



XII

*Experiencing your best
relationship with God and others*



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// Prologue

His feet were calloused. His back was scarred. His voice was hoarse. Having traveled all throughout Asia Minor, the Grecian peninsula and the islands of the Mediterranean, a revolutionary and apostolic zealot by the name of Paul desired to visit Rome and spread the good news of the Messiah, Jesus. In the city of Corinth, he sat down to send a letter ahead of him to Rome, to tell the foundational truths upon which his message would be based. The letter that was produced is likely the most clear-cut and edifying treatise of the Christian life ever produced. Billions of people have impacted throughout history by this letter.

He tells of the spiritual condition of all people apart from Jesus: disconnected from God and under His wrath because of the immorality (sin) that is a part of our human nature. However, the letter continues explaining the heroic narrative of Jesus. Not merely a man, but God's own son, sent to earth to trade His perfect holiness for our filthiness so that anyone who believes in Him can have connection with God. The consequence for our sin is death. Jesus took it. He died. Yet, in victorious triumph, He broke sin's power forevermore by rising from the dead. Paul, himself, had been miraculously transformed by this truth.

Then comes XII.

Chapter 12 of Romans answers the most monumental "Now What?" of existence. How is one supposed to respond to the story and message of Jesus?

Whether you begin this study as one that has been seeking Jesus your whole life or you are one that is experiencing it for the first time, the vital message of Romans 12 stays the same and needs to be take deep roots in our lives. It is the key to our best relationship with God and others. All throughout the Bible, the number 12 is symbolic of completion, wholeness and the Lord's perfection. Romans 12, if you truly have eyes to see and ears to hear, is the pathway to complete fullness in our lives.

Isn't that something we all are looking for?

// A Word to Hosts

Starting this 5-week community groups study, you likely have a wide variety of emotions going through your head and your heart right now. Some of you are beyond excited and rejoicing that this study is finally here. You have been looking up new dessert recipes, printed out custom prayer request charts, and already comprised your email and text distribution lists for the group! Some of you may be absolutely terrified and you are questioning why in the world you've decided to do this. Wherever you are at right now, allow us to share one thing we know with great confidence—you will be blessed and your group participants will be blessed because of your step of faith! We have a specific encouragement for you: **YOU CAN DO THIS!** Our enemy, the devil, would want you to believe that you can't or that you should be afraid, but God is with you and He has great plans for you and each person in your group! That Bible states that "[You] can do all things through Christ who strengthens [you]" (Phil. 4:13). The Lord proclaims over you, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." (2 Cor. 12:9).

In addition, you are not alone. Take full advantage of the Church that God has put around you. Reach out to fellow hosts, key volunteers, leaders or church staff. We all want to come alongside you and help you be successful! Don't try to do this in isolation, but rather link arms with your brothers and sisters!

May the Spirit of the Lord be upon you as you host and shepherd the group of people God has entrusted to you! Blessings!

// How to Get the Most Out of This Study

Welcome to the exciting adventure of studying the Bible! In XII: Experiencing your Best Relationship with God and Others, you will be examining the captivating words of the apostle Paul as he writes about what fullness in life looks like. These words, found in the book of Romans, chapter 12, are memorized by millions around the world and are pivotal building blocks to many Christian Churches' core values. To make the most of this study, here are some important suggestions:

1. First of all, the best way to get the most out of this study is to ENGAGE. Come to your community group ready to listen and ready to discuss! If you are distracted or closed off, we can guarantee you that this experience won't be all that it can be for you.
2. Secondly, make an intentional effort to do the Daily Devotionals for each week. Each of these readings are designed to enhance your weekly discussions. They are written by pastors and ministry directors—men and women just like you—from a very personal perspective and likely will connect with you in ways that are different than the other sections of the workbook.
3. Thirdly, come as you are and don't let this study burden you! This workbook has been put together to be a refreshing, thought-provoking, easy-to-use aid for discussion and study. All the Scripture references are already contained in the workbook. No need to access a Bible. The verses are included with each corresponding question. Though, you certainly are welcome to bring your Bible to group and read from that. (You will need a Bible or a device that can access the Bible for the Devotionals, however).

ROMANS 12:1-2



SESSION I

Life with God

// Introduction

In the spirit of the famous song from *Sound of Music*, “let’s start at the very beginning, a very good place to start.”

Though, what is the beginning of your best relationship with God and others? According to Romans 12:1-2, it all begins with God. God created us, He knows us and He created us for relationship. Every human being has been created to be in relationship with God and with others. Romans chapter 12, in the New Testament, explains how we can experience the best relationship with God and others.

The synopsis of Romans 12 is that our vertical relationship with God is foundational to our horizontal relationships with one another. In order to have the best relationship with others, we must first have the best relationship with God. It all begins with God. We have the best relationship with God when He is the center of our lives, our affections and our worship. In the words of Romans 12:1, we have the best relationship with God when we have offered to Him our bodies (our whole lives) as an act of worship.

It all begins with God. As you dive into this study, ask yourself, “How can I have the best relationship with God possible?” Remember, the vertical affects the horizontal. Let’s start at the very beginning, a very good place to start.

// VIDEO SEGMENT

Now, as a group, turn on your TV or Laptop and watch the video for Session 1, Life with God.

