimming in the sea and watched Him help a kind old lady to her feet. The man wondered why Jesus was here, for He was from Nazareth.

Jesus stopped and stared out to sea at a little boat on its way to shore. Only Jesus knew what He was there for. The man watched as Jesus shouted out something to a man, Peter, while he was getting off the boat. The old man did not know what Jesus had said, but he saw both of them walk off shoulder-to-shoulder, laughing and smiling.

THE WORD:

1. At the beginning of Peter’s life of discipleship, we find him fishing with empty nets that Jesus wants to fill.

READ: Matthew 4:18-20—
Jesus asks Peter to follow Him.

ASK: Talk in your groups about the way Jesus invited Peter to follow Him. Was it odd or abnormal? Was it different from the norm of those days with the rabbis and the way we disciple people today?

Top Questions:

What did Jesus ask of Peter?

What did Jesus promise Peter?

How did Peter respond? What is the meaning of his actions?

2. In the next text, we find that when people seek to have the truth, they have a strong foundation for their lives. This could be one reason why Peter had no question about coming and following Jesus in Matthew 4:18-20 because he had built a strong foundation in Jesus—as we learned in last night’s discussions about exploring.

READ: Luke 6:46-49—Build on solid rock.

ASK: What does Jesus mean by “building on a solid foundation”? What does building a solid foundation in Christ practically look like in our lives? How could this foundation change our lives?

3. Now that Peter had a solid foundation in Christ, he knew he had to be completely dedicated to Jesus. So he left everything on a moment’s notice to truly follow Him. Peter could have made up many excuses to not follow Jesus. He could have said, “Well, I’ll follow you tomorrow,” but he did not. Jesus asks us to follow Him today because today is the day He wants us. He calls us now!

READ: Luke 9:57-62—Jesus calls “Follow Me”—the disciples use excuses.

ASK: How can we put our hands to the plow? Does He ask us to be 25 percent, 50 percent, or 100 percent committed?

What does a 100 percent commitment to Jesus look like in our lives today?

4. Jesus has promised that when we choose to follow Him and answer His call to *come*, then He will honor us for that choice.

READ: John 12:26—Follow Me.

ASK: How can we be where Jesus is? What does the Bible verse mean when it says ‘we will be honored by God’? How can this promise affect us on a daily basis?

TRY IT OUT!:

Just as Jesus is coming to call us, we must come to follow Him. He calls quickly, without hesitation, with courage, and without fear. He calls us the way that we should answer Him. This is the way that Peter answered the call to begin his spiritual walk; Peter was giving up the life he had for something that would be better in the long run. In Luke 18:28, we find that Peter gave up his home and probably a lot more than that.

What is Jesus calling you to do? Take some time now, alone, to think about how God has called you in the past or is calling you now to follow Him. Give Him your answer and don’t wait. Be like Peter and tell Him now. Pray to Him or write it down, because it doesn’t matter how you answer the call, it only matters that you do answer it and accept His call to come to Him. Jesus is simply calling you to come!

Many people find that it is hard to believe someone when you do not know the person. For that same reason, we have to invest in a relationship with Jesus to get to know Him better. This can only happen when we take time to find Him daily. We call it T.A.G.—*Time Alone with God*. This is the perfect time to start tagging up with your Savior. Here are the steps for you to

Monday

launch T.A.G in your life. Write out your answers now to the following questions and try to apply them when you go home tonight:

Choose a time. Choose a time that would work best for you to connect with God every day. Would it be morning, afternoon, or evening?

Choose a place. It helps you make T.A.G. a priority if you have a place set aside to meet with God. Think of a place that would be most free of distractions.

Make a plan. Think of T.A.G. having great priorities: prayer and God's Word. Decide what you will read and study in God's Word. If you are just beginning, one of the four Gospels or Genesis is a great place to begin! Just talk to God like you talk to your friends...because that is what He is!

Jesus takes each person the way they come, as long as they do choose to come. Do not feel like you have to have the same type of TAG as other people do. It is different for each person, but if you invite Jesus to be with you each time, He will bless you as you seek Him.

WHAT IF...?:

In your groups, discuss these "what if" questions. Build each other up and make it practical to your life:

1. ***What if...***you told Jesus Christ you would come to Him as you are?
2. ***What if...***you told Jesus Christ you would follow Him wherever He leads you?
3. ***What if...***you invested in your relationship with God on a daily basis?
4. What is the potential difference it could make in your life?

CHECK-OUT:

Many times in our life we find that Jesus calls us, whether it is something simple or challenging. Sometimes, we will know right away, but other times, we will have to pray and listen very hard to hear His call. Jesus called Peter, an average person/sinner, to come and follow Him, who was and is perfect. Jesus reached out for Peter, rather than waiting for Peter to eventually find Him. "We must not wait for stronger persuasions, for better opportunities, or for holier tempers. We can do nothing of ourselves. We must come to Christ just as we are" (*Steps to Christ*, p. 30). He is reaching out for you. Just as Jesus knew what Peter could do, He knows what our potential is, but He does not force us; He waits for our answer.

YOUR CHOICE

Will you answer His call to come? Not just to come and do nothing, but to come, follow Him, and make disciples of all nations? It's come to the point where "maybes" or "I'll think about it" are over. Tell Him what is on your heart and be honest. He knows what you will say before you say it, but you still have to say it.

FAITH CHALLENGE

Would you like to grow in your faith journey with God? Your faith challenge over the next 23 hours before we meet again is to apply TAG in your life. Here is how you can start:

Read and reflect on Matthew 4:18-20 and Luke 6:46-49.

Talk to God about your choice to follow Him and ask Him to guide you in the new life you have started by coming to Him!

PRAYER

Give each small group time to pray about the Faith Challenge. After that, ask for prayer requests from the whole group. Pray for a divine blessing upon the entire group.

TRUST

day 4 (Tuesday)



BIBLE TEXT

Matthew 14:22-33, *The Message*

As soon as the meal was finished, he insisted that the disciples get in the boat and go on ahead to the other side while he dismissed the people. With the crowd dispersed, he climbed the mountain so he could be by himself and pray. He stayed there alone, late into the night.

Meanwhile, the boat was far out to sea when the wind came up against them and they were battered by the waves. At about four o'clock in the morning, Jesus came toward them walking on the water. They were scared out of their wits. "A ghost!" they said, crying out in terror.

But Jesus was quick to comfort them. "Courage, it's me. Don't be afraid."

Peter, suddenly bold, said, "Master, if it's really you, call me to come to you on the water."

He said, "Come ahead."

Jumping out of the boat, Peter walked on the water to Jesus. But when he looked down at the waves churning beneath his feet, he lost his nerve and started to sink. He cried, "Master, save me!"

Jesus didn't hesitate. He reached down and grabbed his hand. Then he said, "Faint-heart, what got into you?"

The two of them climbed into the boat, and the wind died down. The disciples in the boat, having watched the whole thing, worshiped Jesus, saying, "This is it! You are God's Son for sure!"

Tuesday

FOCUS

Trust Jesus!

CHECK-IN

Form same-gender small groups.

Ask each other:

1. How is your T.A.G. time going?
2. What did you do with last night's faith challenge?

TALK ABOUT IT

Ask: *Turn to someone near you and ask them how they are doing. Inquire how the meetings have affected them and if they have seen God working in his/her life.*

1. Call for a volunteer.
2. Pre-prepare a container by filling it with sticks, leaves, dirt, and even a few non-harmful insects, if available. Be sure to leave a hole large enough for a hand to reach through. You should not be able to see into the container.
3. Place a coin or some other small, semi-valuable item in the container.
4. Tell the volunteer that the container may or may not have a live creature in it and that they are searching for a [insert name of item from #3)].

5. Have them put their hand in the container to search for the item. When they find it, let them keep it.

6. Talk about it: Have everyone turn to the people they talked with earlier to discuss these questions:

Why was it difficult for the volunteer to put their hand in the container?

What makes someone trustworthy?

What makes them not trustworthy?

When Jesus asks you to do something uncomfortable, what do you do?

[Pray with congregation.]

INTRODUCTION

Imagine the only thing between you and safety is a rickety old bridge that doesn't appear to be able to hold any weight. The boards are cracked, the ropes are bare, but behind you a blazing fire rushes uncontrollably toward you. On the other side of the bridge, someone calls to you. They tell you that it's safe, but you can't quite tell who it is or how they know that it's safe. What do you do? Behind you, sure death comes; before you,

uncertainty awaits. You know you don't trust the bridge, but the person calling to you begs you to trust them.

Every day we are called to trust Jesus. We don't always know how He's going to keep us safe or how things will work out. Sometimes we don't even realize that He is the one calling. But we know that He calls. Jesus invites us to trust Him, catches us even when we do not trust Him, and waits for us to trust Him.

THE MESSAGE

[Read Matthew 14:22-29.]

Jesus desires each one of us to trust in Him. When Jesus came to the disciples on the water, they didn't realize it was Him. The storm and the waves scared them so much that they could not recognize Jesus. Their confusion turned to fear. Jesus knew they were afraid and wanted to replace their fear with trust. He reassured them by identifying Himself. They began to trust Him when they knew who He was.

"How often the disciple's experience is ours! When the tempests of temptation gather, and the fierce

lightning flash, and the waves sweep over us, we battle the storm alone, forgetting that there is One who can help us. We trust to our own strength till our hope is lost, and we are ready to perish. Then, we remember Jesus, and if we call upon Him to save us, we shall not cry in vain. Though He sorrowfully reproves our unbelief and self-confidence, He never fails to give us the help we need. Whether on the land or on the sea, if we have the Savior in our hearts, there is no need of fear. Living faith in the Redeemer will smooth the sea of life, and will deliver us from danger in the way that He knows to be best" (*Desire of Ages*, p.336).

Jesus does not expect us to trust Him without help. He calms our fears and concerns just like our parents did when we were small and afraid. Remember those times in the bad storms where the only comforting place was in your parent's arms? Jesus longs for us to trust Him like we trust our parents.

Peter did not have everything together when Jesus called him. He was still questioning whether Jesus was who He said He was. His challenge to Jesus shows both doubt and trust. Jesus does not require perfect trust, only willingness. Jesus responded to Peter's dare with an invitation.

Peter now had an opportunity to put his cautious trust into action. He knew that people cannot walk on water. But he knew Jesus, too. So, in spite of his questions, Peter climbed out of the boat and onto the water; notice that it was his initiative to ask Jesus that he should walk on water. Jesus agreed and Peter stepped out of the boat and walked to Him on the water.

[Read Matthew 14:30-33.]

We are told that Peter was walking towards Jesus and as long as he was doing that, all was well; then the passage says, "When he saw the wind. . ." He was no longer looking unto Jesus, but at the effects of the wind creating the waves; he took his eyes off Jesus. He lost sight of the Savior and became afraid. But Jesus is always there for us when we fall. Doubt and fear clouded his vision until all he could see was the wind and waves surrounding him. He knew he couldn't save himself, and he forgot for a moment that Jesus was the One making it happen. Trusting our own abilities seems easier to us, but in reality it creates more problems.

Imagine with me a sunny day in the town of Trust-No-One.

It was a normal day for Self Reliance as he walked by the

market stalls within his hometown of Trust-No-One. As he shopped for his daily peaches he came upon a rather suspicious looking character lurking in the shadows of a nearby alley. Self Reliance, feeling he had everything under control, continued past the suspicious character.

Pride, the suspicious character, saw the opportunity to grab all of Self Reliance's money. His wicked accomplice, Dr. Stubborn, blinded Self Reliance with a barrel full of chemicals. At that moment Self Reliance's life changed forever. As he came to his senses, he realized the terrible truth of his permanent blindness. He refused, however, to seek help and tried to make it home alone. After Self Reliance bumped into trees, rocks, and other obstacles, he finally understood that he was not going to make it home without help. With a desperate cry to anyone who might hear, he fell to his knees and began to weep. Upon hearing the cry of Self-Reliance, Salvation, a young man with a loving heart, immediately came to help. When he saw him, Salvation offered his hand to Self Reliance who grasped it desperately and allowed himself to be led safely home. Salvation stayed with Self Reliance for the rest of his life, making sure Self Reliance had everything he needed to survive. From then on, Self Reliance was

no longer known as Self Reliance, but as Trusting, for he trusted in Salvation, who saved his life, something that Self Reliance could not do by himself.

