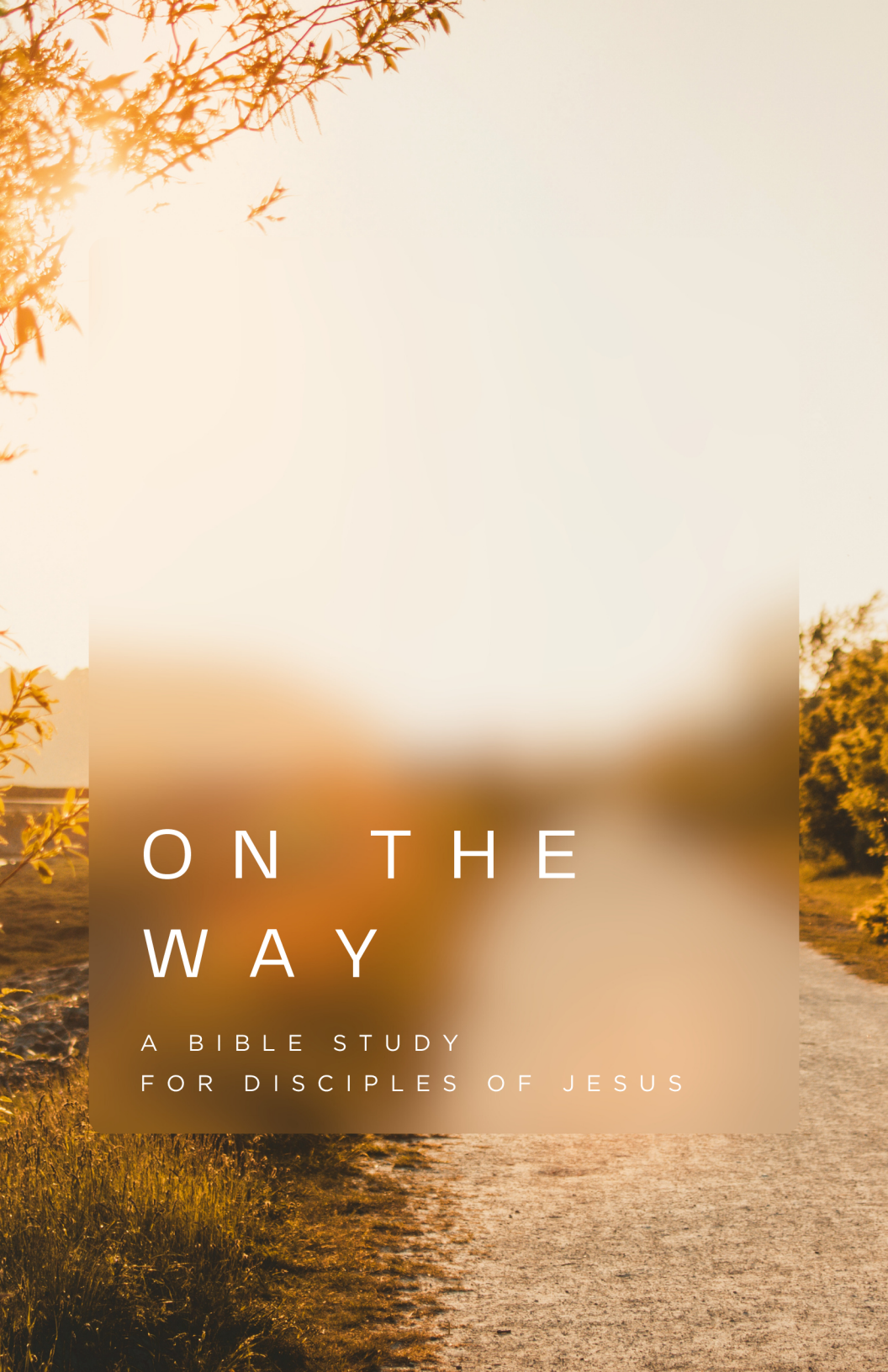




ON THE WAY

A BIBLE STUDY
FOR DISCIPLES OF JESUS

THIS BOOK
BELONGS TO

ON THE WAY

A BIBLE STUDY FOR DISCIPLES OF JESUS

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WEEK 1

Follow

Theme Verses: I am the way, the truth, and the life...whoever believes in me will do the works that I do. John 14:6, 12

TODAY'S READING

God called you to do good—even if it means suffering, just as Christ suffered for you. He is your example, and you must follow in his steps. 1 Peter 2:21 (NLT)

- A disciple is someone who believes in the ideas of their leader and tries to live according to those ideas. Nowadays, the word is primarily used in church culture, but it's not strictly a Christian concept; Gandhi had disciples, as did Sigmund Freud, Hypatia of Alexandria, and Socrates. Yet for the purposes of this study, **Christians are disciples who believe in Jesus's teachings and follow through on their belief by living and doing as Jesus did.**
- Looking to Jesus for direct guidance, we see in our theme verses that he taught: "I am the way, the truth, and the life...whoever believes in me will do the works that I do" (John 14:6, 12). The Greek word for way in this passage is *hodos* (pronounced *hod-os*), which can mean *a travelled road* or *a manner of thinking, feeling, deciding, and conducting oneself*.
- It's important to note that **no one in the Bible ever used the word *disciple* as a verb**. As pastor John Mark Comer teaches in his book, *Practicing the Way*: "You can't 'disciple' somebody any more than you can 'Christian' them, 'believer-er' them, or 'follower-er' them...If 'disciple' is something that is done *to* you (a verb), then that puts the onus of responsibility for your spiritual formation on *someone else*, like your pastor, church, or mentor. But if *disciple* is a noun—if it's someone you *are* or are not—then no one can disciple you but Rabbi Jesus himself."
- These verses are part of a longer section in John (chapters 13-17) in which Jesus—at the last supper table—repeated three themes: 1) He would be returning to his Father, whom he had now fully revealed; 2) **His disciples would remain where they were to continue and expand his work on earth;** and 3) They

couldn't to it alone, so he would send the Spirit to be with them.

- After his ascension, **Jesus's followers faithfully lived out the calling he had given them. Wherever Paul, Peter, and other disciples traveled, they formed small communities of believers in "The Way,"** a counter-cultural movement offering Jesus's teachings, death, and resurrection as the path to transformation. In this time, Christianity focused not so much on doctrine or the afterlife, but on how to live better, restore connections, and build the Reign of God in this life here and now.
- Peter's letters give us a particular wealth of insight for how to be Jesus's disciples, because he literally walked side-by-side with Jesus in relationship, ministry, and even daily life. **Peter was immersed not only in the teachings of Jesus, but also in his personality and lifestyle and decision-making.** Thus, where Peter emphasizes "[Jesus] is your example, and you must follow in his steps," we do well to lean in and pay attention.
- The book of 1 Peter—from which today's verse comes—was addressed to believers composed of mostly Gentiles in Asia Minor. They were enduring oppression at the hands of religious and imperial authorities—specifically because of the threat their faith posed to systems of power—and Peter offered them encouragement through the example of Jesus. **Just like Jesus, Peter said, believers must persist in doing good and showing God's love at all times,** especially when treated unjustly by the world system. Indeed, Jesus's way overcomes the world system, and his resurrection reminds us of our lasting hope for this life and the next.
- If a disciple of Jesus is someone who believes in Jesus's teachings and does as Jesus did, then the natural question arises: **What exactly did Jesus do?** We will spend the next few weeks exploring Jesus's life and teachings, and how we can follow his example in our own day and age. **We begin with Peter's simple exhortation to persist in doing good, just as God has called us to do, and just as Jesus always did.**

GROUP DISCUSSION

1. What images and/or people come to mind when we think of following in Jesus's steps?
2. What is comfortable or desirable about following in Jesus's steps? What is challenging?
3. What images and/or people come to mind when we think of doing good and/or persistence?
4. Have any of us ever suffered for doing something good? How so? Whom did we help? What was the outcome?
5. What actions, stories, and qualities of Jesus do we think are most appealing to our neighbors? Are there any that are difficult for them? Have we ever asked them?
6. What teachings and actions of Jesus are we good at following in our church? In our community? How can we improve?

WEEK 1 GROUP CHALLENGE

Start a conversation with someone in your community (not a church member) about your church. Have they heard of you? What is your church known for, if anything? What do they think churches could do better in your community? How do they wish your church could support them specifically?

T R X T H X S R F S B J N C J S L Z C U
 D A O I P G P A G O O S V W E F M N R P
 K I E A O Z E F F H L J O R S C R Q A X
 D F E R P X T A H D B L S K U F F Z S S
 R V K C E F S T T X A E O B S H D X W Y
 U T G J M T U R C E M A V W C J K P I V
 U P J L H R E Z Y A V S J V F O E G U U
 P R N U T O U P F T U E X W L K O S Q J
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 R S F B Z I N L V L U Y A S U D J D N O
 D G C R L V C F U V C U Z F O V D Q J O
 E X A M P L E L H R P J H O F P C A A B
 L A K W T W K Q J L B G G U M O L H P Z
 L I B R B L G V P O Z O J A T R C Z Y Y
 A Y S L B F U Q K A D G V N L O E W U U
 C I J W A J V W Q O D U O H O L Q N N U

BELIEVE
 CALLED
 DO GOOD
 EXAMPLE
 FOLLOW
 JESUS
 LIFE
 LOVE
 PETER
 STEPS
 TRUTH
 WAY



JESUS IS YOUR EXAMPLE, AND YOU MUST
 FOLLOW IN HIS STEPS. 1 PETER 2:21

MONDAY

Follow

CHECK IN

Today I am feeling:

- | | | | |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| ☐ Happy | ☐ Sad | ☐ Motivated | ☐ _____ |
| ☐ Energized | ☐ Tired | ☐ Stuck | ☐ _____ |
| ☐ Anxious | ☐ Calm | ☐ Overwhelmed | ☐ _____ |

I feel bothered/distracted by: _____

I am thankful for: _____

READ & REFLECT

“Let your light shine before people such that they can see the good things you do and praise your Father who is in heaven.” Matthew 5:16

1. Circle any word(s) that stand out in this verse. _____
Why are they important? _____
2. Why do you think Jesus said and taught this? _____
3. What does it mean for the church today? For you? _____

PRAY

- Give thanks for people who have been a light to you.
- Ask God to help you make this verse come true in your words and actions.
- Pray for those struggling to find any light or hope in their lives.

