





DECLARE

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intro to **DEMONSTRATE & DECLARE**

To be a Christian is to be a disciple, a learner and follower, of Jesus. In Matthew 28, Jesus commissioned His church to go and make disciples, baptizing them (a symbol of initial faith in Jesus Christ) and teaching them to obey all that He has commanded. The primary mission of the church is to lead people to faith in Jesus and to form them as disciples of Jesus.

This fall, we are looking at what it means to be healthy and active disciples, demonstrating & declaring the gospel both near and far. Each week, we will consider a different mark of Jesus' disciples that, while not exhaustive, reflects some of the themes that emerge from the week's readings. Looking at the life and teachings of Christ Jesus, we see that the life of His followers is marked by the power and presence of the Holy Spirit, who gives life and multiplies the Gospel.



how to use this guide

- » INTRO. Each week, there is an introduction intended to highlight a different mark of a healthy and active disciple. Sometimes this will include an article explaining the topic or a tool to help you practice obedience to Christ.
- » BIBLE READING PLAN. As we journey through the New Testament, we've included that week's readings along with some specific application questions to help you see how Jesus' church is commissioned to demonstrate and declare the Gospel as a body.
- SCRIPTURE MEMORY AND PRAYER. Each week, there is a space for you to write out the verses you want to commit to memory. In addition, we have added a section for you to write down prayer requests for yourself, your Gospel Community, or your Grow Group.
- » H.E.A.R. JOURNALING. H.E.A.R. journaling is a tool to help you see how the Bible, by God's power, intends to transform our lives. The transformation of our minds that happens when we read the Word leads to the changing of our hearts and lives by His grace. There is space for you to complete your HEAR journals every week.
- » SERMON NOTES. Preaching is the exposition of the Word, meaning, it is the explanation and application of the Bible. Sermon notes are a great tool for reminding yourself of what was preached on Sunday later in the week, allowing us to continue meditating on the message and to come to our Gospel Communities ready to share how God has been speaking to us.
- » GROUPS. God's Word is intended to be lived out in community. We encourage you to connect to a Gospel Community and/or Grow Group where you can encourage and build one another up in the Gospel.
- PODCAST. We want to equip you to practically apply what you are learning in your everyday life. Subscribe to our Healthy and Active Disciples podcast to access additional resources each week.

HEAR JOURNAL

H HIGHLIGHT

After reading the passage of Scripture, highlight 1–2 verses that stand out to you or summarize the passage well. Look for verses that tell you what is happening in this passage—are there any ideas that are emphasized, repeated, or related? Look for big ideas (central truths about God or commands He gives). Write out the verse with the book, chapter, and verse numbers.

E EXPLAIN

It is important to consider what these verses mean, both to the original audience and to you today. Write down your summary and observations from these verses and their context, based on the passage you read.

- + Who is writing or speaking and who is the audience?
- + What is the situation of the author/speaker and the audience?
- + How do these verses fit within the verses before and after it? The chapter? The book?
- + What is God saying to me about Himself? About man?
- + What is God intending to communicate through this text?

A APPLY

As you examine God's words about Himself, we want to let Him inform, direct, and transform our lives. As disciples of Christ, God intends to change us and this always starts with repentance and faith.

- + What would the application of this verse look like in my life?
- + Is there a truth to believe? A sin to repent of? A promise to trust?

 A command to follow? Is there an attitude or action to embrace or avoid?
- + If I believe what God has said, how will I live differently or be different?
- + How does this truth change my relationship with God? My relationship with others? My work or ministry? My engagement with the world?

R RESPOND

Write out a response of prayer to God, asking God to change your heart and your life based on the time you've spent in His word.

- + Choose 1–2 applications of this verse and prayerfully consider how you might pursue greater faithfulness in them.
- + Be specific about what you will do (or not do) and who you will ask to help you respond in faith.

H (HIGHLIGHT)

"This is the confidence we have before him: If we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears whatever we ask, we know that we have what we have asked of him." 1 John 5:14-15

E (EXPLAIN)

Verses like these can be confusing, because the idea of a God who gives us whatever

we want is attractive. The key in this passage is "according to his will." If we make our

wants God's wants, then we can ask for whatever we want!

A (APPLY)

I find myself wanting all sorts of things. Sometimes it's something different every day.

I need to focus on aligning myself with God's will so that when I ask something, it's already something that He wants too. The Bible tells me a lot about what God wants—

He wants people to worship Him, love one another, obey His word!

R (RESPOND)

Father, make me more like you in every way-in my thoughts, actions, and desires. Make
the desires of my heart the same things your heart desires, so that I can devote myself
to the things that bring you joy and ask for them boldly! I need to look at your word to
see what it is that you want and ask for it!

demonstrate

THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

All of God's work in the church and in the life of the believer is done by the power of the Holy Spirit. Unfortunately, many of us live with a very limited or inaccurate view of the Holy Spirit's power and work in our lives. In *Keep in Step with the Spirit*, theologian J.I. Packer describes the ministry of the Holy Spirit this way:

"Think of the Holy Spirit as fulfilling a floodlight ministry in relation to the Lord Jesus. Think of him as it [the floodlight] standing behind you, shining light over your shoulder from behind, and picking out, as the floodlight does, the glory and the beauty of that on which the light is trained...the person of the glorified and enthroned Lord Jesus. It is as if the Spirit whispers in our ear—"Do you see him? He is God incarnate, God made man, bearer of our sins, and now he is enthroned at the Father's right hand; he is for real, he is not a fantasy, he is a fact." Then the Spirit whispers—"Do you hear him? He is inviting you to come to him, he is calling you."[1]

All throughout the New Testament, we see that the Holy Spirit is given to mediate Christ's presence to believers – "to give them such knowledge of his presence with them as their Savior, Lord, and God" [1] – so that three things keep happening in the life of the believer and in the church:

- 1. Personal fellowship with Jesus
- 2. Personal transformation of character into Jesus' likeness
- 3. Certainty of being loved, redeemed, and adopted

The church of Jesus Christ demonstrates the power and presence of the Holy Spirit through our fellowship with Christ, our increasing transformation into His image, and our security in His work. In our words, our work, our prayers, our conduct – we have opportunities to experience the Holy Spirit's presence and by His power, to shine light on the beauty of Jesus, declaring with the Holy Spirit, "look to Jesus, and see His glory; listen to him, and hear His Word; go to him, and have life; get to know him, and taste his gift of joy and peace." [1]

If I asked you when you last experienced the power of the Spirit, I wonder how you would reply. Perhaps you're thinking, "I'm not sure I can ever remember performing a miracle or speaking in some kind of anointed way." But left to ourselves we would be living for self in proud defiance of God. So all the good we do is done in the power of the Spirit.

- + When you have faith in Christ, you're enjoying the Spirit's power.
- + When you willingly serve God, you're enjoying the Spirit's power.
- + When you joyfully sacrifice for Christ, you're enjoying the Spirit's power.
- + When you have any affection for your Christian brothers and sisters, you're enjoying the Spirit's power.
- + When you recoil from sin, you're enjoying the Spirit's power.
- + When you have any desire for holiness, you're enjoying the Spirit's power.

How have you enjoyed the Spirit's power this week?

How can you demonstrate the Spirit's power this week?

demonstrate power READING PLAN

Acts 10-11

The Holy Spirit was extended to Gentiles in Acts 10:44–48. Through faith in Jesus we have the Holy Spirit dwelling in us. Who is the Holy Spirit? What does he do? In what ways do you neglect the Holy Spirit?