Self Reliance is like many of us. We believe ourselves to be the only things we need. We often find ourselves in a mess and end up becoming blinded by our own pride and stubbornness. Only when we place our trust in Jesus and fully rely on Him will we be able to survive. We must not only trust Jesus with our physical lives as Peter and Self-Reliance did, but we must also see that we can trust Jesus with our eternal lives as well.

[Read Romans 3:23.]

Because humans are sinful, even great men of God like Peter make mistakes, but that does not stop Jesus from loving and saving them. Our failures do not determine Jesus' love for us; He saves us in spite of them.

[Now read the first half of Romans 6:23.] Just as Peter cried out to Jesus for physical deliverance, we too must call out to Jesus for eternal salvation. We are full of sin and we desperately need His saving grace.

Turn with me to 1 John 1:9. [Read aloud.] Everything that separates us from God can be completely wiped away if we only ask. He loves us so much that He desires for us to live eternally with Him. We know He loves us and that His love cannot be taken from us. We can put our trust in His love and in His promise to forgive us. 2 Peter 3:9 tells us that Jesus does not want any to be lost, but wants all to come to repentance. He longs for us to confess our sins to Him so that He can forgive us and take away our guilt.

Jesus loves us unconditionally and earnestly waits for us to confess our sins so He can forgive us. He

also has a special gift for us. [Read the second half of Romans 6:23.]

Whenever you know that you have the perfect gift for a friend, you usually can't wait to give it to them. You eagerly watch to see the happiness in their eyes. Your love for your friend makes it all the more exciting since their joy will bring you joy as well. How much more is it with Christ? We know He loves us with an amazing love and eagerly waits for us to choose Him. He wants to free us from guilt and offers us the gift of eternal life. Jesus wants to give you this gift so badly that He died so that we could have the opportunity to take it.

[Read Revelation 3:20.] Jesus patiently waits for us to accept salvation rather than forcing us. Jesus wants to have a close relationship with us. Our part seems rather simple. We only have to hear His voice and let Him into our lives.

We must recognize Jesus' call to "Come" as Peter did. Then we should go to Jesus. We may stumble and will probably fall, but one cry to Jesus and He will be there, picking us right back up. All we have to do is invite Him to save us and become our best friend.

He wants to show you His love, forgive your sins, free you from guilt, and give you eternal life. Jesus did not refuse Peter's call. He has not refused anyone's plea. He will not refuse yours. Invite Jesus into your heart. He WILL come in.

Please invite Jesus into your heart today. He eagerly knocks at the door of your heart. Don't send Him away. Accept His gift of eternal life and trust that He will take care of you.

Pray before breaking out into small groups.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

1. How will putting your complete trust in God affect your life and the lives of those around you?
2. Why did Peter have such a hard time trusting Jesus? Why do we sometimes have the same problem?
3. How do our failures affect our relationship with God? What have you learned tonight about Jesus' free gift of salvation for you?

FAITH CHALLENGE

Do you truly want to trust God with your life? Your faith challenge for the next 23 hours is to review the verses discussed today. Pray about them, think about them, and search your heart. Read Psalms 145 and 146. And pray that God opens your mind to what He has to say.

Take about five minutes to consider your salvation. Think about who you are entrusting it to: Yourself? God? Your closest friend?

Pray to God for the strength to truly trust Him with everything: your worries, your family, your life, and your salvation. He is the only one who will not disappoint you.

CLOSING

Pray in two's with the person sitting beside you. Thank God together for His eternal love and free gift of salvation. Ask Jesus to forgive you for the times you have chosen to doubt instead of trust. Pray for each other that you will learn to trust Jesus with everything—no matter what storms come your way.

TRUST
IS THE
FOUNDATION
IN HELPING
PEOPLE
BECOME LIKE
JESUS.

TRUST:

Study Guide for Small Group option

BIBLE TEXT

Matthew 14:22-33

CHECK-IN

Form same-gender small groups.
Ask each other:

1. How is your T.A.G. time going?
2. What did you do with last night's faith challenge?

ACTIVITY

1. Find a partner of the same gender to perform this next activity with, then find a place to sit in the middle of the room, giving space between groups.
2. After giving them a chance to do this, have one pair go first.
3. Blindfold one person at one end of the room and have their partner at the other side of the room.
4. Have some more volunteers sit

down on the floor, in the way, so that the blindfolded person will have to walk around them.

5. The seeing partner must verbally direct the blind person across the room without causing them to run into anything. They may not touch their partner.
6. Have all the willing pairs complete this task and then return to the group setting.

TALK ABOUT IT:

- a. Was it hard to trust the other person? Why or why not?
- b. Was your partner deserving of your trust?
- c. How can you know someone is trustworthy?
- d. How is this activity similar to putting your trust in God?
- e. Do you let Him lead you through life?

FOCUS

Trust Jesus!

INTRODUCTION

Imagine the only thing between you and safety is a rickety old bridge that doesn't appear to be able to hold any weight. The boards are cracked, the ropes are bare, but behind you a blazing fire surges uncontrollably toward you. On the other side of the bridge, someone calls to you. They tell you that it's safe, but you can't quite tell who it is or how they know that it's safe. What do you do? Behind you, sure death comes; before you, uncertainty awaits. You know you don't trust the bridge, but the person calling to you begs you to trust them.

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THE WORD

1. Read Matthew 14:22-33.

Why did Peter sink? What was he afraid of?

What happened when Peter finally realized he couldn't save himself?

How did Jesus respond to Peter's call?

2. Read Proverbs 3:5-6.

Did Peter take Solomon's advice?
How could Peter have trusted Jesus more?

Peter knew that people cannot walk on water. But he knew Jesus, too. So he climbed out of the boat and onto the water; it was Peter's initiative to ask Jesus to call him out on the water. Jesus agreed and Peter stepped out of the boat and walked to Him.

We are told that Peter was walking towards Jesus, and as long as he was doing that, all was well. Then the passage says, "When he saw the wind"—in other words, he took his eyes off Jesus and focused on the effects of the wind on the waves. He lost sight of the Savior and became afraid. But Jesus is always there for us when we fall. Doubt and fear clouded his vision until all he could see was the wind and waves surrounding him. He knew he couldn't save himself, and he forgot for a moment that Jesus was the one making it happen.

"How often the disciple's experience is ours! When the tempests of temptation gather, and the fierce

lightnings flash, and the waves sweep over us, we battle the storm alone, forgetting that there is One who can help us. We trust to our own strength till our hope is lost, and we are ready to perish. Then we remember Jesus, and if we call upon Him to save us, we shall not cry in vain. Though He sorrowfully reproves our unbelief and self-confidence, He never fails to give us the help we need. Whether on the land or on the sea, if we have the Savior in our hearts, there is no need of fear. Living faith in the Redeemer will smooth the sea of life, and will deliver us from danger in the way that He knows to be best" (*Desire of Ages*, p.336).

3. Read Romans 8:38-39.

How do we know that God's love will never be taken from us?

Did Peter think that the wind and waves were more powerful than Jesus? Why?

Trust in God because He loves you for who you are, and nothing can take that away.

4. Read Romans 3:23, 6:23 (first half).

What is the end result of sin?
Why?

Does Jesus force us to be saved?
Why or why not?

What does Jesus' rescue of Peter teach us about our freedom of choice?

Peter needed to tell Jesus that he needed Him. We must tell Jesus the same thing.

5. Read 1 John 1:9.

What happens when we confess our sins?

What happened to Peter when he took his eyes off Jesus?

How did Peter respond when he started sinking and realized the consequences of his mistake?

Confessing your sins to Jesus frees you from any guilt and allows you to get back into the boat safely.

6. Read Romans 6:23 (second half).

What does God desire to give us?

Why is salvation called a "gift"?
What does that mean to you?

Jesus desperately wants to save you from your sins and give you eternal life. He is your Savior.

7. Read Revelation 3:20.

What simple action can we do to have Jesus with us?

Will Jesus refuse any offer to come into someone's heart if they ask?

Why or why not?

Invite Jesus into your heart. He WILL come in.

TRY IT OUT!

How incredible would it be if you completely trusted God? What if you accepted His free gift of forgiveness and salvation, trusting that He gives it to everyone who confesses and asks? If you were able to let God lead you down the path He has for you, you could find yourself in some amazing places and situations. Nothing could come between you and what God has planned for you. Jesus desires for you to completely trust in Him—not in yourself, others, or anything else. He wants you to accept Him like Peter did as he was sinking into the water. We are sinking. We need to let Jesus save us and give us the gift of eternal life.

Sometimes we let fear keep us from God. Take this time now to pray and ask God to help you put your trust in Him. Ask Him to show you what you still cling to that you need to let go of and what is keeping you from a deeper relationship with Him. Think about the amazing gift that He is offering and longing for you to accept.

[Ask each person to write down a list of things that is holding them back from trusting in God. Pray and ask God for His help to relinquish control and give Him everything.]

WHAT IF...?

Have everyone return to the small groups and answer these questions:

1. What if... you learned from Peter's mistake and trusted in Jesus?
2. What if... you didn't trust? What would you miss out on?
3. What if... you take Solomon's advice in Proverbs 3:5-6? What would you gain?
4. What if ... you take Jesus' hand like Peter did? How would your life change?

CHECK OUT

Peter trusted Jesus enough to step out of the boat, but looked at himself and took his eyes off of Jesus for a short time. Peter lost his trust at the sight of the wind and the waves. Fear made him lose sight of Jesus and he began to sink. When he called on Jesus' name and realized he could not save himself, Jesus reached out to him and saved him from the storm.

Choice: Will you make the same decision as Peter? Jesus will not let you fall.

FAITH CHALLENGE

1. Do you truly want to trust God with your life? Your faith challenge for the next 23 hours is this:
2. Review the verses discussed today. Pray about them, think about them, and search your heart. Pray that God opens your mind to what He has to say.
3. Read Psalms 145 and 146.
4. Take about five minutes to consider your salvation. Think about who you are entrusting it to: yourself? God? Your closest confidant? Who is strong enough to ensure the safety of your salvation?
5. Pray to God for the strength to truly trust Him with everything: your worries, your family, your life, even your salvation. He is the only one who will not disappoint you.

CLOSING

Ask for prayer requests. Pray for a blessing on what was learned and for the courage to truly trust God with everything.

SURRENDER



BIBLE TEXT

John 13:1-17

Washing His Disciples' Feet, The Message

Just before the Passover Feast, Jesus knew that the time had come to leave this world to go to the Father. Having loved his dear companions, he continued to love them right to the end. It was suppertime. The Devil by now had Judas, son of Simon the Iscariot, firmly in his grip, all set for the betrayal.

Jesus knew that the Father had put him in complete charge of everything, that he came from God and was on his way back to God. So he got up from the supper table, set aside his robe, and put on an apron. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the feet of the disciples, drying them with his apron. When he got to Simon Peter, Peter said, "Master, you wash my feet?"

Jesus answered, "You don't understand now what I'm doing, but it will be clear enough to you later."

Peter persisted, "You're not going to wash my feet—ever!"

Jesus said, "If I don't wash you, you can't be part of what I'm doing."

"Master!" said Peter. "Not only my feet, then. Wash my hands! Wash my head!"

Jesus said, "If you've had a bath in the morning, you only need your feet washed now and you're clean from head to toe. My concern, you understand, is holiness, not hygiene. So now you're clean. But not every one of you." (He knew who was betraying him. That's why he said, "Not every one of you.") After he had finished washing their feet, he took his robe, put it back on, and went back to his place at the table.