ACT

Notice a person, animal, or plant in need today and do what you can to help.

TUESDAY

Follow

CHECK IN

Today I am feeling:

- | | | | |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| ☐ Happy | ☐ Sad | ☐ Motivated | ☐ _____ |
| ☐ Energized | ☐ Tired | ☐ Stuck | ☐ _____ |
| ☐ Anxious | ☐ Calm | ☐ Overwhelmed | ☐ _____ |

I feel bothered/distracted by: _____

I am thankful for: _____

READ & REFLECT

“You always have the poor with you; and whenever you want, you can do something good for them.” Mark 14:7

1. Circle any word(s) that stand out in this verse. _____
Why are they important? _____
2. Why do you think Jesus said and taught this? _____
3. What does it mean for the church today? For you? _____

PRAY

- Give thanks for three things you have/don't struggle with or need help to get.
- Ask God to open your eyes to the poor in your community and their struggles.
- Pray for those who make policy/decisions which affect poverty in your area.

ACT

Donate food, water, and/or money to a food pantry in our community.

WEDNESDAY Follow

CHECK IN

Today I am feeling:

- | | | | |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| ☐ Happy | ☐ Sad | ☐ Motivated | ☐ _____ |
| ☐ Energized | ☐ Tired | ☐ Stuck | ☐ _____ |
| ☐ Anxious | ☐ Calm | ☐ Overwhelmed | ☐ _____ |

I feel bothered/distracted by: _____

I am thankful for: _____

READ & REFLECT

“Love your enemies. Do good to those who hate you.” Luke 6:27

1. Circle any word(s) that stand out in this verse. _____
Why are they important? _____
2. Why do you think Jesus said and taught this? _____
3. What does it mean for the church today? For you? _____

PRAY

- Give thanks for all the people and creatures who uplift you.
- Ask God to heal you of harm others have done to you.
- Pray for those who feel like your enemies, however God leads you to do so.

ACT

Post this verse someplace visible to you and say it out loud whenever you notice it.

THURSDAY Follow

CHECK IN

Today I am feeling:

- | | | | |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| ☐ Happy | ☐ Sad | ☐ Motivated | ☐ _____ |
| ☐ Energized | ☐ Tired | ☐ Stuck | ☐ _____ |
| ☐ Anxious | ☐ Calm | ☐ Overwhelmed | ☐ _____ |

I feel bothered/distracted by: _____

I am thankful for: _____

READ & REFLECT

“Do good, and lend expecting nothing in return. If you do, you will have a great reward. You will be acting the way children of the Most High act...” Luke 6:35

1. Circle any word(s) that stand out in this verse. _____
Why are they important? _____
2. Why do you think Jesus said and taught this? _____
3. What does it mean for the church today? For you? _____

PRAY

- Give thanks for gifts you have received—from God, others, nature, anywhere!
- Ask God for opportunities to give back and/or give forward.
- Pray for the children in your family, church, community, and the world.

ACT

Do a good deed today 100% anonymously. Tell no one.

FRIDAY

Follow

CHECK IN

Today I am feeling:

- | | | | |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| ☐ Happy | ☐ Sad | ☐ Motivated | ☐ _____ |
| ☐ Energized | ☐ Tired | ☐ Stuck | ☐ _____ |
| ☐ Anxious | ☐ Calm | ☐ Overwhelmed | ☐ _____ |

I feel bothered/distracted by: _____

I am thankful for: _____

READ & REFLECT

“A good tree doesn’t produce bad fruit, nor does a bad tree produce good fruit.”
Luke 6:43

1. Circle any word(s) that stand out in this verse.
Why are they important?

2. Why do you think Jesus said and taught this?

3. What does it mean for the church today? For you?

PRAY

- Give thanks for orchards, workers, drivers, and all who provide fruit for us.
- Ask God to grow, prune, and nourish you to produce good fruit.
- Pray for those struggling with religious trauma and harm from bad leaders.

ACT

Send a thank you note or text to someone who has been a good influence on you.

SATURDAY

Rest

BREATHE

- Sit straight in a comfortable seat.
- Relax your face and close your eyes.
- Using your diaphragm/deep belly muscles, breathe in through your nose for a count of 4.
- Breathe out through your mouth for a count of 6.
- Repeat for a total of 7 breaths, or as many times as you can.

RELEASE

Do this relaxation exercise for 3 minutes or as you are able:

1. Sit or lie down in a way that feels natural and relaxed. Close your eyes.
2. Place one hand over your heart and one hand on your belly. Notice your breaths moving in and out, quietly and deeply. Invite the Holy Spirit to be with you in your breaths.
3. Notice the sensation of your breath entering and leaving your body.
4. As you exhale, imagine releasing any tension in your body, starting with your toes and moving up to your head.
5. When thoughts, feelings, or distractions arise, acknowledge them, and then gently let them go without judgment.
6. Close with a simple word of thanks to God.

AFFIRM

Look in a mirror and say to your reflection 3 times:

"I am made in God's image, and God made me to do good things."

WEEK 2

Love

Theme Verses: I am the way, the truth, and the life...whoever believes in me will do the works that I do. John 14:6, 12

TODAY'S READING

"You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your being, with all your mind, and with all your strength, [and] love your neighbor as yourself.

No other commandment is greater than these." Mark 12:30-31

- In Mark's account, Jesus spoke these words after both the Triumphal Entry and his cleansing of the temple (driving out the money-changers). The religious authorities had already decided to have Jesus killed, and they spent their days in the meantime challenging him as he taught in the temple. **These verses occur in one of the few recorded pleasant exchanges between Jesus and one such religious leader, namely a scribe.**
- **The commandments Jesus cited come from the Torah.** The first, "Love God..." is found in Deuteronomy 6:4-5, part of a review of the law Moses gave the Hebrews, emphasizing how to live as God's people in their new freedom and community. "Love your neighbor as yourself" occurs in Leviticus 19:18, nestled within a whole book of specific rules to that same end.
- Key words:
love—*'āhab* (pronounced *aw-hav'*): all expressions of love and affection
heart—*lēbāb* (pronounced *lay-bawb'*): the inner heart, self, mind, will
being—*nepeš* (pronounced *neh'-fesh*): soul, life, self, person, desire, appetite, emotion, passion
strength—*m^a'ōd* (pronounced *meh-ode'*): might, force, abundance
- It's imperative to note that, while cited as two commandments, **these verses actually contain three directives of love: love for God, for neighbor, and also for self**—not to elevate of our own importance unhealthily, but as a measure for how to consider, value, have compassion for, and give grace to others. This same healthy balance shows up in The Golden Rule, too: "Treat people in the same way that you want people to treat you" (Matthew 7:12).

We can't love our neighbors well if we don't value and care for ourselves in healthy ways too, if we don't know how loving treatment looks and feels.

- In his sermon, "On Zeal," John Wesley taught his listeners: **"Be most zealous of all for love, the queen of all graces, the highest perfection in earth or heaven, the very image of the invisible God."** Love is how we prove and share God's presence with the world, and how we reach through every form of shadow to rescue the suffering.
- How naturally it comes to us to love God, others, and ourselves often depends on our own experiences with and cultural definitions of love...and that's okay. **Walking in love can look different for each person in each relationship.** In one case, God may direct us to let our walls down, and in the next to establish healthy boundaries. The Spirit may nudge us to give generously in one area, and to exercise restraint in another. Following Jesus's way of love takes discernment, practice, and a trusted community to support us as we go.
- *A note on abuse: In our efforts to love abundantly, the church has a regrettable history of allowing or even perpetuating abusive behaviors. This is not of God and must not be tolerated. **Harm to ourselves and others is not a legitimate fruit of God's love and Jesus's way.** If you or someone you know is in an abusive situation, please discuss it with persons you can trust. If you don't know where to start, call 877-330-6366.*
- Love is the plumb line of our discipleship, the guard rails on our path, the filter through which we edit our words and deeds. **The greatest commandments are the summation of every good rule and every godly pursuit.** If we set our sights on doing them well, we will inevitably grow healthier, happier, and more like Jesus in all our ways.

GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Allow each person 1-2 minutes to share their experience from last week's Group Challenge. If they weren't able to participate, what got in the way? (No judgment!) If they were, what did they learn?
2. What images and/or people come to mind when we think of loving God? What is comfortable or desirable about doing it? What is challenging?
3. What images and/or people come to mind when we think of loving ourselves? What is comfortable or desirable about doing it? What is challenging?
4. What images and/or people come to mind when we think of loving our neighbors? What is comfortable or desirable about doing it? What is challenging?
5. How do these three things—loving God, neighbor, and ourselves—work together? How does neglecting each one affect the others?
6. How good are we at showing love for God, neighbor, and ourselves in our church? In our community? How can we improve?