2 WAYS TO WATCH

1. Through RightNow Media (Learn How on Page 86)
2. Go to crosslinechurch.com/XII

After watching, take a moment to initially respond with your thoughts about the video.

Read

Romans 12:1-2

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. ² Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Matthew 16:24-25

Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. ²⁵ For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it.

Romans 10:9-13

If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved. ¹¹ As Scripture says, "Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame." ¹² For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, ¹³ for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

Discuss

1. An old Chinese Proverb says, "The journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step". The first step in any endeavor sets the direction for the entire project. What do you think is the first step in having a positive and healthy relationship with God and with others?

2. According to Romans 12:1-2, the first step to a healthy connection with God and others is to offer our bodies to God as an act of worship. What do you think this means? Why do you think the Apostle Paul, the author of Romans, would make such a big deal about surrendering our lives to God?

3. In context, all of Romans 12 is about relationships. What do you think is the connection between our vertical relationship with God and our horizontal relationships with people?

4. In light of Matthew 16:24-25 and Romans 10:9-13, how do these verses help explain what it means to offer our bodies to God as an act of worship? What does this mean to you personally?

Apply

As you are going into this week, take a look at the Descriptions of God in the Psalms on page 87. Wherever you are at in your understanding of God, pick out just one of the descriptions that really resonates with you (e.g. something you have seen God to be recently, something you need God to be for you right now, etc.). Then write that on a sticky note and put it somewhere you will see all week. You can simply write the description or a statement—“God is _____” or “God, please be my _____”.

Devotions

Read

Study

Pray

Day 1: Where Do I Start? //

Jordan Gash

“This guy doesn’t know what he’s talking about!” I remember thinking this about the professor of my YMIN 101 class. Catch that? My 101 class. That’s right—I was a freshmen and this was the entry-level class for my major in Youth Ministry. An apparently overconfident student, I felt like he was squelching creativity and expression by teaching the “facts” of ministry. He claimed that there were rigid prerequisites to working with youth and I thought that was bologna. Though, did I ever have to take a horse-pill of humility in the years to come. Not only was this professor absolutely right, but also he became a favorite professor and a personal mentor. Without those 101 teachings threaded through everything I did, I would have been lost, confused and failing in the first 10 years of ministry working with youth.

Those of you reading this devotional likely are coming from very different places regarding life with God and the teachings of Jesus. That’s okay! However, as we think about what could qualify as Christianity 101 teachings—a place to start—nothing quite hits the nail on the head like the topics of humility and surrender. If we want to experience the best relationship with God and others, humility and surrender has to be threaded into everything we do. In the book of Matthew, the first of four accounts of Jesus’ life in the Bible, it says this:

Then Jesus said to his disciples, “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it.” (Matt. 16:24-25, NIV)

It is a crazy statement Jesus makes here! He's saying that if a person wants to experience the fullest, truest, most abundant life, then that person needs to give up their life and commit to following Jesus, no matter the cost. Many of us would want to believe that this is advance-level Christianity stuff, but that is simply not true. This is 101. This is where we start. If we don't get this, nothing else will work. It's the big, bold, underlined words on the agreement before you sign the dotted line. That's what this session is all about as you read through Romans 12:1-2. Real life starts with surrendering our pride to God. That is not an easy thing to do and you may think that it would squelch your desires and dreams. Though, here is the truth of the matter: our pride and our pursuit of self are keeping us from the life we really want—I promise you that.

“

**OUR PRIDE AND
OUR PURSUIT
OF SELF ARE
KEEPING US
FROM THE LIFE
WE REALLY
WANT**

It's time to stop resisting and admit to ourselves that a life lived for the sake of self just doesn't satisfy.

Lord God, please give me eyes to see
the life that could be mine if I surrendered my pride.
And give me the strength to let it go.

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Day 2: A Contemplated Response //

Gigi Johnson

I grew up in a home where we all talk over each other. Chatter is constant; conversations are many, it gets loud, and some would describe it as pure chaos. But we're Latin, so you should know this is totally done in love! However, when you marry a man that's accustomed to family members who take turns speaking, listen well (and quietly), and respond ever so thoughtfully, you quickly learn that talking over him isn't going to cut it in your marriage. To this day, many of our conversations require intentional effort on my part to refrain from speaking when he's speaking, or from jumping in at those breaths he keeps taking between sentences... (But it's out of looooveee, Babe!) I've finally learned how some intentional, quiet listening really makes him feel valued and understood. And I've also learned that after those meaningful, highly considered, carefully crafted words are shared, he (rightfully so) has high hopes for a response from me—a real, honest, and contemplated response.

In today's passage, Paul highlights the importance of have a real, honest, and contemplated response to the Gospel message set before us. God has offered us eternal life with Him. And how can we have our best relationship with God if we haven't first accepted his offer of eternal life? Our response is simple, all we need to do is acknowledge that He is God, admit we are sinners in need of a Savior—particularly His Son, Jesus, who died on the cross in our place and rose from the dead three days later, wiping clean all our sin and making a way for us to have a personal relationship with God both here on earth, and forever in Heaven. We've been given the message. It's real, it's been presented clearly, and the ball is in our court now. It's time for us to respond.