Then he said, "Do you understand what I have done to you? You address me as 'Teacher' and 'Master,' and rightly so. That is what I am. So if I, the Master and Teacher, washed your feet, you must now wash each other's feet. I've laid down a pattern for you. What I've done, you do. I'm only pointing out the obvious. A servant is not ranked above his master; an employee doesn't give orders to the employer. If you understand what I'm telling you, act like it—and live a blessed life.

FOCUS

Jesus calls us to complete surrender.

CHECK-IN TIME

Gather in pairs of the same gender.

Ask each other:

1. How is your T.A.G. time going?
2. What did you do about the previous night's faith challenge?

TALK ABOUT IT

1. Ask the person next to you to think of something that you have always wanted (job, place to go, thing to have, etc.). [Give time for sharing.] What would you be willing to give up for that thing? (Example: do odd jobs to get money, give up free time to practice, etc.) Why? Talk to the person sitting next to you about it for two minutes.
2. Wait two minutes.
3. You all named something that you really want. You want it so much that you are willing to sacrifice something else in order to have it. Even though doing so would be hard, it would be worth it just to get that thing you wish for. The same goes for God. If we

really desire Him more than anything, we have to be willing to put Him first—even if we have to give up something we like. Tonight we are going to talk about surrendering everything to God and leaving nothing between us and Him.

INTRODUCTION

Imagine this scene in Jerusalem during Passover:

Twelve men hurried excitedly through the narrow streets. Thoughts swirled around in their heads. They were not able to think clearly. It had been a great week. Jesus was finally starting to show some common sense. Just that day, He had ridden into Jerusalem on a donkey while the people sang and praised. Each disciple had proudly walked beside Him, enjoying how important they felt.

This was just the first step. Soon everyone would crown their Jesus king. He would lead in a glorious rebellion against the Romans, which would end in power, riches, and fame. He had asked the disciples to prepare a room for them to eat the Passover that night. Maybe this would be a secret meeting. Perhaps they would begin deciding positions and ranks for the new kingdom.

Soon, the usual argument started again. "I'm going to sit on his right," James casually mentioned to John. "No—me!" John shouted. "Everyone should realize," Peter interrupted, "that I'm the only one who actually gets things done around here. Jesus knows that He can count on me to be His second-in-command." Within a few minutes, all of the disciples were involved in a heated argument.

The disciples burst through the door to the room they had prepared for the feast and sank down on the couches. They kept fighting throughout the meal, even after Jesus had arrived. Peter was loudly arguing with Thomas when they stopped and stared. The disciples fell silent as Jesus rose, bent down, and knelt beside each one with a basin of water. Flinching, they watched in horror as He took on the role of a servant and wiped the dirt from their feet.

What was happening?

The story continues in John 13:1-15. We will focus on the first five verses.

THE MESSAGE

When the disciples first arrived at the upper room, they were probably thinking in terms of their own personal interests;

they often argued about their prospective positions in the soon to be established kingdom, as they understood it. Usually a servant, the lowest of the low, would wash the guests' feet before the meal. All of the disciples were probably too proud to volunteer to do a servant's task of washing each other's feet. Jesus didn't mind, though. He humbled Himself and washed their dirty, smelly feet.

[Read John 13: 6-11.]

like Peter did—when we let go of ourselves and surrender to Him.

[Read John 13:12-15.]

In this story, we find Jesus doing the job no one else would do. He served others, even though He is the King of the Universe! Being humble and serving others was important to Jesus, and He invites us to do the same in these passages. His example shows us how to love others by serving them. Sometimes that is very hard to do.

Have you ever had a habit that you tried and tried to break but couldn't seem to stop?

Peter was embarrassed to see Jesus doing the very thing he was too proud to do. He didn't understand that what Jesus was doing was more than just the task itself, it was symbolic. Jesus wanted to show them an example of love and service to each other. The disciples' feet were dirty, but Jesus wanted to wash more than just their feet. He wanted to wash their hearts—still full of selfishness, pride, and the desires of being at the right hand of a powerful king. Peter almost refused this gift. Until he let Jesus fully cleanse his heart, he had no part with Him. We can make the decision to belong to Jesus—just

The only way we can succeed is by surrendering ourselves to God and letting Him change our hearts.

True surrender can take a while to understand. We can get a better picture of what Jesus means by reading Luke 9:23-25.

[Read aloud.]

What does denying yourself really mean? We don't usually use that word. Denying yourself means you are willing to be honest about whether the things you want to do lead you to Jesus or lead you away from Jesus. Denying yourself is not just asking yourself the tough questions. It is also being willing to give up anything that pulls you

backwards from going forward with Jesus Christ. This question is going to have a different answer for all of us. What may distract you from Jesus may not distract your friend or neighbor. The question is not: Are the activities or priorities in my life there because that is what everybody else is doing? Rather, does this particular activity or priority help me get more real with Jesus, or does it pull me in the opposite direction? For some of us, it might be that we need to make some changes with what we are watching, the music we are listening to, the habits we have created, or in some cases, some friendships that are totally leading us in the opposite direction of where we need to be going. Jesus Christ has this huge amount of love for you, even before you make the right choice to give up something to come to Him. If you really like something, but it is not good for you, let His love for you be what puts the fire in your heart to be willing to walk away from everything that is keeping you from Him.

You may be saying, "Why do I even need to surrender? I think I'm fine the way I am." James 4:7-8, 10 helps to show us our need to surrender. Read aloud.]

This passage calls us sinners and double-minded people. That hurts,

Wednesday

but it helps us to be honest with ourselves and see what we really are. So many times we have done things that we know are wrong. We are in desperate need for God to cleanse our hearts and change our minds. If we want Him to do this, we must admit our mistakes and surrender our sin and everything we are to Him.

Have you ever had a habit that you tried and tried to break but couldn't seem to stop? This verse is encouraging because it shows us that Jesus is stronger than Satan. When we surrender all of our strength to Him, He gives us the power to say no to Satan and his temptations. He helps us to turn our backs on sin and fully belong to Him.

When Jesus washed the feet of His disciples, He humbled himself by serving others. He calls us to do the same. As we humble ourselves before Him daily, He will bless us in unexpected ways. He wants to be our closest friend. The closer we get to God, the more we understand His love for us.

God has many more promises of hope to encourage our hearts. One is found in Ezekiel 36:25-27. [Read aloud.]

If we truly want to change and surrender to God, there is hope!

When we give our hearts to Jesus, He says that He *will* make us clean. He will take away our stony, sinful hearts, so much like stubborn rocks, and give us hearts that are willing to follow Him. He promises to fill us with His Spirit and give us the desire to obey Him.

Surrendering your life to Jesus Christ leads to a friendship with Him beyond your imagination. A surrendered heart is a heart that is full of peace and joy. It is a heart that leads you to a life of service beyond your wildest dreams.

In *Steps to Christ*, Ellen White shares: "The world's Redeemer accepts men as they are, with all their wants, imperfections, and weaknesses... You cannot change your heart, you cannot of yourself give to God its affections; but you can *choose* to serve Him. You can give Him your will; He will then work in you to will and to do according to His good pleasure. Thus your whole nature will be brought under the control of the Spirit of Christ; your affections will be centered upon Him, your thoughts will be in harmony with Him" (p. 46-47).

What does this mean? When we give Jesus everything, imperfect as we are, He will do for us what we cannot do for ourselves. He will change us and make us like Him.

[Distribute paper and pencils now.]

Give everyone the opportunity during the next two minutes to pray. Try asking God these questions: What are the stony places in my heart? What is in my life that I need to surrender to You?

[Allow two minutes for reflection.]

If you want to surrender those places to Jesus, I invite you to take the paper and pencil that you were just given and write the issue God has placed on your heart. Then bring the paper up to the front to be thrown away. As you do so, pray in your heart and tell God, "Lord, I love you more than this. I give _____ up to You and ask You to take control over my whole life."

[Instead of paper and a pencil, you can also use other objects such as rocks, leaves, etc.]

[When all are back in their seats, continue.]

A story is often told of the way islanders catch monkeys. They find a coconut, make a hole in it, and place some rice inside. The coconut is then put where monkeys are often seen. Disappearing behind trees or bushes, the hunters lie in wait. Sure enough, after a while a monkey comes along. Seeing the rice, he chatters in excitement and

plunges his hand into the coconut in hopes of having the rice for himself. He closes his fist around the treat and attempts to remove the rice so he can enjoy it. Unfortunately, the coconut's opening is not big enough for the monkey's hand *and* the rice. Squeezing and tugging, the monkey tries repeatedly to pull his fist out of the coconut, but is unsuccessful. Chattering angrily, he does not notice the hunters sneak up behind him, throw a bag over him, and take him away.

We may laugh at this story. Why didn't the monkey have more sense? Why didn't he just let go of the rice? I wonder how many times we do the same thing. We hold onto things as unimportant to God as a handful of rice seems to us. These may be habits, attitudes, grudges, or stuff that we really like. They seem so important, yet in the end, they distract us and lead us away from God.

Tonight we have been talking about surrendering. To me, surrendering means _____. Please insert a story or share what surrender has meant to you.]

Too often, the world has given us the idea that surrender is a sign of weakness. We think of people who just give up without a fight. Not so with God. When we surrender to Him, this act is a sign of strength! God is greater and stronger than you have ever imagined. There is no better Person to submit to. [Read Jeremiah 29:11.]

What about you? Are you willing to hand over your life to God? Are you ready to surrender everything to His plan? If your answer is yes, I invite you to do so right now as we stand and pray.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

Pray together in the small group before you begin.

Read John 6:35, 14:27, and 13:6-9.

1. Why should I surrender?
2. How do I surrender?
3. What does Peter's surrender to Jesus teach you about completely surrendering your life to Christ?
4. What does surrender mean to me? How would you explain "surrendering to God" to someone who doesn't know Jesus?

What would happen if I truly surrendered my life to God?

1. How would my life change?
2. What would change in my relationship with God?
3. How does God want to use me to serve others?
4. How will my complete surrender to God affect the way I serve my family, friends, those I don't like, and my community?

Read Luke 9:23-25.

1. What does the cross represent for you?
2. What do you have to give up to take up your cross?
3. What does it mean to truly follow Jesus?
4. What does this text say about our priorities?

Wednesday

FAITH CHALLENGE

1. Schedule an appointment with God.
2. Read Genesis 12:1-9. Follow Abraham's life—the story of a man who truly knew the meaning of surrender.
3. Hold out your hands before God and offer Him your life in complete surrender.
4. Pray for God's help to get rid of whatever is keeping you from Him. Ask Him to replace it with something He longs to give you.

CLOSING

Close together with a prayer. Have everyone get into groups of two or three people and pray around the circle for the person on your right. Within your mini-groups, ask for prayer requests and pray together over each other's struggles and over tonight's faith challenge. Pray that God will help the person you pray for to willingly surrender whatever is between God and him/her. Ask God to bless each person as he/she explores Him.

SURRENDER:

Study Guide for Small Group option

BIBLE TEXT

John 13: 1-17; James 4: 7-1; Luke 9:23-25; Ezekiel 36:25-27

CHECK-IN

Form same-gender small groups. Ask each other:

1. How is your T.A.G. time going?
2. What did you do with last night's faith challenge?

TALK ABOUT IT

1. Turn to your neighbor and talk about these questions: Think of something that you have always wanted (job, place to go, thing to have, etc.). [Give time to share.] What would you be willing to give up for that thing? (Example: do odd jobs to get money, give up free time to practice, etc.) Why? Talk to the person sitting next to you about it for two minutes. [Allow time for sharing.]
2. Ask a volunteer to share either what they said or what their partner said. What does this activity have to do with Jesus?

FOCUS

Jesus calls us to complete surrender.