Acts 12

The church prayed earnestly for Peter (Acts 12:5). Would your prayer life be described as "earnest"? What does that reveal about your dependence on the Holy Spirit? What can you do to make prayer more of a priority in your life?

Acts 13-14

Compare Paul's and Barnabas' responses to the people trying to worship them in Acts 14:8–18 to Herod's response in Acts 20:20–25. In what ways do you find yourself seeking glory, recognition, praise, and approval from others today?

James 1-2

What is keeping you from hearing and doing God's Word today? In what ways are you neglecting hearing and reading God's Word, and in what areas of your life are you seeing disobedience and lack of follow through in response to what you are reading?

James 3-5

Take an honest look at your speech and the things you say. Is your speech marked by the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22–23) and building up or is it marked by tearing down, slander, and gossip? What do you need to repent of today in the things that you say to and about others?

MEMORIZE	—— commit a verse to memory
PRAYER ————————————————————————————————————	— write down prayer requests

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SOUND DOCTRINE

"I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel-not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ." - Galatians 1:6-7

Doctrine is what the Bible teaches us about a specific topic. Therefore "adding the adjective 'sound' to doctrine sharpens the definition with the ideas of 'healthy' or 'accurate." A good working definition of what the Bible means when it says "sound doctrine" is this:

"Sound doctrine is accurate scriptural teaching on theological truths that lead to the spiritual health & transformed lives of individuals and the church." [2]

Sound doctrine is important because our faith is based on a specific message. Paul states it explicitly in 1 Corinthians 15:3–5: "For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve."

To change this message is to believe in something other than Jesus for eternal life. Doctrine is what tells us about Jesus, who is the truth in the flesh (John 14:6). We learn how central doctrine is to the church when we read the New Testament; most of it is written to address false doctrine because the writers understood that what we believe affects what we do! What a church believes about God, sin, man, salvation, and the work of Christ will be reflected in their words, conduct, and relationships with God, one another, and the world.

Tim Keller points out that "We live in an age in which the very word 'doctrine,' or worse, 'dogma,' is a negative term. And yet it is simply impossible to live without doctrinal beliefs. While many do not want to use the term, all people–secular as well as religious–treat some views as horrific heresies. I have encountered churches that claim, "We don't teach doctrine, we just preach Jesus." But the moment you ask them—'Well, who is Jesus, and what did he do?'—the only way to answer is to begin to lay out doctrine. [3]

Paul does not simply say that right doctrine is necessary, but it is "sound." The Greek word Paul uses here means healthy rather than diseased. This is Paul's way to say that wrong doctrine eats away at your spiritual health. Or, to say it another way, if you lack spiritual vitality and fruit, if you are not courageous enough, or joyful enough, or if you are not filled with love and hope, it may be because your grasp of Biblical doctrine is shallow and thin, or distorted and mistaken.

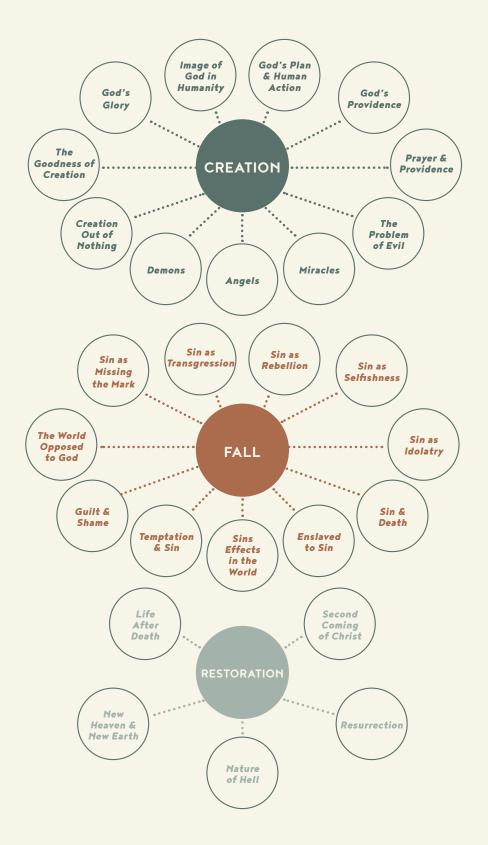
This came home forcibly to me many years ago when I spent a number of weeks working through a Bible study on the attributes of God. What was so revealing were a couple of application questions:

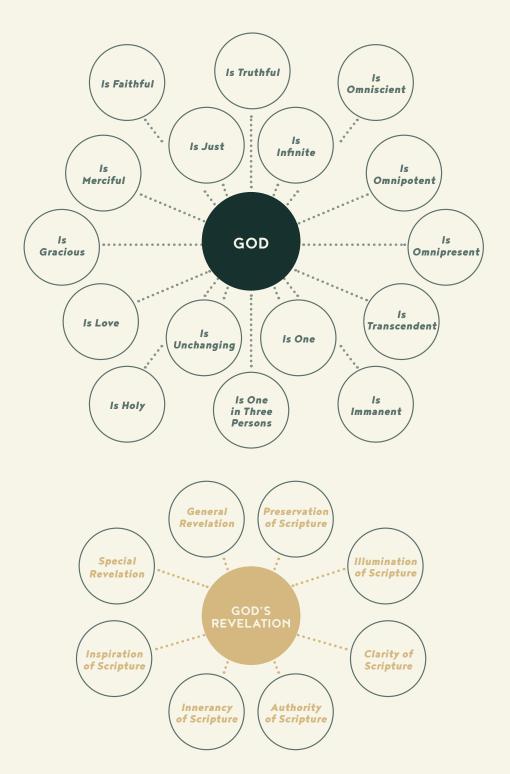
- 1. What specific false thoughts or disturbing emotions hinder [plague] me when I don't trust that God has a particular attribute?
- 2. Although my conscious mind may agree that God has this attribute, does my outward life demonstrate that he is like this?

Try these questions out on the glory and majesty of God, the wisdom and sovereignty of God, the love and mercy of God. Spend time thinking and you will begin to see that many of our most personal and practical problems are doctrinal ones. Either we don't grasp the truth, or we don't connect it to our lives so that it creates 'soundness,' or spiritual health in us."

The church of Jesus Christ isn't just to teach sound doctrine, but to demonstrate how belief in that doctrine transforms. The gospel changes everything. Therefore, we must hold fast to the truth – studying it, teaching it, applying it, and valuing it.

On the next page, you will see a list of 99 essential doctrines. If you are uncertain of where to begin in growing as a healthy & active disciple who demonstrates sound doctrine, this list can help you evaluate opportunities for further study.







Why is it important for the Bible to define our doctrinal beliefs?
Choose one of the doctrines about God.
+ What specific thoughts, feelings or actions do you respond with when you don't believe that God has that particular attribute?
+ Does your life demonstrate that God has this particular attribute? Why or why not?
What are three doctrines that you would like to further study?
Are there any doctrines that you are scared/intimidated/apathetic about?

demonstrate sound doctrine READING PLAN

Acts 15-16

The Jerusalem Council is an example of setting and protecting sound doctrine. What areas of doctrine do you feel you need the most study in your own life?

Galatians 1–3

The word gospel can be translated as "good news". What false gospels or promises of worldly "good news" are you believing and putting your hope in today?

Galatians 4–6

Galatians 5:7 says, "You were running well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth?" What are things that are currently hindering you from obeying the Word of God?

Acts 17-18:17

In Acts 17:11 the Bereans are described as "receiv[ing] the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so." Would your approach to the word of God be described as "eager"? Why or why not? When confronted with a teaching or experience in your personal life or in culture, where do you first turn to determine its validity?

