

FRESH START



CONNECT GROUPS

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INTRODUCTION

“Now we look inside, and what we see is that anyone united with the Messiah gets a fresh start, is created new. The old life is gone; a new life burgeons...”

2 CORINTHIANS 5:17 MSG

Welcome to your Fresh Start. This teaching series is designed to give new believers, and anyone who wants to build up the foundation of their faith, an encouraging space to talk about who God is and what having a relationship with Jesus means for your life. This group is a safe place to ask genuine questions that may have challenged your faith. There may not always be a perfect answer, but that's ok. God's Word tells us that “His thoughts are not our thoughts and His ways are not our ways.” A god that could be fully understood by us would be no God at all. Aren't you grateful to have a God who is bigger, wiser, and who can do more than we ever could?

Our hope is for you to flourish in your relationship with and understanding of God. We believe that you can break old thought patterns, grow tremendously in faith, and experience extraordinary life-change, both personally and spiritually, through this teaching series as you begin to seek after Jesus every day.

To get you started, here are some practical next steps for you to take now that you have decided to follow Jesus:

- **Take the One-Year Challenge.** For one year, go all in. That includes attending weekend services, First Wednesdays, Serve Day, Care Night, and other events and conferences. Complete Growth Track, join the Go Team, and build relationships through Connect Groups. We believe that if you dedicate one year of your life to doing these things, you will see God transform your life in new and exciting ways.
- **Get Water Baptized.** Baptism shows that you've trusted Jesus, accepted Him as your Savior, and made a commitment to follow Him for the rest of your life. It's an outward expression of the inward change that happens. If you have not been water baptized, we want to invite you to take the next step in your relationship with Jesus. Find out more information at thechapel.cc/baptism/.
- **Start attending Weekend services regularly.** It's important to be plugged into a church with other believers. There are probably many good churches in your area, and although we'd love for you to call theChapel home, and invite you to join us regularly, the most important thing is to choose a place and commit. If you would like to become a member at theChapel, start with completing Step One of Growth Track available online.

- **Complete Growth Track.** Growth Track is a two-step process created to help you discover your God-given purpose and design. Growth Track equips you to connect to the church, discover the strengths of your design, and develop your God-given gifts to make a difference in the lives of others. Growth Track is available online and can be completed in one sitting. Visit the following link for more information: thechapel.cc/growthtrack/

- **Join a Connect Group.** Great job! You can already mark this one off the list. There are a variety of Connect Groups available – from Bible and book studies, marriage and family groups, to sports and coffee groups, there is something for everyone. theChapel Connect Groups have one simple purpose: to find freedom by surrounding ourselves with life-giving relationships. Meaningful relationships can be hard to find, and Connect Groups exist to make life-changing relationships accessible to you. Check out the Connect Groups directory at thechapel.cc/groups/ to find one that fits you.

- **Stay connected.** Hear testimonies of life change, stay in the know about events happening at theChapel, and see all kinds of other inspiring content through theChapel App and social media.

Facebook [/thechapel.cc](https://www.facebook.com/thechapel.cc)

IG [@theChapel.cc](https://www.instagram.com/theChapel.cc)

Youtube [@theChapel.cc](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCv3v3v3v3v3v3v3v3v3v3v3)

If you want to know more or have any questions, your Connect Group Leader is a great resource. You can also learn more at thechapel.cc/

– theChapel Connect Groups Team

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This guide is designed to kick-start group discussions each week as you grow deeper in your faith.

Main Idea

This section will lay the foundation for your conversation. It focuses on key thoughts and is followed by a supporting scripture.

Discussion

This section contains questions that are designed to encourage discussion and group interaction, while moving people closer to God and to others.

Prayer Focus

Each week you'll find a suggested prayer focus tailored to your group's current step in the journey.

Next Steps

Next Steps are your opportunity to take what you learn each week and put it into practice. They are practical, attainable, and stretching actions you can take to grow and move forward in your journey following Jesus.

Notes

Use this space to jot down notes and insights during your discussions.

LEADER RESOURCES

Leader Tips

These are practical steps and tips for the Connect Group Leader to help them lead well and create a positive group dynamic.

