

week of prayer 2012
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everything?
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).

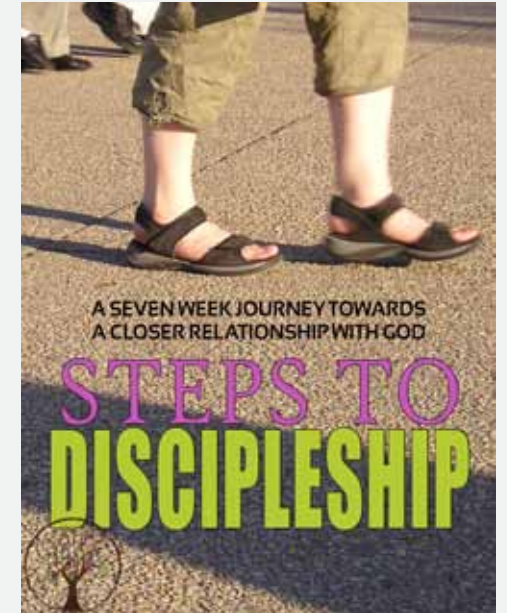
So, please, participate in the week of prayer. Remember the importance of prayer and enjoy the blessings of being in constant communication with your Friend, Creator, and Savior, Jesus Christ.

A WEEK OF PRAYER: A TIME FOR INTERCESSORY PRAYER!



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personal devotion



Use this special week of prayer and spiritual emphasis as a launch-pad to begin your 7-week **Steps to Discipleship** series.

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THE POWER OF ONE

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





Youth Ministries Department



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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

Day 1 < < <

JESUS

John 10:10



SERMON

FOCAL POINT Jesus/Abundant Life

Small Groups

Bridge

1. Ask the congregation to form groups of three or four.
2. Say: *Think for a minute about interesting, positive facts about yourself—two that you think your friends and family know about you and one that you wish everyone knew about you.*
3. Say: *Take turns discussing the interesting facts about yourself for three minutes.*
4. Talk about it: *Did you hear things you already knew? Did you learn anything about anyone? Did someone learn something about you that you thought they already knew or should have known? What are one or two things that Jesus may wish everyone knew about who He really is? 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 much do you really know about 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 does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices in 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 doesn't not envy, Jesus does not boast, Jesus is not proud. Jesus does not dishonor others, 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 Child,” in the book *Desire of Ages*, Ellen White describes Jesus' younger years: “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 sole desire is to replace God on His throne. Isaiah 14:13, 14 records Lucifer as

saying, “I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God, and I will sit on the mount of the assembly in the recess of the north. I will ascend above the heights 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. “There was war 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 choice in whom to believe: God or Satan. Unfortunately, because they chose Satan’s way, our world is now stained with the curse of sin and the misery sin brings. But God gives us hope. 1 Corinthians 15:22 states that while one man’s life got 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 comprehend 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. Some suggested that he might accelerate the process by wearing his hiking boots and stepping on 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 plan into action. As he watched his beloved ants ambling around so sickly, 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 had 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 me and every other human being that has ever lived (or will live) on earth. As part of the Heavenly plan, Jesus left a world of indescribable glory and unfathomable perfection and love. 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? Let me read it again. [Reader, please read 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 an abundant life.

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

He offers us a life of unfathomable 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 about anything in prayer 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 that He gave His life for.

He offers us a purpose in life—not in the future when we're older, smarter, and more experienced; rather, 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 to be in our lives.

Will you choose to see Jesus for who He really is?

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.

Read 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 again, replacing the word "love" with "Jesus." Which description of Jesus is your favorite? Why? How have you seen this characteristic of Jesus shown in the Bible or in your life?

Did you learn anything new about Jesus? If so, what? Did you get a better understanding of something about Him that you've heard before? Did you like this picture of Jesus? Why or why not?

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?

We are like bugs. Even we agree that squishing a bug is easier than attempting to save it. We would never even consider becoming a bug and sacrificing our lives so it 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?

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 before we meet again tomorrow is this:

- Spend 5-10 minutes at home reflecting on what you heard and discussed tonight.
- Think about someone who may want to hear the things you're learning.
- Come back tomorrow night and, if you want to, bring a friend.

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.

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Day 2 < < <

EXPLORE

John 1:35-42



SERMON

FOCAL POINT

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 8-12 people. These groups offer a chance for us to get together and talk about questions and study the Bible. (Allow time for group organization.) Now, within your groups, meet with 2-3 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.*

BRIDGE

Have the congregation stay in their small groups of 2-3.

Say: *Have you ever wanted to get to know all that you possibly could about a specific person? Maybe that person was a famous figure or a new kid at school. What prompted*

your interest in them? What did you have to do in order to find out what they are really like? Did you ask around? Did you try to hang out with them yourself? Discuss this within your groups for a few minutes.

After giving a few minutes for discussion, ask for 1 or 2 volunteers to share their thoughts on how they try to get to know someone.

Debrief: *What are some similarities and differences between exploring the character of a person and exploring the character of Jesus? Do we adopt 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 strewn 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 query before promptly 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-encompassing 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 abstract notions of deities. 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 the status quo of their lives? Or how many believed they had the truth all figured out and were not even 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 a woman looking for a simple coin to the Israelites exploring new territory. You can become explorers too! Jesus wants us to pursue Him and to get to know Him better. God's Word gives a variety of examples of people exploring just who Jesus was.

A simple, personal testimony may be all it takes to spark the need to further explore Jesus. This is all it took for two of John the Baptist's disciples to conclude that they had a need to explore the Son of God.

Read John 1:35-39. Prior to these 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 pretty riled up, and they immediately followed Him to try to learn more about Him.

For some people, exploring Jesus takes time, but the initial step is done almost on a whim. Simon Peter was like that. Read John 1:40-42. Andrew's announcement, "We have found the Messiah," must have resonated with Peter for him to be willing to be led to Jesus. Little did Andrew know it, but 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 a prime example of a group of people, the Pharisees, whose hearts and minds were not changed by the facts. In John 9:1-34, Jesus is 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 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 coincide with their preconceived ideas, so they refused to believe in Jesus.

As we explore, other people's opinions can have quite the sway 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. Having sought out so much about Jesus, Peter had discovered that Jesus was the one true God and Messiah.

It is not too difficult to start 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, HU] [is 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" (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 exploring 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 incorporating Bible studies to help 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!

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

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Go back to the groups of 2-3 people that you met with at the beginning and discuss these questions:
2. 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? What would exploring Jesus look like in your life?
3. What if...you encountered something in the Bible that you found disagreeable, that just rubbed you the wrong way? Would you reject it on account of its unpleasantness? What would you do? Why?
4. What if...you gave God the chance to work in your life? What do you think would happen?

FAITH CHALLENGE

Tonight, examine the way you see God. What is your perception in relation to what actually is the truth? Then, take time to explore who He really is. Obviously, your exploration will last much longer than one night, but start your journey now by earnestly seeking Him in His Word, the Bible.

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 your heart to the possibility that God could be showing you something beyond what you're used to!

CLOSING

Within your mini-groups of 2-3 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.

