

Study Guide



Week 2 - Invest

April 15, 2018

Welcome (40 Minutes)

Be intentional to have authentic relationships...

Worship (5 Minutes)

As the group transitions from a time of fellowship to a time of intentional study of the word, it is important to facilitate that transition with a time of worship. This can look like praying together, singing songs together, or rejoicing in what the Lord has done throughout the week.

Word (45 Minutes)

We have been looking at Jesus' five discourses in Matthew, sitting at His feet, and we have learned how to be disciples and disciple-makers. We have challenged everyone to share the gospel as we have been sent to share the good news of Jesus with others. The next four weeks is planned to equip our members practically as we are sent to live on mission and to be intentional with our relationships and time. The material used for this study comes from North American Mission Board's book, *Life on Mission: Gospel. Mission. Ministry* (2013).

For further study on this weeks study please check out the following pages...

Prayer & Missions

June— Serve Shreveport
July— Community Outreach

For further information visit
norrisferrychurch.org or contact Jared
Clary (clary@norrisferrychurch.org)

Calendar

March 4th- April 15th— Connection Group
March 4th- April 15th— Kids Shine
May 6th— Member's Meeting
June 11th-16th— Youth Camp

Welcome (40 Minutes)

As you fellowship with one another, please be intentional about sharing what the Lord is doing in your lives. Get to know one another and encourage one another. Are your conversations pointing one another toward Christ?

Worship (5 Minutes)

If you are looking for a song to sing this week, here are the lyrics to "[Hosanna](#)":

I see the king of glory
Coming on the clouds with fire
The whole earth shakes
The whole earth shakes

I see his love and mercy
Washing over all our sin
The people sing
The people sing

Hosanna, Hosanna
Hosanna in the highest [x2]

I see a generation
Rising up to take their place
With selfless faith
With selfless faith

I see a near revival
Stirring as we pray and seek
We're on our knees
We're on our knees

Hosanna, Hosanna
Hosanna in the highest

Heal my heart and make it clean
Open up my eyes to the things unseen
Show me how to love like you have loved me

Break my heart for what breaks yours
Everything I am for Your kingdom's cause
As I walk from earth into eternity

Hosanna, Hosanna
Hosanna in the highest [x3]

Chapter 9: Invest

Invest your life in others as you share the gospel.

Invest

"We cared so much for you that we were pleased to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us" (1 Thessalonians 2:8).

Gospel Thread

The gospel tells us that Jesus sacrificed everything for us. He laid down His very life as a ransom for many, not to be served but to serve. (See Mark 10:45.)

In short, the only reason you have the hope that you have is because Jesus went on a mission and rescued you. If you understand that and let it sink in on a heart level, you will naturally want to invest your life to be on mission to others. Not out of a guilt-driven obedience, but from a changed heart that wants to lay down your life for others.

Growing in the gospel will continue to turn your gaze outward, beyond yourself and your life. It will move you from identifying those around you who need the hope of Jesus to investing your life into theirs. When believers join as a community and together invest their lives in those around them, they are reflecting Jesus. The family of God on mission together is a beautiful thing.

How is your view of missions and investing in the lives of others motivated by the gospel or something else? How is your view of missions influenced by the grace of Jesus shown to you?

Intentionality as a Way of Life

If you are familiar with church activities, the first thing you think of when you hear the word missions might be a mission trip or an offering. Short-term mission trips and offerings given to support missionaries are certainly valid aspects of being a biblical community of people on mission, but are, by definition, short-term with limited involvement. So to think about missions primarily in terms of going somewhere for a short time or giving a couple of times a year is divorced from your normal life and is simply incomplete.

**Being on mission is not about going to a specific place—
it's about being intentional where you are.**

It's about investing in the lives of others. Not just for a short period of time, but as a lifestyle. A missional lifestyle is rooted in the knowledge that God is already on mission around you, and the fact that He has placed you in your present environment because He wants to use you to reach the people around you.