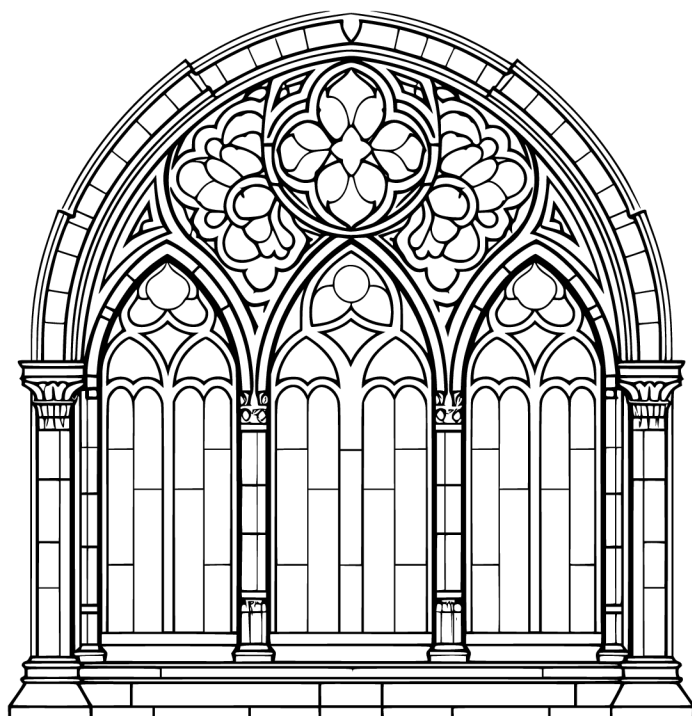
WEEK 2 GROUP CHALLENGE

Repeat the Week 1 challenge with a new person, OR

Go for a gratitude walk—as one large group or 2-3 at a time—in your community. Thank God for the people, creatures, homes, and organizations you see along the way. If possible, offer water, treats, or other simple kindnesses to those you meet, “no catch” (avoid virtue-signaling or proselytizing).

K	A	Y	T	B	D	A	S	B	G	E	Y	Z	H	O
K	Q	C	Q	J	Z	K	V	Y	Q	E	O	F	C	K
A	S	I	E	G	I	H	D	G	X	X	U	V	N	R
L	I	S	P	G	O	E	U	C	F	Q	R	V	C	D
K	U	N	N	O	Y	D	S	S	Y	F	S	Z	X	N
S	R	I	C	O	M	M	A	N	D	M	E	N	T	I
T	E	A	N	E	I	G	H	B	O	R	L	N	O	M
B	L	Z	M	S	T	I	C	D	N	A	F	B	G	D
G	R	A	P	S	T	U	K	W	L	N	B	F	F	G
O	E	L	U	T	Q	R	J	Z	W	E	E	V	O	L
F	H	M	Y	T	T	G	E	F	K	L	S	E	T	Z
X	E	C	X	U	Q	J	O	N	Z	S	N	K	E	E
D	A	G	E	J	K	N	S	W	G	G	G	A	I	F
D	R	K	R	I	C	Y	P	Z	L	T	Q	H	U	L
N	T	Q	Y	K	X	K	S	E	E	F	H	T	T	T

BEING
 COMMANDMENT
 GOD
 HEART
 JESUS
 LOVE
 MARK
 MIND
 MUST
 NEIGHBOR
 STRENGTH
 YOURSELF



**LOVE GOD, LOVE OTHERS,
 LOVE YOURSELF. MARK 12:30-31**

MONDAY

Love

CHECK IN

Today I am feeling:

- | | | | |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| ☐ Happy | ☐ Sad | ☐ Motivated | ☐ _____ |
| ☐ Energized | ☐ Tired | ☐ Stuck | ☐ _____ |
| ☐ Anxious | ☐ Calm | ☐ Overwhelmed | ☐ _____ |

I feel bothered/distracted by: _____

I am thankful for: _____

READ & REFLECT

“Just as your heavenly Father is complete in showing love to everyone, so also you must be complete.” Matthew 5:48

1. Circle any word(s) that stand out in this verse.
Why are they important?

2. Why do you think Jesus said and taught this?

3. What does it mean for the church today? For you?

PRAY

- Give thanks to God for loving you.
- Ask God to show you how you can care for yourself better.
- Pray for those who feel unloved and/or unloveable.

ACT

Make a list of at least three talents, qualities, or other features you like about how God made you. Post it on a mirror where you will see it for the rest of the week.

TUESDAY

Love

CHECK IN

Today I am feeling:

- | | | | |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| ☐ Happy | ☐ Sad | ☐ Motivated | ☐ _____ |
| ☐ Energized | ☐ Tired | ☐ Stuck | ☐ _____ |
| ☐ Anxious | ☐ Calm | ☐ Overwhelmed | ☐ _____ |

I feel bothered/distracted by: _____

I am thankful for: _____

READ & REFLECT

“Her many sins have been forgiven; so she has shown great love. The one who is forgiven little loves little.” Luke 7:47

1. Circle any word(s) that stand out in this verse. _____
Why are they important? _____
2. Why do you think Jesus said and taught this? _____
3. What does it mean for the church today? For you? _____

PRAY

- Give thanks for those who have shown you forgiveness.
- Ask God to show you where you need to forgive someone else.
- Pray for those who are struggling with a burden of unforgiveness.

ACT

Write an encouraging letter to someone in prison. If you don't know where to start, contact a prison ministry in your area.

W E D N E S D A Y

Love

CHECK IN

Today I am feeling:

- | | | | |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| ☐ Happy | ☐ Sad | ☐ Motivated | ☐ _____ |
| ☐ Energized | ☐ Tired | ☐ Stuck | ☐ _____ |
| ☐ Anxious | ☐ Calm | ☐ Overwhelmed | ☐ _____ |

I feel bothered/distracted by: _____

I am thankful for: _____

READ & REFLECT

“Just as I have loved you, so you also must love each other. This is how everyone will know that you are my disciples, when you love each other.” John 13:34-35

1. Circle any word(s) that stand out in this verse. _____
Why are they important? _____
2. Why do you think Jesus said and taught this? _____
3. What does it mean for the church today? For you? _____

PRAY

- Give thanks for your community of faith.
- Ask God for an opening to connect with people in other faith communities.
- Pray for church workers—paid and otherwise.

ACT

Spend 15 minutes curating your social media and news feeds with an eye for love of neighbor. Unfollow or mute any accounts which speak unkindly of others.

THURSDAY

Love

CHECK IN

Today I am feeling:

- | | | | |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| ☐ Happy | ☐ Sad | ☐ Motivated | ☐ _____ |
| ☐ Energized | ☐ Tired | ☐ Stuck | ☐ _____ |
| ☐ Anxious | ☐ Calm | ☐ Overwhelmed | ☐ _____ |

I feel bothered/distracted by: _____

I am thankful for: _____

READ & REFLECT

Love doesn't do anything wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is what fulfills the Law. Romans 13:10

1. Circle any word(s) that stand out in this verse.
Why are they important?

2. Why do you think Paul taught this?

3. What does it mean for the church today? For you?

PRAY

- Give thanks for all the people and creatures you love.
- Ask God to open your eyes to the lonely in your community.
- Pray for caregivers—professional and otherwise.

ACT

Visit a person who is homebound or living in a skilled care facility.

FRIDAY

Love

CHECK IN

Today I am feeling:

- | | | | |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| ☐ Happy | ☐ Sad | ☐ Motivated | ☐ _____ |
| ☐ Energized | ☐ Tired | ☐ Stuck | ☐ _____ |
| ☐ Anxious | ☐ Calm | ☐ Overwhelmed | ☐ _____ |

I feel bothered/distracted by: _____

I am thankful for: _____

READ & REFLECT

Love is patient, love is kind, it isn't jealous, doesn't brag, isn't arrogant, isn't rude, doesn't seek its own advantage, doesn't keep a record of complaints, isn't happy with injustice, and rejoices in the truth. 1 Corinthians 13:4-6

1. Circle any word(s) that stand out in this verse. _____
Why are they important? _____
2. Why do you think Paul taught this? _____
3. What does it mean for the church today? For you? _____

PRAY

- Give thanks for those who have demonstrated their love for you.
- Ask God to help you remove any unloving behaviors you have.
- Pray for those struggling with thoughts of suicide and self-harm.

ACT

Tell three people sincerely that you love them today. (Pets count!)

SATURDAY

Rest

BREATHE

- Sit straight in a comfortable seat.
- Relax your face and close your eyes.
- Using your diaphragm/deep belly muscles, breathe in through your nose for a count of 4.
- Hold it for a count of 4.
- Breathe out through your mouth for a count of 4.
- Hold it for a count of 4.
- Repeat for a total of 7 breaths, or as many times as you can.

RELEASE

Do this grounding exercise as you are able:

1. Sit or lie down in a way that feels natural and relaxed.
2. Place one hand over your heart and one hand on your belly. Notice your breaths moving in and out, quietly and deeply. Invite the Holy Spirit to be with you in your breaths.
3. Notice and identify:
 - 5 things you can see
 - 4 things you can feel
 - 3 things you can hear
 - 2 things you can smell
 - 1 emotion on your heart
3. Close with a simple word of thanks to God.

AFFIRM

Look in a mirror and say to your reflection 3 times:

"I am made in God's image, and God made me to love and be loved."