Common Questions

This curriculum is designed to be a Fresh Start for new believers and anyone who needs to build up the foundation of their faith. With that in mind, you may get some questions each week that aren't already covered specifically in the Main Idea. Each week, this section will include some of the questions that might come up and suggested answers to equip you to respond.

Part 1

What We Need to Know

WEEK ONE: WHO IS GOD?

Main Idea

Who is God, and how can we live in relationship with Him? God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He loves us so much that He sent His Son, Jesus, to save us from our sin and set us free. The cost was heavy, and it was one that only God Himself could pay. Then, He sent His Holy Spirit to empower and guide us in this life. God is our Father, and He wants His children to know Him, not just through a set of rules to follow, but through a genuine, vibrant relationship. God gives us life. He gives us His Son. He gives us Himself. It is the joy of our lives to know, pursue, love, and live in relationship with God our Father.

“I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.”

2 Corinthians 6:18 NIV

Discussion

- Has your view of God changed as your relationship with Him has changed? If so, how has it changed?
- What is your relationship with your earthly father like? How could that affect your relationship with your heavenly Father?
- Relationships are a two-way street. What does your part in the relationship with God look like?
- What is one thing if you started doing this week would improve your relationship with God?

Prayer Focus

In your daily prayer time, pray using Jeremiah 29:13 – “You will seek Me and find Me when you seek Me with all your heart”. Ask God to reveal His character to you, and prepare to seek Him with all of your heart. Renew your commitment to Jesus each day

Next Steps

Spend time in the presence of the Father this week and develop a personal time of connection with Him. Don’t worry about being formal. Try calling God by a different name like “Father”, “Dad”, or “Abba”. Just be real, and watch how your time with God transforms.

[illegible]

WEEK TWO: WHO ARE WE?

Main Idea

Many of us have some confusion about our spiritual identity. We are not slaves to God, but rather, sons and daughters. Romans 8:17 says, “Now if we are children, then we are heirs – heirs of God, and co-heirs with Christ...” So, not only are we God’s children, but we are heirs of His kingdom. The invitation to be adopted into God’s family is open and available to everyone through Jesus Christ.

“But when the set time had fully come, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, so that we might receive adoption to sonship. Because you are His sons, God sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, “Abba, Father.” So you are no longer a slave, but God’s child; and since you are His child, God has made you also an heir.”

Galatians 4:4-7 NIV

Discussion

- Discuss the difference between approaching God as your master versus as your father. Has this message changed the way you think about God? If so, how?
- Romans 8:17 states, “Now if we are children, then we are heirs— heirs of God, and co-heirs with Christ...” What does being an heir of God mean to you?
- What, if anything, stands in the way of viewing yourself as an heir? What can you do to remove the barriers?
- Talk about a time when you attempted to love someone out of duty, rather than out of your genuine care for them. Explain what that was like for you. How should your devotion to God impact how you love other people?

Prayer Focus

Pray this week using Philippians 2:12-13 – “Work hard to show the results of your salvation, obeying God with deep reverence and fear. For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases Him.” Pray each day that you will be driven by devotion and not duty.

Next Steps

In our pursuit of God, we sometimes have a tendency to try to work our way into salvation. Identify one step you can take this week to focus more on Jesus and less on your own actions.

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WEEK THREE: WHAT IS OUR MISSION?

Main Idea

Some of us view God as living behind a locked gate where He can't be reached. Others think of getting to God like scaling an endless ladder, where we strain to climb and climb but never really reach the top. God's Word says He is near to us and not remote. All God asks from us is to believe in Jesus and live in light of that redemption. The truth is that God offers Himself as a free gift to all through Jesus. With that in mind, how can we share this free gift with others? The most powerful tool you have, outside of the Bible, is your own story. People connect with stories. Honestly share how you came to know Jesus and invite them to experience the presence of God that heals and transforms broken lives.

“So we are Christ's ambassadors; God is making His appeal through us...”