That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord", and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. (Romans 10:9)

We are to respond to this message of the Good News of Jesus Christ by believing in our hearts and confessing with our mouths that Jesus is Lord. We are to accept Him as the one, true God, the Lord of our lives—our everyday lives. The gift of eternal life has been offered to us, but it's up to us to choose to accept this gift. If we don't, it becomes just another taped up, brown box package sitting on our doorstep, ordered, sent, arrived, even track-able, yet waiting to be opened by the person that needed it in the first place. Will you respond to this Good News today?

God, I believe You are who You say You are—the Creator of the Universe, in all things and over all things. I thank You that You sent Jesus to die in my place, to save me from my sins, and to make a way for a personal relationship with You. My response to your offer is YES! I confess with my mouth that Jesus is Lord, and I believe in my heart You raised Him from the dead. Come into my life; my heart is yours! Amen.

PRAYER

Read Titus 3:3-7

Day 3: But... //

Grant Gunther

Do you remember the moment that you first received your driver license? For me it felt like the world opened up with endless opportunity, because I now had the freedom to go anywhere and everywhere I could possibly want. I learned quickly though that the open road is not exactly filled with a bunch of saints and angels. Ask any seasoned driver about the worst person they have ever encountered on the road, and they can probably give you an answer quickly. Even more, when we encounter a bad driver our thoughts and words in that moment are usually not going to be the most

affirming of that person either (and if we are being honest, there is a time or twelve where we have driven the same way). Our feelings toward a bad driver are justified, right? After all, if someone is driving crazy and putting others or us in danger, then they have earned being called out and put on blast.

Now, when it comes to our spiritual state we are all bad drivers who deserve to be called out for the stuff that we have done, thought, or said. Yet, this is what makes the God of the Bible so great, he does not give us what we have earned. In Titus 3:3 we read a heavy list of some of our not so great spiritual behaviors, but then God gives us a great word starting in verse four.

But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, He saved us... (Titus 3:4-5)

Did you catch the word? It is one of the best ones in all of Scripture--"but". Rather than God calling us out and giving us what we deserve for our poor spiritual behavior in verse three, God in His kindness and love saves us from our rebellion. Praise God that he does not deal with us as we deserve to be treated, but instead shows us kindness and love in Jesus!

Lord God, thank you for being so kind and loving towards me!
I can be so quick to make sure others get what they deserve, yet you Lord deal so graciously with me.
Will You help me to always remember the kindness and love You have extended to me in Jesus, and would I in turn extend that to those around me.
Amen.

PRAYER

Day 4: Good Enough? //

Sergio Serrano

Think of the best person you know. It could be someone who is a great, family person. This kind, selfless and caring individual, prioritizes quality time with their loved ones. It could be someone who not only upholds high character, morals and ethics, but also does a lot of good for others without expecting anything in return. He or she is an example worth following because they are wise, successful and healthy in many areas of life.

Now, the antonym. Think of the worst person that comes to mind. It could be the most unpleasant boss you've ever had or the most confrontational family member or someone who's betrayed you or someone who has caused a great deal of pain.

Is that 'good' person good enough to go to heaven? Is that bad person not good enough to go to heaven? The truth is, because of our imperfect human nature, we have all 'missed the mark' at some point, at some level, by any standard and followed our sinful, disobedient human desires.

*As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath. **BUT** because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. (Eph. 2:2-5)*

There is possibly no more hopeful statement in the Bible than the one emphasized here! He doesn't just leave us in our deadly state. He loves us too much to leave us there. Here is the amazing, good



**I AM SO GLAD THAT
THIS SALVATION
PLAN WASN'T
DEPENDENT ON
MY GOODNESS,
MY DISCIPLINE OR
MY ABILITIES, BUT
SOLELY ON THE RICH,
GREAT LOVE OF GOD.
AREN'T YOU?**

news to our human problem. It's all because of Him that we can be revived from our human state and saved from spiritual death, into a new and eternal life that changes everything for our future and our present. It's His heart for us. There is nothing we could have done in our power or in our own goodness that could save us. It's an amazing gift of grace, through our belief in Christ. I am so glad that this salvation plan wasn't dependent on my goodness, my discipline or my abilities, but solely on the rich, great love of God. Aren't you?

We can place our hope in this truth. God sent Jesus from heaven, to live a perfect life here on earth, to be the perfect sacrifice to die on the cross for our imperfection, so that our past, present and future sins can be forgiven. He was raised on the third day so that we can be brought back to life and made alive in Christ. There is nothing we can do to make God love us any more or any less.

Dear God, you are so gracious! You alone are good. Your love is overwhelming! Thank you for seeing me the way you do. You see me with all my faults and failures, and still you love me. I want to honor you with this life. Mold me in the person who You want me to be.
In Jesus Name, Amen!

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Day 5: You Need New Clothes //

Donna Jones

At this very moment a light blue shirt lies at the bottom of my husband's dry cleaning pile. Since I'm responsible for taking clothes to the cleaners, I've strategically left it lying there for more months than I can count. This is an act of pure kindness.

I hate that shirt.

It wasn't always that way. Once upon a time the shirt was in style...a long, long time ago. But now it no longer flatters. Eventually clothes need to be updated and replaced. Because I love JP I bought him a new shirt so he no longer needs to wear the old one.

