HOME CHURCH LESSON SERIES

Practical Christian Living

Faith That Works in Everyday Life

"Be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves."

JAMES 1:22

A Home Church Resources Lesson Series
homechurchresources.org

Who We Are

We are a Christian ministry that helps people start home churches through providing support to potential and current home church leaders. You don't have to spend years on a church staff and have college degrees in ministry (although they are welcome to help!) to be qualified. You can be a mechanic and start a home church…a teacher and start a home church…retired and start a home church.

We are here to help you get the support you or others you know need to get started!

How We Help

We provide the resources needed to help you get started. This includes:

- An online community for encouragement
- Online training that combines our best resources in one streamlined pathway
- Dozens of PDF tools to equip you to succeed
- Coaching to tackle the specific issues you face.
- Training for your home church members so they have ministry skills and disciplines

You can join a community where people interact, encourage and pray for each other as they live out the home church planting life together.

All of this is done through an online learning community where you can quickly and easily connect with all of the resources we have developed that are helping home church leaders around the world.

How to Start

Anyone can start, no cost, to start a home church. Our Prepwork will help you lay a biblical foundation for a home church and assembly the building blocks you need for a solid foundation to start a home church. You will also learn a few things to help you prayerfull consider if starting a home church is right for you in this season. This Prepwork comes with a Field Guide, which is a fillable PDF, so that when you are done you will have a guidebook in your hand that you have created, specific to the vision you are finding in scripture and through prayer.

Take the Prepwork Here

Practical Christian Living

God's Word is Truth

New Series on Practical Christian Living—Our new series will focus on living as a Christian in our contemporary culture. Our world is changing faster than ever before. More and more it is becoming a challenge to apply the timeless and unchanging truth of scripture to an ever changing society. One of the biggest changes in the last 30 years is an all out attack on truth. The result has been a new atmosphere of "anything goes." This series will offer some practical "nuts and bolts" suggestions to remind us what God has said concerning various issues so that we can stand firm in our beliefs and live the Christian life in our world today.

The Inspired Word of God:
The Bible (Word of God) is an important part of understanding what God thinks about things. When God speaks that is called "revelation." When God speaks through the mouths or writings of men it is called "Inspiration." Inspiration has the same root as the word "respiration." That is why scripture is called "God breathed" (2 Tim 3:16). The Bible is often called the Word of God because it is a record of what God has said to mankind about a variety of things. The Bible is not like any other book on the shelf because it has been initiated by God and because God is powerful, His Word is also powerful. **Hebrews 4:12** says, "The word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart."

2 Timothy 3:16-17 says all scripture is God-breathed or inspired. That means it originates from God just as breath originates from a person. Because it comes from God, who is creator of all things, it is powerful. *What do we learn from these two passages that scripture is able to do?*

- Penetrates & divides the soul and spirit, judges the thoughts & attitudes, Teaches, rebukes, corrects, and trains in righteousness

John 17:17 & Psalm 119:103-105 show us that God's word is truth and that as truth it gives us guidance.
How does the psalmist describe that guidance in these verses?
As a light to his path
How are truth and light similar?
They both reveal and expose something for what it really is.

Why is it important to realize God's Word is truth?

- If it is truth it is able to give us faithful and accurate guidance through life.

There are many other scriptures that show the Bible is the recorded words of God (Exodus 17:14, 34:27, Jer 30:2, and many others).

The Problem:
There is a problem that has existed since the beginning of time. Satan has challenged God's integrity and has presented lies as if they were truth! **Genesis 3:1-4** we have the story of the very first sin. *What did the serpent call into question?*

- He called into question what God said (the **content** of God's word) – is that what God really said?

- He called into question why God said it (**God's motive/integrity** for God's word) – Satan tried to convince them that God didn't want them to know the truth.
- The serpent presented an alternate explanation of the tree and the fruit which led Adam and Eve into sin.
- In effect Satan told them that God's word was a lie but that his lies were the truth!

Satan has been doing that ever since. We learned above that God's Word is truth. *What would Satan like for us to believe about God's Word?*
- That it is lies
- That God doesn't want us to have any fun.
- That God actually wants to harm us rather than do us good.

Satan doesn't just use one or two sources to shape our thinking in ungodly ways. Today he has hundreds and thousands of outlets for his message. *What outlets does Satan and the world use to pervert our since of right and wrong, godly and ungodly?*
- People, media, our own thinking, and even a misuse of the Bible.

Let's use TV as a test case for how the world can change our thinking.

How many hours each week is the average person exposed to church & scripture and how many hours to TV?
- Someone in church every time the doors are open = 3 hours of the Bible/week
- Average U.S. household has the TV on 6 hours and 47 minutes per day = 47 hours/week.

What compounds the repetition is the content of what we see on television.
- It has been projected that the average 18 year old has seen over 200,000 violent acts on television in their lifetime.