2 Corinthians 5:20 NLT

Discussion

- What does being an ambassador for Christ mean to you?
- Imagine these four pictures people have of God – as a locked gate, a pile of luggage, an endless ladder, and the true view of Him – as a free gift. Do any of these pictures resonate with you? If you had doubts about who God is, have you overcome those doubts? How?
- Talk about a time someone shared their faith with you. What can you learn from how they did it? How would you go about sharing your faith with someone else?
- Briefly share your salvation story. When did you make the decision to follow Jesus?

Prayer Focus

Pray for God to give you the boldness to live a Matthew 5:16 life: “Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.”

Next Steps

- Make a list of the people in your direct sphere of influence and begin intentionally showing them the love of God. Pay attention to them, hear their needs, and make yourself available to serve them in the areas where they need help.
- Invite someone you know to join you at a Connect Group or attend church with you this weekend.

[illegible]

WEEK FOUR: HOW DO WE HEAR THE VOICE OF GOD?

Main Idea

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WEEK FIVE: WHAT IS LIFE AFTER DEATH?

Main Idea

The Bible tells us that Heaven is a real place. It is also a right place, where evil is absent and there is no more sorrow. Heaven is a relational and rewarding place. God created mankind to be His family, and in Heaven we will live in a perfect relationship with one another and with God. So how do we respond to this truth? We refocus each day on where we are going, not where we are. Then, we reach people at any cost because we know that life is like a vapor, here today and gone tomorrow. Each day, in every interaction with another person, we recognize that we have an opportunity to impact their eternity through an introduction to Jesus, the One who saves.

Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” Jesus answered him, “Truly I tell you, today you will be with Me in paradise.”

Luke 23:42-43 NIV

Discussion

- Read Revelations 21:21-27. How is heaven described? Is it different from what you had learned before? How?
- What excites you the most about Heaven?
- When talking about “refocusing our energies,” did you feel the Holy Spirit speaking to you about some of the areas He wants you to refocus? Talk about how you can refocus to live for Heaven instead of earth with your time, talent, treasure, and love for people.

Prayer Focus

Pray that God would help you live with Heaven in mind and give you the wisdom to make the most out of every opportunity

Next Steps

Do you know someone whose eternity is still on the line? Identify some ways that you can help them take the next step. Starting may be as simple as reaching out to them and building a closer relationship, sharing what God has done in your life, or inviting them to church. Don’t be intimidated! You can start small and be amazed at what God does.

This image shows a full page of blank, lined paper. It features approximately 28 horizontal black lines spaced evenly across the page, typical of notebook paper. The lines are thin and extend from the left edge towards the right. There is no handwriting or other markings on the page.

We refocus each day on where we are going, not where we are.

Part 2

What We Need To Do

WEEK SIX: UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE

Main Idea

The Bible is God's Word. It's His voice, constant and unchanging, speaking to a culture and a world that is always moving fast. Sometimes, it may seem impossible in the middle of your busy schedule to make time for God. Here's the good news: holding on to God's Word is not as hard as you think. Start by using the First Fifteen approach. Give God the first 15 minutes of your day by spending five minutes in the Bible, five minutes in worship, and five minutes in prayer. If you take those simple steps, God will honor your commitment and the Word will put down roots in the heart of who you are. Make this time the foundation of your day and watch how quickly God uses it to transform your everyday life.

For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to divide soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

Hebrews 4:12 NIV

Discussion

- What is the Bible to you? How does the scripture above change the way you view the Bible?
- Discuss the First Fifteen approach. How could giving God the first of each day by starting every morning with five minutes in the Word, five minutes in worship, and five minutes in prayer make a difference to the rest of your day?
- Have you seen your decisions and actions change by holding on to God's Word? How?
- Share your experience with reading the Bible. What has worked well for you? What has not worked well for you?

Prayer Focus

This week, focus on praying that the Word of God would draw you into a more vibrant relationship with the Father.

Next Steps

- Make a commitment to set the foundation of your life in God's Word. Find and use a study Bible in a translation that helps you understand the Word better.
- Dedicate the first part of your day to Him by taking the First Fifteen approach.
- Decide ahead of time that you will attend church each week so that you can hear the Word preached regularly.