There comes a time when old clothes simply don't reflect the current us. The same can be said for our actions.

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him." (Colossians 3:12-17)

Before we knew God some things fit us that no longer do. Like an old, ill-fitting, out-of-date wardrobe, old actions must be updated and replaced. Some actions have no more place in a believer's behavior

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**WHEN FACED
WITH A CHOICE,
LET'S CHOOSE
TO WEAR
COMPASSION,
KINDNESS,
HUMILITY,
THANKFULNESS
AND LOVE.
THESE NEVER GO
OUT OF STYLE.**

than an old blue shirt in my husband's closet. The old actions don't reflect the current us. We are God's chosen, holy, dearly loved people. Because God loves us He purchased a new nature for us, one where compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, forgiveness, peace, thankfulness, and love fit better. Look better. Feel better.

We can clothe ourselves with these qualities because they are ours through Christ. When faced with a choice, let's choose to wear compassion, kindness, humility, thankfulness and love. These never go out of style. It's up to us to put them on and dress ourselves in the style that reflects who we really are.

Lord, today I gratefully acknowledge that I am your chosen and dearly loved child. You want my actions to accurately reflect my position in your family, and I do, too. Today I chose to put on compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Today I will forgive. Today I will love. Today I will let the peace of Christ rule my heart. Today—whatever I do, in word or deed—I will do all dressed as a child of God through Jesus Christ. Amen.

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ROMANS 12:3-5

A silhouette of a person's head and neck is centered against a warm, golden sunset background. The person's hair is dark and curly. A thin white diagonal line runs from the top right towards the bottom left, passing behind the silhouette. The overall composition is framed by a dark blue triangle in the top right and a dark grey triangle in the bottom left.

SESSION II

Life with a New Mind

// Introduction

Several years ago, I was on staff with CRU, Campus Crusade for Christ.

One of my assignments was to suffer for Jesus for a summer in Hawaii with ten other CRU staff members and around sixty university students from all over the United States. My job was to train these students how to share their faith and to use Waikiki Beach as a laboratory for practice.

Every Wednesday night we would host an outreach program with singing, skits, testimonies and a short message. One of the students on our Summer Project had what I would call a case of “false humility”. He was always putting himself down, especially if someone was around to verbally contradict him and build him back up. One Wednesday evening this young man shared his personal story of faith in Jesus. I was impressed because he did a good job. Afterwards I was giving him some encouragement and told him what a good job he did. In false humility, he said, “No, no it wasn’t me, it was Jesus”. Shocking him with my reply, I said, “No, it was you, if it was Jesus it would have been a lot better!”

You see, this young man’s false humility was really pride. Romans 12:3 exhort us to, “Not think more highly of ourselves than we should...” According to the context, we think more highly of ourselves when we think that all we need is God and not people. Do we need God? Yes, desperately! But we also need people. In fact, God, through our faith in Jesus Christ, has connected us to people in making us a part of His Body, the Church.

We need God and we need people. Thinking rightly about ourselves and others means that we see our need for God and we see our need for others. It means we properly understand the new relationship we have with Jesus and it means we see how we have been connected to others in the Church. Every believer has a new identity, we are followers of Jesus inter-dependently connected to every other follower of Jesus. We are all on Team Jesus!

 // **VIDEO SEGMENT**

Now, as a group, turn on your TV or Laptop and watch the video for Session 2, Life with a New Mind.

2 WAYS TO WATCH

1. Through RightNow Media (Learn How on Page 86)
2. Go to crosslinechurch.com/XII

After watching, take a moment to initially respond with your thoughts about the video.

Read

Romans 12:3-5

For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you. ⁴ For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, ⁵ so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.

Philippians 2:1-4

Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, ² then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. ³ Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, ⁴ not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

Discuss

1. If you were on a team and a teammate thought more highly of themselves than anyone else on the team, how would that show itself in their life and in the team morale?

Apply

This week, intentionally think through some practical ways that you can sacrificially bless someone. Then, make a plan and set a date to do it! Take note of how that makes them feel.

Devotions

Read

Study

Pray

Day 6: Get Your Mind Right – TEAM or DIE //

Kenny Luck

Football is not an individual sport.

Imagine if you are a running back and say to the offensive linemen who block for you, “Fellas, I don’t need you to block for me anymore. Just give me the ball, step aside, and I will take it from there.” Good luck with that one! It’s suicide. You will never gain a yard. You will never score a touchdown. And you will definitely have the sorest and most bruised body of anyone on the team.

The same thing goes for quarterbacks who, after the ball is snapped, have the fastest, strongest, and largest humans on the planet attempting to rip their head off. A quarterback would never have his teammates, whose job it is to protect him, line up away from the ball. Instead, a smart quarterback calls for protection or run blocking in the huddle. When he calls the play, everybody must execute TOGETHER. When the ball is snapped, his over-sized teammates on the offensive line are on a mission throw blocks for the running back or protect his blindside so he can have enough time to complete a pass downfield and eventually cross the goal line into the end zone. Success in football depends on each individual sacrificing himself for the team and moving AS ONE. Many individual players, but one goal and one agenda.