WEEK 3

Serve

Theme Verses: I am the way, the truth, and the life...whoever believes in me will do the works that I do. John 14:6, 12 (CEB)

TODAY'S READING

"The greatest among you must become like a person of lower status and the leader like a servant...[just as] I am among you as one who serves." Luke 22:26-27

- In Luke's account, Jesus spoke these words during the Last Supper. Verse 24 says, "An argument broke out among the disciples over which one of them should be regarded as the greatest." **Jesus explained to them how the Reign of God is different from the kingdoms of the world.** Worldly rulers gain power by dominating and profiting off of the people "under" them. In the Reign of God, power is not something to aspire to at all; rather, those who serve, love, and take care of others are most esteemed.
- This was not the first time Jesus's followers had succumbed to such conflict. Luke 9:46-50 describes a similar argument, this time apart from Jesus's hearing. Still, **Jesus was "aware of their deepest thoughts" and brought a child before them as a model for how to redefine their aspirations,** saying, "whoever is least among you all is the greatest."
- **Some scholars suggest it was this very dispute which prompted Jesus to wash his disciples' feet (John 13:1-20).** By taking on the garb and role normally held by the lowest servant in a household, Jesus gave a practical, visceral demonstration of how "greatness" plays out God's way. He then concluded his act of service by telling them, "Just as I have done, you also must do... Since you know these things, you will be happy if you do them."
- Key words:
greatest—*me-gas* (pronounced *meg'-as*): big, exceedingly great, high, large, loud, mighty, and strong
lower status—*neos* (pronounced *neh'-os*): least regarded, youngest, new
serves—*diakoneō* (pronounced *dee-ak-on-eh'-o*): to be an attendant, to

wait upon (menially or as a host or friend)

- Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. challenged his listeners that **"Life's most persistent and urgent question is, 'What are you doing for others?'"** This was no mere oratory device; he spoke from an informed position of lifelong ministry for God through Bible teaching and community service. Dr. King emphasized a faith walk in which **righteousness does not come from inward spirituality alone, but through serving together for the common good in God's Beloved Community.**
- A key component of serving is listening. We want to ensure that what we do actually helps those we're trying to serve. Too often, outreach efforts go forth naively (or arrogantly) prescribing what we assume are loving solutions without consulting the community on what their needs really are. **Listening to others and believing their experiences is a powerful form of service in and of itself,** and meaningful change always begins with meaningful relationships.
- Resistance to serving can come from all directions. Like the disciples, we may be scrambling for positions of visibility and influence...but we may also think ourselves incapable or devoid of anything worthwhile to give. We may be too busy with daily routines, or too overwhelmed with the need in the world, paralyzed over where to start. All of these are distractions from the truth. We cannot save the world; that's Jesus's job. **What we can and must do is connect with and serve wherever we are, one act of kindness and one person (or creature) at a time.** This is how we change the world.

GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Allow each person 1-2 minutes to share their experience from last week's Group Challenge. If they weren't able to participate, what got in the way? (No judgment!) If they were, what did they learn?
2. What images and/or people come to mind when we think of serving as Jesus modeled? What is comfortable or desirable about doing it? What is challenging?
3. What gifts has God given the members of this group for serving others and building relationships?
4. What factors hold us back from serving? How can we neutralize them?
5. Who are some people the world system categorizes as lower status? How can learn from them as we work to fulfill Jesus's directive?
6. How good are we at serving like Jesus in our church? Our community? How can we improve?

WEEK 3 GROUP CHALLENGE

Repeat the Week 1 challenge with a new person, OR

Organize a gratitude campaign for servers in your community. Go in groups of 2-3 at a time to bring gift cards, extra tips, thank you notes, and/or any other kindnesses you can think of to thank them for their hard, often unseen or under-appreciated work—"no catch" (avoid virtue-signaling or proselytizing).

T E V R E S W R C F N A Z W E
 Q S U A A R W V V V M N P L V
 A W E Z I A F U M O A Y B C B
 B I H T I O S U N P S Y G F C
 E K D B A E X G H E U L Q E Y
 L O W E R E H Y A R S G U X A
 X L G V R H R R L S E Y T K W
 C H A O K X E G U O J P X H E
 Z N V P X D K S R N W K P V H
 T S X B A T K U U D R T Z R T
 J Y C E M O C E B T P A Q H J
 L N L T T V T P W C A S W T U
 Z Z K H Z U C V G L Z T J X C
 G Q V U O N W Y Z J E Q S Z Z
 B M Y R I O T D T Z T H F A X

AMONG
 BECOME
 GREATEST
 JESUS
 LEADER
 LOWER
 LUKE
 PERSON
 SERVANT
 SERVE
 STATUS
 THE WAY



The greatest must become like a person of lower status, and the leader like a servant. Luke 22:26

MONDAY

Serve

CHECK IN

Today I am feeling:

☐ Happy	☐ Sad	☐ Motivated	☐ _____
☐ Energized	☐ Tired	☐ Stuck	☐ _____
☐ Anxious	☐ Calm	☐ Overwhelmed	☐ _____

I feel bothered/distracted by: _____

I am thankful for: _____

READ & REFLECT

“No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be loyal to the one and have contempt for the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.” Matthew 6:24

1. Circle any word(s) that stand out in this verse.

Why are they important?

2. Why do you think Jesus said and taught this?

3. What does it mean for the church today? For you?

PRAY

- Give thanks to God for your job(s) and co-workers—now and in the past.
- Ask God to show you where wealth has influence in your life and decisions.
- Pray for those in unfair, unsafe, and toxic work environments.

ACT

Visit a park or preserve and spend at least 15 minutes connecting with nature. Do a 5-4-3-2-1 grounding practice (p. 25) to help get you started.

TUESDAY

Serve

CHECK IN

Today I am feeling:

- | | | | |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| ☐ Happy | ☐ Sad | ☐ Motivated | ☐ _____ |
| ☐ Energized | ☐ Tired | ☐ Stuck | ☐ _____ |
| ☐ Anxious | ☐ Calm | ☐ Overwhelmed | ☐ _____ |

I feel bothered/distracted by: _____

I am thankful for: _____

READ & REFLECT

“Whoever serves me must follow me. Wherever I am, there my servant will also be.
My Father will honor whoever serves me.” John 12:26

1. Circle any word(s) that stand out in this verse. _____
Why are they important? _____
2. Why do you think Jesus said and taught this? _____
3. What does it mean for the church today? For you? _____

PRAY

- Give thanks for all the unseen workers who make your community healthier, cleaner, safer, more accessible, and more pleasant.
- Ask God to help you see the imago Dei (image of God) in people around you.
- Pray for those who feel that their work and contributions don't matter.

ACT

Buy or make some kindness rocks and place them around your neighborhood.

WEDNESDAY *Serve*

CHECK IN

Today I am feeling:

- | | | | |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| ☐ Happy | ☐ Sad | ☐ Motivated | ☐ _____ |
| ☐ Energized | ☐ Tired | ☐ Stuck | ☐ _____ |
| ☐ Anxious | ☐ Calm | ☐ Overwhelmed | ☐ _____ |

I feel bothered/distracted by: _____

I am thankful for: _____

READ & REFLECT

The Reign of God is about righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. So let's strive for things that bring peace and that build each other up. Romans 14:17, 19

1. Circle any word(s) that stand out in this verse. _____
Why are they important? _____
2. Why do you think Paul taught this? _____
3. What does it mean for the church today? For you? _____

PRAY

- Give thanks for those who build you up and who bring you peace and joy.
- Ask God for opportunities to make this verse come true in your own actions.
- Pray for international and cross-cultural workers at all levels.

ACT

Make or buy a meal/gift card for someone going through a difficult time.

THURSDAY

Serve

CHECK IN

Today I am feeling:

- | | | | |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| ☐ Happy | ☐ Sad | ☐ Motivated | ☐ _____ |
| ☐ Energized | ☐ Tired | ☐ Stuck | ☐ _____ |
| ☐ Anxious | ☐ Calm | ☐ Overwhelmed | ☐ _____ |

I feel bothered/distracted by: _____

I am thankful for: _____

READ & REFLECT

You were called to freedom—only don't let this freedom be an opportunity to indulge your selfish impulses, but serve each other through love. Galatians 5:13

1. Circle any word(s) that stand out in this verse.
Why are they important?

2. Why do you think Paul taught this?

3. What does it mean for the church today? For you?

PRAY

- Give thanks for pets and all who work to keep them healthy and safe.
- Ask God to remove any selfish or indulgent motives from your heart.
- Pray for those who are in abusive relationships and/or families.

ACT

Donate pet food, towels, or other needs to your local animal shelter.

FRIDAY

Serve

CHECK IN

Today I am feeling:

- | | | | |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| ☐ Happy | ☐ Sad | ☐ Motivated | ☐ _____ |
| ☐ Energized | ☐ Tired | ☐ Stuck | ☐ _____ |
| ☐ Anxious | ☐ Calm | ☐ Overwhelmed | ☐ _____ |

I feel bothered/distracted by: _____

I am thankful for: _____

READ & REFLECT

God isn't unjust; God will not forget your efforts and the love you have shown for the sake of God's name as you served and continue to serve. Hebrews 6:10

1. Circle any word(s) that stand out in this verse. _____
Why are they important? _____
2. Why do you think the writer said this? _____
3. What does it mean for the church today? For you? _____

PRAY

- Give thanks for hospitality workers in your community.
- Ask God for a chance to serve someone who usually serves you.
- Pray for civil and public service workers at all levels.

ACT

Go online and leave a positive review for your favorite small business.

SATURDAY

Rest

BREATHE

Do this relaxation exercise as you are able:

- Sit straight in a comfortable seat.
- Relax your face and close your eyes.
- Position your tongue toward the roof of your mouth, with the tip touching the back of your front teeth.
- Using your diaphragm/deep belly muscles, breathe in through your nose for a count of 4.
- Hold for a count of 7.
- Breathe out through your mouth for a count of 8.
- Repeat for a total of 7 breaths, or as many times as you can.

RELEASE

Do this focusing exercise as you are able:

1. Find a meaningful object to focus on. Touch/hold it in your hand, if you can.
2. Sit or lie down in a way that feels natural and relaxed.
3. Close your eyes and place your other hand on your belly. Notice your breaths moving in and out, quietly and deeply. Invite the Holy Spirit to be with you in your breaths.
4. Now focus on your object. Open your eyes for a moment to study the object, looking at all its details. Gently close your eyes again.
5. Think about the item and try to recall every little detail of it in your mind's eye, down to each crease and bump. Focus all of your attention on this process and what you can recall.
6. Continue for at least three minutes or as long as you are able. Close with a simple word of thanks to God.