[illegible]

WEEK SEVEN: TALKING TO GOD

Main Idea

The Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6:9-13 walks us through how to pray. The Lord's Prayer is not the only way to pray, but it does provide a guideline for how we can pray effectively. Many of us have repeated the Lord's Prayer by memory, or read it word for word as a more general prayer, but it is also very valuable as an outline for our prayer life. The Lord's Prayer is simple, beautiful, and powerful. If we draw out the principles in His prayer, we can use them to help us develop our own prayer life.

This, then, is how you should pray: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name, Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."

MATTHEW 6:9-13 NIV

Discussion

- Does prayer tend to be your first response or your last resort? Why do you think that is?
 - What do you think your prayer time should look like?
 - What are some potential distractions that get in the way of spending time in prayer?
 - God responds to the prayers of His people, and His answers sometimes surprise us.
- Share a time God answered your prayer.

Prayer Focus

Ask God to help you fully surrender anything that you need to release to Him. Pray for a healthy, vibrant daily prayer life.

Next Steps

Plan your prayer time by establishing a time and place that you can see yourself using daily.

[illegible]

WEEK EIGHT: STAYING ON THE RIGHT PATH

Main Idea

Choosing our relationships carefully is vital to staying healthy. God doesn't just call us to nurture and initiate meaningful relationships, His Word also tells us to stay away from harmful relationships and to restore our broken ones. Developing strong relationships takes work, but we can do it. Be intentional with the people in your sphere of influence. Take the time to cultivate Godly relationships with your church family, friends, and coworkers. Growing the right relationships is important because "we" is always better than "me."

A mirror reflects a man's face, but what he is really like is shown by the kind of friends he chooses.

Proverbs 27:19 TLB

Discussion

- Talk about a time when you walked through a difficult season on your own. How do you believe the support of a Connect Group would have impacted the way you experienced that season?
- Can you think of any relationships in your life that feel negative, draining, or unhealthy? What are ways you could start to step away from those relationships?
- What new relationships do you need to start? How could those existing relationships be strengthened?

Prayer Focus

Pray to have healthy relationships. Ask God to help restore any relationships that have been broken, and for the strength and wisdom to sever harmful ones.

Next Steps

- Ask God to show you any relationships in your life that need to be restored. Take a small step towards reconciliation. Starting may be as simple as making a phone call.
- Ask the other members of your group how you can pray for them. Write down their prayer requests and pray for them throughout the week. You might even text them with an encouraging word sometime during the week.

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WEEK NINE: WHY WE GIVE

Main Idea

Intentional giving and generosity is important. God has blessed us with more than we need so that we can be a blessing to others. Let's look for opportunities to be generous and consistently make an effort to listen for the voice of God. When we give generously, we can experience new joy, watching with open hands while God works miracles with the resources He provides us.

You know the generous grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, so that by His poverty He could make you rich.

2 Corinthians 8:9 NLT

Discussion

- Have you been a recipient of someone else's generosity? How did it make you feel?
- We can all be a blessing to someone else. How can we be intentional with the gifts or resources God has given us to bless others? What is one thing you could do to bless someone this week?
 - When do you find it the easiest to be generous? When do you find it the most difficult? What factors contribute to each of those situations?
- Our God is generous. He continues to bless us even when we don't deserve it. How do you live differently knowing that God loves us that much?

Prayer Focus

Seek God's will daily and look for opportunities to expand the Kingdom.

Next Steps

- Ask God to speak to you clearly about how He is calling you to live generously.
- Think about random acts of kindness, outreach, mission trips, a giving plan through your church, and other opportunities that can help you demonstrate generosity in your daily life.
- Ask for wisdom managing your personal finances and pray that God would show you how to leverage your resources to expand His Kingdom.

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WEEK TEN: MAKING THE MOST OUT OF LIFE

Main Idea

We all have an innate, God-given desire to make a difference. When we know Jesus personally, He empowers us to serve His Kingdom in a way that can forever change the lives of others. We are all called to use everything God has given us to serve others and to share the love of Jesus. When we live like this, we get to contribute to the Kingdom of God in a way that continues to impact the world long after we go to Heaven.

You, then, why do you judge your brother or sister? Or why do you treat them with contempt? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat. It is written: "As surely as I live," says the Lord, "every knee will bow before Me; every tongue will acknowledge God." So then, each of us will give an account of ourselves to God.