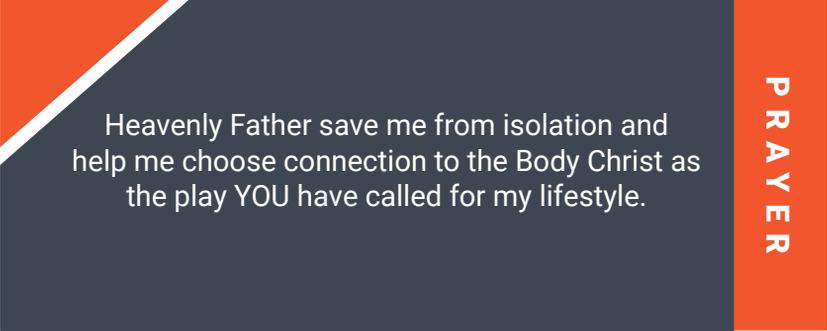
That’s how God set up His spiritual family called the Body of Christ.

Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many. (1 Cor. 12:12-14)

Did you catch it? Many form one.

We were all personally drafted by God through Jesus Christ onto His team in order to execute one game plan together – God’s will. But the only way it is going to come about in a powerful and successful way is if each person is fulfilling their given assignments on the team. It is devastating when believers feel like they don’t need the rest of the team to succeed – they don’t succeed and there is a gaping hole for the Enemy to run through and tackle you for loss.

Take a lesson from the gridiron of God’s Kingdom – isolation kills but connection conquers. Be there for your teammates. Throw blocks for them so they can find space to grow and heal. Sacrifice yourself for them and trust them to get you moving toward the goal. Who scores isn’t as important as the team coming together for God’s greater purposes. When one of us scores – everyone celebrates.



Heavenly Father save me from isolation and help me choose connection to the Body Christ as the play YOU have called for my lifestyle.

PRAYER

Day 7: Bring It All to Peace //

Sarah Aungst

Traveling is the greatest. It is such a gift to visit far off places and interact with new cultures and people. I always say that I love to travel but I love to come home just as much. There is nothing quite like the feeling of home! You know the feeling when you come in the door after a long day, fun vacation, or maybe, if you're like me, an amazing but exhausting week of camp with 300 teenagers and you kick off your shoes and plop down on the couch? Ya, that feeling. It's the best! It is just an immediate sense of peace and comfort as soon as you enter your home. A home is more than the house, the things in it, or even the people; it's a feeling.

When I read the scriptures about people awaiting a savior, the Messiah, I think it must have felt like that longing we feel when we just want to go home, when we just want to have a place where we can take our shoes off and just be. The amazing thing that we see in scripture is that this peaceful feeling we long for is exactly what Jesus provides, and it is exactly what He can to provide for ALL people.

When the Messiah came, He proclaimed the good news of peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with the saints, and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus Himself as the cornerstone. The whole building, being put together by Him, grows into a holy sanctuary in the Lord. You also are being built together for God's dwelling in the Spirit.
(Ephesians 2:17-22)

When I read this passage, I think of taking my shoes off and sitting down on my couch. We are members of His household! We get to

know “the good news of peace” because Jesus came for us. There is an immediate gift of peace by simply knowing Jesus, but there continues to be an outpouring of peace when we know Him as the cornerstone and builder of our lives. We don’t have to hold our lives together or build ourselves up alone, that’s all part of His process. Knowing this brings it all--all circumstances, hardships, stresses, desires, disappointments--all of it to peace.

Jesus thank you for coming to Earth to die for our sins so that we could know you, be with the Father, and be filled with the Holy Spirit. Thank you for coming for all people! Thank you for the unity we can find in that and the peace we can have in that there is no person you did not come to save. God, thank you for being my home, thank you for making me a member of your household. Lastly, thank you for the reminder that you are the cornerstone of who I am and you are the one doing the building. Forgive me when I put myself in your place and try to hold it all together on my own. I know you are my savior, my cornerstone, my builder, and my peace. Amen.

PRAYER

Read Ephesians 3:4-6

Day 8: God’s Marvellous Plan for You //

Greg Munck

When I am surfing the hundreds of channels on my TV, I always seem to pause and watch shows like American Pickers, Pawn Stars, Storage Wars and the one that started them all since 1979, Antiques Roadshow. Besides the engaging personalities, these shows capture our attention because ordinary, seemingly worthless objects turn



**THAT DAY I
UNDERSTOOD
MY EXTREME
VALUE AS A
CHILD OF
GOD.**

out to be worth hundreds and sometimes thousands of dollars! Some of these objects have been laying around in people's homes, ignored and passed by day in and out, for years. In some cases, these objects are passed down from one generation to the next and in other cases they're even thrown out. You know what they say, "one person's trash is another person's treasure." A lot of times people are totally unaware of the extreme value of that old object that has been sitting around for years.

When I was 16, my world was crashing around me. My father was in and out of jail. We moved all the time because we could not afford the rent. My mom worked retail to make ends meet. Coaches gave me coins from the school coke machines so I could buy food. Alcohol wasn't enough to dampen the

emptiness. With the world setting the bar for my morality, the words from my ex-girlfriend, "I'm pregnant", sent me spiraling into darkness and unworthiness. I was turning out just like my dad. I had no value to the world. I thought, "why not just eject from this life and call it quits." Luckily for me, a coach sensed my hurt, pulled me in and asked what's going on. I broke down and started crying. My coach couldn't believe all that I was dealing with and spoke truth to me that day, helping me understand that I am not alone, that I am valuable and that I'm worth something.