AFFIRM

Look in a mirror and say to your reflection 3 times:

"I am made in God's image, and God gave me gifts for serving others."

WEEK 4

Theme Verses: I am the way, the truth, and the life...whoever believes in me will do the works that I do. John 14:6, 12 (CEB)

Forgive

TODAY'S READING

Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they're doing."

Luke 23:34

- In Luke's account, Jesus spoke these words as or just after he was nailed to the cross. He may have been praying for the people who actually did the nailing, or for the criminals dying on either side of him, or for the religious authorities and leaders who put him there, or for all of humanity in general. The text does not specify—though knowing what we do of Jesus, it's not a stretch to imagine he had all of these and more on his heart.
- Words for *forgive* and *forgiveness* occur about 130 times in the Bible, and they are divided almost evenly between the Old and New Testaments. The practice applies to everything from financial debts to human relationships to our own individual spiritual standing with the Eternal One. **Forgiveness is a consistent virtue in God's law and community, spanning all places and all times**, bringing healing to both the givers and the receivers.
- Key words:
forgive—*aphiēmi* (pronounced *af-ee'-ay-mee*): forgive, lay aside, let go
know—*eidō* (pronounced *i'-doh*): to see properly, be aware, consider, perceive, understand, wish
- Medical studies increasingly confirm that forgiving others—and ourselves—can lead to better health outcomes in individuals as well as communities. Benefits include, but are not limited to: reduction of stress, anxiety, and depression symptoms; improved mental health and anger management; better cardio and immune function; lower risk of substance abuse and addiction; healthier and more fulfilling relationships; heightened compassion; better community connectedness; and greater inner peace.

- Corrie Ten Boom, author of *The Hiding Place* and leader in the Dutch Resistance during World War II, was arrested along with her sister for hiding Jewish people from the Nazis. They were sent to concentration camps, and Corrie's sister died there. After her release and the war's end, Corrie set up a rehabilitation center for camp survivors. Of them she said, **"Those who were able to forgive their former enemies were able also to return to the outside world and rebuild their lives, no matter what the physical scars. Those who nursed their bitterness remained invalids. It was as simple and as horrible as that."** She herself went on to forgive two Germans who had worked at the camps—one of whom had been particularly cruel to her sister—and she spent the rest of her life teaching forgiveness and sharing her faith in Jesus, which made it all possible.
- Even in a moment of what should have been all-encompassing pain and suffering, Jesus saw beyond himself to have compassion for the ones hurting him. This is a lofty virtue, to be sure, but not an unattainable one; in fact, **forgiveness and compassion coexist in a self-feeding cycle.** When we have compassion for ourselves and others, we are more easily able to forgive, and when we open our hearts to forgiveness, compassion grows there, too.
- It is important to note that forgiveness and compassion are not synonymous with affection, excusing, forgetting, or removal of boundaries. Once again, harm to ourselves or others is not a legitimate fruit of God's love and Jesus's way, and we are not required to remain in situations or relationships which produce them (see p. 17). **Forgiving is simply letting go of our rights to the offense, and compassion is allowing that we all have reasons for what we do, and we all do wrong sometimes because of them.** Re-establishing trust is a separate exercise that must be done mutually, and it takes time.
- Finally, it is also imperative that we do right by ourselves and others when we are the ones who have done harm. **Making amends and doing the work of true repentance (with corresponding action) is our sacred responsibility.** This is how we repair broken connections and give the ones we've hurt full empowerment to forgive us. Whether they do so or not is up to them, and we must respect them in their process either way.

GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Allow each person 1-2 minutes to share their experience from last week's Group Challenge. If they weren't able to participate, what got in the way? (No judgment!) If they were, what did they learn?
2. What images and/or people come to mind when we think of forgiving as Jesus modeled? What is comfortable or desirable about doing it? What is challenging?
3. What images and/or people come to mind when we think of compassion? What is comfortable or desirable about it? What is challenging?
4. Ask each participant: Is it easier for you to forgive others or to forgive yourself? What makes the difference for you?
5. What factors hold us back from forgiveness? From compassion? What does the Spirit say to us about that?
6. How good are we at modeling forgiveness and compassion in our church? In our community? How can we improve?

WEEK 4 GROUP CHALLENGE

Repeat the Week 1 challenge with a new person, OR

Play the Kindness Game as a group. Exchange names randomly and spend this week doing kindnesses for your assigned person. *(Pro tip: Invite each person to list their love language or some things they like and don't like so you can each show others love their way, without guessing or projecting!)*

Q I J A S Z M F P E L C W G Q
X Z E P U Y E A Y K E O W K A
K M Q Y S Y C T O Q N V M A K
M O D E E R F H G K S H K M Y
W M Z G J O C E O N E O T G P
L U K E R C G R D O I N G O N
X X G G P S I D I S R L Q C M
W D I E S M Y J W N A W A G K
K V Q O M M X Q O T D F B E E
E L R O A P O T D X N R H D H
D C H R G A A E X J U X Z K Z
L U O I I S Q T O X O F I W U
Q A M W U H O K H N B N T X L
P E H U B W T Q H Y M N T M Z
O L Z U I D M M U S Z Y Y I E

- BOUNDARIES
CROSS
DOING
EMPATHY
FATHER
FORGIVE
FREEDOM
HEALING
JESUS
KNOW
LUKE
WAY



MONDAY

Forgive

CHECK IN

Today I am feeling:

- | | | | |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| ☐ Happy | ☐ Sad | ☐ Motivated | ☐ _____ |
| ☐ Energized | ☐ Tired | ☐ Stuck | ☐ _____ |
| ☐ Anxious | ☐ Calm | ☐ Overwhelmed | ☐ _____ |

I feel bothered/distracted by: _____

I am thankful for: _____

READ & REFLECT

“God, forgive us for the ways we have wronged you, just as we also forgive those who have wronged us.” Matthew 6:12

1. Circle any word(s) that stand out in this verse. _____
Why are they important? _____
2. Why do you think Jesus said and taught this? _____
3. What does it mean for the church today? For you? _____

PRAY

- Give thanks to God for forgiving you.
- Ask God to remove judgment and condemnation from your heart.
- Pray for those suffering from shame, guilt, or the unforgiveness of others.

ACT

Write the name of someone who has harmed you on a balloon and blow it up. Pray for help to forgive them, then release the balloon to symbolize releasing that offense.

TUESDAY

Forgive

CHECK IN

Today I am feeling:

- | | | | |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| ☐ Happy | ☐ Sad | ☐ Motivated | ☐ _____ |
| ☐ Energized | ☐ Tired | ☐ Stuck | ☐ _____ |
| ☐ Anxious | ☐ Calm | ☐ Overwhelmed | ☐ _____ |

I feel bothered/distracted by: _____

I am thankful for: _____

READ & REFLECT

When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralyzed man, “Child, your sins are forgiven!” Mark 2:5

1. Circle any word(s) that stand out in this verse. _____
Why are they important? _____
2. Why do you think Jesus said and taught this? _____
3. What does it mean for the church today? For you? _____

PRAY

- Give thanks for your friends.
- Ask God for opportunities to help the hurting.
- Pray for those who are paralyzed—physically or figuratively.

ACT

Visit your nearest free little library or blessing box and donate something to it.

WEDNESDAY *Forgive*

CHECK IN

Today I am feeling:

- | | | | |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| ☐ Happy | ☐ Sad | ☐ Motivated | ☐ _____ |
| ☐ Energized | ☐ Tired | ☐ Stuck | ☐ _____ |
| ☐ Anxious | ☐ Calm | ☐ Overwhelmed | ☐ _____ |

I feel bothered/distracted by: _____

I am thankful for: _____

READ & REFLECT

“Don’t judge, and you won’t be judged. Don’t condemn, and you won’t be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven.” Luke 6:37

1. Circle any word(s) that stand out in this verse. _____
Why are they important? _____
2. Why do you think Jesus said and taught this? _____
3. What does it mean for the church today? For you? _____

PRAY

- Give thanks for people who challenge you or push you to do better.
- Ask God to grow compassion and grace in your heart and relationships.
- Pray for legal officials and administrators.

ACT

Journal about a moment when you felt betrayed or deceived by someone. How did it impact your trust in others? Did forgiveness come easily or was it a struggle?

THURSDAY *Forgive*

CHECK IN

Today I am feeling:

- | | | | |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| ☐ Happy | ☐ Sad | ☐ Motivated | ☐ _____ |
| ☐ Energized | ☐ Tired | ☐ Stuck | ☐ _____ |
| ☐ Anxious | ☐ Calm | ☐ Overwhelmed | ☐ _____ |

I feel bothered/distracted by: _____

I am thankful for: _____

READ & REFLECT

“Even if someone sins against you seven times in one day and returns to you seven times and says, ‘I am changing my ways,’ you must forgive that person.” Luke 17:4

1. Circle any word(s) that stand out in this verse.
Why are they important?

2. Why do you think Jesus said and taught this?

3. What does it mean for the church today? For you?

PRAY

- Give thanks to God for giving you a fresh start every day.
- Ask God for help to change any unhealthy or harmful ways in you.
- Pray for those who are trying to do better in their lives and relationships.

ACT

Post three positive comments on your social media platforms.