Romans 14:10-12 NIV

Discussion

- What do you believe is the greatest inheritance that you can leave for your children or loved ones? What can you start doing today to be more intentional about creating or sustaining that legacy?
- What would you want the people who know you best to say about you when your life is over? What in your life would have to change to make that a reality?
- Identify someone you know personally who seems to be living out God's purpose for his/her life well. What characteristics does that person embody that you would like to see in your own life?
- God has given each of us specific gifts and abilities. What are some of those gifts and how can you use them to impact others?

Prayer Focus

Pray for your eyes to be opened to the needs around you. Ask God to show you how to use your time, resources, and gifts to bless others.

Next Steps

- Decide as a group how you can help each other build a legacy. Create opportunities to bless others together and invite people to join you for Serve Day. Your faithfulness will make a difference in the lives of others.
- Complete Growth Track to discover your God-given purpose.
- Now that this series is coming to a close, identify one next step you could take that would have the biggest impact on your relationship with God. Once you do, share it with a friend or someone from the group for accountability.

[illegible]

**We are all called to use everything God has given us to serve others
and to share the love of Jesus.**

LEADER RESOURCES

Leader Tips - Week One

- Create a group roster with everyone's name and contact information so that you can easily connect with your group throughout the semester. Focus on building relationships with your group and getting to know their stories.
- Encourage your group to begin processing any questions they may have about who God really is and what it means to be in relationship with Him. Transparency at this stage will lead to transformation later.
- Encourage group members who have not had a significant, post-decision baptism, to consider being water baptized.

Common Questions - Week One

Check out the Chapel Statement of Beliefs as an added resource to prepare for each week. thechapel.cc/beliefs/

How can God be three persons at one time?

That's a great question. God is Father, Son, and Spirit. This is one of the great mysteries of the faith. We know that it's true because the Bible makes it clear over and over again, but we can't fully understand how it works. One of the greatest proofs of the reality of God is that there's much about Him we can't understand. Isaiah 55:8 tells us that "His thoughts are not our thoughts, and His ways are not our ways."

How can I trust God if I don't fully understand Him?

There are lots of things in life that we trust but don't completely understand. To trust God is to have faith in God. Faith is defined as "trust or confidence in something or someone." When you sit in a chair for the first time you are showing faith that the chair will hold you. Until you sit, you really don't know if the chair will stay together. We trust God based on His history, character, and promises. Over time, as you grow closer to God, trusting Him will become more natural.

I don't have a good relationship with my father, so how am I supposed to trust God as a father?

Sometimes, our experience with our biological father doesn't match up well with the standard that God sets, and that can be really difficult. God models the role of "father" as it should be, not the other way around. God is the father who loves fully and

unconditionally. He will never leave, and He will always forgive. He builds up, equips, frees, and empowers. God sets the standard for fatherhood. The critical thing to remember is that God was the first Father, and He always fills that role perfectly.

Why does God love us so much?

He chooses to - He freely loves us. More than a feeling, love is a choice. The Word tells us in 1 John 4:8 that God is love, so He is really the embodiment of that choice in action. It's even more beautiful when we understand that God isn't forced to love us because of a feeling. He chooses to love us, unconditionally and always, out of His own free will.

Leader Tips - Week Two

- The material covered in this Connect Group can potentially lead to lengthy or off topic discussion. Quickly guide the discussion back to the topic when those instances arise. Offer to stay late or meet outside of the group to continue any helpful conversation that didn't fit within this week's topic.
- Remind your group members that their identity is found in Christ alone. Encourage them to keep focusing on the small steps they're taking in faith.
- Recommend that they start Growth Track this week if they haven't already completed it. It can be done online

Common Questions - Week Two

Does God still love us when we mess up?

Yes! Romans 5:8 says that "God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." Think about that for a moment. God loves us so much that even while we were doing wrong, He sent His only Son to die on a cross so that we could be forgiven and free. That's how much He still loves us when we mess up. His love is unconditional!

I want to do right, but I keep sinning. Is being a "good Christian" supposed to be this hard?