My struggle of feeling worthless would continue until the day I finally surrendered my life to Jesus Christ at the first Harvest Crusade in 1990. That day I understood my extreme value as a child of God. I realized I was an heir to a family that would never let me down,

ignore me, pass me by or throw me away.

"In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to people in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets. This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus." (Ephesians 3:4-6 NIV)

Whatever you're dealing with, please know that God loves you. When you surrender your life to God, you share in the inheritance that was promised to Jesus Christ himself. The world makes you feel worthless. Surrender to God and rest in the value of being a child of God.

Lord Jesus thank you for making a way for me! Please help to understand my true value, as a child of God and all that being your heir means for me here on this earth and in heaven. Please use me as a light to show people around me that God loves them and that they have extreme value! In Jesus name, Amen!

PRAYER

Read Ephesians 4:3-6

Day 9: Where is your Focus //

Nancy Matossian

I am the U-turn queen. Whether I am going somewhere completely familiar or someplace new, I will inevitably need to make a U-turn, almost daily. Even with the most current technology (aka GPS) talking me through the steps in real time, I will miss a turn and need to back track. At least my children find it comical now. There was a time when it was mostly frustrating for everyone. Especially for

our youngest who would get carsick from the frequent roundabouts. Being easily distracted is the main reason for my constant missed opportunities for a direct route. My focus is initially on target, however, life can throw me curves.

Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. **(Eph. 4:3-6)**

In this passage, when Paul mentions “making every effort” in our walk with Christ, he was not saying it can happen in one moment. He gently reminds us where our focus should be: “one body and one Spirit, one Hope, one Lord, one Faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is above all, and through all and in all.”

The thing about habits is that they’re built. They don’t just appear. And as you are building a habit of keeping your focus on Christ, it is inevitable you will experience missed opportunities and possible U-turns in life and need to head back to the main focus. However, what an amazing focus it is—Jesus! He is the author and perfecter of our faith and the Holy Spirit will guide us in a lifetime of U-turns.

Dear God, You are the one.
The one Lord, one God and Father of all.
You are over all and through all.
Thank you for not only loving me when I am fully
focused but also loving me through my distractions
and weaknesses, when I need to turn around and re-
focus on you.
In Jesus' name, Amen.

PRAYER

Day 10: Let's Talk POWER! //

Jordan Gash

Truly one of the most spectacular things I have ever seen is the great tomb of princess Mumtaz Mahal—otherwise known as the Taj Mahal. It is easy to see why it is one of the 7 wonders of the world. Over 1000 elephants and 20,000 laborers and craftsmen for about 20 years worked on this masterpiece. 28 different types of precious jewels are elegantly set into the dazzling white marble. I remember walking around like a human fly-catcher as my mouth hung open and my eyes were wide.

However, that wasn't the most amazing thing I saw on that trip to India. You see, I had gone to India to see how faith in Jesus was revolutionizing the historic cultural norms of the country. Before going I had familiarized myself with the Indian Caste System—an ancient religious hierarchy of sorts that separated different ancestral groups of people and assigned value. In order, the hierarchy was Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras, and at the bottom, beneath animals and rodents were the Dalits. The Dalits, consisting of hundreds of millions of people, were seen as dirty and unclean.

The astounding nature of what I saw cannot be understated when I tell you that I saw all members of different castes coming together in homes, embracing one another, serving one another, sharing a meal and beautifully loving one another—all because of their faith in Jesus. It was a faith that made them family. It made them one. I, too, was family with them and they made me feel it by their love. This is the power of the Spirit of Jesus Christ that can transform our minds and unify His followers around the world. The power that can undo the selfishness of our human nature and lead us to humble, sacrificial love—the type of love characteristic of Jesus.

If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourself. (Phil. 2:1-3)

Undeniably, loneliness is wreaking havoc in western cultures. People are more and more feeling isolated and unconnected. In the midst of that, healthy Christ-centered community shines as a brilliant light in a lonely world. When we place our faith in Jesus, we enter into a powerful love relationship—not only with Jesus, but also with His followers. My questions to you are: do you want that? Are you contributing to that community? Can your love be described as sacrificial and humble? Can it be described as powerful?

Holy Spirit, You are powerful
and Your works are miraculous!
You transcend the lines of division
that our world draws

and bring Your people to beautiful unity!

Fill me with your heart of sacrificial love. Forgive me
for the times I look only to my own interests and not
the interests of others. Please make me a catalyst
for community!

In the powerful name of Jesus I pray, Amen.

PRAYER

ROMANS 12:6-8



SESSION III

Life at Your Full Potential

// Introduction

As a former football player and coach, I know the importance of playing your position.

As a former football player and coach, I know the importance of playing your position. On any given play, whether it is offense or defense, every position on the field has a responsibility. When a player doesn't play his position, he makes the whole team vulnerable to being taken advantage of by the opposing team. The famous football coach, Vince Lombardi, was famous for saying, "Football is blocking and tackling." That's true, but, each position on the field, has some unique responsibilities beyond blocking and tackling. The Church is amazingly similar. Every believer is called to love God and love their neighbor. This is the common mission. In addition, because of our unique spiritual gifts, each of us is called to play our position.