What effect can a continuous stream of negative and harmful images have on our ideas of what is right and what is wrong, what is appropriate and what is inappropriate?
- We begin thinking evil is normal and even okay if we are exposed to it enough times.
- We have men who no longer look at a women appropriately because they have been trained to think women are objects instead of people. Where does that come from? Certainly not scripture.

Is there any wonder people start getting their values and norms from television and the surrounding culture rather than the Bible?

Re-establishing the place of Scripture

If we are going to live as Christians in our culture we have to reestablish scripture's role in our lives. We have to remove the lies the world has told us and replace them with the truth of the Gospel. When we have re-established God's Word as our source of guidance we will have a spiritual renewal in our lives and in our communities similar to what God spoke through the prophet Isaiah in **Isaiah 61:1-4, 7-9** and we will respond with rejoicing to God similar to that found in **61:10-11**.

1. Study it
In order to re-establish the role of scripture as a guiding force in our lives we must study God's Word with the purpose of transformation. That means we don't study it like a self-help book or as a book of good suggestions. We study it because we know it can lead us in a holy direction because it is from God. *Why is familiarity with scripture important in order to make daily decisions?*

2. Discuss it
Do more than read it repeatedly. Make sure you discuss what you are studying with your Christian brothers and sisters. Scripture was meant to be read and studied in community. **Proverbs 27:17** says, "As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another." *What benefit comes from discussing scripture that you cannot get by yourself?*

3. Apply it
It is not enough to read or hear the Word of God. **James 1:22-25**. Application means doing what it says. It means we apply the truth we find in scripture to real life situations.

As we study about Practical Christian Living over the next three months we will be examining what the scriptures have to say about various issues we run into in our culture. Let's not merely form scriptural opinions about these matters. That means nothing if we don't live out what we believe. One final reminder. The Word of God is not meant to be used as a club to smash people with. Instead when we discover truth in scripture we use it to speak the truth in love to others (Eph 4:15).

Prayer

Practical Christian Living

From Consumerism to Contentment

Icebreaker: *What would have been your favorite thing about living in the Garden of Eden?*

Last week we talked about sin in the garden and how the serpent tried to challenge God's command not to eat fruit from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Satan was substituting God's way with an alternative that, although sounded good and pleasing, in the end resulted in emptiness and death. God had all their needs taken care of but Satan convinced them that what God had provided was not enough—they needed more.

That is the message of the world—Consumerism. *Why does consumerism breed dissatisfaction?*
- You feel like you never have enough. There is always something bigger and better you can buy.

Consumerism can become an entire worldview—something that effects the way we see everything. Because of that we have to address this early in our study because many of the other things we study are problems because people have developed a consumer mindset that has taken the place of God in their lives. In other words, when this has fully taken root, we begin believing that the world can meet our needs instead of God. But like Adam and Eve the end result will be emptiness and even death.

How does the world bombard us with the message that what we have is never enough?
- Advertisements, trends, movies, television, internet, etc.

How was the Garden of Eden before sin entered the picture?
- It was a perfect existence between God and mankind.
- They should have been satisfied—all their basic needs were met.

The Bible makes very clear that God is the one who supplies our needs. Because of that we should be content.

Phil 4:19

How many of your needs did Paul say God will meet?
- All

What is the difference between a want and a need?
- A want is something that is non-essential for the continuance of living life as a whole person. A need is something that only God can provide that is essential for life and spiritual development.
- Paul didn't say God will meet all your ***wants***. Paul said God will give you what you ***really need***.

What does the world tell us we really need?
- Definitely not God—they say God will mess you up or that God is out to get you or that he doesn't exist.
- The world says we need stuff. Once you get enough stuff you will be satisfied.
- The world says we need love and acceptance—the difference is how you go about finding it.

Matthew 6:28-34

The world says if you don't have what you want you better worry until you get it. *What does God say about worry? Why?*

- Don't worry—God will provide what you really need.

Jesus shifts the priority from chasing some really important things (food and clothing) to something of even greater importance. *What does Jesus say is the most important thing to seek out?*

- A relationship with God

What does Jesus say will follow if we make God our priority?

- The things we really need will be provided in addition to the greatest thing—a relationship with God.

Back to the way the world looks at this. The world says if you want clothes you chase clothes. If you want food you chase food. If you want stuff you better chase it yourself because no one else is going to do it for you. And don't chase just anything. Only the best is worth your attention. Following that line of thinking to the end makes stuff our "lord" instead of God. Stuff begins to rule our lives and we end up on an endless pursuit of things that will make us seem important or "somebody."

Gen 1:26-27

Where does scripture say our value is found?

- Our value rests in our relationship with God. We are made in his image and that makes us valuable.

What does it take for the world to say you are valuable?

- If you have the right income, job, clothes, cars, appearance, etc.
- In other words, you don't have any inherent value apart from your things.

Consumerism robs us of who we are and it steals away from us a healthy view of others. Instead of seeing others for who God made them to be we start seeing others for how they can benefit us, how they can help our cash flow, buy our product, compliment us, etc.