INTRODUCTION

Imagine this scene in Jerusalem during Passover:

Twelve men hurried excitedly through the narrow streets. Thoughts swirled around in their heads. They were not able to think clearly. It

had been a great week. Jesus was finally starting to show some common sense. Just that day, He had ridden into Jerusalem on a donkey while the people sang and praised. Each disciple had proudly walked beside Him, enjoying how important they felt.

This was just the first step. Soon everyone would crown their Jesus king. He would lead in a glorious rebellion against the Romans, which would end in power, riches, and fame. He had asked the disciples to prepare a room for them to eat the Passover that night. Maybe this would be a secret meeting. Perhaps they would begin deciding positions and ranks for the new kingdom.

Soon, the usual argument had started. “I’m going to sit on his right,” James casually mentioned to John. “No—me!” John shouted. “Everyone should realize,” Peter interrupted, “that I’m the only one who actually gets things done around here. Jesus knows that He can count on me to be His second-in-command.” Within a few minutes, all of the disciples were involved in a heated argument.

The disciples burst through the door and sank down on the couches. They kept fighting throughout the meal, even after Jesus had arrived. Then there was

a hush. The disciples fell silent as Jesus rose, bent down, and knelt beside each one with a basin of water. Flinching, they watched in horror as He took on the role of a servant and wiped the dirt from their feet. What was happening?

THE WORD

1. Read John 13: 1-17.

Ask: *Why did Jesus wash His disciples’ feet?*

[Bulleted lists are possible answers.]

- to show them an example
- He wanted them to love and serve each other
- to teach them humility

Ask: *Why didn’t Peter want Jesus to wash his feet?*

- he was embarrassed
- he was proud, still following his own desires
- he hadn’t fully given his heart to Jesus
- he didn’t understand

Ask: *What changed his mind?*

- he did not want to miss out on what Jesus had to offer
- he wanted to belong to Jesus and be identified with Him

2. Read James 4: 7-10.

Ask: *What does it mean to submit ourselves to God?*

- we give Him control over our whole lives
- we recognize the lordship of Christ
- we no longer belong to ourselves, but to God
- we become willing to follow His will

Ask: *What does God promise when we humble ourselves before Him?*

- He will lift us up

3. Read Luke 9:23-25.

Ask: *When we surrender, what will God call us to do?*

- sacrifice
- deny ourselves

Ask: *What does it mean to deny yourself?*

- turn your back on the world
- forget your own desires
- get rid of anything keeping you from God

4. Read Ezekiel 36: 25-27.

Ask: *Why do we need to surrender to God?*

- we are full of impurities
- we hold onto idols
- our hearts are like stone

Ask: *What does God give us when we surrender to Him?*

- a new heart
- a heart of flesh
- a new spirit
- He will move us to follow His decrees/laws

In *Steps to Christ*, p. 46-47, Ellen White shares: “The world’s Redeemer accepts men as they are, with all their wants, imperfections, and weaknesses... You cannot change your heart, you cannot of yourself give to God its affections; but you can *choose* to serve Him. You can give Him your will; He will then work in you to will and to do according to His good pleasure. Thus your whole nature will be brought under the control of the Spirit of Christ; your affections will be centered upon Him, your thoughts will be in harmony with Him.”

Ask: *What does this mean to you?*

- When we give Jesus everything, imperfect as we are, He will do for us what we cannot do for ourselves. He will change us and make us like Him.

TRY IT OUT!

Say: *Take three minutes of silence, just between you and God. Try asking God these questions: What are the stony places in my heart? What is in my life that I need to surrender to You?*

[Distribute paper and pencils.]

Say: *If you want to surrender those places to Jesus, I invite you to write the issue God has placed on your heart and then bring the paper up to the front to be thrown away. As you do so, pray in your heart and tell God, “Lord, I love you more than this. I give _____ up to You and ask You to take control over my whole life.”*

[Instead of paper and a pencil, you can also use other objects such as rocks, leaves, etc.]

Discuss these questions in groups of two or three.

1. What does surrender mean to you?
2. What is holding you back from surrendering?
3. What if you truly submitted your life to God? How would your life change?

CHECK-OUT

Summary: By allowing Jesus to wash his feet, Peter showed that he was totally surrendering himself to God. Jesus calls each of us to do the same.

Choice: The world sees surrender as defeat. The follower of Christ sees surrender as victory. Will you surrender your life to God?

FAITH CHALLENGE

1. Schedule an appointment with God.
2. Read Genesis 12:1-9. Follow Abraham’s life—the story of a man who truly knew the meaning of surrender.
3. Hold out your hands before God and offer Him your life in complete surrender.
4. Pray for God’s help to get rid of whatever is keeping you from Him. Ask Him to replace it with something He longs to give you.

CLOSING

Get in pairs with the person you shared with earlier. Pray for each other that God will help you to surrender to Him.

ASK



FOCUS

Ask God for the Holy Spirit.

CHECK-IN TIME

Gather in pairs of the same gender.

Ask each other:

1. How is your T.A.G. time going?
2. What did you do about the previous night's faith challenge?

TALK ABOUT IT

1. **Say:** *Imagine an important birthday is coming up and your mother has told you she will make your favorite food. Turn to the person next to you and discuss what you would like as a special meal for your birthday.*
2. Give the young people a minute to discuss this.
3. **Say:** *Now imagine that your mother has even set an entire day aside from her normal work to create your meal; she only asks that you tell her what you want her to make. The day comes and you still have not told her what you would like to eat, and then the day passes without a special meal because of your unwillingness to answer.*
4. *How do you think this made your mother feel? What keeps us from asking in our daily lives? Are there any times in your life where God is waiting to give you something but you wouldn't ask? How do you think this makes God feel?*

INTRODUCTION

As the sun burst over the horizon, Peter hurried down the streets of Jerusalem. So much had happened in so little time; he felt as if things would never settle. The tragedy of Jesus's death and his own denial had deeply saddened him. Yet, things had not ended there. Greeting a fellow walker, Peter felt his step lighten a bit. The same Jesus who he'd thought dead was alive, and the first time they had met after his resurrection, Jesus asked him to personally take care of His believers!

Gazing at the morning rays, Peter was excited! His Savior was going to come again, and He had promised to send the Helper, the Holy Spirit, to the disciples. Following His last commands, the disciples had stayed in Jerusalem to pray for this promised Gift. When would this Gift come?

As Peter walked past the city streets, he may have wondered what it would be like to have the Holy Spirit fill his heart up completely. To know that the Spirit of God, a member of the Godhead along with Jesus and God the Father, would personally change his life and give him power to fearlessly share Jesus anywhere at any time was electrifying! He knew Jesus had spoken of the Holy Spirit as a helpful friend and encourager, not as some faceless force. That appealed to Peter.

Reaching an ordinary building, Peter quietly opened the door and slipped inside. Glancing around, he noticed that many other believers had gathered there. Here they would wait until Jesus' promise had been fulfilled. Jesus had never let them down. Even with this assurance, however, Peter was not prepared for what came next.

As he prayed with the others, something happened. Like a violent wind blowing, a sound came from heaven and filled every corner of the house. Peter stared in amazement, and then saw something more. What seemed to be tongues of fire rested on every disciple. As the fire came to rest on his head, Peter was filled with the promised Gift. The Holy Spirit had come!

MESSAGE

Months before, Jesus had told Peter and the disciples something that sounded too good to be true. Jesus had said, "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?" (Luke 11:13). Wow! We have great fun dreaming up special gifts to give to those we love. Just imagine. God gets way more excited about giving us the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Peter knew that his Heavenly Father really wanted to give him the Holy Spirit. All Peter needed to do was ask, and so he did. In Acts 1:4, Jesus commanded the disciples "not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised." He then said, "you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

Peter and the disciples, trusting that promise, stayed in a city where they experienced many dangers and challenges. Jerusalem was where Jesus was put to death. Peter remembered his three denials of Jesus, and it bothered him. Regardless of these thoughts, Peter and the apostles hung on to Jesus' promise, knowing it would be fulfilled. Jesus' promise still stands true for us today. In Acts 2:39, Peter told the huge crowds

that all can receive the wonderful gift of the Holy Spirit.

Yet, how do you receive this gift? [Read Acts 1:13-14.] The text says that the disciples were "all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer." They were praying earnestly with one purpose. In previous experiences, these twelve chosen ones had frequently argued among themselves. But in this prayer meeting, all 120 of the believers gathered there and asked God together for all He promised. They were like one huge family. Think how different your church will be when this happens again!

Ellen White says, "If all were willing, all would be filled with the Spirit....Since this is the means by which we are to receive power, why do we not hunger and thirst for the gift of the Spirit? Why do we not talk of it, pray for it, and preach concerning it?" (*Acts of the Apostles*, p. 50).

Unity of this kind is impossible for us to find alone, but Peter, in Acts 2:38, realized this and explained it to the crowd. He said "Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." You cannot be filled with yourself and the Holy Spirit at the

same time. You will be filled with one or the other. The Lord wants to do amazing things through you, but He has given you free choice in the matter. Ask Him to clean you and grant you the gift of the Holy Spirit. Then you will find your life changing in incredible ways.

Just what are these incredible ways? Jesus told the disciples in John 16:13 that “when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth.” Think about it. He personally guides you to understand truth for yourself.

Later on, we find that in Acts 1:8, Jesus promised the disciples: “you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.” This is fulfilled through Peter in the very next chapter. Filled with the power of the Holy Spirit, he preaches to a great crowd right outside the disciples’ meeting house. He paints a picture of the reality of their lives without Jesus, invites them to repent, and amazing things happen. Acts 2:41 says that three thousand people became believers in a single day!

In verses 42 and 47, this group of believers is “continually devoting themselves to the apostles teaching

and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer... Praising God and having favor with all the people.” These ordinary people became powerful witnesses for Christ. Through their actions, unity, and joy, they witnessed for God, and “the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.”

If you value God’s opinion over your own, He will do amazing things through you. If you let go of your fears and make room for the Holy Spirit, you can become a powerful witness for Christ. Our Father God gave us this amazing gift and helper, but the Holy Spirit can’t help you if you don’t let Him in. It’s up to you. All you have to do is *Ask*.

SMALL GROUPS

Think of the amazing things the Holy Spirit did through Peter and the rest of the apostles. Think about how this could happen in your own life! But God wants our cooperation. You have to ask the Holy Spirit to come in and change you. Get into the groups you met with earlier and discuss a few questions.

WHAT IF...?

1. What if you asked God to cleanse you of sins and fears,

making room for the Holy Spirit? What would you need to let go of?

2. What if you let the Holy Spirit work through you to be a fearless witness? What could happen in your circle of family, friends, and classmates?
3. What do you think the Holy Spirit dreams of doing in your life?

FAITH CHALLENGE

Do you want the Holy Spirit in your life? During the next 23 hours, your faith challenge is this:

1. Read Acts 1-2 and Luke 11:1-13.
2. Ask God for the gift of the Holy Spirit and what you need to do in order to receive Him.

CLOSING

Close together with a prayer. Pray for the person on your right. Ask them what they want to be prayed for specifically, and also pray that they take up the faith challenge today. Pray for their spiritual walk with God and any troubles they may be going through. Then close with a group prayer.

Thursday

ASK:

Study Guide for Small Group option

BIBLE TEXT

Acts 2

FOCUS

Ask God for the Holy Spirit.

CHECK-IN

Form same-gender small groups. Ask each other:

1. How is your T.A.G. time going?
2. What did you do with last night's faith challenge?

TALK ABOUT IT

1. **Say:** *Imagine an important birthday is coming up and your mother has told you she will make your favorite food. Turn to the person next to you and discuss what you would like as a special meal for your birthday.*
2. Give the young people a minute to discuss this.
3. **Say:** *Now imagine that your mother has even set an entire day aside from her normal work to create your meal; she only asks that you tell her what you want her to make. The day comes and you still have not told her what you would like to eat, and then the day passes without a special meal because of your unwillingness to answer.*

4. Discuss

- a. *How do you think this made your mother feel?*
- b. *What keeps us from asking for things in our daily lives?*
- c. *Are there any times in your life where God is waiting to give you something but you wouldn't ask?*
- d. *How do you think this makes God feel?*

THE MAIN POINT

Ask for the Holy Spirit.