Romans 12:6-8 introduces us to an important truth in living out Christian lives and that is the truth about spiritual gifts. Spiritual gifts are supernatural endowments, given by the Holy Spirit to every believer for the purpose of serving others in the Church. Several passages clarify the teaching on spiritual gifts, including Ephesians 4, 1 Corinthians 12 and 1 Peter 4.

A few observations become clear: 1) Every believer has one or more spiritual gifts 2) No believer has all the gifts 3) No one particular gift is given to everyone 4) All the gifts are necessary for the whole Church to be healthy and growing 5) It is the Holy Spirit who gives us the gift(s) that we have 6) We have received our spiritual gift(s) for the purpose to actually use them in service in the Church 7) When we all use our gifts the whole Church grows in love and is built up. The teaching on spiritual gifts reminds us to play our position.

All believers are to love God and to love people. In addition, each is to play their position in the Church by using our spiritual gift(s) to serve others. If you don't know what spiritual gift(s) you may have, go to the appendix in the back of this study and take the Spiritual Gifts Assessment. Remember, once you know what your gift(s) are, play your position!



// VIDEO SEGMENT

Now, as a group, turn on your TV or Laptop and watch the video for Session 3, Life at your Full Potential..

2 WAYS TO WATCH

1. Through RightNow Media (Learn How on Page 86)
2. Go to crosslinechurch.com/XII

After watching, take a moment to initially respond with your thoughts about the video.

Read

Romans 12:6-8

We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; ⁷ if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; ⁸ if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.

1 Corinthians 12:4-11

There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. ⁵ There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. ⁶ There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work. ⁷ Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. ⁸ To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, ⁹ to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, ¹⁰ to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. ¹¹ All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines.

Ephesians 4:11-12

So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, ¹² to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up.

1 Peter 4:10-11

Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. ¹¹ If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.

Discuss

1. Think of a team sport that you enjoy (Football, Baseball, Soccer, etc.). What do each of the positions have in common? What are some of the unique features or requirements of each position?
2. In the Church, every believer has a position on the Team. This position is defined and described by their individual spiritual gifts. Reflecting on the passages above, what are the different spiritual gifts mentioned?
3. What spiritual gifts do you think you may have?
4. In light of 1 Peter 4:10-11, what should every believer do with their spiritual gifts? How can you play your position in the Church?

Apply

At some point this week, take the spiritual gifts assessment on page 88. After getting your results, text them to your Community Group. Reflect on if you agree with the results. Perhaps ask others in your group if they see those gifts in you.

Devotions

Read

Study

Pray

Day 11: Better Together //

Sarah Aungst

Growing up, I played A LOT of basketball. I started by playing on our front driveway after dinner on long summer nights in my PJs and then continued on by playing in leagues from the age of 7 years old. Finally, when I entered high school and took the court for my first league game, I felt like I had finally arrived. After the game, the coach from the other team approached me to tell me what an incredible game I had. Some specific quotes of his praise were, "It was crazy! It was like you were everywhere!!!" He continued to say, "You must have had twenty-something points and covered like 3 people on defense!" It was at this moment that I realized this coach did not know that a very important piece of information... my identical twin sister was also on the team. Ha! I was a power forward and Emma was a shooting guard so it definitely would have seemed like "I was everywhere."

Every time I think about the scriptures that talk about Spiritual Gifts I think of this hilarious story. The reality was that Emma and I were both doing our specific giftings so that together we looked like the PERFECT basketball player. I was more inclined to quick post moves, short-range shorts, aggressive inside defense, and taking the ball to the basket. She was more gifted in 3-pointers, ball handling, and assists. However, because we recognized our strengths, devoted ourselves to the training required to enhance them, and executed them with dedication they worked together harmoniously. Let's take a look at this passage that talks about the gifts God gives to His followers:

The One who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things. And He personally gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, 12 for the training of the saints in the work of ministry, to build up the body of Christ. (Ephesians 4:10-12)

Here's the deal, the Lord gives us all different gifts. We are not meant to covet after another's gifting or shirk the responsibilities of ours. For our giftings to be effective for the Kingdom we need to embrace them, commit to training ourselves in them, and then use them to "train" and "build up" others! These scriptures make this very clear! If _____, then do _____. The questions that every believer should ask himself or herself are, "Do I know my God-given spiritual gifts? And, if I do, "Do I use them?"

Imagine if our church was like Emma and I in that basketball game, using our gifts to the best of our abilities, moving in unity together for a common purpose. Now that would make an incredible impact in our communities.

Thank you for including us in your work. You can do it all yourself, and yet, you give us identity and purpose by including us to be apart of your mission of spreading the Gospel and serving others. Thank you for creating us individually and gifting us with different spiritual gifts to make an impact in unique ways for your Kingdom. I pray that you help me to fully understand my gifts. Help your website to be moving in unity as our gifts complement each other and spur us on in our common goal of loving you and loving others. Amen.