1 Thessalonians 1–2

What areas of your life do you see yourself imitating the Lord as a result of your time in the word of God? What areas of your life need repentance and growth?

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UNITY

"One of the hardest aspects of God's church is his call to live in unity with others. I try to imagine first-century church gatherings, which were often small groups of people trying to figure out this new, life-changing faith. They know theologically that in Christ, every dividing wall is broken: Jew and Gentile, male and female, slave and free . . . and while the counter-cultural reality of God's work is amazing, it was just that: counter-cultural! It must have been hard for people of various backgrounds, genders, age, socio-economic, and ethnic divides to operate as "one," especially when the world around them kept them separate.

But that's how God has always operated! He is less glorified in uniformity, when everything is or becomes exactly the same. Rather, God is more glorified in unity—which is when things that are different celebrate their differences, and bring those differences together for his purposes. That's unity, and it's been part of God's design since the beginning."[5]

We usually lose unity within the church because our desires are at war within us (James 4:1) and whatever we are wanting has become more important to us than Jesus. In a church with sinners – which, of course, is every church – unity will not often be easy or comfortable. It will demand that we, empowered by the Holy Spirit, actively "put on love, which is the perfect bond in unity" (Col. 3:14) as we navigate conflict and forgiveness.

Walker and Thune describe how this often plays out in the church [6]:

As the gospel renews us internally, it also flows out of us to bring renewal to our relationships. Nothing is more common to relationships than conflict. If the gospel is not affecting the way we deal with conflict, then it's probably not touching us very deeply! Think of the most recent fight you've had. Perhaps the conflict was with your spouse, a family member, or a work associate. Now, set aside the circumstances of the argument (what the issue was, how it made you feel, who was right or wrong) and take a moment to ponder your actions during the conflict. Your behavior probably falls into one of two categories.

Some people are attackers. They like to be on the offensive. They place a high value on justice, so it matters greatly to them who is right and who is wrong. Below are signs that you might be an attacker.

- » You deal with anger or frustration by "venting" it.
- You argue your case passionately.
- You ask questions like "How do you know?" and "Can you prove that?"
- » You want to fight until the fight is over.
- » You cross-examine like a lawyer in order to "get to the heart of the conflict."
- » Winning the argument is more important than loving the opponent.
- » You turn the argument to focus on the other person, even if it began with you as the focal point.

On the other end of the spectrum are withdrawers. People with this tendency ofter find themselves on the defensive. They tend to avoid or ignore conflict and, when pressed into an argument, they respond in sullen silence or apathetic passivity. If you're a withdrawer, here are some patterns you might recognize:

- You deal with anger or frustration by suppressing it.
- » You have opinions but keep them to yourself in order to "keep the peace."
- » You ask questions like, "Do we have to talk about this now?" and "Does it matter?"
- » You'd rather avoid a fight than win one
- » You sometimes physically leave an argument in order to "get some space."

These are typical ways we respond to disagreement, frustration, offense, or hurt. The fact that these responses are considered "normal" (i.e. natural) is a clue that they may not be biblical (i.e. supernatural).

Gospel-centered confrontation mirrors God's movement toward us in the gospel. God did not pour out his wrath on us (attack) or remove his presence from us (withdraw). Instead, he sacrificially moved toward us in the person of Jesus, full of grace and truth. Jesus confronted sin, invited relationship, and provided a way of reconciliation. Thus, the gospel provides the pattern of biblical conflict resolution. We have a proper motivation (love), confidence (faith), and means for resolving conflict (grace and truth).

The gospel calls us to repent of our sinful patterns of attacking and withdrawing. And the gospel empowers us to move into conflict by faith, with a humble, confident, God-glorifying intentionality. We can forsake the "normal" way of doing things for the gospel way.

The chart below outlines the differences between attacking and withdrawing and contrasts them with a gospel-centered approach to conflict. Not everything in this chart is going to resonate with every person or conflict, so focus on whichever descriptions are particularly relevant to you. The goal is to help you identify what is at the root of the unhealthy patterns of conflict in your life and to provide a clear path toward gospel resolution.

ASPECT	ATTACKING	WITHDRAWING	GOSPEL
HEART FOUNDATION	Self-Righteousness	Insecurity	Repentance, Forgiveness
POWER SOURCE	Flesh, Pride	Flesh, Fear	The Holy Spirit
COMMITMENT	To Be Right	To Avoid Conflict	To Understand & Engage
DIRECTION	To Argue or Subdue	To Deny or Appease	To Convey & Invite
FEELING	Life is Safe	Life is Painful	Life is Challenging
GOAL	Self-Protection	"Peace"	God's Glory, Their Good
RESULT	Hurt, Divisiveness	Bitterness, Separation	Healing, Reconciliation

Thabiti Anyabwile reminds us:

"In one sense, the Christian church is already unified through our spiritual union with Christ. By his death, Jesus Christ was "killing the hostility" (Eph. 2:16) that existed between God and humanity since the fall of Adam and Eve into sin (Rom. 8:7). Through his crucifixion and resurrection, the Lord Jesus makes all Christians "one new man" (Eph. 2:15). You might think of the Christian family as one new ethnicity made up of people from all natural ethnicities who have been "reconciled to God through one body in the cross" (Eph. 2:16). In this reconciliation is union with Christ and union with one another (Rom. 6:3-4, 11; 12:5; 1 Cor. 12:27) and a new identity that eclipses and relativizes the old (1 Cor. 9:19-23). In that spiritual union, regarding our equality before God and with one another, "there is neither Jew nor Greek" (Gal. 3:28; Col. 3:11). Jesus accomplishes our unity in his redemptive work on the cross.

In another sense, our experience of unity is not yet perfected. We see that our unity, like all of our redemption, belongs to an "already-not yet" tension. We are already unified in Christ through faith in him, but we have yet to experience the fullness of that unity inside the Church. So the Christian church must "do everything to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3). We must help feuding sisters agree (Phil. 4:2-3). We must remind one another that our favorite teachers did not die for us and we were not baptized into them, but must "have the same mind and judgement" (1 Cor. 1:10-12)...Christ has begun the work, and in the end Christ will complete the work. But here in the in-between-time the Lord has left us the ministry of reconciliation—a ministry that involves proclaiming the gospel to sinners (2 Cor. 5:16-21) but also practicing reconciliation among saints as an act of worship (Matt. 5:23-24). [7]"

demonstrate unity READING PLAN

1 Thessalonians 3-5

Paul is encouraged by the unity of the Thessalonians and their faith. Think of a person whose faith is an encouragement to you. Call or text them to tell them how their faith has challenged and encouraged you today.

2 Thessalonians 1-3

In order to stand firm in the faith, we need others alongside us. Who do you lean on and depend on to help you stand firm in the faith? If you do not have anyone, pray and ask God that he would provide that for you.

Acts 18:18-28 & 19

Priscilla and Aquila are used by God to teach Apollos "the way of God more accurately." Part of demonstrating unity is to teach one another and to be teachable. Would your life be marked as "teachable?" Why or why not?

1 Corinthians 1–2

The church in Corinth had a lack of unity. Paul's answer to this was to point them to Christ. Are you experiencing any division or disunity right now with other believers? In what ways have you lost sight of Christ?

1 Corinthians 3-4

1 Corinthians 3:9 – "For we are God's fellow workers. You are God's field, God's building." Would you say your ministry and your walk with the Lord is usually done on your own or in community with other believers as "fellow workers?" What are some ways that you can partner and work with other believers to accomplish the works of God?