SMALL GROUP STUDY GUIDE

EXPLORE

Check-In

SAY:

Tonight, we're going to be spending some time in groups of 8-12 people. These groups offer a chance for us to get together and talk about questions and study the Bible. (Allow time for group organization.) Now, within your groups, meet with 2-3 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.

THE BRIDGE

Go back to your main group of 8-12.

Give each group a sufficient amount of paper and writing utensils for Step 3.

Have each individual write three characteristics about themselves (non-physical characteristics, i.e. hobbies, personality traits, age, etc.).

Fold each paper and stick them in a bag and mix them up, then have each person pick a paper. If you draw your own, put it back and re-pick.

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.

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?"*

ALTERNATIVE BRIDGE

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.

Give everyone one minute to carefully study the shoes and make every mental observation they can about them.

Remove the shoes from the group's sight.

Ask everyone to share their observations.

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?"*

FOCAL POINT

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 strewn 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 query before promptly 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-encompassing 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 abstract notions of deities. 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 the status quo

of their lives? Or how many believed they had the truth all figured out and were not looking for any 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 8-12, read and discuss the following passages.

Read John 1:35-39. Why did the two disciples of John follow Jesus? What do you think they were searching for?

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?

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?

Read Matthew 16:13-16. Who did people say Jesus was? Who did Peter say Jesus was? What do you think convinced him to identify Jesus in this way?

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?” Pose this question to the people around you, and you’ll quickly discover that there are a lot of ideas 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’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.

Ellen White writes 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 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” (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?

GO BACK TO THE GROUPS OF 2-3 PEOPLE THAT YOU MET WITH AT THE BEGINNING.

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?

WITHIN YOUR SMALL GROUPS (2-3), DISCUSS THESE QUESTIONS:

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? What would that look like for you?

What if...you found something in the Bible that you found disagreeable, that just rubbed

discipleship is actively following JESUS

you the wrong way? Would you reject it on account of its unpleasantness? What would you do? Why?

What if...you gave God the chance to work in your life? What do you think would happen?

Check-Out

Summary: 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!

First, determine if you are willing to start on an exploration of who God really is.

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.

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 2-3 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.

Day 3 < < <

COME

Matthew 4:18-20



SERMON

FOCAL POINT

Come to Jesus

CHECK-IN:

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

Ask: Please get in groups of three or four of the
same gender and talk about last night’s Faith
Challenge and the question just asked. Discuss
how it went, why you did or didn’t do it, how
you could make it a regular thing in your life,
and then pray with each other over what was
discussed.

BRIDGE

Ask the congregation to continue in their
groups of 3-4.

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.*

CALL FOR THREE TEAMS TO COME UP
FRONT AND DEMONSTRATE THEIR IDEA
OF HOW TO CONVINCE EVERYONE TO
FOLLOW THEM OUT THE DOOR.

Debrief: *It’s not easy to convince people to come
and 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
out 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

Coming means stepping out into the unknown!
Jesus calls us to step out in faith and come to
Him! Jesus 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

READ Matthew 4:18-20. Here, we find Peter’s
experience with coming and following Jesus.
When Jesus approaches Peter, in this story, He
comes with a very simple call: “Come, follow
me!”

In those days, being chosen as a disciple
was an extreme honor, as only the best and
brightest people were chosen to work for the
rabbi. It was therefore a very structured,
meticulous process. However, Jesus’ process
for choosing disciples was dramatically
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 strange that during the
process of finding disciples, Jesus didn’t go
to a king, priest, or other high member of
society? Instead, He went to the simplest,
most common man. Nothing was very special
about Peter, right? But, Jesus knew his heart

and his potential, and somehow, that was
what mattered! The call that Jesus made to
Peter, He also extends to each one of us, 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 has the potential to benefit His
kingdom!

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

READ Luke 9:57-62. In these verses, Jesus
makes it clear that when we come to Him we
should come with 100 percent dedication to His
call! This means we do not make excuses or
put off our commitment, but rather, we come
when He calls with all that we are! He doesn’t
ask us to make a million changes before we
come; He just asks us to come wholeheartedly!
This is how Peter responded to Jesus’ call. He
never even second-guessed his actions. Jesus
said, “Come,” and Peter didn’t let anything,
anyone, or any preconceived ideas hold him
back! Something about Jesus was so intriguing
and real that Peter didn’t need any persuading.
Peter came 100 percent, and so should we!

Have you heard the story about Jim Laudey
who shared an apartment with his best friend,
Stevie, in the bustling city of San Diego? Both

men felt overwhelmed by the hectic atmosphere surrounding them! One day, they met a man named Michael who told them of his home on the Pacific coast! As he talked, Jim and Stevie began to imagine what their lives could be like if they could live like Michael! As if he could read their minds, he broke their daydreams by inviting them to come back with him and live a new life on beautiful beachfront property. There were only two conditions: They could only come if they came empty handed and if Michael built their homes! They had to be willing to accept everything their new life offered! Within seconds, both Jim and Stevie accepted his offer.

As the men made their way to the new property, their minds raced! They imagined the gigantic houses they would build! Finally, they reached their new home! They soaked in the fresh air and the sound of the waves crashing against the shores. They heard the giddy laughter of the children, watched as a couple walked hand in hand, and saw the beautiful sunset hanging above the water. This was what they had been waiting for!

Michael walked alongside the men as they surveyed the scene and focused the men on where their homes would soon stand. He took them over to a large plot of land. It was time

to start building. Jim followed Michael over to the land given him. Stevie, on the other hand, turned away. He would build his home by himself! He knew he was perfectly capable on his own and what his house should look like.

A biblical parable tells a similar story of two men who built their houses on a beachfront shore! Read Luke 6:46-49. When we come to Jesus, He helps us build a strong foundation that supports our new life with Him. You see, both Jim and Stevie “came” in action! But only Jim came in heart! Only then do we build a life foundation that will never fail us!

When we say yes to God’s call we choose to come the same way Peter and Jim did! We follow not merely in action, but in heart! We follow 100 percent! If you want to come and build a sturdy foundation in Christ, then now is the time to make your choice! “Yes, I believe! Yes, I want You (God) to be the sturdy 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 T.A.G. or Time Alone with God! To start this only takes three simple steps:

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.

CHOOSE A PLAN. Think of T.A.G. having at 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!

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

Now let’s get back in the 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!

- What if you told Jesus Christ you would come to Him as you are? What would that look like in your life?
- What if you told Jesus Christ you would follow Him wherever He leads? What kind of places could He take you? Would it have to be a physical place, or could He lead you to a change in mindset?

- 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. spiritually refreshing for you?

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 this:

- Apply T.A.G. in your life.
- Read Matthew 4:18-20 and Luke 6:46-49.
- Talk to God about your choice to follow Him.
- Ask Him to impress your heart with whatever He has to say to you in response!
- If you want to come to Christ, but hesitate, ask Him to give you the desire to follow Him.
- Ask Him to make this coming process a strong foundation for your spiritual walk!

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 him/her into a whole new life! Pray for any specific situation he/she mentioned or just for his/her T.A.G. time with God. Then we will close with a group prayer!