"From one man He has made every nationality to live over the whole earth and has determined their appointed times and the boundaries of where they live. He did this so they might seek God, and perhaps they might reach out and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us" (Acts 17:26-27).

The great thing about intentionality as a way of life is that it goes where you go. If God calls you to move, you will already know how to be on mission to anyone around you. Your location may change, but your intentionality won't. It's a mistake to think that you will be intentional as soon as you move somewhere different or take the next step—if you're not on mission where you are now, you won't be on mission where you're going.

In what ways are your normal, everyday surroundings your mission field?

How can you grow in being intentionally on mission where you are?

Getting Practical

Once you've identified where God is at work around you and noticed opportunities for spreading the gospel, it's time to put intentional effort in investing into the lives of those people.

In other words: share your life with people. Make friends. Ask them to lunch. Throw a party. Have a cookout. Invite them to go bowling. In short, build relationships.

Another great way to build relationship is by serving. Learn the needs of the person or group and how you can help fill that need. Remember Josh and the guys serving the single moms? Their venture was a big investment, and it immediately formed relationships with the moms who took them up on their offer of childcare.

However, fulfilling a need doesn't always have to be something as big as weekly childcare. It can be something as simple as offering to help a neighbor with yard work or home repair.

**Whatever you have to do—do what it takes
to invest in the lives of others.**

Why? Why wouldn't you just tell them about the gospel and move on? Because, while there is certainly room for telling someone you barely know about Jesus (See Romans 10:14-15.), it often works best to build a relationship with them first. In general, people don't like to feel they are a project, or that they are receiving a sales pitch, and they may have the wrong idea about why you want so badly for them to become a follower of Jesus.

Just like any friendship, if a relationship is growing deeper, you will naturally get to the things that are important in your life. If Jesus is important to you, then as your relationship grows He will naturally come up in conversation.

Relational Evangelism

This act of investing in relationships to spread the gospel is called relational evangelism. The reason it works well is easy: we are much more likely to listen and trust something a friend tells us than something a complete stranger communicates to us. It is powerful when we share our lives with people as we share the gospel. We see Jesus doing this very thing with His disciples—taking time to really invest in their lives on a very deep level. They spent an extraordinary amount of time together, and church history reveals that it was time well spent to say the least.

The Great Commission calls us not to simply make converts but to make disciples. So as we invest in the lives of people, we help them continue to take the next step toward Jesus, with the hope that one day they will become a reproducing missionary as well. (We will dig deeper into this toward the end of this session.)

How often do you spend quality time with people who don't know Jesus?

Look back at your answers from the “Identify” questions. What would it look like for you to invest in the lives of the people God has helped you identify?

Whom could you invite to come alongside you to invest in the community and people you identified?

Well Worth It

Guess what Josh and his friends discovered early on in their efforts?

Truly investing in the lives of others

takes a lot of time and energy.

They had to learn to change dirty diapers. They had to clean up spills, and yes they were spit up on. They had to sacrifice other things in their schedules—things that they wanted to do—in order to truly invest in the needs they had identified around them. They had to show up with smiles on their faces, even during times they’d selfishly rather be doing something else.

But do you know what else they discovered?

All of the sacrificial investments are well worth it.

They got to see the look of relief on the faces of those moms. They got a chance to talk about Jesus when asked over and over: “Why are you guys doing this?” They got to witness the bonds that the kids formed with them over the months, asking their moms if they could stop by their house every time they drove by.

It was all so very worth it.

What would you have to give up or sacrifice in order to tangibly communicate Jesus to those whom you have been able to identify?

List three tangible ways you can invest your life in those people you have identified.

Investing: Both/And

The methods you use to intentionally invest in relationships may differ depending on the person and situation.

Some situations will look like a somewhat normal friendship because the person you are investing in is somewhat similar to you culturally. He or she may be a co-worker with whom you share common interests, such as golf. It's easy to go golfing together because you both already enjoy golf.

However, in other situations, God calls us to cross significant cultural barriers to invest in the lives of others. Investing in these scenarios may require a concerted effort since it might be difficult to discover common ground. It's not either/or—it's both/and.