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demonstrate unity SERMON NOTES

demonstrate

THE LOVE OF GOD

"By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." – John 13:35

Are you a disciple of Jesus? How would someone know that? In his final address to his disciples before going to the cross, Jesus tells His disciples that they will be known by their love for one another.

But "love" is a term that needs Biblical defining. In 1 Corinthians 13, we see a description of Biblical love. Fill in the chart below with descriptions of what "love is"... and what "love does"...

love is... love does...

Paul Tripp points out that "the best definition of love was established at an event. the most important event in human history: the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ Christ's sacrifice of love is the ultimate example of what love is and what love does. If we are followers of Jesus Christ and believe in the cross for salvation, then our words and actions and responses must be motivated by cruciform love. That is, love that shapes itself to the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ (cruci = "cross" and form = "in the shape of")."

What does that love look like and how can the church of Jesus Christ demonstrate it?

- 1. **LOVE IS** willing self-sacrifice for the good of another that does not require reciprocation or that the person being loved is deserving.
- **2. LOVE IS** being willing to have your life complicated by the needs and struggles of others without impatience or anger.
- **3. LOVE IS** actively fighting the temptation to be critical and judgmental toward another while looking for ways to encourage and praise.
- **4. LOVE IS** making a daily commitment to resist the needless moments of conflict that come from pointing out and responding to minor offenses.
- **5. LOVE IS** being lovingly honest and humbly approachable in times of misunderstanding.
- **6. LOVE IS** being more committed to unity and understanding than you are to winning, accusing, or being right.
- LOVE IS making a daily commitment to admit your sin, weakness, and failure and to resist the temptation to offer an excuse or shift the blame.
- **8. LOVE IS** being willing, when confronted by another, to examine your heart rather than rising to your defense or shifting the focus.
- **9. LOVE IS** making a daily commitment to grow in love so that the love you offer to another is increasingly selfless, mature, and patient.
- 10. LOVE IS being unwilling to do what is wrong when you have been wronged, but looking for concrete and specific ways to overcome evil with good.
- 11. LOVE IS being a good student of another, looking for their physical, emotional, and spiritual needs so that in some way you can remove the burden, support them as they carry it, or encourage them along the way.
- **12. LOVE IS** being willing to invest the time necessary to discuss, examine, and understand the relational problems you face, staying on task until the problem is removed or you have agreed upon a strategy of response.
- **13.** LOVE IS being willing to always ask for forgiveness and always being committed to grant forgiveness when it is requested.

- **14. LOVE IS** recognizing the high value of trust in a relationship and being faithful to your promises and true to your word.
- **15. LOVE IS** speaking kindly and gently, even in moments of disagreement, refusing to attack the other person's character or assault their intelligence.
- 16. LOVE IS being unwilling to flatter, lie, manipulate, or deceive in any way in order to co-opt the other person into giving you what you want or doing something your way.
- **17. LOVE IS** being unwilling to ask another person to be the source of your identity, meaning, and purpose, or inner sense of well-being, while refusing to be the source of theirs.
- **18.** LOVE IS the willingness to have less free time, less sleep, and a busier schedule in order to be faithful to what God has called you to be and to do as a spouse, parent, neighbor, etc.
- **19. LOVE** IS a commitment to say no to selfish instincts and to do everything that is within your ability to promote real unity, functional understanding, and active love in your relationships.
- **20.** LOVE IS staying faithful to your commitment to treat another with appreciation, respect, and grace, even in moments when the other person doesn't seem deserving or is unwilling to reciprocate.
- **21. LOVE IS** the willingness to make regular and costly sacrifices for the sake of a relationship without asking for anything in return or using your sacrifices to place the other person in your debt.
- **22.** LOVE IS being unwilling to make any personal decision or choice that would harm a relationship, hurt the other person, or weaken the bond of trust between you.
- **23.** LOVE IS refusing to be self-focused or demanding, but instead looking for specific ways to serve, support, and encourage, even when you are busy or tired.
- **24.** LOVE IS daily admitting to yourself, the other person, and God that you are unable to be driven by a cruciform love without God's protecting, providing, forgiving, rescuing, and delivering grace. [8]

Circle the 3 that stand out to you. Pray that God would grow you to demonstrate His love to those around you.

READING PLAN

1 Corinthians 5-6

In 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, Paul names some specific categories of sinners, but right after that he declares that the love of Jesus washes, sanctifies, and justifies us. How does the love of Jesus encourage your faith today? How does this show us how we should approach sinners with biblical truth and love?

1 Corinthians 7–8

In 1 Corinthians 8, Paul charges the Corinthians that though they are free to eat whatever they want, they should not do it if it is a stumbling block to others' faith. In what ways have you demonstrated love to another believer in laying down some of your freedoms to defer to their convictions? How is this hard for you? Why or why not?

1 Corinthians 9–10

We cannot truly love others if we are committed to self-glory because we will see others as a means to attain glory for ourselves. In what ways do you see this tendency within yourself? What would it look like to instead "do all for the glory of God"?

1 Corinthians 11–12

Spiritual gifts are given "for the common good" and for the building up of the body. What are unique ways that God has gifted you by his Spirit to love and build up the body of believers? In what ways do you see yourself tempted to use your gifts to build up yourself?

1 Corinthians 13–14

How have you neglected to be loving, patient, kind, and humble this week? Repent to God and ask for forgiveness to those whom you have wronged.

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THE COMFORT OF GOD

Life in this broken world is hard. We are constantly dealing with the frustration of this world not operating the way God intended. Almost daily we are required to deal with something we wouldn't have chosen for our lives, but it's there because of the location where we live. Our world, including you and me, is in need of the comfort of God – the promise of His present presence and future restoration.

Dear Self,

God does not promise to rid your life of affliction and difficulty. He does, however, offer to give you the grace needed to suffer well, and through grace to discover the riches and beauty of the gospel. It isn't wrong to ask God to relieve you of your pain, but it is more important that in the midst of the pain you rely on the promise of God to work such experiences for his glory and your good – to use these times as a means of perfecting your faith, strengthening your spirit, and transforming your life in such a way that you are becoming more like Jesus.

I know you want relief, but often relief comes, not in the form of the removal of the affliction, but in the strengthening of your faith. And that is what these trials are designed to do – test, prove, and strengthen your faith. In times of ease you have sometimes wondered just how real and robust is your faith. In times of your own weakness you have asked God to sanctify you, grow you, and strengthen you. Well, here is your answer. God accomplishes much of that through your "fiery trial" when you suffer well. To suffer well doesn't mean you put on a stoic face and muscle through your suffering. You trust God, bless him, look to him, and point others to him.

When the world strips away your comfort and confidence in thing temporal, when friends become enemies and attack you, when in the providence of God suffering enters your life like a flash flood, you are given an opportunity to see very clearly where your ultimate dependence lies and where you find your identity. And it's not just something that reveals truth about yourself; it is also something God uses to sanctify you.

Do you want to be confident in God's good purposes for your life? Then you must discover them in times of ease as well as times of difficulty. Do you want to become more like Christ? Then you must suffer, and suffer well. [9]

HOPE WHEN IT HURTS

By Sarah Walton

What we really believe shapes what we actually say, both to ourselves and to others. If we believe the wrong thing, we will say the wrong thing, and end up resorting to quasi-Christian clichés (which offer false hope) or to never having anything to say at all to those who are hurting (which offers no hope).