COME Matthew 4:18-20

SMALL GROUP STUDY GUIDE

CHECK-IN:

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

Ask: Please get in groups of three or four people of the same gender and talk about last night’s Faith Challenge and the question just asked. Discuss how it went, why you did or didn’t do it, how you could make it a regular thing in your life, and then pray with each other over what was discussed.

THE BRIDGE

Ask them to stay in their groups of 3 or 4.

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 out the door.

Give each team about 30 seconds to convince the whole group to follow them out the door.

DEBRIEF

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 calls has called people to follow Him?

FOCAL POINT

Jesus calls you to follow Him.

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 an old lady to her feet. The man wondered why Jesus was there, 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

To start off Peter’s life of discipleship, we find him fishing with empty nets that Jesus wants to fill. Read Matthew 4:18-20.

Why was the way Jesus invited Peter to follow Him odd or different from the ways of the other rabbis in those days? How is it different from the way we disciple people today?

- What did Jesus ask of Peter?
- What did Jesus promise Peter?
- How did Peter respond? What is the meaning of his actions?

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.

- What does Jesus mean by building on a solid foundation?
- How can we relate this to God’s call?
- What would this foundation help us with in our lives?

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. Peter could have made up many excuses and said, “Well, I’ll follow you tomorrow,” but he didn’t. Jesus asks us today because today is the day He wants us. He calls us *now!* Read Luke 9:57-62.

- How can we put our hands to the plow?
- What did Jesus mean when He told the man that foxes have holes but He doesn’t have a place to rest his head?

- What kind of commitment does Jesus desire from us?
- How does that look practically in our lives?”

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.

- How can we be where Jesus is?
- What does God’s “honoring” look like?
- How can this promise relate to us today?

TRY IT OUT!

Just as Jesus is coming to call us, we must come to follow Him. He calls with haste, without delay, 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 start his spiritual walk, for Peter was giving up the life he had for something that would be better in the long run. In Luke 18:28, we find 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. He is simply and purely calling you to “come.”

People have found that it is hard to believe someone when you do not know that person.

In the same way, 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 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 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.

CHOOSE A PLAN. Think of T.A.G. having at least 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!

WHAT IF...?

IN YOUR GROUPS, DISCUSS THESE QUESTIONS, BUILD EACH OTHER UP, AND MAKE IT PRACTICAL TO YOUR LIVES:

- What if you told Jesus Christ you would come to Him as you are?
- What if you told Jesus Christ you would follow Him wherever He leads you?

- What if you invested in your relationship with God on a daily basis starting tonight?

- What is the potential difference it could make in your life?

CHECK-OUT

Summary: Many times in our lives 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. He is reaching out for you. "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). Just as Jesus knew what Peter could do, He knows what our potential is, but He is waiting for our answer.

CHOICE: Will you answer His call to come and follow Him? Tell Him what is on your heart and be honest.

FAITH CHALLENGE

Would you like to grow closer to your Savior and build your relationship with Him? The challenge for you in the next 23 hours before we meet again is to apply T.A.G. into your life. To do this, you can start with these simple steps:

- Schedule an appointment with God.
- Read Matthew 4:18-20 and chapter 25.

- Talk to God about your choice to follow Him.

- Ask Him to impress your heart with whatever He has to say to you in response.

- Take action!

CLOSING

Give each small group time to pray about the faith challenge. Have each member pray specifically for the person on his or her right. After that, ask for prayer requests from the whole group. Then, pray for a divine blessing upon the whole group.

Christianity doesn't end with our repentance and conversion. It is only the beginning—the beginning of a wonderful journey called discipleship. To disciple effectively, we need to be constantly growing. As we behold the character of God, we can do this in many ways.

Day 3 < < <

TRUST

Matthew 14: 22-23



SERMON

FOCAL POINT: Trust Jesus!

SMALL GROUPS: Accountability

Form same gender pairs (guys together and girls together).

Ask each other:

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

BRIDGE

Say: Turn to someone near and ask how they're doing. Ask how the meetings have affected them and if they have seen God working in their life.

Call for a volunteer.

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.

Place a coin or some other small semi-valuable item in the container.

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].

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

DEBRIEF

Have everyone turn to the people they talked to earlier to discuss these questions.

- *Was it difficult to place their hand in the container? Why or why not?*
- *How might the volunteer's reaction to placing their hand into the bag of unknown things compare with your reaction to God's leading in your life?*
- *Pray with the person next to you for an open mind and a willing heart.*

[Pray with congregation.]

INTRODUCTION

Imagine the only thing between you and safety is a rickety old bridge. The boards are cracked, the ropes are bare, but behind you a blazing fire surges uncontrollably. On the other side of the bridge, someone calls to you. They tell you it's safe to cross, but you aren't sure who it is or how they know that it's safe. What do you do?

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, in the confusion, we aren't sure we believe His voice. The good news is that Jesus does not wait for us to trust Him perfectly. He invites us to trust Him. He waits patiently while we learn to trust Him. And He is right there to catch us when we fail.

[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 who He was. They were probably distracted by the storm and tired of fighting the waves. In their exhausted state, their confusion turned to fear. Jesus felt their fear and wanted to replace it with trust in Him. He reassured them by identifying Himself. Knowledge of who He was laid a foundation of trust.

"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).

Jesus does not expect us to trust Him without help. He calms our fears and concerns as He did for the disciples. In the Bible, we learn who Jesus is. He then invites us to take a step toward Him.

Peter did not have everything together when Jesus called him. He was still questioning whether or not Jesus was who He said He was. His challenge to Jesus shows both doubt and trust. Fortunately for us, Jesus does not require perfect trust, only willingness. Jesus responded to Peter’s challenge 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.

Peter instantly realized his mistake and cried out to the one Person that he knew could save him. Jesus did not allow any time to pass between Peter’s cry and His action. Jesus was right there waiting to save him. He may have been disappointed with Peter’s lack of trust, but it by no means kept Him from saving Peter.

Peter’s life is an excellent example of what learning to trust Jesus looks like. He showed incredible trust in daring Jesus to call him to walk on water; sometimes, we can experience temporary lapses after displaying surprising levels of trust. But every time Peter failed, Jesus picked him back up. Peter went on to be a great influence to the world. Can we do the same? Of course we can! We can all step out of our boats and trust Jesus. We can all get into the water to experience something completely new with our Savior. We may fail, but Jesus’ power and trustworthiness will always shine through. Imagine all the incredible things that could happen if we would only step out of the boat and truly trust Jesus with everything.

One of the first things we have to trust is Jesus’ love for us. Read Romans 8:38-39.

The enemy is always at work to make us feel that God doesn’t love us. We might feel like we have done too many things wrong or that we have disappointed Him too often. Sometimes, when tragic things happen, we blame God for it. That is exactly what the enemy wants. It was Satan’s first accusation against God to say that He should not be trusted. Guard yourself against this. Take texts like the one we just

read and embed them in your heart. Jesus tells us over and over again that His love for us is never-ending, and His greatest desire is that none should be lost. His love for us surpasses everything. We cannot comprehend it. This love will never leave us and will never betray a trust.

Keeping this undying love in mind, turn with me to Romans 3:23. [Read Romans 3:23.] God loves us, but we fall short. But even our failures do not stop Jesus from saving us. He does not judge us by our failures; He saves us in spite of them. Jesus longs to save us from the seas that threaten our lives; we need only to ask.