None of us are perfect. Jesus lived the only perfect life that the world has ever seen. We should always strive to be like Jesus, but it's a process, and sometimes we will fall short. Every Christian struggles and is faced with temptation and difficulty, but there are practical steps we can take to help us. Find an accountability partner, make spending time in the Word a habit, and pray regularly. As you grow, you'll find your walk with the Lord feels more and more natural as you move forward on your journey of faith. Keep going!

If I'm God's son, does God punish His children?

No. Jesus took all the punishment for us. Romans 8:1 tells us that "There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." The difference now is that God gives the bad in our lives purpose. He does not cause the disaster, but He works through it to shape and help us grow. (Genesis 50:20)

What can I do to earn God's love and approval?

Nothing. You don't have to earn it and you wouldn't be able to even if you tried. Fortunately, you can just receive it. Ephesians 2:8 tells us that "by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God." You don't have to do anything except put your faith in Jesus to receive God's love and approval.

Leader Tip – Week Three

- If your group has room for more people, encourage your members to invite someone to come with them.

Common Questions – Week Three

How do I help lost people that are far away, or out of my reach?

Pray, go, give. Pray for the people to experience God and for the safety of the teams who are in the mission field. Go get involved by reaching the lost in your sphere of influence, joining a Serve Day Project, or taking short or long-term mission trips. Give your time, money, and giftings to support local or global outreach and mission efforts.

What happens if sharing my faith doesn't work?

The truth is, our responsibility is to share our faith and trust God to take care of the results. Ideally, you want the person to accept Jesus and enter into a vibrant relationship with Him. That may not happen right away every time. Whenever you share, you move the ball down the field some. You plant a seed. Someone else may come along later and water it. You may never see that person come to Christ, but you played a role.

Do I have to share my faith?

Yes, we are ambassadors for Christ. It can sound intimidating, but it's really just telling your own story. Tell them about what God has done in your life and share the hope you have as a result.

Leader Tips – Week Four

- Encourage your group members to invite the Holy Spirit into their daily life and listen for His voice as He teaches and guides them. Whether their relationship with the Holy Spirit is new, or they've known Him for a long time, encourage them to continually grow closer to Him.
- Share any misconceptions or fears you may have had about the Holy Spirit even after you trusted Christ. How did you come to understand His true identity and purpose?

Common Questions – Week Four

How do I know if I am hearing from God?

We can try to answer this in two parts. First, one of the best ways to discern whether or not you are hearing from God is to dive into His Word. God will not contradict Himself, so if you feel like the Spirit is telling you something, check it with God's Word. On top of that, you can know that The Holy Spirit always offers hope, while the enemy beats down. The Holy Spirit calms, comforts, convicts, leads, and encourages, while the Enemy obsesses, worries, condemns, and confuses.

On an even more practical note, you can ask yourself these 4 questions:

- Does what I'm hearing line up with scripture?
- Is it consistent with God's character?
- Is it being confirmed through messages I'm hearing at church or studying in my quiet times?
- Would it please God?

What is the Holy Spirit?

The Holy Spirit is a person. He is, more specifically, the third person of the Trinity. The Holy Spirit is one of the three persons of God. The Spirit is not a feeling, a force, or an energy. For some additional Scriptural resources, look at John 16:13-15, and Romans 8:27. If someone in your group would like to learn more about the Holy Spirit, encourage them to read the Gospel of John.

What are spiritual gifts?

Spiritual Gifts are what God equips you with to serve the Church and build up the Kingdom of God. There are many different kinds of gifts. If you haven't discovered the areas where you are uniquely gifted by God, then check out Growth Track. For more about spiritual gifts, read 1 Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4:12.

Leader Tips – Week Five

- Encourage your group members to identify people in their sphere of influence who need to know Jesus and begin to develop relationships with them.
- Now that you are halfway into the semester, this is a great time to reemphasize completing Growth Track. If they have completed the Growth Track, encourage them to join the Go Team.

Common Questions – Week Five

Is there suffering in Heaven?

No. Heaven is the place of perfect happiness; it holds no fear, sorrow, or pain.

Is Jesus the only way to Heaven?

In John 14:6, Jesus says that “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.” Jesus is the only way to Heaven. He lived, died, and rose again so that everyone could have a path to freedom and salvation through Him. Is Hell real?