FRIDAY

Forgive

CHECK IN

Today I am feeling:

- | | | | |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| ☐ Happy | ☐ Sad | ☐ Motivated | ☐ _____ |
| ☐ Energized | ☐ Tired | ☐ Stuck | ☐ _____ |
| ☐ Anxious | ☐ Calm | ☐ Overwhelmed | ☐ _____ |

I feel bothered/distracted by: _____

I am thankful for: _____

READ & REFLECT

When we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from everything we've done wrong. 1 John 1:9

1. Circle any word(s) that stand out in this verse. _____
Why are they important? _____
2. Why do you think John wrote this? _____
3. What does it mean for the church today? For you? _____

PRAY

- Give thanks for sanitation workers in your community.
- Ask God to help you be a good listener.
- Pray for those struggling to overcome addictions.

ACT

Look in a mirror or sit across from an empty chair and visualize yourself in it. Say something kind to yourself as if you were speaking to a close friend.

SATURDAY

Rest

BREATHE

Do this relaxation exercise as you are able:

- Sit straight in a comfortable seat.
- Relax your face and close your eyes.
- Using your diaphragm/deep belly muscles, breathe in through your nose for a count of 8.
- Breathe out while making a humming sound for a count of 8.
- Repeat for a total of 7 breaths or as many times as you can.

RELEASE

Do this open heart exercise as you are able:

1. Sit or lie down in a way that feels natural and relaxed.
2. Place one hand over your heart and one hand on your belly. Notice your breaths moving in and out, quietly and deeply. Invite the Holy Spirit to be with you in your breaths.
3. Picture your heart as cabinet inside you. Open the doors and look inside. What memories, feelings, and other things do you see in it that are helpful and good? Imagine yourself arranging those things in a place of honor. Thank God for them.
4. What memories, feelings, and other things do you see in your heart that are out of date, taking up space, or actively harmful to you? Imagine yourself removing them. Give them to God and let them go.
5. Picture your heart now clean, open, and ready for all the good things God has to come for you. All is well.
6. Close with a simple word of thanks to God.

AFFIRM

Look in a mirror and say to your reflection 3 times:

"I am made in God's image, and God gives me power to forgive and grace to be forgiven."

WEEK 5

Disrupt

Theme Verses: I am the way, the truth, and the life...whoever believes in me will do the works that I do. John 14:6, 12 (CEB)

TODAY'S READING

"I've come to start a fire on this earth—how I wish it were blazing right now! I've come to change everything, turn everything right-side up—how I long for it to be finished! Do you think I came to smooth things over and make everything nice? Not so. I've come to disrupt and confront!" Luke 12:49-51 (MSG)

- In Luke's account, Jesus spoke these words during a long period of teaching to a crowd of "thousands upon thousands" (Luke 12:1-13:9). In it, **he offered many hard lessons about the connections (and dissonance) between our earthly pursuits and eternal destiny.** These lessons included warnings against greed, apathy, and hypocrisy in tandem with solemn advice to be prepared, wise, aware, and genuinely repentant before God.
- In this specific passage, **Jesus prophesied the cost of following him, even in personal relationships.** "From now on, a household of five will be divided three against two and two against three. Father will square off against son and son against father; mother against daughter and daughter against mother..." (vs. 52-53).
- Key words:
make nice—*eirēnē* (pronounced *i-ray'-nay*): to grant or permit peace between individuals, political tranquillity, safety, prosperity, felicity, exemption from the rage and havoc of war
disrupt and confront—*diamerismos* (pronounced *dee-am-er-is-mos*): to cause or churn up a parting, disunion, dissension, redistribution
- As with all scripture, we must take Jesus's teachings here in the full context of the Bible, particularly with regard to Jesus's life and ministry and God's design for sending him. We know from the prophets (especially Isaiah) and Jesus's own words (particularly Luke 4 and the Sermon on the Mount) that **the Messiah's purpose was to restore shalom peace to all of creation.**

Shalom peace is all-encompassing. It includes safety, wellness, happiness, friendship, health, prosperity, and the full restoration of humanity's every broken connection: to God, to creation, to each other, and to ourselves. So **we know Jesus was not making a statement of intent here, and it would be irresponsible of us to use this passage as an excuse for religious conflict or even apathy toward it. Jesus did not purpose to divide people;** he did, however, unflinchingly confront the inevitable conflict between the Reign of God and the deeply entrenched world system.

- This is just one example of the expectations Jesus challenged regarding the role of the Messiah. The people looked for a powerful king who would conquer their enemies, establish a theocratic rule in their favor, and provide them with a prosperous, hassle-free life. **Jesus's message of love for enemies, forgiveness, generosity, and "the first shall be last" created a series of massive disruptions to the traditions and systems of power already in place.** As a result, the people on the side of that power began stirring up conflict against him almost immediately.
- The phrase "comfort the afflicted, and afflict the comfortable" (originally crafted by humorist Finley Peter Dunne) is an adage that perfectly describes the ministry of Jesus and by extension, the calling of the church. **Jesus disrupted personal lives (Matthew the tax collector, Zaccheus), social norms (table fellowship with "sinners," healing on the Sabbath), and entire power structures (calling out religious leaders, the Triumphal Entry)—all for the sake of transforming lives, revealing truth, and realigning with God's design for the good of all.**
- **As disciples of Jesus, it is our calling to rise above manufactured conflict and disrupt every system and argument (internal or social) that sets itself up against Jesus's way.** We disrupt by listening instead of judging, by calling people by name instead of by labels and issues, by loving our enemies instead of retaliating, and by doing everything we can to bring shalom peace to all of creation.

GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Allow each person 1-2 minutes to share their experience from last week's Group Challenge. If they weren't able to participate, what got in the way? (No judgment!) If they were, what did they learn?
2. What images and/or people come to mind when we think of sacred disruption as Jesus modeled? What is comfortable or desirable about doing it? What is challenging?
3. How many of us have experienced division or harm in our relationships due to religious conflict? What happened? How are these relationships doing now?
4. What expectations do we have of Jesus? Are any of them based more in tradition or our own ideas than in scripture?
5. What factors hold us back from embracing sacred disruption? What does the Spirit say to us about that?
6. How good are we at bringing shalom peace into our church? In our community? How can we improve?

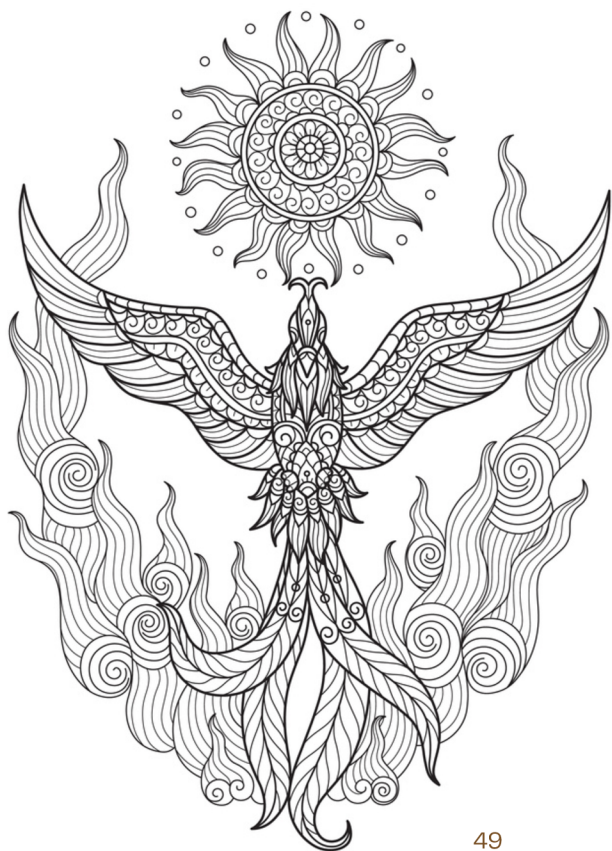
WEEK 5 GROUP CHALLENGE

Repeat the Week 1 challenge with a new person, OR

Go in groups of 2-3 at a time to visit homebound members of your church or a senior home (with permission). Bring a kind surprise they can enjoy, and spend time listening to their stories and/or exchanging favorite songs. If possible, share communion with them before you leave.

E J G R S V Z V X V J N Y J B
 E G P C R F R A T E R E Q E L
 W D N Q E N A P S U Z Q K O U
 F S F A R Z U U T C D L V T K
 Z I C H H R S B T R P W E N B
 F W N F S C B X N W S D G N V
 I G N I Z A L B O R X F M V W
 R P D W S E V E R Y T H I N G
 E O T L H H O O F O V T S K B
 Y D M U H U E X N H D R V U H
 C K A T N F J D O F S A A W D
 W A S H V L S C C W P T B F Z
 H D T Y I C R F O U O S Z M I
 W Z W F W D Q S V R K N Q Z F
 E K U L G O G F W S V J F Y F

BLAZING
 CHANGE
 CONFRONT
 DISRUPT
 EVERYTHING
 FINISHED
 FIRE
 JESUS
 LUKE
 NOW
 START
 TURN



I HAVE
 COME TO
 START A
 FIRE ON
 EARTH
 LUKE 12:49

MONDAY

Disrupt

CHECK IN

Today I am feeling:

- | | | | |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| ☐ Happy | ☐ Sad | ☐ Motivated | ☐ _____ |
| ☐ Energized | ☐ Tired | ☐ Stuck | ☐ _____ |
| ☐ Anxious | ☐ Calm | ☐ Overwhelmed | ☐ _____ |

I feel bothered/distracted by: _____

I am thankful for: _____

READ & REFLECT

“The Sabbath was created for humans; not humans for the Sabbath.”

Mark 2:23-28

1. Circle any word(s) that stand out in this verse. _____
Why are they important? _____
2. Why do you think Jesus said and taught this? _____
3. What does it mean for the church today? For you? _____

PRAY

- Give thanks to God for parks and recreation areas in your community.
- Ask God to show you how you can improve at honoring the Sabbath.
- Pray for those suffering from overwork, exhaustion, and chronic fatigue.