Paul teaches us that no matter what circumstances or company we may find ourselves in, our message of hope should confidently remain the same:

"Since we have the same spirit of faith according to what has been written, 'I believed, and so I spoke,' we also believe, and so we also speak, knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into his presence. For it is all for your sake, so that as grace extends to more and more people it may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God." (2 Corinthians 4 v 13–14)

Trace Paul's logic in these verses. He believes that Christ has risen to eternal life, and so one day he will raise Paul to eternal life. So this is what he speaks of, for the sake of his listeners coming to understand and appreciate grace, and the sake of his God coming to receive the thanksgiving he so richly and infinitely deserves.

If we believe in resurrection hope, we will speak that hope into the lives of others.

One of the most crucial times for us to share this truth is when we are walking alongside a brother or sister who is suffering and struggling to see this hope for themselves.

Christ's Comfort is Better Than Commiseration

As I have endured years of physical pain, heartache, and loss, I have come to learn that nothing can replace what's been lost, or repair what's been broken, apart from Christ. But instead of the Lord comforting me by removing the pain and reversing the loss of my worldly hopes, he has comforted me with his presence and secure future hope. In his grace, he has not only comforted me through his word and promises but through brothers and sisters in Christ who walk this journey with me. It is out of these comforts that I can turn to someone else and offer that same comfort (2 Corinthians 1 v 3–5).

Comforting another person in their pain is not simply commiserating with them, and it may not always mean agreeing with them. It is speaking the truths of the gospel that we ourselves have found of greater value than any earthly comfort. We need to point to God's promises while being real about the present. Instead of telling them it will be alright and life will get easier (you don't know that), we can comfort them with the truth that not a second of their pain will be wasted, and that when Christ returns, there will not be one more second of pain or heartache (you can know that!).

Although we may not be able to make sense of what someone else is going through, Christ promises that as they choose to trust him (even if their faith is hanging by a thread), he will faithfully use those trials to accomplish his good and loving purposes in their life and the lives of those around them. We may not be able to offer answers or temporary solutions that ease their pain, but we can bring the comfort of Christ and the eternal value of suffering with him.

Christ's Comfort is Better Than Your Experience

Not everyone grieves or responds to suffering in the same way or time frame that we do. In fact, no one responds in exactly the same way as you do. So if we seek to comfort only through our own experiences, we are bound to say the wrong thing, offer nothing more than temporal comfort, and possibly even obscure or undo the gospel comfort others are seeking to share with them.

This is why, I think, we are often speechless and feel we have nothing to say when someone we love is hurting. But we do have something to say! Not out of our own reserves of wisdom or experience alone, but out of the treasures of the gospel.



So how does this look practically?

- We need to be slow to judge whether they are suffering "well," and quick to grieve and mourn alongside them.
- We need to be slow to speak the "truths" we think they need to hear, and quick to discern and pray about encouraging them with Scripture and God's promises.
- We need to be slow to impatience, and quick to learn how to be long-suffering.
- We need to be slow to run away from the discomfort of entering another's pain, and quick to allow God to use their suffering to grow our own faith.
- We need to be slow to speak our opinions and solutions, and quick to listen and hear their heart
- We need to be slow to do the minimum and quick to serve in ways God calls us to even if it takes sacrifice. (This does not mean we must say yes to all needs!)
- We need to be slow to view the other's suffering as their problem, and quick to see
 the other's suffering as a privilege in which we can love, serve, and be mutually
 blessed by the body of Christ.
- We need to be slow to believe that we aren't equipped to help and quick to comfort
 with the unique gifts and personality that God has given us. (If you are good at
 crafts, make an encouraging gift. If you are hands-on, offer to help with work
 around the house. If you like writing, send a note of how you see Christ working in
 their life.)

You Are Not the Savior

You cannot fix it. Loving the hurting opens us up to the temptation to see ourselves as the sufferer's personal savior. But they do not need you—they need Christ.

Comfort is about redirecting someone to seek what they need in Christ first and not in you. Comfort is not about always being there for someone; it is about reminding someone that Christ is always there for them.

This frees us from a burden we weren't meant to carry. It frees us to speak truth and show love but not to feel guilty about what we cannot manage or cannot solve. You are not their Savior. God is not expecting you to be—he already sent Another to do that job. [10]



demonstrate comfort

READING PLAN

1 Corinthians 15–16

If Christ had not been raised from the dead, why would we be without hope? How is the resurrection of Jesus the source of your hope and your comfort today?

2 Corinthians 1-2

How has God comforted you in affliction? How has God given you the unique ability to declare the comfort of God to others based on your experiences?

2 Corinthians 3-4

In what ways have you been looking "to the things that are seen" for comfort this week? How does looking ahead to the unseen, eternal weight of glory provide you the hope and comfort you need today? Is there someone that you can encourage with that perspective today?

2 Corinthians 5-6

In what ways does (or doesn't) your life reflect the priorities of ambassadorship for the kingdom of God? How are you demonstrating and declaring the comfort, hope, peace, and joy found in Christ?

2 Corinthians 7–8

When we are grieved over our sin and confess our sin, he is faithful to forgive us and comfort us. Is your attitude towards your sin more accurately described as "godly grief" or "worldly grief"?

MEMORIZE	 commit a verse to memory
PRAYER —————	write down prayer requests

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Rebecca Pippert STAY SALT

The risen Christ commanded his disciples "to go and make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28 v 18). Notice what Jesus did not say! He did not say, Go therefore, all you extroverts, all of you with dynamic communication skills, and all those gifted as evangelists, and make disciples. The rest of you can just hang out. Sing some hymns and wait until I return. No, the great commission is a command to each one of us. Jesus commands and calls every Christian-from every culture and every nation on earth, regardless of our gifts or personality types-to be his witnesses. The command couldn't be clearer. That is why the early disciples lived and proclaimed the good news everywhere they went. Even when persecution drove them from their homes in Jerusalem, "Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went" (Acts 8 v 4). Evangelism isn't an activity limited only to clergy, evangelists, and missionaries. Nor is it limited to those who have been Christians for a while. God has given all believers at all times the amazing privilege and continuing challenge of being sent to be his witnesses. And when we witness, we are joining Jesus' whole purpose in coming! Jesus described his purpose on earth this way: "The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost" (Luke 19 v 10). Jesus died for the salvation of the whole world so that all who come

to him in faith may live eternally in God's presence. What does this tell us? That God loves us deeply and passionately-that he loved us even "while we were still sinners" (Romans 5 v 8

loved us even "while we were still sinners" (Romans 5 v 8). It is love that compelled God the Father to give his very best-his own Son. It is love that compelled Jesus to come and rescue a planet that was in desperate trouble. It is the love of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit that sends us out on mission. So it must be love that compels us to reach outward to others. If God loves the world and his creation this much. then so must we! However, we cannot give to others what we do not have ourselves. The love that sent Jesus to our planet and to the cross is the love that we need to have grasped and be enjoying ourselves if we are to be effective. We need to fall in love with Jesus all over again, by asking God to rekindle our first love. We need to be reading the Bible every day and allowing God to speak to us. If we desire to reflect the life of Jesus, we need to immerse ourselves in the Gospels, asking God to help us see Jesus with fresh eyes. We need to be praying and asking God through his Spirit to give us courage, wisdom, and a deeper love for him and for others. The call to evangelism is a call to become inwardly strong yet outwardly focused. Imagine what God can do through people who are ablaze with the love of Christ! [11]



"The one thing that unites all Christians, now and throughout history, is our joyful assurance that the greatest thing that ever happened on our planet is the birth, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ. The message of the gospel is quite simply the best news ever! So here is my question: if this is so, why do so many Christians struggle to share the glorious news of the gospel? How can we believe that there is no greater news in the world but still feel unable or unwilling to tell others?