INTRODUCTION

As the sun burst over the horizon, Peter hurried down the streets of Jerusalem. So much had happened in so little time; he felt as if things would never settle. The tragedy of Jesus' death and his own denial had deeply saddened him. Yet, things had not ended there. Greeting a fellow walker, Peter felt his step lighten a bit. The same Jesus who he'd thought dead was alive, and the first time they had met after his resurrection, Jesus asked him to personally take care of His believers!

Gazing at the morning rays, Peter was excited! His Savior was going to come again, and He had promised to send the Helper, the Holy Spirit, to the disciples. Following His last commands, the disciples had stayed in Jerusalem to pray for this promised Gift. When would this Gift come?

As Peter walked past the city streets, he may have wondered what it would be like to have the Holy Spirit fill his heart up completely. To know that the Spirit of God, a member of the Godhead, along with Jesus and God the Father, would personally change his life and give him power to fearlessly share Jesus anywhere at any time was electrifying! He knew Jesus had spoken of the Holy Spirit as a helpful friend and encourager, not as some faceless force. That appealed to Peter.

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As he prayed with the others, something happened. Like a violent wind blowing, a sound came from heaven and filled every corner of the house. Peter stared in amazement, and then saw something more. What seemed to be tongues of fire rested on every disciple. As the fire came to rest on his head, Peter was filled with the promised Gift. The Holy Spirit had come!

THE WORD

1. Read Luke 11:9-13. How willing is God to give you gifts? If even humans know how to give good gifts, can you count on God to grant you good gifts? What is the one thing we must do to receive these gifts?
2. Read Acts 1:4-5; 2: 39. What is common in these verses? What does Jesus promise the disciples? Who is this promise for?
3. Read Acts 1:13-14; 2: 38. How were the disciples praying? How is this important to us now? What is necessary to be able to accept the Holy Spirit?
4. Read John 14:16-17. What does Jesus do? Why can the world not receive the Holy Spirit? How is this important for our preparations for the Holy Spirit?
5. Read Acts 1:8 and John 16:13. What does Jesus say the Holy Spirit will enable the disciples to do? How can this apply to us?
6. Read Acts 2:4-47. What happens to the believers after their receiving of the Holy Spirit?
5. What changes do you notice? What impact could this gift have on our church?

6. Ellen White says, "It is not because of any restriction on the part of God that the riches of His grace do not flow earthward to men....If all were willing, all would be filled with the Spirit....Since this is the means by which we are to receive power, why do we not hunger and thirst for the gift of the Spirit? Why do we not talk of it, pray for it, and preach concerning it?" (*Acts of the Apostles*, p. 50).

TRY IT OUT!

Think of the amazing things the Holy Spirit did through Peter and the rest of the apostles. Think about how this could happen in your own life! But God wants our cooperation. You have to ask the Holy Spirit to come in and change you.

Are you willing to let the Holy Spirit take control? Are you willing to see the change in your life that the Holy Spirit is waiting to make? You can make that decision; you can ask in the privacy of your own mind and wait to see the adventure that God will set before you.

I want to ask, right now, that we get on our knees before God. Ask Him to show you what you need to do to prepare for the Holy Spirit and invite Him into your life.

The Holy Spirit can have an incredible impact on your life and your church, but only if you're willing.

Try it; see what the Holy Spirit can really do when you let Him take control. Start right now; all you have to do is *ask*. [Tell the youth to take time for private contemplation and prayer now.]

WHAT IF...?

Please discuss these questions in groups of two or three.

1. What if you let the Holy Spirit work through you? What could happen in your life?
2. What if you valued God's opinion over the opinions of those around you?
3. What if you asked God to cleanse you of sin and fears, making room for the Holy Spirit?

CHECK OUT

Summary: Jesus gave us this amazing gift called the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit can guide your life, making you a steadfast disciple and witness for Jesus.

There's only one requirement: you have to invite Him in.

Choice: Will you ask the Holy Spirit to come and change your life? He's waiting for you. Just say the word!

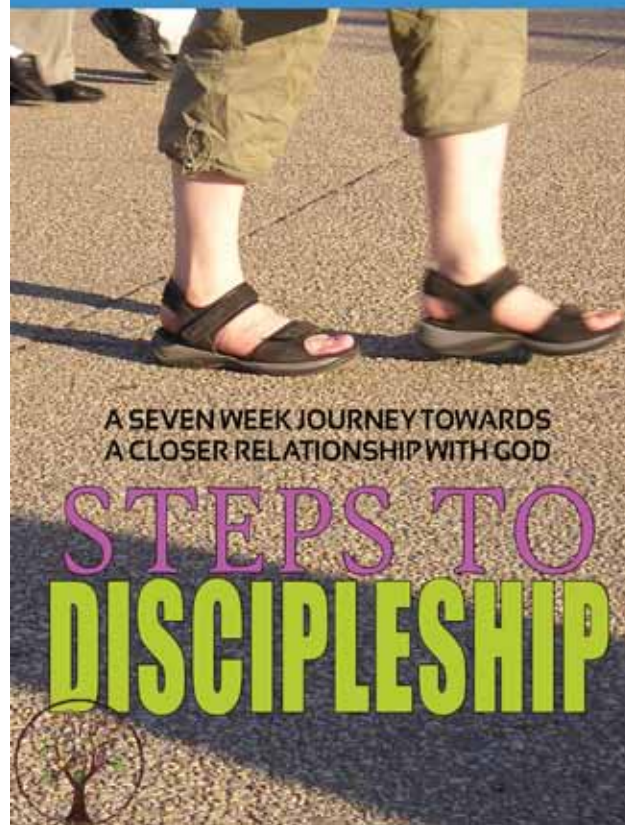
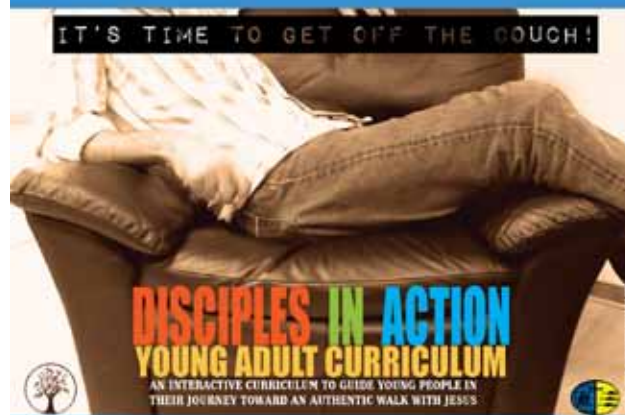
FAITH CHALLENGE

Do you want that presence in your life? Your faith challenge over the next 23 hours before we meet again is this:

1. Read Acts 1-2 and Luke 11:1-13.
2. Ask God for the gift of the Holy Spirit and what you need to do in order to receive God's Helper.
3. Think about the radical changes in Peter's life. Are you willing to take a radical step and let God lead your life? Talk to Him about it.

PRAYER

Ask for prayer requests. Give a prayer of blessing for the group, then split up into smaller groups of two or three. Ask them to pray specifically for the person on their right, asking in particular for any special needs the person may have.



LOVE



day 7 (Friday)

TALK ABOUT IT

1. **Say:** *Everyone, please stand to hear the instructions for this assignment. Think of someone who has shown you what unselfish, caring love really is. Share what they did in story form. You have thirty seconds to share this experience with someone else. [In thirty seconds, ask them to switch and listen to their partner share.]*
2. **Say:** *You have one more minute to find another partner, share your story, and hear theirs.*
3. **Say:** *The story you shared is an example of how someone changed your life with love. Tonight, let's see how God's love directly changes the way we love others.*

FOCUS

God's love leads you to love others.

BIBLE TEXT

Acts 10

CHECK-IN

Form same-gender small groups. Ask each other:

1. How is your T.A.G. time going?
2. What did you do with last night's faith challenge?

INTRODUCTION

Think back to Bible times and remember some of the stories of Jesus and His disciples. Imagine what each one might have been thinking, feeling, experiencing...

1. **Encounter #1:** It was a hot, muggy afternoon in Palestine. Jesus and His disciples trudged along the path, weary from their journey. Soon, the disciples realized they were

Friday

not alone. “Someone’s following us!” they hissed to one another. Looking back, they knew with one glimpse they wanted nothing to do with this person. They walked ahead, determined to ignore the woman running up behind them. Her eyes a silent plea for help, the woman came to Jesus, begging Him to listen and heal her daughter. The disciples couldn’t believe Jesus was talking to this Gentile—let alone helping her! He had spoken of love, saying, “A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John 13:34, 35). They still hadn’t understood...

2. **Encounter #2:** “What were you arguing about on the road?” Jesus tenderly asked His disciples. They looked at each other, embarrassed. The constant competition between them was a continuous ache to His heart. Their open bitterness filled His heart with sadness. When would they learn?
3. **Encounter #3:** Tears streamed down their faces as they saw their Master, Teacher, and best Friend of three years suffer the cruelest death imaginable. They wanted to know why. Why is He letting Himself go through this? Where is the kingdom He was supposed to set up? Jesus watched them with sadness. He had tried so hard to open their eyes, to help them see...

Sometime after the crucifixion of Jesus, Peter stared in shock at the scene in front of him. What was happening? Everything he had been taught his whole life rebelled at what he saw and heard. Peter had felt Jesus’ love, but until now he hadn’t fully understood what it meant to love others. Jesus was about to teach

Peter something very important—something He had tried to show him all along.

THE MESSAGE

God was preparing a perfect plan to give the Gentiles hope and to show them that He did love them, too. Peter was the perfect man to carry out that plan.

Peter was a man who lived each day with an active faith in God’s love and power. Many people in Joppa believed in Jesus because of the miracles God did through Peter. In the townspeople’s excitement from

GOD CALLS US TO LOVE EACH OTHER AS HE LOVES US.

these miracles, Peter decided to escape the crowds by taking a break at the home where he was staying in Joppa. This brief “time out” from his busy life allowed him to spend some personal time in prayer with God. He went up to the peaceful rooftop and suddenly felt extremely hungry.

Peter’s time alone with God made a big difference in his life and in the lives of the Gentiles.

[Read Acts 10: 10-16.]

We read in Acts 10:10-16 that he had a vision in which he saw a sheet-like object come down from heaven. In this sheet was a collection of four-footed animals of every kind. Peter heard a voice—God’s voice—saying, “Rise, Peter: kill and eat.” But Peter argued with God, saying that many of these animals were undesirable and unclean. To live by God’s commandments and long-standing Jewish tradition, he should not eat them. God immediately ignored Peter’s claims

and showed that what He had declared “clean” must not be called otherwise. This exchange between God and Peter took place three times and immediately after that the sheet was taken back to heaven. No wonder Peter was confused and was left wondering about the meaning of the vision. He knew that it was not about eating or not eating unclean animals; God was about to provide the meaning as access to the Kingdom was to be made available to Gentiles (who were considered by Jews to be unclean).

Immediately after Peter experienced this vision, the Holy Spirit told Peter that visitors had been sent from Caesarea and were at his door asking him to come with them. The visitors told Peter that their master—a Roman centurion named Cornelius, a just, God-fearing man—had invited Peter to his house. As a Jew, Peter did not have a friendly attitude toward Romans. They had overrun his country and taken many rights away from him and his people. Peter classified all Romans among the Gentiles—whom he considered unclean and unworthy of his company. We find in Acts 10:23, 29 that, despite these feelings, Peter’s faith and the vision God had shown him convinced him to go with the men to Caesarea without question,

just as God had directed him in the vision.