ACT

Commit one full day this week to complete, purposeful rest. If possible, take a break from screen time as well.

TUESDAY *Disrupt*

CHECK IN

Today I am feeling:

- | | | | |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| ☐ Happy | ☐ Sad | ☐ Motivated | ☐ _____ |
| ☐ Energized | ☐ Tired | ☐ Stuck | ☐ _____ |
| ☐ Anxious | ☐ Calm | ☐ Overwhelmed | ☐ _____ |

I feel bothered/distracted by: _____

I am thankful for: _____

READ & REFLECT

“Whoever hasn’t sinned should throw the first stone.”

John 8:1-11

1. Circle any word(s) that stand out in this verse. _____
Why are they important? _____
2. Why do you think Jesus said and taught this? _____
3. What does it mean for the church today? For you? _____

PRAY

- Give thanks for those who have stood up for you and what you need.
- Ask God to remove any self-righteousness from your heart.
- Pray for those who are bullied, targeted, and discriminated against.

ACT

Compliment at least three people you meet today, those you know and don't know.

W E D N E S D A Y

Disrupt

CHECK IN

Today I am feeling:

- | | | | |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| ☐ Happy | ☐ Sad | ☐ Motivated | ☐ _____ |
| ☐ Energized | ☐ Tired | ☐ Stuck | ☐ _____ |
| ☐ Anxious | ☐ Calm | ☐ Overwhelmed | ☐ _____ |

I feel bothered/distracted by: _____

I am thankful for: _____

READ & REFLECT

“Healthy people don’t need a doctor, but sick people do. I didn’t come to call righteous people, but sinners.” Mark 2:13-17

1. Circle any word(s) that stand out in this verse. _____
Why are they important? _____
2. Why do you think Jesus said and taught this? _____
3. What does it mean for the church today? For you? _____

PRAY

- Give thanks for doctors, PAs, nurses, administrators, and all medical workers.
- Ask God to rekindle and increase joy in your heart.
- Pray for those who discriminate against or look down on others.

ACT

Offer snacks and drinks to delivery drivers at home, work, church, and wherever you see them.

THURSDAY *Disrupt*

CHECK IN

Today I am feeling:

- | | | | |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| ☐ Happy | ☐ Sad | ☐ Motivated | ☐ _____ |
| ☐ Energized | ☐ Tired | ☐ Stuck | ☐ _____ |
| ☐ Anxious | ☐ Calm | ☐ Overwhelmed | ☐ _____ |

I feel bothered/distracted by: _____

I am thankful for: _____

READ & REFLECT

Many Samaritans believed in Jesus because of the woman's word; they asked him to stay with them, and he stayed there for two days. John 4:1-42

1. Circle any word(s) that stand out in this verse. _____
Why are they important? _____
2. Why do you think John made note of this? _____
3. What does it mean for the church today? For you? _____

PRAY

- Give thanks to God for people who make you feel seen and heard.
- Ask God to help you notice and interact with people no one else does.
- Pray for those who help and care for people of all ages with special needs.

ACT

Send an encouraging note and/or care package to someone who is away from their family and friends.

FRIDAY

Disrupt

CHECK IN

Today I am feeling:

- | | | | |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| ☐ Happy | ☐ Sad | ☐ Motivated | ☐ _____ |
| ☐ Energized | ☐ Tired | ☐ Stuck | ☐ _____ |
| ☐ Anxious | ☐ Calm | ☐ Overwhelmed | ☐ _____ |

I feel bothered/distracted by: _____

I am thankful for: _____

READ & REFLECT

"Hasn't it been written, 'My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations?'
But you've turned it into a hideout for crooks!" Mark 11:15-18

1. Circle any word(s) that stand out in this verse. _____
Why are they important? _____
2. Why do you think Jesus said and taught this? _____
3. What does it mean for the church today? For you? _____

PRAY

- Give thanks for your favorite place(s) to pray and worship.
- Ask God to help you grow as someone who worships in spirit and in truth.
- Pray for those whose faith has brought conflict in personal relationships.

ACT

Make way for others today: open doors, let people merge in traffic, give up your place in line...whatever you can do as opportunities arise.

SATURDAY

Rest

BREATHE

Do this energy exercise as you are able:

- Sit straight in a comfortable seat.
- Relax your face and close your eyes.
- Using your diaphragm/deep belly muscles, breathe in through your nose for a count of 4.
- Breathe out forcefully for a count of 2.
- Repeat for a total of 7 breaths or as many times as you can.

RELEASE

Do this listening exercise as you are able:

1. Choose an instrumental piece of music or nature soundscape to enjoy.
2. Sit or lie down in a way that feels natural and relaxed. Close your eyes.
3. Place one hand over your heart and one hand on your belly. Notice your breaths moving in and out, quietly and deeply. Invite the Holy Spirit to be with you in your breaths.
4. Keep this posture as you listen to the music/soundscape to the end. Picture yourself present in the scene, fully immersed in all that you hear.
5. Focus on the different instruments or elements you hear, allowing yourself to see and appreciate them in your mind.
6. As the music/soundscape ends, close with a simple word of thanks to God.

AFFIRM

Look in a mirror and say to your reflection 3 times:

"I am made in God's image, and God made me to make a difference."

WEEK 6

Rise

Theme Verses: I am the way, the truth, and the life...whoever believes in me will do the works that I do. John 14:6, 12 (CEB)

TODAY'S READING

Why do you look for the living among the dead? Jesus isn't here, but has risen. Remember what he told you while he was still in Galilee: that the Human One must be handed over to sinful people, be crucified, and on the third day rise again. Luke 24:5-7

- In Luke's telling of Jesus's resurrection, these words were spoken to a group of his followers—all women—by two messengers at the tomb in dazzlingly bright clothing. **After the messengers said these things, the women remembered Jesus's words and ran to share what they knew with the rest of his followers.** Unfortunately, verses 11-12 tell us, "Their words struck the apostles as nonsense, and they didn't believe the women. But Peter ran to the tomb; when he bent over to look inside, he saw only the linen cloth. He returned home, wondering what had happened." Funny! The women had just told him exactly what happened, yet even seeing the empty tomb for himself, he still wondered.
- Jesus gave his followers advance notice that he would be executed and rise from the dead—at least three times that we know of in the book of Luke alone (9:21-22, 9:43-45, and 18:31-34). In John's account, after one such prediction, **Jesus even said, "I have told you this before it takes place so that when it does take place, you may believe"** (14:29). Yet for whatever reason (and there would have been many good ones: disappointment, grief, fear, anger...), they still had to have it explained to them again when the events actually unfolded.
- Key words:
rise—*anistēmi* (pronounced *an-is'-tay-mee*): to arise, stand up, lift up, raise up, rise from the dead
remember—*mimnēskomai* (pronounced *mim-nace'-ko*): recall to mind, be mindful of

- Paul wrote in his letter to the church in Rome, **“If the Spirit of the one who raised Jesus from the dead lives in you, the one who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your human bodies also, through the Spirit that lives in you”** (Romans 8:10-11). Paul wasn’t speaking of resurrection literally (although the apostles certainly did experience that as well), but rather of the Spirit’s power in our lives over sin, corruption, and all that separates us from God and each other.
- Through this same Spirit, resurrection power lives on in us today. As theologian Esau McCaulley wrote, **“I am convinced that the Messiah has defeated death. I can forgive my enemies because I believe the resurrection happened. I am convinced the God who had the power to judge me did not. Instead he invited me into communion with his Son, and through that union with the Messiah I discover the resources to love that I did not possess before.”** **Faith that Jesus rose from the dead gives us power to rise, too—above temptation, fear, weakness, mistakes, judgment, apathy... literally anything the brokenness in this world can throw at us.**
- Resurrection may feel like a strong, even mystical word, but its real-life applications are everything we all want. **Resurrection looks like restoring relationships, working through traumas, overcoming addictions, pushing through apathy, healing broken hearts, standing up for the exploited, and receiving second (and third, and even more) chances.** It is love and service and forgiveness and sacred disruption, and we absolutely have the power to do all of it. As Jesus himself said, **“I assure you that whoever believes in me will do the works that I do; they will do even greater works than these...”** (John 14:12).
- Calling ourselves disciples of Jesus means we must also be responsible to know Jesus, to study his life and teachings, and to let all of Jesus inform our choices throughout our lives. **We believe in his love and resurrection, we remember the words that he told us, and we rise every day to share his love with everyone, no matter what.** This is The Way.

GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Allow each person 1-2 minutes to share their experience from last week's Group Challenge. If they weren't able to participate, what got in the way? (No judgment!) If they were, what did they learn?
2. What images and/or people come to mind when we think of resurrection? What is comfortable or desirable about it? What is challenging?
3. Imagine our group on the morning Jesus rose again. Imagine that the women came to us with their message. How do we think we would have responded?
4. How many of us have experienced resurrection power as Paul and Esau McCaulley described it? What happened?
5. What factors hold us back from rising above the temptations, influences, and hardships we meet in the world? What does the Spirit say to us about that?
6. How good are we at modeling resurrection in our church? In our community? How can we improve?