Moving from Consumerism to Contentment:

Philippians 4:11-13 shows us that contentment does not come from filling ourselves with stuff. Contentment is not based on circumstances or a series of good purchases. Contentment comes from resting in the fact that we have value that comes from God and that through God our needs will be met.

What are some things in your life you feel get in the way of seeing God and others in a healthy way?

What are the necessary steps it will take for you to find contentment in God alone?

Practical Christian Living

How God Defines Beauty

Icebreaker: *Where do most people get their definition of beauty?*

We live in a "touched up" world. The Dove Campaign is beginning to show how much touch up work goes into the average photo you see on the newsstand, billboard, or internet. What you see is no longer what you get. We are surrounded by a made-up and make believe world that tells us beauty is basically unattainable unless you starve yourself. That is not how God views us. God sees us as beautiful because that is how he made everyone of us.

Outward Beauty:

Gen 1:26, 31

With what two qualities did God make mankind?
- He made us in his image
- He said that what he had made was good.

Every culture is different in how they define beauty. Because different cultures say different things are beautiful we see that the way culture defines beauty is arbitrary. It is not arbitrary with God. God's view is, If you exist, you are beautiful to him. Our culture defines beauty and then tries to sell the product that will help make you the way they defined it! That is crazy. You can never be happy or satisfied with that kind of standard. In Genesis God said what he made was good.

Psalm 139:13-16

What does this scripture say about God's involvement in creating us?
- God is hands on. God is actively engaged in his creation. God loves who and what he makes.

How does the psalmist respond to the idea that God created him this way?
- He responds with praise.

The world's message of beauty is designed to create dissatisfaction with self and forms an ideal that is unattainable. *Why would it be hard to praise God for creating you if you are dissatisfied with yourself?*
- Because you wish you were not the person God created you to be.
- God created you with value, worth, and beauty because He chose to make you, you.

Ecclesiastes 3:11-14

How many things has God made beautiful?
- Everything

God says over and over again that he is head over heals for us! Revelation 2 even calls his church his bride who is being prepared for the great wedding day with Christ. He thinks we are beautiful. But not just on the outside. Society dwells on outward beauty because they do not realize what inward beauty can be. God thinks you are beautiful but not just because of how he made your outside. Even moreso God sees you as beautiful because of how he made you inside.

The Value of Inward Beauty
Outward beauty is not all there is to life. When we spend our time and money chasing that and not tending to our souls we have gotten our priorities out of line.

Proverbs 31:30 & 1 Samuel 16:6-7

The proverbs say there is something more lasting and substantial than outward beauty. God gave us a clearer picture of what that is when he selected David to be king. When the people selected a king they picked Saul because of his physical characteristics (he was head and shoulders above the rest). *When God picked a king what was he looking at?*

- The inner person—the heart, soul, and character.

People use all sorts of products to makeup the outward person. *What can we do to really develop the quality of our inner self?*

- Through relationship with God, trusting God, faith, Bible study, prayer...all the things that put us in touch with God and his people.
- Time invested in those things will never go to waste.

1 Peter 3:3-4

Beauty is not skin deep. As we already saw outward beauty fades. *What type of beauty does Peter say never fades?*

- Beauty that comes from a gentle and quiet spirit.
- God puts a great value on that.

God sees past all the outward adornment straight into our hearts.

Application:

Where have you gotten your cues of what makes you beautiful?

When you get ready for your day which gets more prep time the outside or the inside?

What does God see when he looks past all the makeup, all the nice clothes, and jewelry right into your soul?

God thinks you are beautiful through and through. God says we are valuable and that it more important than what anyone else in the whole world has to say about it.

Practical Christian Living

Helping those in Poverty

Icebreaker: *How big of a problem is poverty in our community?*

See page 3 for an illustration on how the world at large lives.

What are some excuses people have used to not help the poor?
- Their fault
- Jesus said you will always have the poor with you (Mtt 26:11) —why help them?
- Someone else will do it/that is what the government and taxes are for

Treating People with Love and Dignity

As we studied last week, God made all people with value. Because we are all made in God's image we have to treat each other with love and dignity.

How does the world try to remove the dignity of the poor?

What are some ways we could give dignity to the poor rather than taking it away from them?

Christ-like Compassion

When Jesus ministered on the earth he really looked out for the underdog and the downtrodden.

Luke 4:18-21

What four groups does Jesus say he came to minister to in this passage?
- Poor, imprisoned, the blind, and the oppressed

Each of these are groups that are at the mercy of society. Jesus didn't come to dine with the rulers and leaders of the earth. He went into the homes of the tax collectors and sinners. He had compassion on the poor. His message of the kingdom was a message that all of mankind was now on equal footing with God.

How can we show compassion on the poor like Jesus would?
- Meet their needs, pray for them, treating the impoverished like real people because that is who they are.

Identifying & Meeting Real Needs

One of the hardest things to do in addressing the homeless and those who are severely impoverished is to really know what their real needs are and how those needs are best met.

What are some concrete needs for someone who is homeless?

- Shelter, food, clothing, the basics of hygiene, and even real human interaction instead of being treated like less important or less than human.