In Acts we find that after Peter arrived in Caesarea, he reminded the Gentiles in the room of the Jewish tradition of fraternizing with non-Jews. “You know, I’m sure that this is highly irregular. Jews just don’t do this—visit and relax with people of another race. But God has just shown me that no race is better than any other. So the minute I was sent for, I came, no questions asked. But now I’d like to know why you sent for me” (Acts 10:27-29, *The Message*).

However, Peter was told by God not to call anyone common or unclean. At the end of verse 29, Peter asked, “Why have you sent for me?” Cornelius told Peter about his belief in Jesus. He said that he had received a vision in which an angel told him to call for Peter. We can only imagine what Cornelius’ testimony must have brought to Peter’s mind. Through the Holy Spirit’s leading, Peter’s view of the Gentiles was in the middle of a dramatic change.

Cornelius’ explanation caused Peter to speak the truth about God’s gift, seen in Acts 10:34-35. In these verses, Peter says, “It’s God’s own truth, nothing could be plainer: God plays no favorites! It makes no difference who you are or where

you’re from—if you want God and are ready to do as he says, the door is open” (*The Message*). When Peter realized that God accepts everybody, he shared the gospel to the Gentiles in the room. As Peter spoke of Jesus and His acceptance of everyone who believed in Him, the Holy Spirit came upon everyone in the room! Peter became so astonished that he ordered that the Gentiles were to be baptized in the name of the Lord.

We have seen how Peter started out doubting God’s judgment. He quickly learned through this experience, however, that he was mistaken in his view of other people. All people were to be given a chance to accept Jesus.

Most of us remember when Simon Peter denied Jesus three times. Do you also remember that, sometime later, Jesus asked Peter a painful question? In John 21:15-17, we find that Jesus asks a question three times: “Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?” Peter is challenged to answer a total of three times and is grieved that his Lord has to ask him more than once. Perhaps this is Jesus’ way of allowing Peter to reflect on the depth of his own love response to what his Savior had done for him. In a convincing way, Peter vowed to feed Jesus’ sheep, His believers,

because he loved Him. When we love Jesus, we want to do the same.

When Jesus began His ministry on earth, He called Peter and the other disciples to join Him in sharing His Father's love with others. About three years later, Jesus urged Peter and the other disciples to "go, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." What hope we have! Jesus promises to be with His disciples to the end!

Peter's acceptance of the Gentiles caused a shockwave across the early Christian church. The followers of Christ no longer would consider themselves to be the only chosen people of God to receive His gift. Rather, they would begin to love and disciple everyone in the name of Jesus!

Jesus has called each one of us to love everyone: our family, friends, enemies, and strangers alike. This is one of the greatest practical challenges of being a daily disciple of Jesus. When we love Jesus, He will work through us to love everyone. When we allow the Holy Spirit to make our character like Jesus', we will love people! Ellen

White states, "The more closely we resemble our Savior in character, the greater will be our love toward those for whom He died" (*Testimonies to the Church*, volume 5, p. 167).

Let's look at Damien and Brian's story.

Damien could not believe his teacher would pair him up with Brian for the week-long canoe ride! Brian was very rude all the time and made negative comments about everything and everyone. His comments could ruin the most perfect day. Brian was the very last person Damien would have chosen to partner with for this amazing outdoor adventure.

At first, Damien barely tolerated Brian's behavior. After several days, God convicted Damien to love Brian like his own brother and treat him with kindness and respect. Brian was surprised! Damien took time to listen to Brian and to encourage him as they paddled their canoe through rapids and stormy weather. Brian was very glad to have a friend. They both ended the canoe trip with the unexpected gift of each finding a new friend.

Call to Decision: God calls us to love each other as He loves us.

For Peter, loving others meant befriending a people group that he used to ignore and hate. For Damien, reaching out to Brian with God's love meant taking time to listen and encourage. Think of someone in your life who needs God's love through you. Will you choose to love them the way Jesus loves you?

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Identify three different ways you have been loved by others. Why is this important to remember? How has it impacted you?
2. Talk about what the world would be like if everyone loved each other in Christ. What would be the difference in our families, neighborhoods, schools, and churches?
3. What are some specific ways God is calling you to leave your comfort zone to love the people in your life? What will you do with these convictions?

CLOSING

Turn to the person beside you and pray for God to bless them as they strive to love difficult people.

LOVE

Study Guide for Small Group option

FOCUS

God's love leads you to love others.

CHECK-IN TIME

1. Gather in pairs of the same gender.
2. Inquire as to how everyone's T.A.G. time is going.
3. Ask what they did about the previous night's faith challenge.

TALK ABOUT IT

1. **Say:** *Everyone, please stand to hear the instructions for this assignment. Think of someone who has shown you what unselfish, caring love really is. Get ready to share what they did—in story form. You have thirty seconds to share this love story with someone else. Share! [In thirty seconds, ask them to switch and listen to their partner share.]*
2. **Say:** *You have one more minute to find another partner, share your story, and hear theirs.*
3. **Say:** *The story you shared is an example of how someone changed your life with love. Tonight, let's see how God's love directly changes the way we love others.*

INTRODUCTION

Think back to Bible times and remember some of the stories of Jesus and His disciples. Imagine what each one might have been thinking, feeling, experiencing...

1. **Encounter #1:** It was a hot, muggy afternoon in Palestine. Jesus and His disciples trudged along the path, weary from their journey. Soon, the disciples realized they were not alone. "Someone's following us!" they hissed to one another. Looking back, they knew with one glimpse they wanted nothing to do with this person. They walked ahead, determined to ignore the woman running up behind them. Her eyes a silent plea for help, the woman came to Jesus, begging Him to listen and heal her daughter. The disciples couldn't believe Jesus was talking to this Gentile—let alone helping her! He had spoken of love, saying, "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:34, 35). They still hadn't understood...
2. **Encounter #2:** "What were you arguing about on the road?" Jesus tenderly asked His disciples. They looked at each other, embarrassed. The constant competition between them was a continuous ache to Jesus. Their open bitterness filled His heart with sadness. When would they learn?
3. **Encounter #3:** Tears streamed down their faces as they saw their Master, Teacher, and best Friend of three years suffer the cruelest death imaginable. "Why? Why is He letting Himself go through this?" they questioned. "Where is the kingdom He was supposed to set up?" Jesus watched them with sadness. He had tried so hard to open their eyes, to help them see...

Sometime after the crucifixion of Jesus, Peter stared in shock at the scene in front of him. What was happening? Everything he had been taught his whole life rebelled at what he saw and heard. Peter had felt Jesus' love, but until now he hadn't fully understood what it meant to love others. Jesus was about to teach Peter something very important—something He had tried to show him all along.

THE MESSAGE

1. Read Acts 10:10-16. Why was Peter's vision so startling to him?
2. Read Acts 10:17-23. What do you imagine Peter was feeling when he first heard the request of Cornelius' servants? What do you think would have happened if Peter had not made the time in his busy schedule to pray?
3. Read Acts 10:28, 34-35. What was the reason Peter had a drastic change in heart toward the Gentiles?
4. Peter's response to Cornelius is found in Acts 10:47-48. What did Peter say? The Jews no longer would consider themselves to be God's only

chosen people who would receive His gift. Rather, they would begin to help Gentiles become trusting followers of Christ.

5. Early in this story, Peter doubted God's judgment. After meeting Cornelius, he learned that God wanted him to change his view of other people. Not long before Peter's vision, Jesus had given the disciples instructions. Later, He added some special advice for Peter. Read Matthew 28:19, 20 and John 21:15-17. What did Jesus call the disciples to do? What did He specifically ask of Peter?
6. Read John 13:34, 35. How does Peter's treatment of Cornelius show that he finally understood Jesus' command to love others? Be specific.

TRY IT OUT!

Jesus had sent the disciples out of their comfort zones to practice what they had learned from Him. Sometime later the Holy Spirit sent Peter from the comfort of Joppa to a Gentile's home in Caesarea to share the good news of Jesus.

I invite you to get on your knees right now. Ask God to bring to your

mind the names of one or more persons who need to see Jesus' love through you right now. Is it someone you have wronged? Is it someone you have ignored? Is it someone who has hurt you? Pray for strength to follow through with the names God placed on your heart.

WHAT IF...

Identify three different ways you have been loved by others. Why is this important to remember? How has it impacted you?

1. Talk about what the world would be like if everyone loved each other in Christ. What would be the difference in our families, neighborhoods, schools, and churches?
2. What are some specific ways God is calling you leave your comfort zone to love the people in your life? What will you do with what He told you?

CHECK-OUT

1. Jesus has called each one of us to love everyone: our family, friends, enemies, and even strangers. When we allow the Holy Spirit to make our

characters like Jesus', we will love people! Ellen White states, "The more closely we resemble our Saviour in character, the greater will be our love toward those for whom He died" (*Testimonies to the Church*, volume 5, p. 167).

2. **Choice:** Will you choose to love everyone you come into contact with for the glory of God? God called us to love one another as He has loved us.

CLOSING

1. Ask for prayer requests. Pray for God's help to love people. Schedule an appointment with God:
 2. Read Mark 6:7, Matthew 28:18-20—See how Jesus sent His disciples out to practice what they had learned.
 3. Talk to God about your choice to allow Him to love others through you.
 4. Ask Him to give you His best ideas of how to love these people.
 5. Practice what you have discussed tonight.
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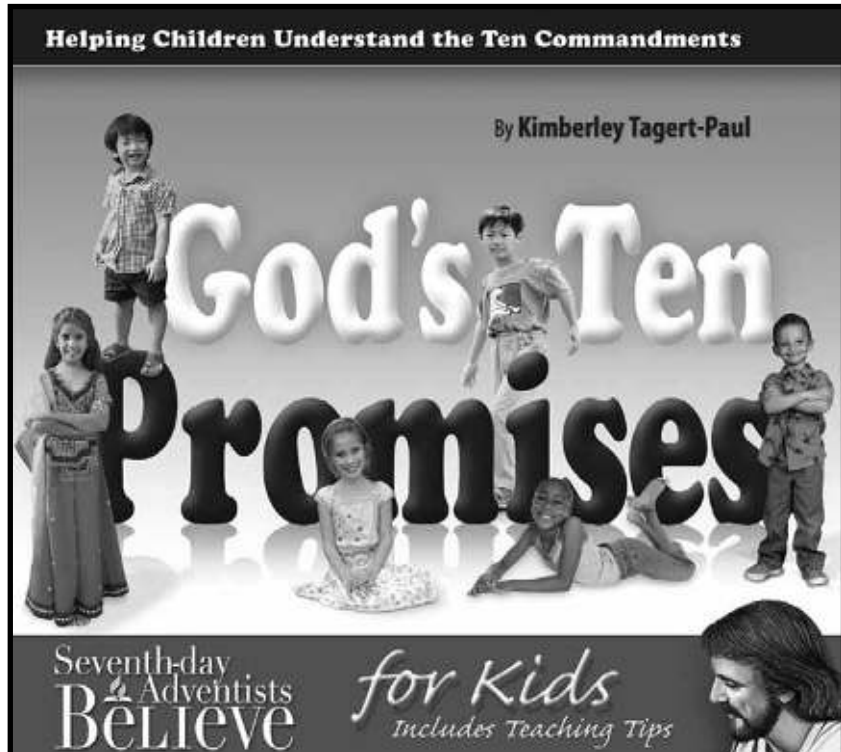
FAITH CHALLENGE

Would you like to grow in your faith journey with God? Here's your faith challenge over the next 23 hours before we meet again:

Schedule an appointment with God

1. Read Mark 6:7, 30-31—See how Jesus sent his disciples out to practice what they had learned.
2. Talk to God about your choice to allow Him to love others through you.
3. Ask Him to give you His best ideas of how to love these people.
4. Practice what you have discussed tonight.

[HTTP://WWW.ADVENTISTBOOKCENTER.COM](http://www.adventistbookcenter.com)



Friday

WHAT IF YOU GAVE GOD EVERYTHING?