...Even as our cultural landscape becomes increasingly secular, secularism does not have the power to erase our human longings for meaning and worth. If anything, it increases them. God has placed a longing for identity, meaning, and purpose in all human hearts; so, even if people can't quite articulate what they feel they are missing, the longing and wistfulness are there. But they will not know where to look unless Christians both live and tell the good news of what God has done for all in Christ."

- Rebecca Manley Pippert

What comes into your mind when you think of "declaring" the Gospel? What effect does this have on your sharing your faith with others?

Are you asking God for opportunities to declare the Gospel? How could you learn to expect more, and therefore to ask for more?

"If we do not understand what we believe, and how it truly is good news for this world, then we will not be persuasive in communicating our faith to others—and we will not even want to do that." How excited are you personally about the Gospel right now? Why? And what impact can you see that this has on your desire to tell others that Gospel?

"And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matthew 28:20). God has given you everything you need to effectively declare the gospel (his power through the Holy Spirit, his truth through his word, his love and the gospel through the person of Jesus, and the knowledge that you are never alone). How can knowing this truth strengthen you in your witness?

Is there someone (or a group of several people) you would like to share the Gospel with? What might hold you back?

THREE CIRCLES

How many times, in everyday conversations, do people engage you in their problems or challenges? It's amazing how often people share their hearts regarding the brokenness and pain in their lives; they are hurting and need hope. The Three Circles is a tool that can help you enter into these conversations and share the hope of the Gospel.

Draw one circle and label it "God's perfect design."

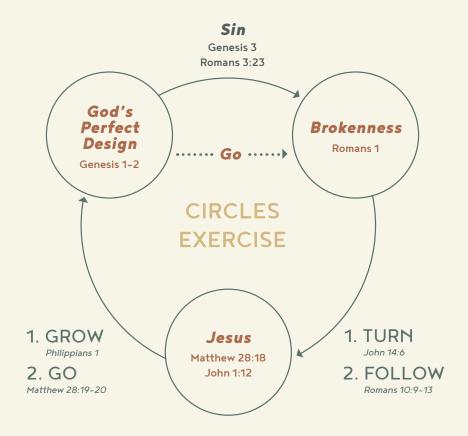
Talk about how God created everything, and everything was good (Genesis 1–2). Next, draw an arrow that points away from the first circle. Above the arrow write, "sin." Explain what sin is, where it originates, and how it continues in us and the world today (Genesis 3, Romans 3:23). At the end of the arrow, draw the second circle, and label it "fall" or "brokenness." Discuss how sin separates us from God and darkens our thinking (Romans 1). If you have the time, or are having multiple conversations, you can also talk about brokenness in ourselves, our relationships, and our world. You may also want to share how God was constantly at work to remedy our brokenness, through the commandments and the sacrifices of the Old Testament. These measures were not perfect, nor were they meant to be. They served to illuminate our need for a better sacrifice, Jesus.

Next, draw an arrow that extends from the second circle.

At the end of this arrow, draw the third circle, write "Jesus" in the circle's center, and draw a cross below His name. Beside the arrow, write "turn" and "follow." Faith in Jesus requires turning away from sin (repentance) and following Him (belief) (Mark 1:14–15, Acts 3:17–26, Romans 10:5–13). It acknowledges we cannot appease God or mend our brokenness. We need Jesus, the sinless Savior, to mend what is broken inside and outside ourselves. We need Him to make us right with God.

Now draw an arrow that connects the third circle to the first circle.

Beside the arrow, write "grow" and "go." Faith in Jesus begins with turning away from sin and following Him. Faith in Jesus continues with those same actions, combined with growing and going. We grow in our faith, living to delight the One who loved and loves us to the utmost (John 13:1, Hebrews 7:23–25). We go, too, meaning that we speak of what we have seen and heard. We share Jesus with everyone, awaiting the day Jesus returns and makes all things new.



After you talk through the circles, ask the person a couple of questions:

- 1. What made sense, and what was confusing?
- 2. Where would you place yourself on the diagram, and where would you like to be?
- 3. What prevents you from trusting in Jesus?

The answers you receive to the third question may require additional conversations. If you do not know how to talk with people about their misgivings, say so. You do not have to know everything to be an evangelist. Say, "you know, I don't have a good answer for that. Could I think about it some more and ask one of my friends at church for their input?" [12]

declare God's story READING PLAN



2 Corinthians 9–10

In light of God's righteousness, what steps do you need to take today to fight your flesh, take every thought captive, and turn in obedience to Jesus?

2 Corinthians 11–13

Reflect on a time when you felt God's strength in the midst of great human weakness. What did you learn about God during that time, what did you learn about yourself, and how was your relationship with him impacted as a result?

Romans 1-2 & Acts 20:1-3

What words or phrases do you notice in Romans 1–2 that describe who you are apart from Christ? Take time to confess and repent of sin and unrighteousness. What glimpses of grace do you see in these chapters?

Romans 3-4

Why is Romans 3:9-20 important for us to believe and understand before the word "but" in verse 21? Using Romans 3:9-26, write your own summary of the gospel message.

Romans 5-6

In what ways have you allowed the grace of God to give you license to sin? What areas of your life need repentance to declare the righteousness and the grace of God to others?

MEMORIZE	 commit a verse to memory
PRAYER ————————————————————————————————————	write down prayer requests

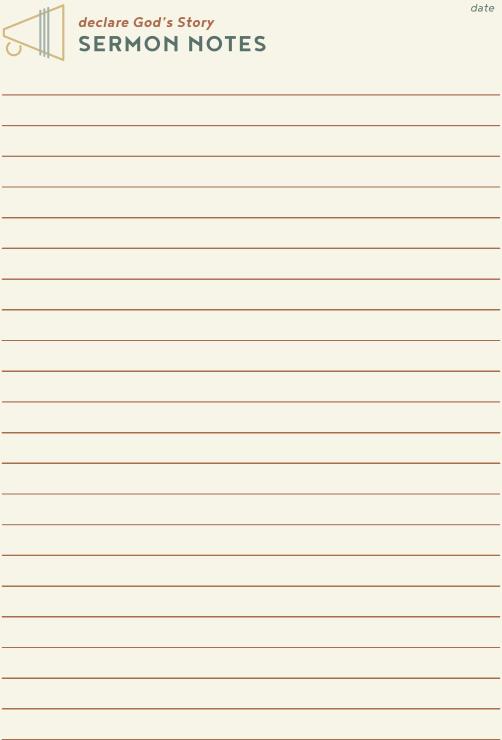
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"Stories are how we make sense of the world and our place in it. The question people want an answer to, whether or not they realize it, is: Is there a story that is big enough to build our lives upon—a story that gives our lives ultimate meaning and purpose?

The gospel of Jesus Christ is the most glorious, liberating news that has ever graced our weary, battered planet! The good news of Jesus enables us to discover the meaning of our individual stories by helping us understand the big story: the greatest story ever told."

- Rebecca Manley Pippers

Every disciple of Jesus has a story to tell of how God rescued them from sin and death, into life and righteousness through Jesus Christ. God's redemptive work in us through Jesus Christ is not only so that we might be saved from sin and placed into a right relationship with God, but also, it might serve as an illustration to those who do not yet believe.

GOD'S STORY THROUGH OUR STORIES

by Casey Cease

Oftentimes people have not thought through their story enough to be able to articulate it in a manner that conveys their need for rescue and forgiveness, and God's sent solution through Jesus Christ. Instead, it either becomes a glorification of their former sin or a boastful tirade of who they worked hard to become. Both instances are in error: they put us at the center of the story instead of God since our stories are a part of God's bigger story.