Many Americans tend to throw money at problems. When we do that it keeps us from being really connected with the people who are actually in need. We can write a check to the Red Cross, Disaster Relief, or a missionary and feel like we have done our part. Giving is important but there are times we can actively take part in making a difference too.

When you connect with the poor or homeless on a personal level you will begin to know what their real core needs are.

Money can be a big asset in helping some people. It is able to alleviate many burdens and we should be willing to give to others in their time of need. We see that is one of the biggest characteristics of the early church.

Acts 2:42-45 & Acts 4:32-37

How did the early church address poverty in their midst?
- They sacrificed for each other and were willing to give.
- They knew people were more important than money or possessions.

Which are we often more invested in, money or other people?

Offering People More than Money

Acts 3:1-8

What did the lame man think he really needed?
- Money

What gift was he given instead? Was it a better gift or a worse gift that what he expected?
- He was given healing but more than that he was restored to society.

While we will not be able to miraculously heal the sick, the greatest gift we can give to the homeless and those in extreme poverty is a renewal of their personhood that comes through restoring their dignity. To do that we have to treat them as equals, as people, as who God intended them to be.

What makes that a difficult thing to do?

How happy was this man in Acts when he received the gift of wholeness?

Christians are not called to be passive observers in the world. We are called to be difference makers. Our goal is to start making a difference in the world one person at a time.

If the world was a village of 100 people*

If we could reduce the world's population to a village of precisely 100 people, with all existing human ratios remaining the same, the demographics would look something like this:

The village would have 60 Asians, 14 Africans, 12 Europeans, 8 Latin Americans, 5 from the USA and Canada, and 1 from the South Pacific

50 would be male, 50 would be female

73 would be non-white; 27 white

67 would be non-Christian; 33 would be Christian

33 would live in substandard housing

20 would be unable to read

33 would be malnourished and 1 dying of starvation

33 would be without access to a safe water supply

39 would lack access to improved sanitation

24 would not have any electricity (And of the 76 that do have electricity, most would only use it for light at night.)

7 people would have access to the Internet

10 would have a college education

1 would have HIV

2 would be near birth; 1 near death

5 would control 32% of the entire world's wealth

33 would be receiving --and attempting to live on-- only 3% of the income of "the village"

* From the Family Care Foundation with corrections from snopes.com

Practical Christian Living

Stewardship—Taking Care of God's Blessings

Icebreaker: *What comes to mind when you think of stewardship?*

We keep looking back to the God's creation of the world because that is where we find the example of how God intended things to be.

Genesis 1:26-31

What did God entrust to the care of mankind?
- Fish, birds, livestock, and all other creatures and plants

God gave them a responsibility to care for creation. While they didn't have many of the other things we take care of today they still had a responsibility to be good stewards of God's creation. God expected them and he expects us to take care of the things he has entrusted into our care.

What things does God expect us to be good stewards of today?
- Talents, time, finances, family, the earth/environment, etc
- Some times we think God is going to destroy the earth so why worry about taking care of it? God entrusted the earth to our care and we need to be mindful of that responsibility.

We are going to spend some time this week on how we are to be good stewards of our time and our finances. If you want to tell what is important to someone you can ask two questions—"How do they spend their time?" and "What do they spend money on?" You have heard the expression, "Time is money." Time and money are both limited resources and how we use or abuse them can reflect the health of our relationship with God.

Psalm 24:1

How many things belong to God
- Everything

How do you treat something that isn't yours?
- You treat it at least as carefully as you treat your own things.

Stewardship starts with the idea that everything is God's and we are just taking care of it for the time being. If we have things in our lives that we can't live without we need to start thinking of how we are going to change that. If some material thing besides shelter, food or clothing is so important to you that you cannot live without it the best thing you can possibly do is to let it go.

The question of stewardship is "Who owns who?" Do our possessions and material things own and control us or do we own and take control of them? Materialism is a control issue.

Matthew 25:14-30

What does it mean to be entrusted with something of value?
- It means you are expected to take care of it.

Why do you think the 1 talent man hid his talent?
- He was too afraid to risk it. He couldn't let it go.

Stewardship requires trust that God will provide. *If God made everything wouldn't he be able to provide us with what we really need?*

Giving

Each week on Sunday we have a chance to give back to the work of the church. This is a very scriptural practice but something we don't talk about often enough. When we give to others we are blessed—not with money or homes or nice cars but blessed because God loves a cheerful giver.

2 Corinthians 9:6-15

What does it mean to sow and what does it mean to reap?
- When we sow we give and when we reap we receive a harvest.

How does God want us to make a decision on what and how much we should give?
- In our hearts and not under compulsion or reluctantly.

Can you give reluctantly and cheerfully at the same time?

Why should giving generate joy and good cheer?
- Because we are passing on the blessings God has given us to someone else.

Who will make sure you still have all that you really need even after you have given to others?
- God supplies it all

This passage says God will make his people rich in everyway so that they can respond how?
- In generosity.