Now turn with me over just a few chapters to the first half of Romans 6:23. [Read the first half of Romans 6:23.] We cannot save ourselves, but if we are not saved, we will die. Sin and separation from God will result in death. Too often we overlook the fact that we owe everything to God. There is not a single thing we ‘own’ that was not provided by God. Without Him, we cease to exist.

Just as Peter cried out to Jesus for physical salvation, we too must cry out to Jesus for eternal salvation. We need to admit to Jesus that we are full of sin and fall short of His glory, and because of this we desperately need His saving grace.

Turn with me to 1 John 1:9. [Read 1 John 1:9.] 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 anticipate 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 so is it with Christ? We know He loves us with an incomprehensible love and that He is eagerly awaiting our choice to let Him forgive us. He wants to free us from guilt and offers us the incomparable 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.

Turn with me to Revelation 3:20. [Read Revelation 3:20.] Jesus patiently waits for us to accept salvation rather than forcing us. Jesus desires to be with us. He wants to come in and spend time with us. Jesus wants to have a close relationship with us. Our part seems rather simple. Jesus invites us to hear His voice and open the door.

We must recognize Jesus’ call to “Come” as Peter did. Then we must go to Jesus. We will stumble and probably fall, but one cry to Jesus and He will be there picking us right back up. All we must 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.

Pray with me now, and if you are willing, invite Jesus into your heart today. He eagerly knocks at the door of your heart. As we bow our heads, don't send Him away. Accept His gift of eternal life and trust that He will take care of you.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

- How will putting your complete trust in God affect your life and the lives of those around you?
- Why did Peter have such a hard time trusting Jesus? Why do we have the same problem?
- 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 this:

1. 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.
2. Read Psalms 145-146.
3. Take about five minutes to consider your salvation. Think about who you are trusting it to: yourself? God? Your closest confidant? The One who is strong enough to ensure its safety?
4. 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

Please turn to the person sitting beside you and pray in twos. 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 through your way.



GOD'S TEN PROMISES

by Kimberley Tagert-Paul

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

In *Gods Ten Promises* you will find a refreshingly different approach to learning about this important topic. Join twins Cameron and Kaitlynn as they discover something exciting—the commandments are not a list of dos and donts. Rather, they are promises. In them, God is saying, “If you let Me, Ill make you into someone who wouldnt even think of stealing.”

TRUST

Matthew 14:22-33

SMALL GROUP STUDY GUIDE

CHECK-IN

Form same gender pairs (guys together and girls together).

Ask each other:

How is your T.A.G. time going?

What did you do with last night's faith challenge?

THE BRIDGE

Say: 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, a little space away from everyone else.

1. After giving them a chance to do this, have one pair of volunteers go first.
2. Blindfold one person at one end of the room and have their partner at the other side of the room.
3. Have some more volunteers sit down on the floor, in the way, so that the blindfolded person will have to walk around them.
4. 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.
5. Have all the willing pairs complete this task, then return to the group setting.

DEBRIEF

- Was it hard to trust the other person? Why?
- Was your partner deserving of your trust?
- How can you know someone is trustworthy?
- How does this activity resemble your trust in God?
- Do you let Him lead you through life?

FOCAL POINT

We can trust Jesus!

INTRODUCTION

After a long day of teaching, Peter must have known Jesus was exhausted. He probably suppressed his urge to speak when Jesus dismissed them to go across the lake, but inside, he still wondered if Jesus could control the crowd without his help.

Once out in the lake, Peter must have noticed the wind rising against them. He probably thought of Jesus on the shore, but soon became quickly distracted by the growing waves. No doubt Peter began to take control of the situation, and pride may have filled his heart as the other disciples followed his orders.

Peter did not realize that Jesus was about to show him how much he needed to trust someone other than himself.

THE WORD

1. Read Matthew 14:22-33.

- What do you think Peter was thinking when he told Jesus “Lord, if it’s You, tell me to come to You on the water”?
- How did Jesus respond to Peter’s challenge? What does this tell you about Jesus?
- 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?
- Did Jesus refuse Peter’s cry for salvation? Has he ever refused anyone’s plea?

2. Read Proverbs 3:5-6.

- Did Peter take Solomon’s advice?
- How could Peter have trusted more? What did he do wrong?

In order to be saved from the sea, Peter had to choose to trust Jesus with his life and ask for help. Peter learned that he could not escape the sea by himself. He had to trust Jesus with everything, every bit of himself: his past, his present, and his future. Perhaps Peter finally began to realize that Jesus was not only the Savior of his life, but also the Savior of his soul.

“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

- What does this verse tell us about God’s love?
- Did Peter think that the wind and waves were more powerful than Jesus? Why?
- Is there anything powerful enough to take away God’s love for you?
- Summary: Trust in God because He loves you for who you are, and nothing can take that away.

4. Read Romans 3:23, 6:23 (1st half)

- What is the end result of sin? Why?
- What happened when Peter stopped trusting Jesus?
- What did Jesus do when He heard Peter’s cry?
- Does Jesus force you to be saved? Did He grab Peter before Peter asked?

- How do you get help from Jesus?
- Summary: Peter needed to tell Jesus that he needed Him. We must tell Jesus the same thing.

5. Read 1 John 1:9.

- What is Jesus’ promise to us in this passage?
- What would Jesus do for you if you told Him all of your sins and gave Him your trust?
- Summary: 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 (2nd part)

- What does God desire to give us?
- Can we do anything to earn this gift?
- What gift did Jesus give Peter out in the water?
- How much more so does He want to give everyone eternal life?
- Summary: Jesus desperately wants to save you from the sin you’re drowning in and give you eternal life. He is your Savior.

7. Read Revelation 3:20

- What must we do to have Jesus be with us?
- How did Peter accept Jesus?
- Will Jesus refuse any offer to come into someone’s heart if they ask?
- Summary: 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 promises 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 sank 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 trust in Him. Ask Him to show you what you are still clinging to 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: Write down a list of things that are holding you back from trusting in God. Pray over them individually and ask God for His help. Tell Him that you relinquish your control and give Him all of your problems. He will take them from you and He will not betray your trust.

WHAT IF...?

Say: *Please return to your small groups and answer these questions.*

1. What if... you learned from Peter’s mistake and trusted in Jesus?
2. What if... you take Solomon’s advice (Proverbs 3:5-6)? What would you gain?

3. What if ... you take Jesus' hand like Peter did? How would your life change?

CHECK OUT

Summary: Peter trusted Jesus enough to step out of the boat, but he 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

Do you truly want to trust God with your life? Your faith challenge for the next 23 hours is this:

- 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.
- Read Psalms 145-146.
- Take about five minutes to consider your salvation. Think about who you are trusting it to: yourself? God? Your closest confidant? The One who is strong enough to ensure its safety?
- 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.

trust
is the
foundation
in helping
people
become like
Jesus.

Day 5 <<<

SURRENDER John 13: 1-18



SERMON

SMALL GROUPS

Accountability

Ask: *Please team up in twos- guys together and girls together.*

Ask each other:

How is your T.A.G. time going?