For example, a married couple, named Paul and Jennifer, felt a strong call from God to be missionaries to the Hispanic community in their city. This direction reoriented their lives in many ways. They had to grow in their knowledge of Spanish. They started looking for like-minded believers to join them, and they even began trying to move into a community populated by Hispanic families.

Depending on where God has you and whom He has led you to identify, your methods of investment may look different from those of other people pursuing the same missionary process for their lives, and that's OK. The important thing is that we are all moving ahead in the process and joining God in His mission to seek and save the lost.

Chapter 3: The Gospel

"Sin doesn't make us bad—sin makes us dead.

The gospel doesn't make us better—the gospel makes us alive."

— Louie Giglio

(Send North America Conference 2012)

Gospel Foundation

A life on mission is a calling of abandonment. It is the confession of our willingness to set aside our preferences for the mission of God. Like a bungee jumper diving off a platform, we must relinquish our own selfish hopes with total abandon to spread the true hope we have found in Jesus.

And like the bungee jumper, we soon discover that what once may have seemed dangerous or unappealing is the thrill of a lifetime once you let go. Living out a gospel mission is not a guilt or fear-driven task—it is the good life.

To live this type of sacrificial life with a worthy motive is impossible without a solid foundation. The gospel is like a bungee cord that keeps a jumper connected to life, and our missions efforts are in vain if we are without it. We must not jump off the platform without being securely fastened to the gospel of Jesus, because there is truly no other hope for us or for our aching world. A missionary who is not grounded in the good news of Jesus is no missionary at all because he or she does not have good news to proclaim.

Over the last decade, the word *missional* has grown in popularity. For the most part, this has been a great thing for the church, but there is potential danger if there is not a clear understanding of what should always determine and drive the mission set forth for us. If we don't grow in the gospel, we don't get the mission. The gospel answers the "why" question about missions.

Before you think to yourself, "I get the gospel. I know the gospel, I know why I'm on mission," let's remember something really important:

The gospel is not something we simply "get." It is

something we grow deeper in our entire lives.

If the gospel is not genuinely the foundation and motivation of your mission, you will likely falter and lead others astray. The more we grasp what Jesus has done for us and in us, the more we will be compelled by grace to clearly communicate Jesus to those around us.

For example, there seems to be a perpetual cycle of students who participate in mission work because it makes them feel good about themselves. This motive is not necessarily openly stated, but is unfortunately one that seems to be prevalent

in the church. These same students are often the ones who head off to college and leave the idea of a relationship with Christ back at their summer mission trip. Unfortunately, for many the motive for missions is not the gospel—it is a guilt or works-based mentality, built on the idea that we can somehow erase our sin or earn favor with God by doing the right things. To believe that your missions efforts in some way eradicate sin isn't much different from an eastern-based karma belief with a splash of Jesus.

This reality is true not only for students, but also for many others in our church services, whether they are wearing a three-piece suit or a V-neck and skinny jeans. Our missions efforts are vital and must increase as we move toward a more progressively post-Christian era that is crying out for a real hope. There must be foundational anchors to our missions efforts, otherwise we will eventually crumble and quit. Our motivation for missions has to be that Jesus is already our great reward. When taking the risk of living selflessly on mission, we must be grounded and affixed to a gospel understanding.

The gospel is the starting point, the sustaining point, and the finishing point of all missions. The gospel truly answers the question, "Why?" Therefore it should be of first importance, always.

Think about why you participate in mission work. What are some things that motivate you (e.g., compassion for the poor, experiencing new cultures, sharing the gospel)?

How do you consider yourself “sent” from God? Is there room for growth in your view on missions? How? Why?

Foundations

In addition to the gospel, which is the foundation for all of ministry, we've identified four total foundations that will keep us grounded in the truth as we seek to live LIFE ON MISSION.

- The Gospel
- Spiritual Maturity
- Biblical Community
- Intentional Discipleship

As we study these four foundations, evaluate your life and ask the Holy Spirit to reveal any areas of weakness. Pray for the Lord to help you discern how you can grow and where you need to surrender more to these gospel foundations.