An attitude of generosity reflects a heart that understands where the blessings come from—God and that we are just stewards or caretakers of all that God has entrusted to us. The earth is the Lord's and everything in it. Everything we have is just on loan from God and he will come back and take an accounting of how we have chosen to treat it.

Application:

What area of your life could you improve at being a good steward?

Practical Christian Living

Make Me a Servant

Read a slogan and see if they can guess the company:

"Have it your way" - Burger King
"You're the boss" - Burger King
"Obey your thirst" - Sprite
"Do What Tastes Right" - Wendy's
"You Deserve a Break Today" - McDonalds

What is the common thread that runs through these slogans?
- It is all about you! You are the boss and you should get things your way.

The Voice of Culture

Getting things your way is the dominant message of our culture. Being a servant is not one of the dominant messages of our culture. Just the opposite. Culture wants you to think you are supposed to be the boss.

Why would a "Godless" world have to fall back on us being the boss?
- Without God as the ultimate authority the responsibility falls back on mankind.

How good of a job has mankind done at running the show?
- We have failed miserably.

Culture looks down on servants and up to bosses but the Gospel reverses the order of things. Jesus made it very clear that the attitude that you are the boss of your own life just wouldn't fly.

The Voice of the Gospel

Mark 10:35-40

James and John asked for a blank check from Jesus. *Why was their request a very bold and even improper one?*
- They were asking to be held above the other disciples
- They were asking for a position that was reserved for someone much greater than themselves.

What kind of attitude would it take to make such a request?
- Possibly arrogance and entitlement

How does Jesus show their request was an ignorant one (vs.38)?
- He told them they didn't know what they were asking.

Jesus uses this request as a teachable moment for his disciples.

Mark 10:42-45

What does Jesus say is the criteria for greatness?
- Being a servant and serving others

Whose example does Jesus point to that shows us he is serious about this?
- Himself—he was willing to do it himself.
- Jesus became a suffering servant who gave his life to save us from sin even though he didn't have to.

The Example of Jesus—Philippians 2:5-11

Jesus was divine. He was in effect God. *But what does Paul say was his attitude toward his equality with God?*
- That position was not something to be eagerly or greedily held on to. Instead, he let it go.

How did Jesus let it go?
- By becoming a man—not just any man, a servant.

How obedient was Jesus as a suffering servant?
- He was obedient even to the point of death...and not just any death...death on a cross.

What did God do as a result?
- God exalted Jesus.

We are called to go and do and be likewise. If service was good enough for Jesus is should be good enough for us. When you become a Christian you die to yourself and you begin living for God. That means the message the world sends, that getting our needs and wants met first and foremost, is no longer valid. We have to put God and others first and the best way to do that is through having the attitude and position of a servant.

Application:

How can we show our willingness to serve in places where it is not expected?

What talents do you have that can be used to serve others?

What is the biggest challenge for you to serve someone else?

What attitudes do you have that challenge having a servant's heart?

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Dealing with Conflict

What is the hardest thing about other people for you to get along with?

It is an unfortunate reality that even in the church there are some times disagreements and conflicts among Christians. Personality differences, doctrinal differences, or doing something that offends or hurts another Christian are things that are bound to happen from time to time and it is important that we deal with times like that appropriately and biblically.

In Matthew 18 Jesus talks about what to do if another Christian sins against you. **Matthew 18:15-20**

Jesus says "brother" but he is not just talking about men. This also applies if a sister sins against you. *What is the first thing Jesus says you are to do?*

- Go to him and show him his fault

The attitude in which this is done is extremely important. *How would you approach someone like this in a way that shows you care?*

If we are not careful we will go to someone to prove we are right. *How can an attitude of arrogance rather than love short-circuit this process?*

- It shows that we are not as interested in helping the one who was wrong and heal the relationship with them than we are getting our way or trying to be better than they are.

What does Jesus say is the result if that person listens to the correction?

- They will be won over.

What else will happen to that relationship?

- It will be mended and healthy again.

What does Jesus say to do if they will not listen?

- Take some witnesses and then, if still not resolved bring it before the church/elders.

Notice, Jesus doesn't say to go and talk to a whole lot of people about the problem. He doesn't advocate spreading rumors. We often don't really have all the facts when we think someone has wronged us. It is important that you not judge too quickly and ask questions rather than make accusations. Telling anyone about it other than the person in question is a last resort.

Why do people tell everyone but the person in question?

Why is it important to go to mature Christians with the problem rather than "itching ears" or a young Christian?

- You are seeking more than a witness—when you take the second step you are seeking counsel. Maybe in that process you get feedback and information that you didn't realize before.

What does Jesus mean by "treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector?"
- That is an odd statement because Jesus treated tax-collectors and sinners with love.
- Yet, the ones Jesus spent time with were repentant and trying to do better.
- Jesus is saying treat them as you would someone who has no interest in the things of God.

Reconciliation is an important concept for Christians to understand. We often realize our need to be reconciled to God but what about our need to be reconciled with each other?