There is a Heaven and a Hell. The Scriptures don’t leave any gray area here. The important thing to remember about Hell is that God doesn’t send anyone there. In fact, He sent His only Son to live a sinless life and die on a cross to make sure that no one had to go to Hell. Hell is a place where people can pay their own debt if they want to, but nobody has to. Jesus has paid it. It’s done. All that’s required of us is to turn and accept His sacrifice on our behalf.

Leader Tips – Week Six

- Your experience reading and understanding the Bible can be a big help to your group members. Share what has worked well and what hasn’t worked well for you. Give them ideas on how to start. Explain that there are different versions and translations of the Bible available (i.e. NIV, the Message, Amplified, etc.) as well as parallel Bibles, one-year Bibles, Bible reading plans, apps, and so on. The One Year Bible plan and devotion is a great place to start. Find it at churchofthehighlands.com/bible.
- Encourage your group members to be praying the full armor of God from Ephesians 6 over themselves each and every day. Show them how to do so.

Common Questions – Week Six

What is the Bible?

The Bible is the living Word of God, and is our guidebook to life. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 says it best, “The whole Bible was given to us by inspiration from God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives; it straightens us out and helps us do what is right. It is God’s way of making us well prepared at every point, fully equipped to do good to everyone.”

How do I get more from my Bible?

There are three great steps to take towards getting the most out of your Bible. First, accept its authority by receiving God’s Word with an open heart and respond to His Word with obedience. Second, absorb its truths by hearing, reading, studying, memorizing, and meditating on God’s Word. Third, apply its principles. James 1:22 tells us plainly, “Do not merely listen to the Word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.”

Why are there different translations/versions of the Bible?

The Bible was originally written in ancient Greek and Hebrew. Different translations exist because language is alive, constantly developing and changing. The truths in God’s Word stay the same, but the words we use to communicate them effectively change along with

the language. In the King James Version, you find a lot of “thees and thous.” Those are fine, and accurate, but they aren’t words we use anymore. The different versions of the bible are all just trying to communicate the exact same truths in ways that match up well with our modern language. God told His prophet in Habakkuk 2:2 to “write down the revelation and make it plain.” The different translations are all taking the same truths and trying to make them plain.

What is the difference between the Old Testament and New Testament?

The Old Testament is the foundation. The New Testament is the fulfillment. God made promises in the Old Testament and keeps His promises in the New Testament. The Old Testament is about God making the world. The New Testament is about God saving the world. God’s people in the Old Testament were Israel. God’s people in the New Testament are the Church.

Leader Tips – Week Seven

- Establishing a prayer plan before you begin can help your prayer time be more effective. Talk about some plans that have been effective for you. Get your group thinking of a place they can go to pray that is private and free of distractions. Tell them when and where you pray. It may be a closet in their home, a patio, or even their parked car. Explain how you can create a holy environment in an everyday space.

Common Questions – Week Seven

Does God heal the sick?

Yes, God is still the Great Physician. Healing the sick is illustrated in the life and ministry of Jesus, and included in the commission of Jesus to His disciples. Healing is also one of the gifts of the Spirit. For some examples, check out Matthew 8:16-17, Acts 8:6-7, and especially James 5:14-16.

Why doesn’t God answer all of our prayers?

He does! Sometimes we get stuck on the idea that “yes” is the only answer that counts. God may answer with “not right now,” or “I have something better for you.” Often, when we look back over time, we are able to see how God was moving and realize His plan was better, and although He removed an opportunity, or closed a door, it ended up leading us to more joy, freedom, and life.

How often should we pray?

1 Thessalonians 5 gives us an answer. It says, “Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.” Essentially, pray anytime there’s an opportunity — no matter where you are or what you’re doing. Use every occasion, every season, and every possible moment to pray. It doesn’t have to be formal. Make talking with God a part of your everyday habits.

What is God's will?

It is the Father's will to see the lost saved and the saved become whole, healthy, and successful in all areas of life — spiritually, mentally, emotionally, physically, and financially. He wills that the whole then be equipped, and the equipped be sent out to spread the Gospel to the nations.