First Importance

First Corinthians 15:1-4 states: “Now brothers, I want to clarify for you the gospel I proclaimed to you; you received it and have taken your stand on it. You are also saved by it, if you hold to the message I proclaimed to you—unless you believed for no purpose. For I passed on to you as most important what I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures ...”

The gospel of Jesus is, as Paul states, of greatest importance in our lives and in our mission. It is the ultimate game-changer.

The gospel changes everything and is foundational to all of life. It applies to and affects everything (work, school, leadership, shopping, friendships, marriage, family, etc.).

This chapter lays the groundwork for the rest of the content you will read from here forward. You should even consider jumping back to this session from time to time throughout the rest of this work as a reminder of the things this is built upon.

**“The gospel is so simple that small children can understand it,
and it is so profound that studies by the wisest theologians
will never exhaust its riches.”**

– Charles Hodge

How do you define the gospel?

List ways the gospel affects every area of your life (work, relationships, school, etc.) and your mission work.

Life

Gospel Defined

"And you were dead in your trespasses and sins in which you previously walked according to the ways of this world, according to the ruler who exercises authority over the lower heavens, the spirit now working in the disobedient. We too all previously lived among them in our fleshly desires, carrying out the inclinations of our flesh and thoughts, and we were by nature children under wrath as the others were also. But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love that He had for us, made us alive with the Messiah even though we were dead in trespasses. You are saved by grace! Together with Christ Jesus He also raised us up and seated us in the heavens, so that in the coming ages He might display the immeasurable riches of His grace through His kindness to us in Christ Jesus. For you are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God's gift—not from works, so that no one can boast" (Ephesians 2:1-9).

The gospel is all about the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. We were separated from God and under His wrath because of our sin but, by grace, Jesus came after us. God Himself became flesh and dwelt among us. He lived a perfectly righteous life in relationship with the Father—succeeding in every way that we have failed so that His spotless righteousness is offered to us. He sacrificed Himself on the cross, shedding His own blood to provide atonement for our sins, and then rose from the grave to defeat sin and death forever. By grace through faith, this great salvation is offered freely to us wayward sinners, testifying to the overwhelming good news that we are not hopeless in our sin and despair after all.

"But God"

It has been said that the two best words in the entire Bible are found in Ephesians 2:4— But God. In verses 1-3 of Ephesians 2, we see the overwhelming weight that we all feel when we are separated from God. These two words, "But God," form the transition from the bad news of sin and condemnation to the unbelievable good news of forgiveness through Jesus.

"But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love that He had for us, made us alive with the Messiah even though we were dead in trespasses. You are saved by grace" (Ephesians 2:4-5)!

The reason we have hope is because God is rich in mercy. The same word used to describe a wealthy king having more money than he knows what to do with is used to describe how much mercy God has for us. His grace and mercy abound, proving to be more than sufficient for our many shortcomings. As Lamentations 3:22-23 says, His mercies "are new every morning."

Likewise, throughout Scripture God is described as being loving and compassionate, and this passage grounds the saving work of Christ in the “great love that He had for us.” Though we are more sinful than we’ll ever truly know, we are still loved by God more than we could ever imagine.

“But God” truly is incredible news!

“The gospel is that Jesus lived the life you should have lived and died the death you should have died, in your place, so God can receive you not for your record and sake but for His record and sake.” – Tim Keller, *Keller on Preaching to a Post-Modern City II: Preaching to Create Inclusive Worship*

God’s Holiness and Greatness

As created beings, we are only measured and defined by comparison to our Creator. We cannot know ourselves without first looking at the awe-inspiring holiness and majesty of God.

In Isaiah 6, the prophet finds himself standing in the throne room of God. He sees the Lord sitting high on a throne, His robe filling the temple. Seraphim (angels) surround Him, singing “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; His glory fills the whole earth.” While they sing, the foundations of the doorways shake and the temple fills with smoke. This is an amazing scene to say the least.