How important is it for the world to see Christians know how to reconcile their differences?
- It sends a tremendous message of unity that the world needs to see demonstrated in our lives.
- If the world sees us snapping at each other will they want to be a part of God's community?

Learning From God's Example of Reconciliation—Romans 5:6-10

We see in this passage that Christ didn't die for us because we were nice or pretty or had it all together. *Who did Christ die for?*
- The ungodly.

Christ's death brought about our reconciliation with God. God initiated it even though we were the ones who had done wrong. *When someone does you wrong how important is it that you initiate the reconciliation process? Why?*
- Very important

We often want someone to come and say they were wrong or sorry but it doesn't always work that way.

If God can forgive and reconcile us when we were still sinners, how should that make it easier for us to reconcile with others?

Application:

Make a list of who you have open conflicts with or things that were never resolved. *How could you go about bringing a resolution to those conflicts and reconciliation with those people?*

Who is the hardest person or what is the toughest situation you may have to go out and reconcile?

Practical Christian Living

Having Compassion in a Compassionless World

Icebreaker: *What are you a push over for?*

When Jesus walked the earth his mission was more than to die for the sins of the world. That was a huge part of his mission but the overarching plan was to restore God's kingdom. Another way to say that is to say Jesus came to restore things to be in line with the way God intended them to be in the first place. When Jesus looked at the world, in all its brokenness, full of heartache and strife, his response and reaction was one of compassion because he knew that what he saw was not how it was supposed to be.

This World is Not How Things Are Supposed to Be:
What signs in our world show us this is not how things were intended to be?
- Violence, sickness, oppression, injustice

How did Jesus respond when he saw these things?
- He confronted evil and embraced the hurting

Why do you think Jesus had so much compassion for mankind?
- Because he was the creator.
- He didn't see people the way we see people. He saw them for who he had made them to be and not as the world had twisted them to be.

Understanding How Things Are Supposed to Be:

John 8:2-11

Why did these men bring this women before Jesus?
- To test and trap him—to see if he would condone sin

What kind of attitude did her accusers have toward her condition?
- They were angry toward her and didn't care what happened to her.

How well did their actions and attitude line up with the way God intends?
- They were totally at odds with the ways of God. God never intended us to use others as pawns in our prideful games but to recognize people for who they are—made in the image of God.

What kept these men from having compassion on this woman?
- They had their own agenda and it didn't include concern for her. In their eyes she was no more than a tool to be used by them to get to Jesus.

How different was Jesus' approach to this woman's sin than the mob of teachers and Pharisees?

- Jesus had compassion on her even though she had sinned. If anyone had a right to be angry at her it was Jesus but he wasn't. He was more concerned about the woman than about her sin.

Does that mean Jesus or God does not care about sin or that sin is not important?

- No—sin is a big deal but God but sometimes we think God can have compassion on anyone but ourselves.

How can we have compassion for people and still recognize the seriousness of sin?

- You can approach someone in sin with compassion—let them know that you are telling them how serious their sin is because you care about them and not because you are looking down on them.

Why do some people have the attitude that God loves everyone else but have a hard time accepting God's love themselves?

Part of learning to have a Christ-like compassion is to learn to accept Christ's compassion for you. It is hard to give to others what we are not comfortable receiving ourselves.

How does an understanding that God is totally compassionate toward us renew our courage to trust him even though some times we sin?

Know that God loves you unconditionally and he wants you to be made right with Him. That is called reconciliation. The beautiful thing is he loves you so much and has so much compassion for you, even when you sin, that he sent his son to die for you so that you could live again.

The Bible says that Christians have "new life" - once we move from death to life we become part of the solution to bringing compassion to the world.

Application—We Are Part of the Solution:

We understand that the world is in need of Christ-like compassion because the world we live in is far from how things are supposed to be. We understand that we are to look to Jesus for our example of how to show compassion to others. The next step is going out and showing the world how much we care. We need to be part of the solution.

Step 1—Listen—*How can you improve your listening skills to catch the fact that sometimes others around you are hurting and need attention?*

Step 2—Soften Your Heart—Often we are so fast paced that we become hardened to "distractions" and miss opportunities to help others. When you hear they are hurting make sure your heart is soft enough to feel compassion for that person.

Step 3—Act—Compassion is more than a feeling. It must be acted upon. *What creative approaches to helping the hurting could you try?*

Practical Christian Living

How to Be a Godly Role-Model

Icebreaker: *Who in your life has been a role model to you?*

Philippians 4:8-9

What three things does Paul say to "put into practice?"
- Whatever they have learned, or received, or heard from him

Why might that be a dangerous statement for someone to make?
- You may have done something you shouldn't have done.

How confident was Paul in his example to the Philippian Christians?
- He was extremely confident to make a statement like that.

What things in our lives might keep us from making a statement like that?

Many famous sports figures and musicians have tried to say they aren't a role-model to anyone. Whether they like it or not, someone is watching them and doing what they say. Everyone has someone watching them and it is very important that we are a good role-model. The old saying goes, "You might be the only Bible someone ever reads."