What did you do with last night's faith challenge?

BRIDGE

Say: *Turn to your neighbor and discuss these questions: Think of two items that you treasure. (Pause.) Which one is more important to you? Which one would you give up for the other? Why? Discuss with the person sitting next to you for two minutes.*

DEBRIEF

You all named two items that are important to you. Even though you treasure both of them, one is still more significant than the other. You are willing to give up the "lesser" item for the

more valuable one. Tonight we are going to talk about surrendering everything that is between us and God.

INTRODUCTION

Imagine this scene in Jerusalem during Passover:

Twelve men surged through the narrow streets, elated. Thoughts swirled around in their heads. They were beyond reason. 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, glorying in the favor of the people.

This was just the first step. Soon everyone would crown their Jesus king. He would lead in a glorious revolt 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 inevitable argument had started again. “I’m going to sit on his right,” James casually mentioned to John. “No—me!” John objected. “Everyone should realize,” Peter interjected, “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 engaged in a heated argument.

The disciples burst through the door and sank down on the couches. They kept bickering throughout the meal, even after Jesus had

arrived. Peter was loudly debating 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 assumed the role of a servant and wiped the dirt from their feet. What was happening?

The story continues in John 13:1-17. Please turn there with me as we focus on the first five verses.

MESSAGE

When the disciples first arrived at the upper room, they were probably arguing. It was something that they did often. Their minds were focused on the kingdom they thought Jesus was going to make and the positions of power they thought they were going to receive. 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 stoop to a servant’s task of washing each other’s feet. Jesus didn’t mind, though. He humbled Himself and washed their dirty feet.

[READ JOHN 13: 6-11.]

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. 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. We have to realize that unless we let Jesus fully cleanse our hearts, we have no

part with Him. We don’t truly belong to Him until we let go of ourselves and surrender to Him.

[READ JOHN 13:12-17.]

If we want to be like Jesus, we must be willing to serve. Jesus showed us the perfect example of selfless love. He is so much more than we are, yet He stooped to the role of a servant. What does that say about us? He invites us to follow His example and do the same. This heart change happens only when we fully surrender to Him.

What does surrender really mean? How will it affect us?

[READ LUKE 9:23-25.]

In this passage, Jesus makes it very clear that we must deny ourselves, which has a completely different meaning for each person. Denying yourself means that you say to the desires of this world, “I don’t know you.” You say to your selfish inclinations, “I don’t want you.” You must be willing to give everything for Jesus and find yourself in Him.

He also mentions that we must take up our crosses just as He did. If suffering, persecution, or hardship follow us as we give ourselves to God, we should rejoice that we are suffering as Christ did. If you are trying to “save your life” by gaining riches, popularity, power, or fame, this will only result in losing the most important life we can have: eternal life in Christ Jesus. Gaining the things this world has to offer is only temporary, but life in Jesus lasts forever. Losing your life means wholly surrendering to Christ, forgetting your own plans, and following wherever He leads you. The world may call you crazy, or may see you as ignorant, but Jesus calls you His child.

James 4:7-10 helps us to better understand why we need to surrender and what it means for us.

[READ JAMES 4:7.]

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 resist Satan and his temptations. He helps us to turn our backs on sin and fully belong to Him.

[READ JAMES 4:8-10.]

On countless occasions, we have all sinned and done things that we know are wrong. We are in desperate need for God to cleanse our hearts and change our minds. To do so, we must admit our shortcomings, surrendering our sin and everything we are 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 lift us up. The closer we get to God, the more we come to resemble Him.

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

[READ EZEKIEL 36:25-27.]

All these verses refer to the importance of surrendering your life to God. This passage shares God’s promises to us when we do surrender. The Holy Spirit will cleanse our hearts and form us into His likeness. We must allow Him to break the stony places in our hearts and fill the empty spaces with Himself.

God promises to fill us with His Spirit and give us the desire to follow His will.

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

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."

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.

I want to give you the opportunity during the next two minutes to ask God these questions: What are the stony places in my heart? What is in my life that I need to surrender to You?

[WAIT FOR TWO MINUTES.]

If you want to surrender those places to Jesus, I invite you to take a *piece of paper and pencil that are being distributed. On the paper, 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.]

[WHEN ALL ARE BACK IN THEIR SEATS, CONTINUE.]

A story is often told of a particular method islander's use for capturing monkeys. They find a coconut, make a hole in it, and place some rice inside. This coconut is then put where monkeys are often seen. Disappearing behind trees or bushes, the hunters lie in wait. Sure enough, 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 sneaking up behind him, throwing a bag over him, and taking him away.

Friends, 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 insignificant to God as a handful of rice seems to us. These may be habits, attitudes, grudges, or material things of this world. 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 misconception 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 your life to. [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 and purposes? 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.

1. 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 a non-Christian friend or family member?

2. What 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 am I being called 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?

3. Read Luke 9:23-25.

1. What does the cross symbolize 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?

FAITH CHALLENGE

Schedule an appointment with God.

Read Genesis 12:1-9. Follow Abraham's story—the saga of a man who truly knew the meaning of surrender.

Hold out your hands before God and offer Him your life in complete surrender.

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. 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 we will close with a group prayer.

Pray that God will help the person you pray for to willingly surrender whatever is between God and him/her. Within your mini-groups of 2-3 people, ask for prayer requests, and pray together over each other's struggles and over tonight's faith challenge. Ask God to bless each person as he/she explores Him.

SURRENDER

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

SMALL GROUP STUDY GUIDE

CHECK-IN

Ask: *Please team up in twos- guys together and girls together.*

Ask each other:

How is your T.A.G. time going?

What did you do with last night's faith challenge?

THE BRIDGE

SAY:

Turn to your neighbor. Name two items that you treasure. Which one is more important to you? Which one would you give up for the other? Why?

Give them two minutes to share.

DEBRIEF

Ask: *If both items were important, what made one more important to you?*

What does this activity have to do with Jesus?

FOCAL POINT

Jesus calls us to complete surrender.

INTRODUCTION

Imagine this scene in Jerusalem during Passover...

Twelve men surged through the narrow streets, elated. Thoughts swirled around in their heads. They were beyond reason. 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, glorying in the favor of the people.

This was just the first step. Soon everyone would crown their Jesus king. He would lead in a glorious revolt 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 inevitable argument had started again. "I'm going to sit on his right," James casually mentioned to John. "No—me!" he responded. "Everyone should realize," Peter interjected, "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 engaged in a heated argument.

The disciples burst through the door and sank down on the couches. They kept bickering throughout the meal, even after Jesus had arrived. Peter was loudly

debating with Thomas when he 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 assumed the role of a servant and wiped the dirt from their feet. What was happening?

PRAY TOGETHER BEFORE YOU BEGIN.

READ JOHN 13: 1-17.

[All bulleted items are possible answers.]

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

- 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

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

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

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 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. Ask God to show you what is holding you back from complete surrender to Him.*

Say: *Take a common object. Picture it as the thing you just identified. Throw it away as a symbol of surrendering to God.*

Examples:

1. Write problem on a piece of paper, then crumple it and throw it away.
2. Take a rock and toss it into a bucket of water, or a lake, stream, etc.