This passage, among many others, describes the overwhelming “otherness” of God. He is completely holy, set apart, transcendent, all knowing, all-powerful ... the list goes on and on. He is the one and only true God, the creator and sustainer of all things, the One in which all things “live and move and exist.” (See Acts 17:28.)

Being altogether righteous and holy, God cannot look upon or tolerate sin. (See Habakkuk 1:13.) It is an affront to His majesty, His character and His design for life.

What do the following verses tell us about the nature and character of God?

- Isaiah 6:1-8
- Habakkuk 1:13
- 1 Samuel 2:2
- 1 John 1:5

Our Sinfulness

As Isaiah sees God sitting on His throne, seraphim worshiping Him while the foundations shake because of the weight of His glory—he has an immediate and gripping response:

“Woe is me for I am ruined because I am a man of unclean lips and live among a people of unclean lips, and because my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts” (Isaiah 6:5).

This is not a religious spectacle or some rote spiel spouted from memory. As you read the verse you are gripped by the weight of it—the weight of the truth Isaiah feels pressing down upon him.

In this moment Isaiah is completely overwhelmed by his own sinfulness in the presence of an all-holy God. He immediately feels the separation between himself and God sitting on the throne. He feels the reality that every human lives under—we are by nature and by choice wicked, rebellious and sinful. It's not the most exciting idea to own up to, but it's true to its core and a necessary understanding in order to have the full depth of the gospel. Every facet of our existence (even our so-called “good” works) is shot through with sin. Because of this, we are separated from God and rightfully under condemnation.

What do the following verses tell us about the nature and character of humans?

- Romans 3:9-20
- Romans 1:18-25
- Colossians 1:21
- Isaiah 64:6

How is our nature and character different from God's?

The only way to truly evaluate one's self is through an honest view of God's holiness and our own sinfulness. Like Isaiah, we have to look at God first to see ourselves clearly.

Our Reality Absent of God's Grace:

God is holy, and I am _____

God is forgiving, and I am _____

God is generous, and I am _____

God is caring, and I am _____

God is alive, and I am _____

If you were wondering what should be written in the blanks above—the word not will suffice when we are absent the grace of God. Sin is not just a setback or obstacle to overcome—it is in fact a self-inflicted curse—a cancer that we can do nothing in and of ourselves to remedy.

"Sin doesn't make us bad ... sin makes us dead. The gospel doesn't make us better ... the gospel makes us alive." – Louie Giglio (Send North America Conference 2012)

However, there is good news for those who recognize the

hopelessness of their state—those who with Isaiah cry,

"Woe is me!" There is the boundless hope of grace.

Grace Extended

What happened to Isaiah is gratefully a foreshadowing of the gospel.

"Then one of the seraphim flew to me, and in his hand was a glowing coal that he had taken from the altar with tongs. He touched my mouth with it and said: 'Now that this has touched your lips, your wickedness is removed and your sin is atoned for.' Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying: 'Who should I send? Who will go for Us?' I said: 'Here I am. Send me'" (Isaiah 6:6-8).

After Isaiah was stunned by God's holiness, then overwhelmed by his own sinfulness, God stepped in to intervene in what felt like a hopeless situation. The burning coal from the altar symbolizes the cleansing, atoning work of Jesus applied to us by grace through faith.

The perfect life, death and resurrection of Jesus is the central tenet of the gospel, of such importance that it cannot be understated. (See 1 Corinthians 15:1-4.) He came to earth on a rescue mission, lived the perfect life by succeeding in every way that Adam (and we) failed, died for our sins, and rose from the grave on the third day to conquer sin and death. There is no gospel, no good news, without this immeasurable grace shown to us on the cross of Jesus.

The Pressure Is Off

A pastor was meeting regularly with a young man named Jay. Jay was trying to get freedom from a severe addiction to pornography that had plagued him for years. As they talked over the course of months, the pastor realized that there was more going on than sexual sin.