One of the most helpful exercises I was ever encouraged to do was by one of my mentors when he challenged me to tell my story in three minutes or less. To be honest, I have an intense story, so condensing it down into three minutes, while including the redemption that occurred through Christ was challenging. However, it forced me to focus on what was most important in my story by being able to illustrate what was most important in God's story, which is God's grace to us through Jesus Christ.

THE POINT OF THE STORY IS JESUS

I'd encourage you to take some time and think through how your story is a part of a larger story. It is God's story. Perhaps you grew up in a faithful Christian home and came to faith at a young age, then boast in God's grace and how you, a sinner, didn't deserve any of what he gave you. Maybe you were a religious kid who grew up knowing all of the "right" answers, but your heart was far from God. Maybe you didn't grow up in a Christian family. In any case, discuss how your sin and depravity was ultimately and completely redeemed through Jesus Christ, and how this salvation and redemption continues to be applied even today. Regardless of where you were prior to Christ, the point is that Jesus doesn't just make us better-he makes us new! (See 1 Corinthians 5:17)

TELLING YOUR STORY

by Casey Cease

Be honest about where you were, where you are, and where you sense Jesus leading you. Here are a few things to think about as you work to craft your story in a helpful way:

1. Who were you before you met Jesus? For some, this is an easy question to answer, for others, it is a revealing question. Don't try to make it more or less than it is, just be honest about who you were without Jesus.

2. How did you first hear of Jesus? Was it a family member, friend, pamphlet, etc.? What was your initial response? Did you believe the first time you heard?

3. What was your conversion like? Was it sudden, gradual, substantial, or simple? How did it feel? How was it applied (i.e. were there immediate changes, or gradual changes)?

	4. What is the most important thing you have learned about Jesus since your conversion? This is important, and may not be only one thing, but it might be helpful to have one theme going throughout your story when you prepare to share it with others. Was he your Redeemer? If so, what did he redeem you from?
	5. How has your view of yourself changed in view of your relationship with Jesus? What lies did you believe about yourself before you met Jesus? What truth has replaced those lies?
	6. How does your story best point people to Jesus? Is it a story of a criminal being forgiven of a crime? Is it one who was dead because of their sin finding life? Is it a story about someone being lost, then being found? Sound familiar? There are stories like this all over the Bible. There are stories like this being written today. You are a part of God's story!
	The aim of our stories is ultimately to point people to Jesus. Our stories are not to tell people how great we are now—they're sober realizations of who we were without Christ and a hopeful presentation of who we hope to become in him. What is your story? Think through it, organize it, and then share it often. [13]
//:	

declare their story READING PLAN



Romans 7-8

Read and reread Romans 8:1 multiple times. How is this hard for you to believe? How does this comfort and encourage you today? If you are struggling to believe this truth, ask God to help you believe it and thank him for His grace.

Romans 9-10

Who did God use in your life to declare the Gospel to you? Who is in your circle of influence that needs to hear the gospel from you? Pray for them right now and ask that God would give you the boldness to share.

Romans 11-12

According to Romans 12:9–21, would your life reflect and declare a life that has experienced the grace and salvation of Jesus? What were some of the phrases from this passage that were convicting or challenging?

Romans 13-14

What are some ways that you can express the love of Christ and declare the grace of God to government officials, neighbors, and employers (even if you disagree with them)?

Romans 15-16

Paul made it his ambition to declare the grace and salvation of God in places where Christ had not yet been named (Romans 15:20). Could God be calling you to do that? Would you be willing to if he was? Why or why not? Consider: Pray for those right now that do not know the Name of Jesus or have access to the Word of God.

MEMORIZE	– commit a verse to memory
PRAYER ————————————————————————————————————	
PRATER	write down prayer requests

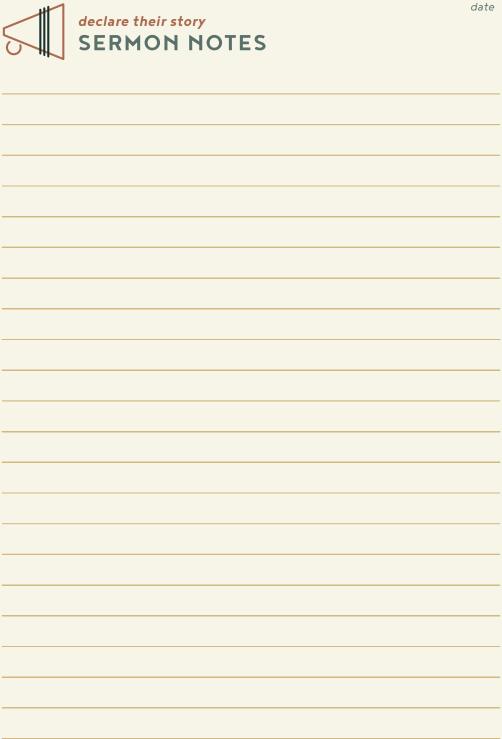
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That quote reminds us that God, of course, is the greatest evangelist. Only God can change hearts, open blind eyes, and produce conversion. In Acts 16, when Paul arrived in Philippi, he went outside the city gate to the river, and sat down and began speaking to the women who were gathered there. Among them was Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth, which indicated that she was a successful and no doubt wealthy merchant. She clearly wasn't a woman who lacked confidence, as we see when she persuaded Paul and his companions to stay at her home during their time in Philippi. Paul, Luke tells us, shared the gospel with her, and "the Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message" (Acts 16 v 14). In other words, the words were Paul's, but the work was God's. It is God and only God who brings people to faith in his Son-wonderfully, he usually does that life-changing work through His people. We get the privilege of being a part of how God saves people for eternity! This means two things:

First, success in evangelism is not about how many people we convert, since none of us have ever converted anyone! Success is about loving people with our lives and with our words—about showing them Jesus and then telling them the gospel of Jesus in as faithful, engaging, and loving a way as we are able to. We are not responsible for someone's response to the message, but we are responsible for sharing that message. Remember, God is pleased when we bear witness to his Son, whether the result is conversion or rejection. Rico Tice puts it this way: "What is successful witnessing? It's not someone becoming a Christian—it's someone hearing about Christ ... You have not failed if you explain the gospel and are rejected. You have failed if you don't try." (Honest Evangelism, pages 64, 65)

Second, we must remember that we need God-confidence and not self-confidence. When we know that, as we bear witness, God can work to open blind eyes and hearts to respond to the Gospel message, it makes us bold and prayerful. God is with us and is backing us up as we speak. Who knows how he may use our words? So, start to pray boldly. Ask God to show you where he is already at work in your immediate world-ask him to point you to those in your family, your neighborhood, your workplace, your community, and/or your city who he is preparing to hear the gospel. Begin there-and remember that God may send some of us to the ends of the earth." [11]

PRAYING FOR UNBELIEVERS

A believer is someone who has repented and put their faith in Jesus Christ; therefore, an unbeliever is someone who has not put their faith in Jesus Christ. Since belief in the gospel is the means by which people are reconciled to God, an unbeliever is someone who is dead in their trespasses, a slave to sin, and an enemy of God

- + Pray that God draws them to himself (John 6:44).
- + Pray that they seek to know God (Acts 17:27, Deuteronomy 4:29).
- + Pray that they believe the Scriptures (1 Thessalonians 2:13, Romans 10:17).
- Pray that Satan would be kept from blinding them to the truth (Matthew 13:19, 2 Corinthians 4:4).
- + Pray that the Holy Spirit works in them (John 16:8-13).
- Pray that God would send them someone to lead them to Christ (Matthew 9:37-38).
- + Pray that they would believe in Christ as Savior (John 1:12, 5:24) and confess him as Lord (Romans 10:9-10).
- + Pray that they would turn from sin (Acts 3:19, 17:30-31).
- Pray that they would yield all to follow Christ (2 Corinthians 5:15, Philippians 3:7-8).
- + Pray that they would take root and grow in Christ (Colossians 2:6-7).