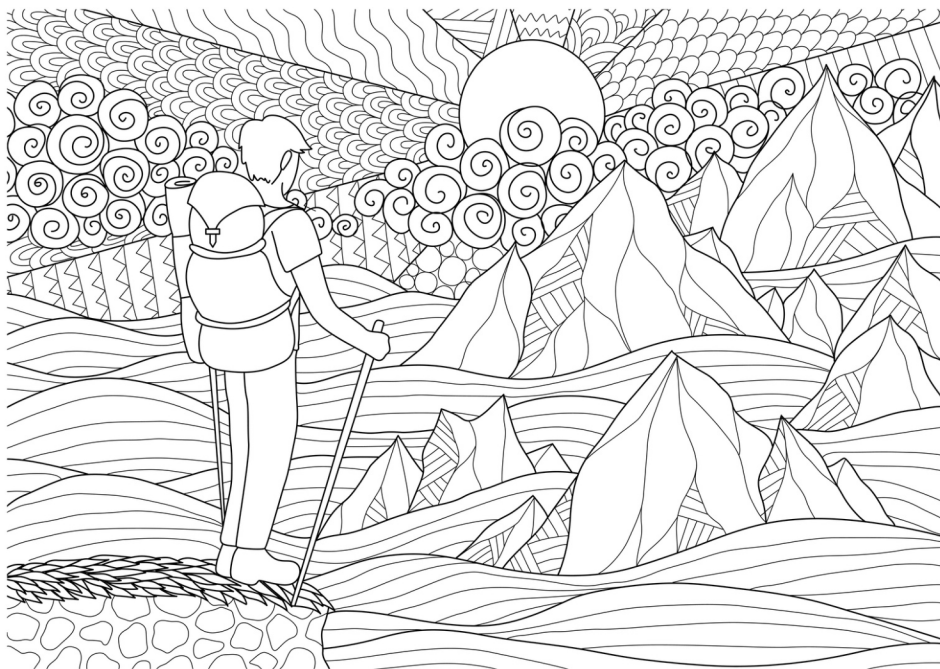
WEEK 6 GROUP CHALLENGE

Repeat the Week 1 challenge with a new person, OR

Plant a tree as a group (make sure everyone has a role in it, as they are able to contribute). Pick one that is native to your natural area, and purchase from an independent farm or nursery, if possible. Learn what this tree needs in order to thrive, and commit as a group to tend it into maturity as you can. When planting is done, pray together in a circle around the tree.

R G O O J R C R T M R W K R I
 L A S D I K Q X I Y H O I E N
 J L I S V B D X E O O X G M Z
 L I E S I K H I D L S V N E R
 R L B J E C Z G B E E D I M I
 K E P S L D T H Z T A Y V B J
 S E N O N A M U H R M D I E S
 U R Y U M J L U K E T U L R V
 Z Z P T A T L N Q A C V P B W
 E L Q N T N X C L L L H P B X
 V S Y G L C F P Z S A M G B N
 C R U C I F I E D N A G B L Y
 C E R S P U Y F D P A Y K W U
 C X J S E U K E Z V E S A M J
 D P A R R J D G R F O Y J W Z

CRUCIFIED
 DEAD
 GALILEE
 HANDED
 HUMAN ONE
 JESUS
 LIVING
 LOOK
 LUKE
 RAISED
 REMEMBER
 RISE



JESUS ISN'T HERE, BUT HAS RISEN. REMEMBER
 WHAT HE TOLD YOU... LUKE 24:5-6

MONDAY

Rise

CHECK IN

Today I am feeling:

- ☐ Happy
- ☐ Sad
- ☐ Motivated
- ☐ _____
- ☐ Energized
- ☐ Tired
- ☐ Stuck
- ☐ _____
- ☐ Anxious
- ☐ Calm
- ☐ Overwhelmed
- ☐ _____

I feel bothered/distracted by: _____

I am thankful for: _____

READ & REFLECT

“Rise up, take your cot, and go home.”
Matthew 9:6

1. Circle any word(s) that stand out in this verse.

Why are they important?

2. Why do you think Jesus said and taught this?

3. What does it mean for the church today? For you?

PRAY

- Give thanks to God for your home and everyone in it.
- Ask God to show you where you are spiritually or emotionally stuck.
- Pray for those who have given up on themselves.

ACT

Write encouraging messages on sticky notes and leave them around your community for others to find.

TUESDAY

Rise

CHECK IN

Today I am feeling:

- | | | | |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| ☐ Happy | ☐ Sad | ☐ Motivated | ☐ _____ |
| ☐ Energized | ☐ Tired | ☐ Stuck | ☐ _____ |
| ☐ Anxious | ☐ Calm | ☐ Overwhelmed | ☐ _____ |

I feel bothered/distracted by: _____

I am thankful for: _____

READ & REFLECT

Jesus came and touched them. “Rise up,” he said. “Don’t be afraid.”
Matthew 17:7

1. Circle any word(s) that stand out in this verse. _____
Why are they important? _____
2. Why do you think Jesus said and taught this? _____
3. What does it mean for the church today? For you? _____

PRAY

- Give thanks for those who have reached out to you in times of need.
- Ask God to show you what you are afraid of and to help you face it.
- Pray for mental health professionals and administrators.

ACT

Clean out a closet or cabinet and donate any items you don't need.

W E D N E S D A Y

Rise

CHECK IN

Today I am feeling:

- | | | | |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| ☐ Happy | ☐ Sad | ☐ Motivated | ☐ _____ |
| ☐ Energized | ☐ Tired | ☐ Stuck | ☐ _____ |
| ☐ Anxious | ☐ Calm | ☐ Overwhelmed | ☐ _____ |

I feel bothered/distracted by: _____

I am thankful for: _____

READ & REFLECT

Be encouraged! Rise up! Jesus is calling you.
Mark 10:49

1. Circle any word(s) that stand out in this verse. _____
Why are they important? _____
2. Why do you think Mark made note of this? _____
3. What does it mean for the church today? For you? _____

PRAY

- Give thanks to God for what is good about your health.
- Ask God for fresh energy and vision to use your gifts to help others.
- Pray for those struggling to afford medical care or medicines.

ACT

Celebrate someone you love.

THURSDAY

Rise

CHECK IN

Today I am feeling:

- | | | | |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| ☐ Happy | ☐ Sad | ☐ Motivated | ☐ _____ |
| ☐ Energized | ☐ Tired | ☐ Stuck | ☐ _____ |
| ☐ Anxious | ☐ Calm | ☐ Overwhelmed | ☐ _____ |

I feel bothered/distracted by: _____

I am thankful for: _____

READ & REFLECT

“Why are you sleeping? Rise up and pray so you won’t give in to temptation.”
Luke 22:46

1. Circle any word(s) that stand out in this verse.
Why are they important?

2. Why do you think Jesus said and taught this?

3. What does it mean for the church today? For you?

PRAY

- Give thanks to God for people who help make you safe.
- Ask God to reveal areas of temptation in your heart.
- Pray for those with insomnia, sleep apnea, and other sleep disruptions.

ACT

Donate blood, if you are able. If not, bring a kind surprise to your local blood/platelet donation facility or urgent care clinic (with permission).

FRIDAY

Rise

CHECK IN

Today I am feeling:

- ☐ Happy
- ☐ Sad
- ☐ Motivated
- ☐ _____
- ☐ Energized
- ☐ Tired
- ☐ Stuck
- ☐ _____
- ☐ Anxious
- ☐ Calm
- ☐ Overwhelmed
- ☐ _____

I feel bothered/distracted by: _____

I am thankful for: _____

READ & REFLECT

“Rise up and go. Your faith has healed you.”
Luke 17:19

1. Circle any word(s) that stand out in this verse.

Why are they important?

2. Why do you think Jesus said and taught this?

3. What does it mean for the church today? For you?

PRAY

- Give thanks for those who have led and nurtured you in your faith.
- Ask God for direction on what's next for you after this study.
- Pray for transportation workers and administrators.

ACT

Anonymously leave a stack of quarters at your local laundromat.

SATURDAY

Rest

BREATHE

Do this fun exercise as you are able:

- Sit straight in a comfortable seat.
- Relax your face and close your eyes.
- Breathe in for a count of 6 while slightly constricting the passage of air. You should hear a hissing sound (think Darth Vader).
- Breathe out for a count of 6 making the same sound.
- Repeat for a total of 7 breaths or as many times as you can.

RELEASE

Do this imagination exercise as you are able:

1. Sit or lie down in a way that feels natural and relaxed. Close your eyes.
2. Place one hand over your heart and one hand on your belly. Notice your breaths moving in and out, quietly and deeply. Invite the Holy Spirit to be with you in your breaths.
3. Imagine yourself in a safe, cozy place. Where are you? What does it look like?
4. Now imagine that Jesus has entered the room to spend time with you. What do you talk about? What questions do you have for him?
5. Now ask Jesus, "What do you want to say to me? What do I need to hear?" Listen quietly for a few minutes. (If distractions or intrusive thoughts come in, acknowledge them without judgment, then refocus on listening.)
6. Now imagine yourself getting up and leaving with Jesus.
7. Close with a simple word of thanks to God.

AFFIRM

Look in a mirror and say to your reflection 3 times:

"I am made in God's image, and God made me to rise."

WEEK 7

Theme Verses: I am the way, the truth, and the life...whoever believes in me will do the works that I do. John 14:6, 12 (CEB)

Recap

GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Allow each person 1-2 minutes to share their experience from last week's Group Challenge. If they weren't able to participate, what got in the way? (No judgment!) If they were, what did they learn?
2. Look back at the lessons and the time that has passed since we began this study. What are some of our high points/favorite verses, moments, or activities?
3. What are some of our low points/most challenging verses, moments, or activities? What made them challenging?
4. Have we made any new connections or relationships over the last six weeks? Have we experienced any changes in our pre-existing relationships?
5. What's next for us as a group?
6. Break down into groups of 2-3 and ask each other: How is your soul? Listen attentively, then close with a simple prayer for each other.

AMEN

On the Way: A Bible Study for Disciples of Jesus

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- NLT—*Holy Bible: New Living Translation*. 2015. Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.
- All others: CEB—*Common English Bible*. 2011. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press.

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