Jay kept expressing that he had a lot of anxiety over his obedience to God, or lack thereof. He said that it was even hard for him to hear grace-based, practical sermons because even then he would leave the service consumed by feeling like a failure. "No matter what I do, I just can't seem to measure up," he would say. "I can't hit the proverbial ball right. Even in the little things—things like reading my Bible and praying, I feel so anxious and helpless constantly."

The pastor noticed that Jay was completely missing the gospel because he was so focused on his own performance, so he started to remind Jay of one of the basic tenets of the gospel—that we are affirmed and approved by God based on Jesus' performance, not our own.

"I have a new mantra for you, Jay," the pastor told him one afternoon while sitting in a coffee shop. "Are you ready for it? The pressure is off. If Jesus is your Savior, the pressure is off. There is no need to perform. You are already forgiven, approved and affirmed based solely on Jesus' righteousness. And there is nothing you could ever do to add to or take away from Jesus' righteousness." Slowly but surely, the simple truth of "the pressure is off" started to work freedom into Jay's soul.

The gospel is not based on what you do for God, but what God has done for you. It is not "you do" but "Jesus did."

Sadly, this works-based righteousness is second nature to us, simply because of pride. We want to be good enough. We want to measure up on our own, to hit the ball right, so to speak. Even ministry can be turned into a performance for God—an act to try to win His favor or affirmation. This is a dangerous subconscious ideology that leads to much destruction, and we must be freed from it by continually going back to the gospel and reaffirming the fact that we are already approved in Jesus, so there's no need to earn it.

How do you struggle with turning ministry into a performance for God?

Read Luke 18:9-14. Which character was trying to perform for God? What does Jesus say about him?

Growing in the Gospel

The gospel is not only the starting point; it is also the point in every step of our journey. The gospel is how we become Christians, but it is also how we grow as believers—through meditating on it and applying it to every fabric of our lives.

One might think that the good news of Jesus would grow less meaningful and prevalent as you move in time away from the point of your conversion, but the opposite is actually true. If you are walking in honesty and confession, allowing the Holy Spirit to search your heart deeper and deeper, you quickly realize that your heart gets more ugly the deeper you delve.

Not only do we struggle with wrong actions and behaviors, but with wrong thoughts, motivations and desires. This causes us to grow more and more aware of our need for grace, and the work of Jesus becomes bigger in scope and importance as we see the growing necessity of it.

Every Fabric

If a person releases a single drop of potent red dye into a load of laundry, the dye will run its course until every stitch of fabric is red. This is how the good news of Jesus affects our lives in an all-encompassing way.

"The gospel is the heart of the Bible. Everything in Scripture is either preparation for the gospel, presentation of the gospel or participation in the gospel." – Dave Harvey, *When Sinners Say, "I Do"*

The summation of the Scriptures is the message of the gospel; therefore, the gospel should transform every fabric of one's life. It reaches every facet of our being and leaves nothing untouched. Jesus doesn't make us halfway new—He makes us fully new.

Grasping the colossal contrast between God's holiness and our own sinfulness leads one to a clearer view of what truly is so amazing about grace.

An accurate understanding of grace grows our urgency to communicate and display grace to a lost and hurting world.

Our Reality Absent of God's Grace	A Grace-Filled Reality
God is Holy, and I am _____	God transforms me to be Holy (1 Peter 2:9).
God is forgiving, and I am _____	God transforms me to be Forgiving (Colossians 3:13).
God is generous, and I am _____	God transforms me to be Generous (2 Corinthians 8:8-15).
God is caring, and I am _____	God transforms me to be Caring (1 Peter 5:1-5).
God is alive, and I am _____	God transforms me to be Alive (Colossians 2:13).

Humble Confidence

Growing in an understanding of God's grace leads more and more to a place of humble confidence—humbled by the weight of your sin and need for salvation, yet confident that in Jesus you have all the grace, mercy, approval and affirmation that you will ever have. His work really is sufficient. God does not love you any more or less based on your performance or lack thereof, so you can humbly bring every fabric of your life out into the light.