How valid is the statement, "You might be on the only Bible someone ever reads?"

How does that statement motivate you to be a godly role-model?

1 Corinthians 11:1

We have all had role-models but it is important that our ultimate role-model is Christ. *Why does Christ provide the perfect role-model for us?*
- He lived a perfect life
- He taught many things we need to learn to live a better life

How does the question "What Would Jesus Do?" Help us be a Christ-like role-model for others?

In 1 Corinthians 4:16 Paul urges the Corinthians to imitate him. When you imitate someone you mirror what they do. If they are doing bad things you will do bad things. If they do good things and you imitate them you will end up doing bad things. That is the reason we all need to surround ourselves with positive Christian people because it rubs off on us whether we like it or not.

Steps to Being a Godly Role-Model:
1) Know Christ—study his words and teachings, his actions and attitudes.

Philippians 2:4

How does studying the Bible help us imitate and have the same attitude as Christ?
2) Spend time with mature Christians—This is what Paul was urging them to do in Corinth. See **1 Corinthians 4:17**. *What was Timothy going to come and do in Corinth?*

- Remind them of a life suitable to being a Christian
- Remind them of the teachings/gospel

3) Put it into practice—As Paul said in Philippians 4:8-9 it is not enough to know how to be a godly role-model. You have to put it into practice. You have to do it. It takes action.

You have to be willing to do some things and make some decisions that are unpopular with some people. *What is an example of an unpopular decision a Christian might have to make?*

Integrity is often defined as how you live when you think no one is looking. To be a godly role-model you have to have an ordered and holy private life. Seeming to be a good Christian on Sunday morning for an hour or two is not difficult. Everyone may think you have it all together. *Why is it harder to put it into practice the rest of the week outside the church building?*

What kinds of things help us live our faith out when not "at the building?"

- Godly people, scripture, prayer

Application:

What in your life is keeping you from being the role-model you know you need to be?

What experiences in your life would be beneficial for someone else to learn from? How are you going to share that with someone else?

What lessons do you wish someone had taught you about having a relationship with God that you should pass on to someone else?

What was the best quality of the role-models you have had in your life? What do you think is your best "role-model" quality?

Prayer—That God could help each of us influence the circle of people we contact on a regular basis and to be alert and on guard that people are watching us.

Practical Christian Living

Putting Pride in the Proper Place

Icebreaker: *What was the proudest moment of your life?*

Not All Pride is Bad:
Pride is not always an unhealthy thing in the Christian life. Several people in the Bible talked about pride as a positive and healthy thing.

2 Corinthians 7:4

Who does Paul take great pride in?
- The Corinthian Christians

Why is taking pride in someone else different than taking pride in self?

Galatians 6:1-4

But now Paul seems to say we should take pride in ourlselves. How do we match that up with the fact that God does not want us to be proud (1 Peter 5:5-6) ? Here in Galatians 6 Paul is saying that pride should not come from comparing yourself with someone else. Instead he says you can be proud of yourself when you have tested your actions and understand that you have done the right thing. This is taking pride not in our own accomplishment of righteousness but in the fact that God is working on our lives and for that we should be proud.

How is that a healthy kind of pride?
- It is recognizing God is working in and through us

Unhealthy Pride:
Healthy pride says, "Look what God has done in my life!" *What might unhealthy pride say?*
- Look at all the things I have done!
- How wonderful must I be to have done all of this myself!

What is the difference?
- Focus—when the focus is on self pride becomes an unhealthy thing. When the focus is on God and others pride can be a very healthy thing

1 Corinthians 10:12 & 1 Peter 5:5-6

What happens to people who have unhealthy pride in their lives?
- They will get put in the proper place all in due time.

Luke 14:7-14

Which attitude would Jesus have us assume—pride or humility? Why?

Who does Jesus encourage us to invite to the party?

- The poor, lame, crippled, blind, etc.

Why?

- Because they have nothing to offer in return.

That is important because it shows we invite people into our lives because we want them to be near to us and not because they have anything to offer us. They are valuable even if they have nothing to offer us.

When you invite those who are able to do something in return for you it can be more about "what's in it for me?" than about the actual people who come. When you start to view other people that way you stop seeing them as people and start seeing them almost like impersonal robots who have been put on earth for our own purposes. That is wrong.

Because of that pride is a heart issue—when our eyes get so dulled from pride that we can only see ourselves we no longer see others as clearly as we ought.

Why does pride cloud our vision of others?

Pride is such a subtle sin. You cannot look at someone and tell they are prideful. It can be a very hidden issue of the heart that may not seem so serious. The problem often goes much deeper than we can imagine. We were never intended to view people like objects.

Application:

What are some things you have had a healthy pride for?

- We sing the song "Because He Lives" and it has the line "How sweet to hold a newborn baby and feel the pride and joy he gives." We can be proud of our children and of our God.

What are some things you have had an unhealthy pride for?

What kind of smoke-screens have you been able to put up to conceal the fact that you struggle with pride?