Leader Tips – Week Eight

- Get your group thinking about how they can build healthy relationships with other like-minded believers. Ask your group if there is an activity in their life that God has been calling them to turn into a Connect Group, and if so, encourage them to attend a Connect Group Leadership Training.
- Have each group member pray for another person in the group. Have them all write a prayer request on an index card or piece of paper (give them the choice to remain anonymous or write down their name). Then, gather all the requests and have each person pick one of the cards/pieces of paper and pray for that request outside of the group.

Common Questions – Week Eight

Why do I need to forgive someone when they are the ones that wronged me?

In order to experience the fruit of our own forgiveness, we need to forgive others. Forgiving others allows us to overcome feelings of anger, bitterness, and revenge. Forgiveness can heal spiritual wounds and bring the peace and love that only God can give.

What do I tell people who knew the “old me”?

Just be honest. Your story of life change can have a tremendous impact on the people in your sphere of influence. You can tell them that God has changed you on the inside. Some people will understand, some won't. Remember 1 Corinthians 1:18, which says, “For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.”

Can I still be friends with people who aren't Christians?

Absolutely. God's light in you will be attractive, so don't be surprised if people are drawn to you - especially people who are far from God. Jesus had a wide range of friends and ministered to them on a daily basis just by being Himself.

Leader Tips – Week Nine

- Encourage your group members to spend some time this week discussing their personal financial values and giving strategies with their spouse and family. Make sure to suggest that they commit to these principles by writing them down.

- Encourage your group to ask God daily, “how would you like to use me today?” and listen for His response.
- Encourage your group to join and serve on the Go Team if they are not already

Common Questions- Week Nine

How much should I give?

Financial giving can be divided into two categories: tithes and offerings. The Bible teaches us that we worship the Lord with our tithe, which is ten percent of our income contributed to the church on a regular basis. When we feel called to give over and above our tithe, we do so as an offering.

I don't have any money and I don't have any talents. What do I have to offer God?

Everybody is a “10” at something and has plenty to offer. It sounds like you haven’t discovered your areas of strengths and spiritual giftings. You can discover how your design reveals your purpose in life and your best fit in Growth Track.

It's hard for me to wrap my head around the idea of “giving.” How can I become a more generous person?

Start with the tithe, which involves giving a percentage of your income regularly. Have you ever heard the funny fact about smiling and feeling happy? Studies show that if you don’t feel very happy, but you’d like to, one of the best things you can do is start smiling. By behaving like a happy person, you start actually feeling happy. Obedience to God is a lot like that. The best way to feel more generous is to do what a generous person would: give. When you see the impact your giving has, and experience your relationship with God grow deeper as you walk in obedience, you will become a confident, cheerful giver. As in so many things, actions lead and feelings follow.

How do I benefit from giving?

- Giving draws us closer to God.
Matthew 6:21 tells us, “Where your treasure is, there your heart is also.” Giving is the antidote to materialism. See 1 Timothy 6: 17-19, which says “Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.”

- Giving strengthens our faith.
Proverbs 3:5, 9-10 “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; Honor the Lord with your possessions, and with the first fruits of all your increase; So your barns will be filled with plenty.”

- Giving is an investment in eternity.

See 1 Timothy 6: 18-19: “Give happily to those in need, and always be ready to share whatever God has given you. By doing this, you will be storing up real treasure for yourselves in heaven - it is the only safe investment for eternity.”

Where does that money go?

At theChapel, you can view a full financial report that shows where all of the money we receive goes. Visit our website to check it out. In general, theChapel grows at the pace of your giving so that we can give more people the opportunity to respond to the life-giving message of Jesus and have an impact for the Kingdom of God. Every dollar we spend is to make us more effective in reaching people.

Leader Tips – Week Ten

- Help your group members identify some practical ways that they can start building a legacy.
- Encourage your group members to lead a Connect Group next semester!

Common Questions – Week Ten

Now that group is over, what's next?

- Help your group identify their next steps and have everyone share that step.
- Encourage the group to join/start a Serve Day project together.
- Tell your group what your plans are for next semester.
- Stay in contact over the break.
- Encourage your group to complete Growth Track if they haven't already.
- Pray over everyone in the group