"For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tested in every way as we are, yet without sin. Therefore let us approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us at the proper time" (Hebrews 4:15-16).

What implication does Hebrews 4:15-16 have for your life?

Your community, your city, and any other people God may call you to need to be exposed to people who are holy, forgiving, generous, caring and alive. This type of person isn't self-made, but transformed. The gospel of Jesus is the only means by which this type of person is possible. It's through grace and grace alone that this a reality we can walk in.

What about you? Where does the gospel need to be applied to your life in this moment?

The Fabric of Idolatry

Many times in Scripture, our sin is referred to as idolatry. That concept may seem archaic, conjuring up images of totem poles or golden calves. To a 21st century American, this concept may at first seem a bit primitive and irrelevant. However, nothing could be further from the truth.

We may not bow down and worship an image made of gold, but we absolutely worship things other than God. Romans 1:25 offers us a great description of idolatry: "They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served something created instead of the Creator, who is praised forever. Amen."

Any time we exchange the truth about God (that He is all-sufficient, all-satisfying and the only thing in the universe worthy of our worship) for a lie, we are worshiping an idol. We turn our heart's devotion to a created thing rather than the Creator by turning to something other than God for our worth, value, satisfaction, acceptance, hope or purpose in life.

These can be very tangible, surface-level things. Surface idols are fairly easy to spot. Typically all we need to do is look at our calendars and checkbooks. What things get the majority of our time and money? What do we sacrifice for? Whatever we value, we will devote ourselves to—so our lives end up looking like walking billboards that put what we worship on display.

What are some common surface idols?

- Relationships
- Money
- Entertainment
- Possessions
- Pornography
- Job Performance
- Alcohol or Drugs
- Family/Children

Or fill in your own blank—there are millions of possible things that we could worship.

What do you sacrifice for the most? What do you daydream about? ("If I just had more _____, I'd be happy.")

Where do you spend your time and money most frequently? In what do you tend to seek significance, worth, value and acceptance?

As you know, our hearts are more than surface deep. Often there are deeper, underlying motivations that are really driving our behaviors. If we are ever going to achieve true freedom from slavery to idols, we have to let God dig down to the roots of our sin.

What are some common deep idols?

- Comfort
- Approval
- Control
- Power

For example, remember Jay from earlier in this chapter? His addiction to pornography could on a deeper level be any one of these idols.

- **Comfort** – Deep down he might feel dissatisfied and look to it for comfort.
- **Control** – He might feel that life is chaos and look to it for something to control.
- **Approval** – He might feel unwanted by women, so he turns to pornography to gain approval because the women on the screen "want him."
- **Power** – He might feel godlike by exerting power over his imagination.

Isn't that fascinating? Our sin is deep and multi-faceted, and it requires a deep and multi-faceted cure.

A \$6,000 Night

A guy named Gary was struggling with severe alcohol addiction and began attending a recovery ministry at a local church. Gary explained that he had a serious problem with alcohol for almost a decade, but that he always thought he had it under control until the previous weekend. He had taken a group of friends to party at a strip club, only to wake up the next morning hung-over and \$6,000 poorer. He had spent \$6,000 in one night.

This was a wake-up call for Gary. He finally realized he had a very serious problem. However, the most interesting part of Gary's story is that before they even talked about idolatry in the recovery ministry, Gary explained it perfectly well.

"You know," Gary said, "it's really not even about the alcohol, or about lust. You see, I'm a really nice and loving drunk. People like me when I'm drunk. I'm generous (as you can obviously see). So when I go out with a group of friends like that and tell them to do whatever they want and the tab is on me, it makes me feel so powerful—so liked and so powerful. That's the real issue—that's really why I do it." Without realizing it, Gary had just explained that his surface idols of alcohol and lust were really the deeper idols of approval and power.

Look back at your previous answers for surface idolatry and ask yourself the question, "Why?" What is the deeper reason you turn to these things as idols? Ask the Holy Spirit to help you understand your true motivation.