WHAT IF...?

Say: *Please discuss these questions in groups of two or three.*

What does surrender mean to you?

What is holding you back from surrendering?

What if you truly submitted your life to God?

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 finds surrender to be victory. Will you surrender your life to God?

FAITH CHALLENGE

Schedule an appointment with God.

Read Genesis 12:1-9. Follow Abraham’s story—the saga of a man who truly knew the meaning of surrender.

Hold out your hands before God and offer Him your life in complete surrender.

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



SERMON

Ask: *What have you asked God for recently? Did you get what you wanted? Did you ask for a material item or something else?*

FOCAL POINT

Ask God for the Holy Spirit.

Please team up in groups of 2-3—guy and girl teams. Ask each other: What did you do with last night’s faith challenge? Listen to each other. Support each other. Pray for each other.

SMALL GROUPS

Accountability

Ask: *Please team up in pairs—guys together and girls together.*

Ask each other:

How is your T.A.G. time going?

What did you do with last night’s faith challenge?

BRIDGE

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.*

Give the young people a minute to discuss this.

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.

Debrief: *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 shed the early rays of morning, Peter quietly walked the streets of Jerusalem. So much had happened in so little time; he felt as if his emotions would never truly settle. The tragedy of Jesus' death and his own denial had crushed his spirit. 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 had risen, and had asked him, fisherman Peter, to feed His sheep! Gazing at the morning rays, Peter felt a sense of joy fill him. 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, setting aside their differences and becoming unified as they sought the Holy Spirit Jesus spoke of.

Reaching a nondescript building, Peter quietly opened the door and slipped inside. Glancing around, he noted the many other believers gathered there, exchanging greetings with a few. Here they were gathered, and here they would wait until Jesus' promise had been fulfilled. Jesus had never let them down. Even with this assurance, however, Peter wasn't prepared for what came next.

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

THE MESSAGE

What was Peter counting on in his time of need? In Luke 11:13, Jesus is talking to the disciples about prayer, and as He finishes, He makes this interesting comment: "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?" Even we who are sinful human beings know how to give good gifts to our kids—how much more our perfect heavenly Father wants to give us the Holy Spirit.

Peter knew that his Heavenly Father really wanted to give him the gift of the Holy Spirit. All Peter needed to do was ask, and so that's what 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 continued in verse 5, saying "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 great danger and many challenges. Jerusalem was where Jesus was put to death, and no doubt many memories lingered in Peter's mind of his three denials in that city. Yet regardless of the dangers, Peter and the apostles clung to Jesus'

promise, knowing it would be fulfilled. This is not only for the disciples, however. In Acts 2:39, Peter proclaims that all can receive the wonderful gift of the Holy Spirit.

Yet, how do you receive this gift? Read Acts 1:13-14. Speaking of the disciples, the text says, "these all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer." So they were praying, but praying in a specific fashion, "in one accord." In previous experiences, these twelve chosen ones had frequently quarreled among themselves, even in the presence of Jesus. But in this preparation, all 120 of the believers gathered there set aside their differences and became unified. Think of the impact of that happening in your church; the results could be incredible!

In her book, *the Apostles*, page 50, 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?"

Yet prayer and unity cannot be gained by human means. Peter, in Acts 2:38, realizes this and explains it to the crowd, saying "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. In Luke 9:23, Jesus says to deny yourself, take up your cross daily, and follow Him. John 14:17 says, "The world cannot receive [The Holy Spirit], because it does not behold Him or know Him, but you know Him

because He abides with you, and will be in you." The Lord wants to do amazing things through you, but He has given you free choice in the matter. Ask Him to cleanse you and grant you the gift of the Holy Spirit. Then you will find your life changing in incredible ways.

Yet just what are these incredible ways? In Acts 1:8, Jesus promises 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." Indeed, when promising the Spirit in John 16:13, Jesus says, "when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth." This truly is fulfilled through Peter in the very next chapter. Filled with the power of the Holy Spirit, he spontaneously preaches to a great crowd right outside the disciples' meeting house, telling them the startling reality of their position. Peter calls on them to repent, and astounding results take place. Acts 2:41 says that three thousand souls were added to the believers in a single day! This body of believers goes on in verse 42 and 47, "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 everyday people became powerful witnesses for Christ. Through their actions, unity, and joy, they became witnesses, 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. Jesus left us this amazing Gift and Helper, but the Holy Spirit can't help you if you don't let Him in. It's all 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! Yet, as with everything God does, He 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 you asked God to cleanse you of sins and fears, making room for the Holy Spirit? What would you need to let go of?
- 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?
- What do you think the Holy Spirit dreams of doing in your life?

FAITH CHALLENGE

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

- Read Acts 1-2 and Luke 11:1-13.
- 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 we will close with a group prayer.

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ASK Acts 2:1-47

SMALL GROUP STUDY GUIDE

CHECK-IN

Ask: *Please team up in twos—guys together and girls together.*

Ask each other:

How is your T.A.G. time going?

What did you do with last night's faith challenge?

THE BRIDGE

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.*

Give the young people a minute to discuss this.

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.*

DEBRIEF

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?

FOCAL POINT

Ask for the Holy Spirit.

INTRODUCTION

As the sun shed the early rays of morning, Peter quietly walked the streets of Jerusalem. So much had happened in so little time; he felt as if his emotions would never truly settle. The tragedy of Jesus's death and his own denial had crushed his spirit; yet, things had not ended there. Greeting a fellow walker, Peter felt his step lighten a bit. The same Jesus who he had thought dead had risen, and had asked him, fisherman Peter, to feed His sheep! Gazing at the morning rays, Peter felt a sense of joy fill him. His Savior was going to come again, and He had promised to send the Helper, the Holy Spirit, to the disciples. Following Christ's last commands, the disciples had stayed in Jerusalem, setting aside their differences and becoming unified as they sought the Holy Spirit Jesus spoke of.

Reaching a nondescript building, Peter quietly opened the door and slipped inside. Glancing around, he noted the many other believers gathered there, exchanging greetings with a few. Here they were gathered, and here they would wait until Jesus's promise had been fulfilled. Jesus had never let them down. Even with this assurance, however, Peter wasn't prepared for what came next.

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

THE WORD

Read Luke 11:9-13. How willing is God to give you gifts? What gift does He long to give you? What is the one thing we must do to receive these gifts?

READ ACTS 1:4-5, 39.

- What is common to these verses?
- What does Jesus promise the disciples?
- Who is this promise for?

READ ACTS 1:13-14, 38.

- In what way were the disciples praying?
- How is this significant to our current experience?
- What is key to being able to receive the Holy Spirit?

READ JOHN 14:16-17.

- What does Jesus do?
- Why can the world not receive the Holy Spirit?
- What does this say about our preparation for the Holy Spirit?

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 your modern situation?

READ ACTS 2:4-42, 47.

- What happens to the believers after this outpouring of the Holy Spirit?
- What changes do you notice?
- What impact could this gift have on our current church?

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! Yet, as with everything God does, He 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.

Yet this adventure cannot start when you have fears and sins holding you back. 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.

WHAT IF...?