FOCUS

God's love leads you to love others.

CHECK-IN

Form same-gender small groups. Ask each other:

1. How is your T.A.G. time going?
2. What did you do with last night's faith challenge?

TALK ABOUT IT

1. **Say:** *Now, stay in your groups. You have a minute to brainstorm and create a list of things that you would buy if someone made you very wealthy. Share with one another what these things would be.*
2. Allow a minute for brainstorming.
3. **Say:** *Now imagine that you have all these things, and a stranger comes up to you and says, "Give all these things to me." How would you react?*
4. Let them respond. This can be funny!
5. **Say:** *Now imagine that the person you love most in the whole world is asking you to give up these things. How do you feel about it now?*

Remember the person you loved most who asked for your possessions? How would you feel if you knew that person was asking only because they had something of far greater value to give you in place of what you already had? Jesus is asking you to give Him everything—who you are, what you have, even your plans for your life. But He asks you to give these things not to leave you empty, but to fill you with Himself—with His love, with His peace, and with His plans for your life. These things are better than what you have by yourself. It's only when you empty yourself that you can live fully in Him.

INTRODUCTION

Peter and John are walking to the temple to pray. So much has happened recently. Something has changed in Peter. He no longer walks with an over-confident strut, nor does he bow his head in shame. His attention is focused elsewhere. He sees every person he passes on his way to the temple in a different way than before.

As Peter approaches the gate, he notices a crippled man. He has passed this man many times before, but he had never really focused on his situation. This time he really *sees* him and wants to do something to help him.

The man looks up and asks for money.

This was all he expected, maybe a penny. This was all he asked of those who passed by him each day and all that he thought he needed. But Peter doesn't have money. Peter knows that this man needs only what Jesus can give him: healing, new strength, and wholeness.

"I have no silver or gold," he says, and the lame man's face falls in disappointment.

"But what I have, I give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk!"

Suddenly, feeling creeps into the man's legs. He wiggles his toes, and he leaps to his feet.

"I am healed!" he cries. "Praise the God of Heaven! I am *healed!*"

THE MESSAGE

We find this man in Acts 3: 1-8. The first thing we see is Peter's encounter with a lame man who begs for money. This man probably thought that money was what he needed. Money, for most people, means security—the ability to buy food, clothes, and other things they need.

Peter says, "Look at me! I don't have money, but I have something much better."

The man must have felt discouraged when he heard the first part of Peter's statement: "I don't have money." Peter could have stopped there—he didn't have money. This man had probably been waiting for healing for years. Perhaps he had hoped to meet Jesus face to face and receive healing. Peter wasn't Jesus. This man may have thought his chance at healing was forever gone, and now only asked for money—for what would give him another meal. Peter didn't have money, but he had something better: the power given by the indwelling of Christ. And this power healed the crippled man.

Let's start reading in Acts chapter 3, verses 9-10. *[Read aloud.]* The healing of this man affected other people. When Jesus uses you to help one person, it creates a ripple effect that can spread to many others.

If you have Jesus, you have everything you need. This man wanted money; instead, he received what God knew he needed. Just like this man, so often we cling to

what we think we need, rather than letting God work His will in our lives. His will is so much better than what we can plan for ourselves.

During the rest of this chapter, Peter is boldly preaching about Christ: convicting crowds of people of their need to come back to God.

Now look at verses 12-13. *[Read aloud.]* Peter is declaring that this miracle was done by Jesus' power and not his own. He is giving all the glory to God.

As the priests listen to Peter's message, they become greatly disturbed and want to do whatever they can to stop Peter and John from stirring up the people. They have Peter and John arrested and put them in jail until the next morning.

Let's continue on in chapter 4, verses 5-7. *[Read aloud.]*

[Pause here.] Do you notice anything interesting about the men sitting in front of Peter and John? These are the very same men we read about in Matthew 26, when Peter denied Jesus three times.

Peter used to be afraid of these people—even though he had walked with Jesus for years! You know what? You can't learn enough to make yourself unafraid. Peter hadn't learned enough during those years to be unafraid when he was put under pressure. But now things had changed—while before, the most important things to Peter

were safety, being powerful, and the approval of people around him, now Christ was most important.

Let's read on through verses 8-12 and see how Peter responds this time.

[Read aloud.]

Peter is accusing the high priest and elders of killing the Messiah! He used to be afraid, but now he stands boldly before them and states the truth.

What has changed?

Peter has completely surrendered and committed his life to following Jesus. He has given up all of his earthly cares, so his interests are now eternal. Peter has given Christ everything. He is no longer filled with himself, but instead he is filled with the Spirit of God.

What about you and me? Can we have this kind of change? What would happen if you gave Christ everything? *You will be filled with His Spirit: unashamed, unafraid.*

Let's take a look at how the priests reacted to this new Peter. Look at verse 13 with me. [Read aloud.]

What if you give Christ everything? You will be recognized as someone who has been with Jesus.

Keep reading until verse 19. [Read aloud.]

Peter and John ask a simple question: "Should we obey you or God?"

There is no middle ground when it comes to following Christ. Peter and John cannot simply say, "Okay, we will stop telling people about Jesus so that you won't threaten us." No. Their lives certainly would have been easier had they said this, but they have a different purpose in mind. They have surrendered themselves to God's plan.

Next, we find Peter and John returning to the other believers, praying and praising God together. Then something spectacular happens. [Read verses 29-31 aloud.]

What if you give Christ everything? He will radically pour out His Spirit in your life.

God has so much that He wants to do in your life. When you give yourself and everything you have to Jesus, you open yourself up for His plan to take place. He has so much that He wants to give you. Look at the lame man who wanted money; he thought that money was safety. He didn't even know that

healing was available. When you try to control your own life, you miss out on what God can do with you, for you, and through you.

But when you give everything you have to God and ask for His plan in your life, you will be a reflection of Jesus. People will know that you have been with Christ.

If you are filled with yourself, you cannot be filled with God's spirit. You don't leave enough room. But if you give up the things that you are holding on to, He will fill you with more than you could ever imagine: more joy, more peace, more power, and eternal security. He will use you in a powerful way as a part of His plan.

Imagine what would happen if you were a fully committed disciple of Jesus in your home, your school, your church, your community. What would God accomplish through you?

Something amazing happens when people give themselves to Christ and come together with others who have done the same. In Acts, the followers of Christ take care of each other because they are living for Christ and for others instead of for themselves. Everyone's cup is filled.

Let's read on in Acts chapter 4, beginning in verse 32, to hear what happens after people give everything to God. We will continue reading to the end of chapter 4.

[Read aloud.]

What would happen if I give everything to Christ?

My cup would be filled because Christ would provide everything I need.

Peter was just a fisherman—a foul-mouthed, rude, selfish, prideful fisherman. Then Jesus came along and called him to something more. As Peter spent time with Jesus, he discovered a life he had never expected. He found Jesus to be Someone who could be trusted, and Peter put his faith in Him. Peter placed everything in Jesus' hands and opened his heart to the gift that Jesus had promised him: the gift of the Holy Spirit. He was then filled with love for his friends, fellow disciples, and even his enemies. This was a complete transformation of Peter's heart—from hardened and worldly to Christ-like, sharing the same tenderness, joy, peacefulness, and overflowing love as the heart of Christ.

Consider this: I am Peter, and you are Peter. Jesus called Peter the fisherman just as He calls you, every day, to a life spent with Him. What if you give Christ everything? If Peter started out just like you, imperfect and unqualified, couldn't you end up just like him? Just like Peter, when you surrender to Christ, you will be changed, used by God, and filled with the Holy Spirit.

[Option for speaker—here, tell about your personal experience with giving Jesus everything. How was your life before? How is it different now? Use a single instance or a compilation of your experiences.]

What is God calling you to today? Complete surrender? Daily time spent getting to know Him? Letting Him help you forgive those who have hurt you? You know that Jesus is trustworthy and that you are most secure when you trust in Him. What would happen if you gave Him everything? There is only one way to find out. In the book *Ministry of Healing*, we read, "There is no limit to the usefulness of one who, putting self aside, makes room for the working of the Holy Spirit upon his heart and lives a life wholly consecrated to God. All who consecrate body, soul, and spirit to His service

will be constantly receiving a new endowment of physical, mental, and spiritual power. The inexhaustible supplies of heaven are at their command" (p. 159).

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

1. What would it mean for you to give Jesus everything?
2. What might you have to give up?
3. Where can you find the strength to do this?
4. Who here wants to be transformed into the likeness of Jesus and used by Him to change the world?
5. Are you willing to give Him your life, or even *willing to be made willing*?
6. Take time to pray for one another, and pray for the Holy Spirit to come and help you in surrendering every part of your life to Christ.

CLOSING

Create a great circle with everyone, joining hands. Pray a prayer to dedicate everyone who chooses to give everything to Jesus Christ

The Junior Youth worked as general consultants on this project. They were not assigned separate lessons.

Carol Raney provided editing support and opened her home and provided delightful suppers for the students.

Lynne Macias is a teacher at the Academy and provided editorial support for the WOP project.

Scott Douglass is a community member who was instrumental in the editing process.

Dale Cady was the person who kept it flowing. She has been with the KID Ministry since February 2011. Dale enjoys working with young people of all ages.

Don MacLafferty is the president of Kids in Discipleship (*KID*) Ministry Center. It began as a ministry of the Collegedale Seventh-day Adventist Church in 2002, and transitioned to a ministry of the Georgia-Cumberland Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in May of 2011. *KID* continues to be dedicated to equipping parents to spiritually nurture their children to have a personal, meaningful, and fruitful relationship with Jesus Christ.

GENERAL CONSULTANTS AND THOSE WHO MADE IT HAPPEN!



Brianna Johnson



Christian Beasley



Colby Hallock



Francesca Watkins



Isabelle Kaneza



Jamie Henderson



Joelle Kanyana



Jonathan Peden



Ken Norton



Mike Fisher



Olivia Odem



Sierra Watkins



Yehjee Lee



PHOTO
NOT
AVAILABLE

Keira Hooven



Carol Raney



Lynne Macias



Scott Douglass



Dale Cady



Don MacLafferty

HOW IT ALL CAME TOGETHER



Dear Friends,

A group of young people prayed earnestly for the Holy Spirit to give them words that would challenge their peers around the world to hold on to their calling to discipleship, and to call those who have not stepped up yet to join them in becoming disciples of Christ now! This Junior Youth Week of Prayer is their voice, their words, their passion...their heart cry.

For many weeks I met with these youth as they wrestled with how to best invite youth around the globe to discover Jesus Christ for themselves. As they studied the life of Peter through the Word of God and the writings of Ellen G. White, their hearts were deeply moved. If the Holy Spirit could change the rash and self-centered Peter into a Christ-like, bold disciple, He can do the same for them and for you!

This Week of Prayer is about Discipleship—living your life as a disciple of Jesus Christ now!

It begins by lifting Jesus up as the One who longs to turn your world upside down with His love, grace, and forgiveness. Each day that follows provides a powerful portrait of Peter's faith journey as a follower of the Master Disciple, the Carpenter of Nazareth.

This year you will have two options: the traditional way of a daily sermon with questions at the end of the lesson, and a new format where there is no sermon and the lesson is studied in a small group. Each message begins with an activity to prepare the youth for the relevant, powerful Word of God. The message ends with a spiritual challenge to be completed before the next evening. The messages and small group options are not merely the sharing of information, but rather an intentional discipleship process to encourage each youth in making decisions for Christ and acting on them.

God loves to reach youth through youth who walk with Him! Prayerfully consider equipping the youth of your church to lead out in this week of spiritual awakening. Encourage these young leaders to personalize these sermons and small group Bible studies by inserting their own stories of God's life-changing grace and His power to speak and work through their lives.