Worship Your Way In, Worship Your Way Out

If the way into idolatry is worship (of broken, created things that can't give you life), then the way out of idolatry is also worship. We smash our idols by repenting of our sin and trusting Jesus, the only One worthy of our worship. As missionaries, the greatest gift we can present to the world around us is a life that displays the sufficiency of Jesus.

As we dive deep into our hearts, we explore how Jesus offers us the true version of what we were futilely looking for in an idol.

- Looking for joy? Jesus offers you true satisfaction.
- Looking for comfort? Jesus offers you true comfort.
- Looking for control? God is the only One in control.
- Looking for approval? Jesus is your approval, fully and finally.
- Looking for power? God is all-powerful, and He is your loving Father.

The only way to overcome a wrong desire is to replace it with a new affection that is deeper and stronger than the old desire. We smash our idols by seeing the ultimate glory and sufficiency of Jesus; He is better than anything else we could chase after.

"The secret of gospel change is being convinced that

Jesus is the good life and the fountain of joy.

Any alternative would be the letdown."

*-Tim Chester, You Can Change: God's Transforming Power
for Our Sinful Behavior and Negative Emotions*

"Come, everyone who is thirsty, come to the waters; and you without money, come, buy, and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost! Why do you spend money on what is not food, and your wages on what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, and you will enjoy the choicest of foods" (Isaiah 55:1-2).

The Gospel Fuels the Mission

Even if we cognitively know otherwise, so often our tendency is to somehow believe we can earn God's favor by working for it. However, taking a look back at Isaiah 6, the timeline of events is very insightful. Isaiah doesn't run off to the mission field after realizing his own sin, hoping that working for God will somehow make up for his wickedness, thus earning God's approval.

However, as Isaiah encounters a powerful foreshadowing of the gospel—being cleansed and having his sin atoned for—he is a changed man. Not only is he a changed man—he is a compelled man. When God calls out "Who should I send, who will go for Us?" Isaiah, compelled by grace, quickly volunteers himself.

The grace of God had humbled him, changed him, given him hope, and moved him. It then became a compelling force, calling him outward toward God's mission. There is no mission without the gospel.

How does God's grace fuel your mission?

The gospel stands opposed to earning, but it should by grace propel us toward great effort. As we see what we already have in Jesus, our hearts are moved toward obedience and sharing that good news with others.

Pushing toward a great mission effort in our churches is a worthy desire, as long as the work is driven by the grace delivered through the cross. Grace should not lead us toward apathy and laziness, but instead toward a godly life on mission with Him. (See Titus 2:11-13.)

Walk (30 minutes)

After enjoying fellowship, worship, and time in God's word together, it is now time to pray together as a group and encourage one another in the faith. It is very easy for this portion of the group time to be consumed by the other portions. However, this segment of the group time is crucially important. It answers the question, how do we apply what we are learning in Matthew to our lives today?

Many groups have found that it is helpful to sometimes break up into a men's group and a women's group for the purpose of being able to be more transparent and honest as we encourage one another and keep one another accountable. I encourage you to try this in your groups.

In addition to praying for, and encouraging, one another, this portion of the group time should also be used for planning how your group can participate in God's work outside the walls of our church – "neighbors and nations." Discuss with your group some ideas on how you can be intentional with building relationships with your neighbors and co-workers. What can your Community Group do to impact the area around you?

Here is a list of local ministries Norris Ferry is actively involved in:

Hub/purchased	Celebrate recovery
Young life	Samaritan counseling
Heart of hope	Last call ministries
First priority	Golden age ministries
Ark-la-Tex crisis pregnancy center	Rescue mission
Community renewal	Luke's lighthouse
Grief counseling	FCA

Here is a list of missionaries Norris Ferry is actively involved in:

Shannon & Carrie Lewis (South Sudan)
Matt & Angie Johnson (Panama)
Meggie Hickson (Tanzania)
Kyle & Suzy Jagers (New Orleans)

May the Lord bless and encourage you as you are in your groups this week! Know that we are praying for you on a weekly basis and that we are here to help you in any way that we can!