Discuss these questions in twos or threes:

- 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?
- 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?
- What do you think the Holy Spirit dreams of doing in your life?

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 the Holy Spirit in your life? Your faith challenge over the next 23 hours before we meet again is this:

Read Acts 1-2 and Luke 11:1-13.

Ask God for the gift of the Holy Spirit and what you need to do in order to receive God's Helper.

CLOSING

Ask for prayer requests. Give a prayer of blessing for the group. Then split up into smaller groups of 2-3. Ask them to pray specifically for the person on their right, asking in particular for any special needs the person may have.



Day 7 <<<

LOVE

Acts 10



SERMON

FOCAL POINT

God's love leads you to love others.

SMALL GROUPS

Accountability

Ask: *Please team up in twos—guys together and girls together.*

Ask each other:

How is your T.A.G. time going?

What did you do with last night's faith challenge?

BRIDGE:

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 30 seconds to share this love story with someone else. Share!*

IN 30 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 Jesus' encounters with His disciples. Imagine what each one might have been thinking, feeling, experiencing...

Encounter #1: It was a hot, sultry 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 strode 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...

Encounter #2: "What were you arguing about on the road?" Jesus tenderly asked His disciples. They looked at each other, embarrassed. The constant rivalry between them was a continuous ache. Their open animosity saddened His heart. When would they learn?

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 in agony—not only from the physical pain He was experiencing. 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. Peter was the perfect man to carry out that plan.

Peter was a man of faith 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 performed through Peter. In the townspeople's excitement from 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.

What a difference Peter's time alone with God was to make 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 descend from heaven. In this sheet was a fabulous 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, declaring 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 informed Peter that visitors had been sent from Caesarea and were at his door asking him to accompany them. The visitors told Peter that their master—a Roman centurion named Cornelius, a just, God-fearing man—had summoned Peter to his house. As a zealous 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. In addition to those reasons for preferring to avoid this representative of the Roman government, 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 strong objections,

Peter’s faith convinced him to accompany the men to Caesarea without question, just as God had directed him in the vision.

In Acts 10:28, we find that, after Peter arrived in Caesarea, he reminded the Gentiles in the room of the Jewish tradition that “it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation.” However, Peter was told by God not to call anyone common or unclean. In response to Peter’s question, “Why have you sent for me?” Cornelius informed Peter of his belief in Jesus, from whom he had received a vision in which an angel told him to call for Simon Peter. We can only imagine what Cornelius’ testimony must have brought to Peter’s mind. Through the Holy Spirit’s intervention, Peter’s view of the Gentiles was in the midst 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, “In truth, I perceive that God shows no partiality, but in every nation, whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him.” When Peter realized that God accepts everyone, he shared the gospel to the Gentiles in the room. As Peter spoke of Jesus and His acceptance of all who believed in Him, the Holy Spirit came upon everyone in the room! Peter became so astonished that he said these 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 encounter, however, that he was mistaken in his view of other people.

Most of us remember when Simon Peter denied Jesus three times. Do you also remember that, some time later, Jesus asked Peter a question that must have brought pain to the apostle?

In John 21:15-17, we find that Jesus poses a question three times: “Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?” Peter is forced to answer a total of three times and was grieved that his Lord had to ask him more than once. Perhaps this is Jesus’ way of allowing Peter the chance to counter the three times that he had denied Jesus or perhaps three times Peter was given the chance to truly reflect on his love response to Jesus. In a convincing way, Peter vowed to feed Jesus’ sheep 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 they encountered along the way. Approximately 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 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” (5T, p. 167).

Through a series of unexpected experiences, God taught a very important lesson to Brenden, a 16-year-old student who was quite popular with his schoolmates. He relates his story to us in the following sentences:

“Sure, I’m popular. I don’t have any enemies. And I try to be friendly with everyone. But there’s one boy in our school group—let’s call him Alex—who tried too hard to be my friend. I’d noticed that he doesn’t seem to have many friends. He’s not as mature as most of us, he often misbehaves in class, and sometimes he tells jokes that my friends and I don’t like to hear. Like many others in my class, I’ve tried to avoid him.”

On a school-sponsored trip to a local park, there was tension between Brenden and Alex for most of the day. During this trip, however, Brenden finally realized that he needed to love his classmate. Brenden comments on this experience:

“Things changed during our school group’s visit to a park to take a hike. As I wandered around the park with some of my other friends, Alex received a cell phone call. As he talked on the phone, we could see from his facial expressions that the conversation wasn’t bringing good news. Out of curiosity, I approached Alex and asked if I could help him in any way. He admitted he was upset because his girlfriend had just ended their relationship.”

God impressed Brenden to take the time to listen. Alex just needed someone to care...and Brenden was the one God placed there at just the right moment to help.

Until that point, Brenden hadn't realized just how much Alex needed a friend. He thanks God for that opportunity and for teaching him that, despite his prejudices and concepts about Alex, he was able to care.

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 Brenden, reaching out to Alex with God's love meant taking time to listen. 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

- Identify three different ways you have been loved by others. Why is this important to remember? How has it impacted you?
- 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?
- What are some specific ways God is calling you leave your comfort zone to love the people He has put in your life? What will you do with these convictions?

CLOSING

Turn to the person beside you and pray for God to bless them in loving difficult people.

FREE
DOWNLOAD



WWW.GCYOUTHMINISTRIES.ORG

LOVE Acts 10

SMALL GROUP STUDY GUIDE

CHECK-IN

Team up in same gender pairs. Ask each other:

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

BRIDGE

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 30 seconds to share this love story with someone else. Share!*

IN 30 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.*

FOCAL POINT

God's love leads you to love others.

INTRODUCTION

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

Encounter #1: It was a hot, sultry 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 strode 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...

Encounter #2: "What were you arguing about on the road?" Jesus tenderly asked His disciples. They looked at each other, embarrassed. The constant rivalry between them was a continuous ache. Their open animosity saddened His heart. When would they learn?

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 in agony—not only from the physical pain He was experiencing. He had tried so hard to open their eyes, to help them see...

Some time 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 WORD

READ ACTS 10:10-16.

Why was Peter’s vision so startling to him?

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?

READ ACTS 10:28, 34-35.

What was the reason Peter had a drastic change in heart toward the people he had considered in the past to be common and unclean?

Peter’s response to Cornelius is found in Acts 10:47-48. What was the testimony of Peter? The followers of Christ no longer would consider themselves to be God’s only Chosen People who would receive His gift. Rather, they would begin to disciple the Gentiles.

Early in this story, Peter doubted God’s judgment. Through this encounter, he quickly learned that he was mistaken in 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?

READ JOHN 13:34,35.

How do Jesus’ words relate to Peter’s experience with Cornelius?

TRY IT OUT!

Just as Jesus had sent the disciples out of their comfort zones to practice what they had learned from Him, the Holy Spirit sent Peter from the comfort of Joppa to a Gentile’s home in Caesarea to explain God’s original, intended plan of acceptance.

I invite you to get on your knees right now. Ask God to bring to your mind the names of a person or two that 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?

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?

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?

CHECK-OUT

Summary: Jesus has called each one of us to love everyone: our family, friends, enemies, and strangers alike. 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 Saviour in character, the greater will be our love toward those for whom He died” (5T 167).