PRAYING FOR GOERS

While all of us are sent out to declare the Gospel to everyone and everywhere, we use the term "goer" to refer to believers who actively cross a culture to make disciples and plant churches globally. At Redeemer, we train, mobilize, and send, both men and women, to go to the unreached.

Thank God

Thank God for the New Testament missionaries like Paul; for their "toil and hardship" in growing the early church. Then, thank God for our Goers. Thank God for his grace in saving them; thank God for the gifts and talents he's given them; thank God for their willingness to use these talents to serve him cross-culturally.

Guarded from discouragement

Serving God cross-culturally can bring a barrage of discouragements: health problems, challenging team dynamics, spiritual attack or a seeming lack of fruit. Pray that Goers would be encouraged, knowing that they are not trying to please local partners or their sending church, but God—and that their continued faithfulness is what delights their Father.

Focused on the gospel

Our Goers work in parts of the world where sharing the gospel carries significant risk. Ask God for courage. Some Goers may also have a "secular" job, which can threaten to steal focus, energy, and time from this primary goal. Pray that their job or platform would facilitate gospel ministry, rather than distracting from it.

Walking righteously

Pray that our Goers would live in a way that is "holy, righteous and blameless", even when things are hard. Perhaps you know some ways in which they struggle to be godly; pray through these specifically.

Deepening relationships

Pray that, like Paul, our Goers would always be "encouraging, comforting and urging [local Christians] to live lives worthy of God". Thank God for the Christians—your brothers and sisters!—in this part of the world. Pray that our Goers would be able to grow deep relationships with local believers, built on a unity in the gospel that overcomes all cultural differences.

PRAYING FOR THE UNREACHED

Members of a people group share a common history, language, cultural identity, and worldview. It's the largest ethnic grouping of people within which the Gospel can flow without barriers to understanding. A people group is unreached if it has no indigenous community of believing Christians with adequate numbers and resources to engage its people with the Gospel. Unreached people groups have less than 2% evangelical Christians and less than 5% professing Christians.

Good news for everyone

Thank God that the news of Christ's Kingdom is good news. Praise God for the way that Jesus proclaimed it in "all the towns and villages"—no matter where or how people live, the gospel is universally good news. Thank God that he wants all nations and all types of people in his kingdom.

Compassion

People without Christ are "harassed and helpless"—and when Jesus was surrounded by the lost, he had compassion. Yet when we contemplate the sheer number of lost people, often we sink into indifference or apathetic hopelessness. Ask God to fill you with more of Christ's compassion. Ask him to make you faithful both in praying for the unreached, and in playing your part to reach them.

Know the Good Shepherd

Thank Jesus that he is the Good Shepherd that people need. Thank him for the way he laid down his life for his sheep; pray that many of these unreached people would come to understand the sacrifice of the cross. Pray that they'd experience the joy and security that comes from following the Good Shepherd.

Plentiful harvest

It may not look this way, but Jesus is clear: "The harvest is plentiful". Thank God! Say sorry to God for the times when you've doubted this; for the times when—even unconsciously—you've dismissed people as too far, or too hard, or too messy. Ask him to encourage your soul with this truth: "The harvest is plentiful"!

Send out more workers

Jesus is equally clear that "the workers are few". And this is what he tells us to do about it: "Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field". So ask now! And-if you dare!—ask God to use you as a worker in whatever part of his harvest field he wills. [12]

declare to everyone everywhere READING PLAN



Acts 20-21

"Gospel goodbyes" are a part of the call to declare Jesus to everyone and everywhere (Acts 20:36–38). Reflect on a time where you have had to say goodbye to friends and family that have either gone overseas, moved with a church plant, or multiplied a gospel community. How was this hard, but why was it worth it?

Acts 22-23

Paul tells his conversion story. What is your story of coming to faith in Jesus? Who can you share that with today?

Acts 24-25

When you face opposition to the gospel, how do you respond (anger, withdrawal, combative, fearful, etc.)? What stands out to you about the way Paul responds to opposition?

Acts 26-27

There are both internal and external obstacles and barriers to declaring the gospel. What barriers do you see within yourself and in circumstances outside of your control to declaring the gospel to others? Take time to ask God to remove those barriers today.

Acts 28

All believers in Jesus are a part of the Great Commission to make Jesus known to the ends of the earth. How can you play your part in that commission today?

MEMORIZE	— commit a verse to memory
PRAYER ————————————————————————————————————	write down prayer requests

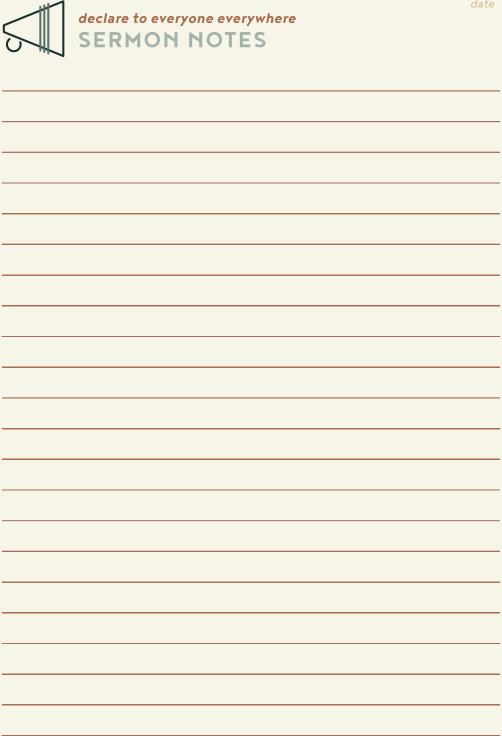
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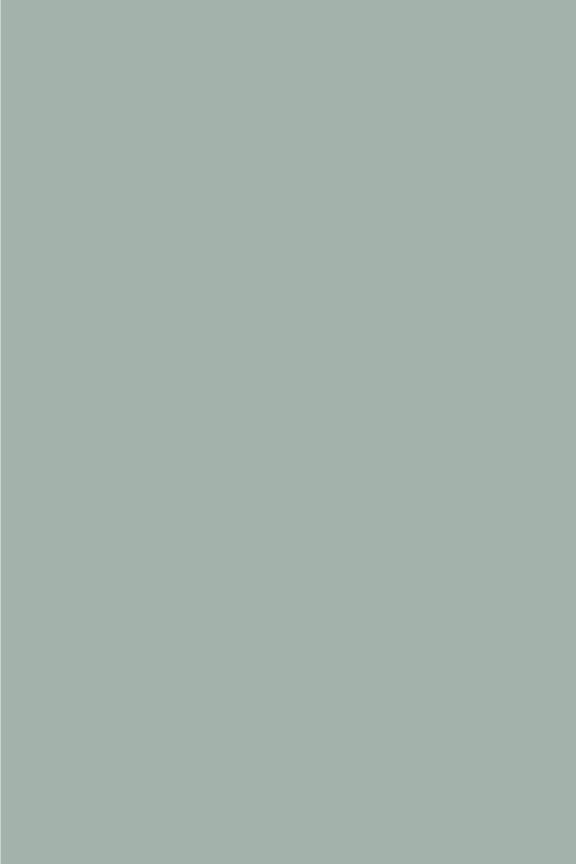
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