Have you ever struggled with seeing people for what they can do for you rather than who they are?

How can you better view them as real people God loves rather than as one more person who can do something for you?

Practical Christian Living

Discipleship: The Life of Self Sacrifice

Icebreaker: *If you could spend time with anyone from history who would it be?*

Jesus taught a lot about what it means to be a disciple. Some of his teachings were direct and to the point. We find these kind of teachings in verses like **Mark 8:34-36**.

What three things did Jesus say are necessary if we are going to be his disciple?
- Denial of self, take up a cross, follow Him

What does it mean to deny yourself?
- You put God first and put yourself last.

What does it mean to take up a cross?
- It means we are willing to endure hardship for Jesus Christ—not necessarily a literal cross but instead all the things that come with bearing a cross—pain, shame, difficulty.

Which of those three is easiest for you and which is hardest? Why?

Why is it only possible to do those three things in that order?
- You cannot follow him until you are willing to take up a cross
- You cannot take up a cross until you are willing to sacrifice your own desires to His will.

Other of Jesus teachings on discipleship were a little more subtle. In **Matthew 19:16-22** Jesus meets a rich young man who has good intentions but is not yet ready to follow Jesus.

What three things did Jesus tell this man to do?
- Sell everything, give to the poor, and follow Him

Which of the three steps above (denial of self, taking up a cross, and following Jesus) was hardest for this man?
- He was not willing to deny himself of his possessions and that short-circuited his discipleship process and made him unable to really follow Jesus.

Jesus knew people's hearts. Jesus pointed right at this young man's biggest weakness, his biggest roadblock and demanded it be removed. Whatever he struggled with the most is what Jesus pointed out and asked that it no longer take first place in his life.

If you were to ask Jesus what you lacked to better be his disciple, what would he point out has to go?

What is keeping you from getting that done?

There is an important verse in Romans 12 that sheds more light on self sacrifice and being a disciple of Jesus Christ.

Romans 12:1-2

Discipleship is a Continuous Process
When people sacrificed an animal it was killed and burned. It was a one-time act per animal and had to be repeated over and over again. *How is being a "living sacrifice" different?*

- It is continuous
- That is what discipleship is all about. It is not done in chunks or only here and there or on Sunday and Wednesday. It is continuous.

He is not through with us yet. This process is one where we are shaped over and over again and like Paul said in verse 1, it requires God's mercy.

Discipleship is Holy and Pleasing
He says to offer your body as a "living sacrifice." *What two words does he use to describe such a sacrifice?*

- Holy and pleasing

In the Old Testament the phrase "pleasing aroma" happens 39 times and is always used regarding the smell that goes up to God from someone's animal sacrifice. Paul is saying when we offer ourselves to God as a living sacrifice, God is please by the aroma that is lifted up to him by such a continuous and holy offering.

What do you think God is most pleased with in your life?

Discipleship is Total
Sacrifices involved the whole animal. It was all given. That is how our lives are to be to God—wholly given to God. Self-sacrifice involves taking our whole life and willingly laying it on God's altar to be holy and pleasing in his site. If we hold back and keep things for ourselves (not denying ourselves and not taking up a cross) we will not be able to follow Jesus.

What areas of your life are not wholly given over to God?

Activity

1—Hand everyone two note cards and a pencil or pen.
2—Have them write on one card the areas of their life God is pleased with and on the other card areas of their life that still need to be sacrificed to God's control.
3—Pray for the group thanking God for the first card and asking God to take control of the things on the second card.
4—Have group members dispose of the cards (You can do this different ways depending on your resources—if you have a fire place or a fire pit outside you could burn them up fitting with Romans 12:1-2 or you could just tear them up and have them put them in a trash can.
Feel free to modify this any way you like.

Who We Are

We are a Christian ministry that helps people start home churches through providing support to potential and current home church leaders. You don't have to spend years on a church staff and have college degrees in ministry (although they are welcome to help!) to be qualified. You can be a mechanic and start a home church…a teacher and start a home church…retired and start a home church.

We are here to help you get the support you or others you know need to get started!

How We Help

We provide the resources needed to help you get started. This includes:

- An online community for encouragement
- Online training that combines our best resources in one streamlined pathway
- Dozens of PDF tools to equip you to succeed
- Coaching to tackle the specific issues you face.
- Training for your home church members so they have ministry skills and disciplines

You can join a community where people interact, encourage and pray for each other as they live out the home church planting life together.

All of this is done through an online learning community where you can quickly and easily connect with all of the resources we have developed that are helping home church leaders around the world.

How to Start

Anyone can start, no cost, to start a home church. Our Prepwork will help you lay a biblical foundation for a home church and assembly the building blocks you need for a solid foundation to start a home church. You will also learn a few things to help you prayerfull consider if starting a home church is right for you in this season. This Prepwork comes with a Field Guide, which is a fillable PDF, so that when you are done you will have a guidebook in your hand that you have created, specific to the vision you are finding in scripture and through prayer.

Take the Prepwork Here