Above all else, pray for the presence and power of the Holy Spirit to call the youth to follow Christ now. Pray that the Comforter will bring healing to young hearts. Pray that this Spirit of the living God will completely fill up the lives of our youth. Pray that He will send them out with a holy fire in their veins to once again turn the world upside down with their teaching, preaching, and living for the sole glory and honor of their Elder Brother, their Savior and their Friend, Jesus.

Your friend,

Pastor Don

ABOUT THE WRITERS

DAY 1: JESUS



Britney Verduzco is a fifteen-year-old sophomore

in an Adventist academy, who lives in Tennessee with her younger brother and her parents. Being creative, reading books, playing the piano, and talking with friends fill her spare time and bring a smile to her face. She enjoys backpacking, camping, and spending time with her family. She loves Jesus and says she cannot wait to spend eternity in heaven with Him.



Katherine Hesler just finished her first year at Collegedale

Academy. Her family moved to Collegedale, Tennessee in 2010. She enjoys reading, playing soccer, turning average activities into exciting adventures, and being with friends. Her favorite subjects in school are algebra and biology. She hopes to someday be either a scientist, teacher, or both. Her favorite

Bible verse is Proverbs 3:5, 6, which reminds her that when she trusts and submits to God she does not need to worry because He is guiding her.



Macayla Raney is a growing disciple of Jesus Christ.

She is an academy senior who loves singing, playing the piano and guitar, writing, and spending time with her friends and family. She preached an evangelistic series in Nicaragua when she was twelve and went on a mission trip to Fiji in the summer of 2010.



Michelle Suekert is a seventeen-year-old senior at

Collegedale Academy. The summer before her 9th grade year her family moved from Charlevoix, Michigan to Collegedale, Tennessee. She enjoys reading, horseback riding, hanging out with friends, daydreaming, and walking in the rain. She has grown a lot closer to the Lord this past year, and is still getting closer

to and deepening her understanding of Him. Michelle says "God is my lifesaver and I don't know what I'd do without Him!"

DAY 2: EXPLORE



Amanda Ruf is a senior at Collegedale Academy in Tennessee. She

loves stories of all kinds, in every medium. She is endlessly fascinated by the spiritual questions in life and takes every opportunity to seek out the truth.

DAY 3: COME

Kaitlyn

Elizabeth Verrill is an eighteen-year-old Lancaster, Massachusetts native, who relocated with her family to Collegedale, Tennessee. A student of Southern Adventist University, she has a passion for people, music, writing, and leading. She has worked full-time at a summer day camp at the Collegedale Church as a small group counselor and children's pastor. Kaitlyn loves God



and desires to do His will. Kaitlyn says, "I am excited to be included in two projects involving the world church this year, including the Inside Out Leadership training this past winter and the world church youth week of prayer project. I am grateful to all of you for this opportunity. God bless."



A bio-physics major, **Paul Miller** is a freshman at Southern

Adventist University in Collegedale, Tennessee. He enjoys playing and watching all kinds of sports and loves to swim, run, hang out with friends, travel, write, build and design rockets, hike, and enjoy the outdoors. Above all, he loves spending time with God. Born into an Adventist family, Paul says his walk with Christ became real at the beginning of his senior year. He has recommitted his life to Christ, which he says is a daily choice. He says, "Christ has displayed Himself to me in many ways, and now I

have a driving desire to tell others about Him.”

DAY 4: TRUST



Eighteen-year-old **Kelsey Elliott** has a passion for hiking and spending time with family. One day she hopes to be able to see the world and capture it with her camera to educate others. She is a freshman at Southern Adventist University and is eager to see how God will work in her life.



Mindy Harvey graduated from Collegedale

Academy in the summer of 2012. She is currently completing her general education subjects at Southern Adventist University, and hopes to be accepted into their Nursing Program this coming January, or the fall of 2012. Mindy plan to use the skills she will acquire in the mission field.



Sara Fernando was raised in an Adventist family. She

has two brothers and a sister, and attended Adventist schools her whole life, and is currently a freshman at Southern Adventist University. She enjoys horseback riding, camping, and general outdoor activities. Playing the piano and organ are also a major part of her life. She is currently a music major, but has no idea what her final career goal will be. Although she loves the idea of mission work, she is waiting to see what God has planned for her.

DAY 5: SURRENDER



Alexandra “Alex” Pervis enjoys hiking, playing

instruments, drawing, and spending time with friends. But her relationship with God

comes first. She feels blessed to be a part of the writing process of this Week of Prayer. She says, “It’s is a wonderful thing to see God working through young people. I pray that this Week of Prayer will be guided by the Holy Spirit.”



Julie MacLafferty is in 10th grade and goes to

Collegedale Academy Tennessee. She enjoys reading, writing, the outdoors, and spending time with family and friends. A love for languages, cultures and world traveling make her life interesting. Her ultimate goal is to live a crazy life following wherever Jesus leads.

DAY 6: ASK



Evan Moses is an avid reader, enjoys games, laughing, and

friends. He likes working with kids and showing them Christ’s love.



Travis Crumley is a freshman at Southern Adventist University,

majoring in Computer Software Engineering and Music, with concentration on the French horn. Travis enjoys riding ATV’s, writing, singing, and performing in the university orchestra and band. He also enjoys computers in general, but in particular programming various things, including games. He’s hoping to eventually join one of the major technology companies as a software engineer in the future, but he says it all depends on where God leads him.

DAY 7: LOVE



Brenden Dodd attended all nine years of schooling

in Collegedale’s Seventh-day Adventist school system, graduating from Collegedale Academy May 2011. He is currently enrolled

at Southern Adventist University, with an interest in the languages of the world. He lives with his parents, younger sister, and two dogs in Apison, Tennessee. He enjoys writing, hiking, reading, and playing the banjo.



Garring Steele is a graduate of Collegedale Academy.

He currently works at Southern Adventist University as a janitor in the Hulsey Wellness Center. When Garring was a young boy he enjoyed an engaging life of home schooling with three siblings in a small house on a large, wooded property. He spent much of his time climbing trees and working alongside his mother in the garden and doing home repair projects. He was strongly influenced by the morals of his father, who passed away when Garring was seven years old and by the old-fashioned climate of country living where neighbors help neighbors and watch out for each other's needs.

DAY 8: WHAT IF YOU GAVE GOD EVERYTHING?



Angela McPherson loves using words to serve

Christ. She is twenty-six years old and a recent graduate of Southern Adventist University, with a degree in Mass Communications. She has pastored a small non-denominational church (and shared the Advent message while she was at it), travelled to multiple countries on mission adventures, and written for various church publications. She is currently interning with the Georgia-Cumberland Conference assisting in the Communications division, and will be an assistant chaplain for Georgia Cumberland Academy this coming fall. She longs for knowledge in many areas, but craves most to know the depth of the heart of God and to magnify His character.



Heather Kalua was born in California, USA, and

lived there until she was twelve, when she and her mom and three other siblings moved to Tennessee. Now she is seventeen and loves living in Tennessee! She has always loved animals and has lots of pets—cats, dogs, rabbits, horses, and goats. Heather just graduated from high school and is planning on starting college. She hopes to find a career where she can help people in a way that she is good at and that she enjoys. She is excited to see what her life will be like in a few years.



Jacklyn Ruth moved from Laurel, Maryland to Tennessee in 2010.

She just completed her freshman year of high school at Collegedale Academy. Jacklyn enjoys singing, reading,

and listening to music. Her friends like to give her nicknames like: Cracker Jack, Sunshine, Jackie Chan, Giggle Box, Canned Peas, and Smiles. She adores little kids and enjoys having fun, and hopes to learn to play the guitar someday. Despite her nonstop talkativeness, she is very shy. She is eager to get her drivers license so that she can drive on her own. During class she sometimes doodle hearts and sunshine on her papers, and hopes someday in her future to get a great job. Jacklyn wants her life to be a reflection of Christ.



Morgan Williams is a senior at Collegedale Academy in Tennessee,

USA. In her spare time, she enjoys horseback riding, drawing, exploring the countryside, and singing in the choir. After she graduates, she plans on going to Southern Adventist University to become a nurse practitioner.

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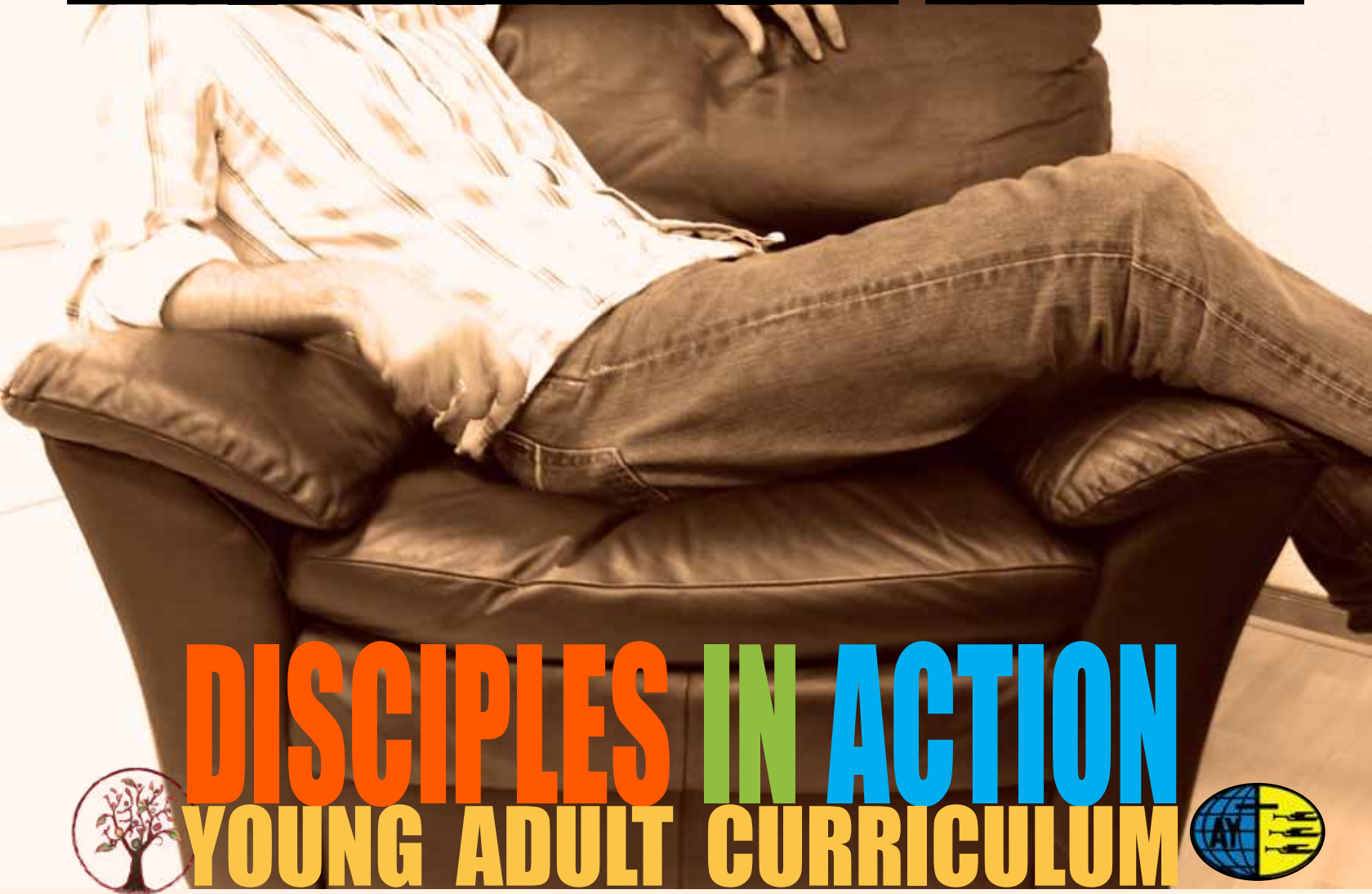
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