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.

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.
- Read Mark 6:7, 30-31—See how Jesus sent His disciples out to practice what they had learned.
- Talk to God about your choice to allow Him to love others through you.
- Ask Him to impress your heart with whatever He has to say to you in response.

Practice what you have discussed tonight.

CLOSING

Ask for prayer requests. Pray for God’s help to love people.

Week of Prayer
SMALL GROUP TRAINING VIDEO
AVAILABLE AT AT GCYOUTH.ADVENTIST.ORG

LET'S START READING IN ACTS CHAPTER 3, VERSES 9-10. The healing of this man affected other people. When Jesus uses you to help one person, it creates a ripple effect that spreads 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 multitudes of their need for repentance.

Now look at verses 12-13 [READ VERSES 12-13]. 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 THESE VERSES].

Do you notice anything interesting about the men sitting in front of Peter and John? These are the very same men we saw 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, security, 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 VERSES 8-12.

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 GIVE 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 VERSE 13].

What if you give Christ everything?

You will be recognized as someone who has been with Jesus.

Let's keep reading until verse 19 [READ VERSES 14-19].

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 can not 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. Look at verses 29-31 [Read vs. 29-31].

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 security. 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 100% dedicated 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, verse 32 to hear what happens after people give everything to God. Continue reading to the end of chapter 4 [read v. 32 to the end of chapter 4].

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, proud 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: ADD YOUR OWN TESTIMONY. HOW WAS YOUR LIFE BEFOREHAND? 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 give 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."

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

- What would it mean for you to give Jesus everything?
- What might you have to give up?
- Where can you find the strength to do this?
- Who here wants to be transformed into the likeness of Jesus and used by Him to change the world?
- Are you willing to give Him your life, or even *willing to be made willing*?
- 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.

DISCIPLESHIP
is taking biblical truths and relating them to our lives.

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.

THE TEAM: 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



Keira Hooven served as a junior consultant on this project

Keira Hooven



Carol Raney



Lynne Macias



Scott Douglass



Dale Cady



Don MacLafferty

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 ATVs, 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 as 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.

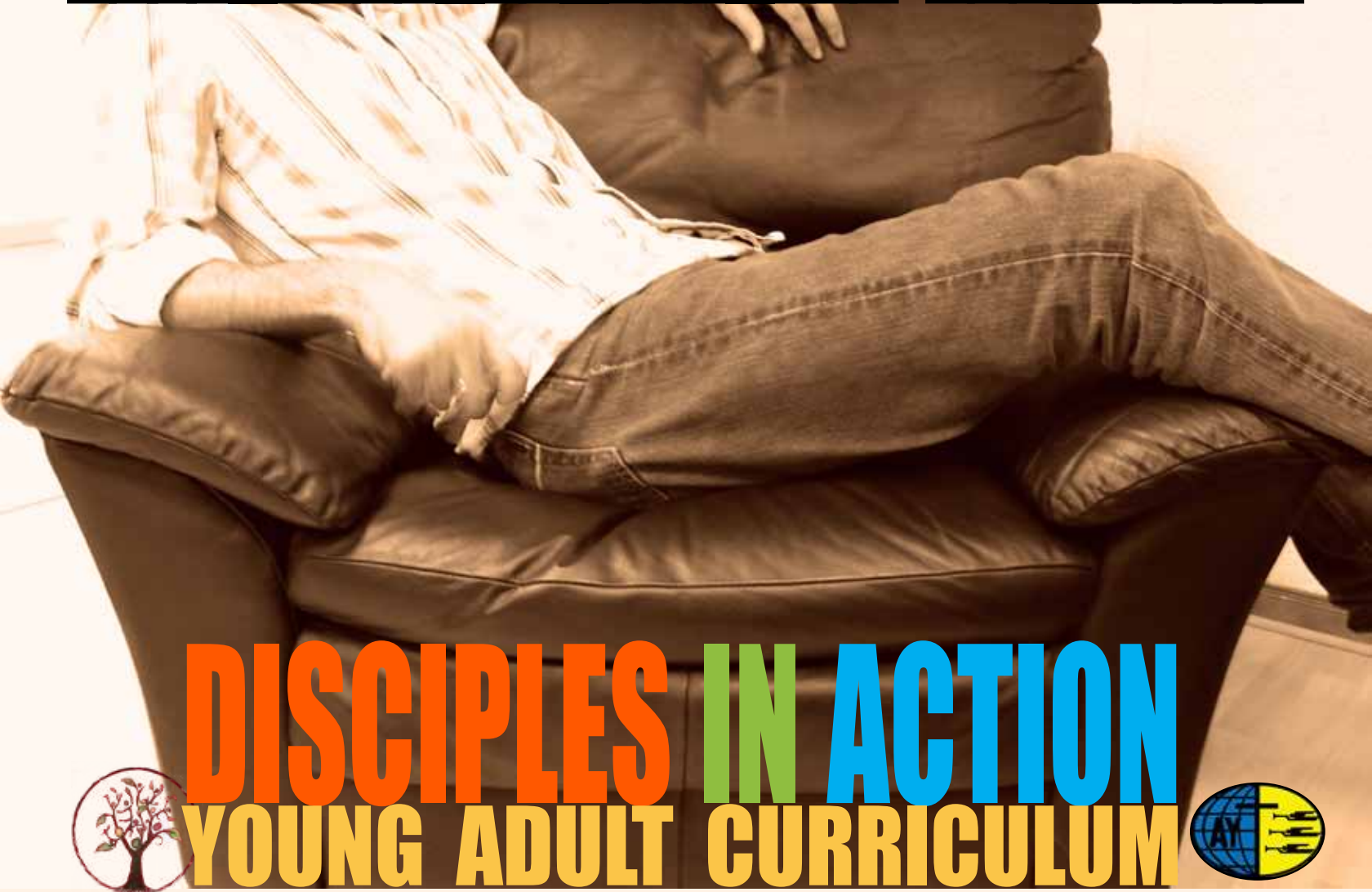


Morgan Williams is a senior at Collegedale Academy in Tennessee,

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.

The graphic features the year '2013' in large, stylized orange and yellow numbers. Below it, the text 'impact South Africa' is written in a bold, white, sans-serif font. Underneath that, 'Jesus in the city' is written in a white, cursive script. The next line reads '3rd World Conference on Youth and Community Service' in a smaller, white, sans-serif font. Below that, 'Pretoria - South Africa' is written in a large, bold, white, sans-serif font. The following line is 'Service Projects & Evangelism / July 1-5' and the last line is 'Congress / July 8-13', both in a white, sans-serif font. At the bottom, the website 'www.gcyouthministries.org' is written in a large, bold, white, sans-serif font. The background of the graphic is a dark red with a textured, splattered appearance. A globe is centered in the lower half, with the South African flag's colors (green, white, black, yellow, red, blue) splattered around it.

IT'S TIME TO GET OFF THE COUCH



DISCIPLES IN ACTION

YOUNG ADULT CURRICULUM



a 26-week interactive curriculum
to guide young people in their journey
toward an authentic walk with Jesus.

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