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Day 12: The Death Lineup //

Taylor Jones

Sometimes all it takes to become legendary is a good nickname. And if you're a basketball player about to tip-off a game against a team whose best five-player line up has been nicknamed the "Death Lineup," you know you're in for a rough time. In June 2015, the Golden State Warriors were down two games to one against the Cleveland Cavaliers in the NBA Finals series. With a championship

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**THE
"DEATH LINEUP"
BECAME SEEMINGLY
UNSTOPPABLE
BECAUSE THE
ROLES OF EACH
PLAYER PERFECTLY
COMPLIMENTED THE
OTHERS**

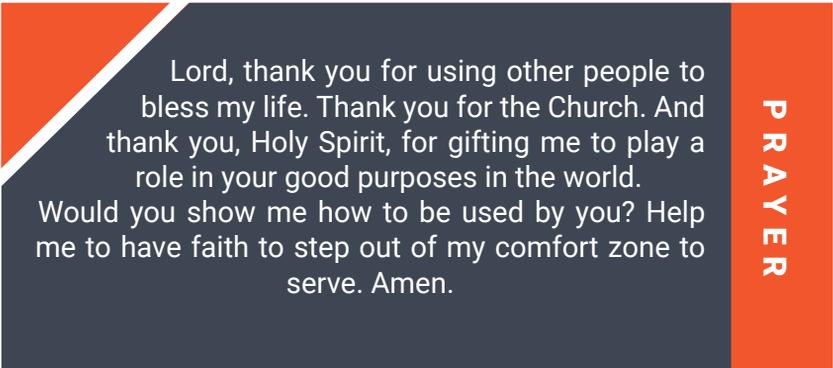
on the line, Head Coach Steve Kerr decided to do something unprecedented when he replaced the 7'0" Andrew Bogut—a solid player in his own right—for the 6'7" Draymond Green to start at the team's "center" position. You don't have to know much about basketball to understand that there's a big difference between a player who stands at 7'0" and a player who stands at 6'7." And while the 6'7" Green may be an enormous person by normal standards, he's a pipsqueak for an NBA center. The switch, though, completely changed the game for the Golden State Warriors, with Green's better quickness, shooting and versatility unlocking the full potential of every other player on court. With the switch to Green at center, the "Death Lineup" was born and the Warriors came back to win the remaining three games of the Finals series and claimed

the 2015 NBA Championship.

The success of the “Death Lineup” illustrates an important principle for following Jesus with a community—the best teams get the most out of the unique contributions of every player. The “Death Lineup” became seemingly unstoppable because the roles of each player perfectly complimented the others. Each player was vital to the success of the whole. The same is true for Jesus’ Church, in which every person has been gifted by the Holy Spirit to serve for the Church’s mission of bringing the life and love of God to each other and the world. 1 Corinthians 12:4-7 expresses it like this:

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. (1 Cor. 12:4-7).

If you are a follower of Jesus, the Spirit of God has gifted you for service in His Church. What abilities, skills, or experiences has God given you? How might you use them to bless others through the Church? Every position matters. What role has God given you to play? How might you contribute to your local church community becoming its own “Death Lineup” for the good purposes of God?



Lord, thank you for using other people to bless my life. Thank you for the Church. And thank you, Holy Spirit, for gifting me to play a role in your good purposes in the world. Would you show me how to be used by you? Help me to have faith to step out of my comfort zone to serve. Amen.

PRAYER

Day 13: Blank Plus Love Equals Impact //

Gigi Johnson

You know how sometimes you run really, really fast, but entirely in the wrong direction? No? Oh. Um... yeah, me neither. Well, physically speaking, I haven't really done that. However, many times in my life, I've found myself putting hours, days or weeks of effort and energy into something, only to find out it had significantly less impact than I'd expected. I end up weary, taxed, and discouraged that my efforts produced so little. Upon reflection, I've found that it's usually in those instances that I did all that work in my own effort, by my own strength, and out of my own devices, not having given much space for God to lead those efforts and call those shots.

In today's passage, Paul describes how we can do great and amazing things, yet, if they're done without love—without God's love—working in us and through us, our efforts will be futile. Or, perhaps as verse 1 describes, the efforts are seen or heard, but without love, they're just noise.

If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but I have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing. (1 Cor. 13:1-3)

But what happens when we do add love to the equation? Real love? The kind of love God prescribes to be added to all things? Let's take a look at what the Bible says that looks like.

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in

evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues they will be stilled; where this is knowledge, it will pass away.

(1 Cor.13: 4-8)

The things we do for God and for others should be done out of this type of love. But adding elements like patience and kindness, and not allowing ourselves to be self-seeking or easily angered are hard things to fake. They must be authentic. And these things authentically happen when we truly create and give God space in our lives to call our shots and give us right perspective. When we genuinely ask God what to do, when to do it, and how it should be done, and we let Him lead us in how we spend our time and energy, we will finally have that real impact for Jesus we've all been hoping to have.

Dear God, I ask that you would fill me to the point of overflowing with your love, then show me, specifically, what to do and how and when to do it. Don't let me operate out of selfishness or even out of what I "think" I should do, but rather show me what you would have me do in each and every moment of each and every day. Thank you that you lead me in real and practical ways in my life. I love you. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

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Day 14: Do Not Miss The Point //

Grant Gunther



**AS WE GET EXCITED
ABOUT BRINGING
OUR SPIRITUAL GIFT
TO THE CHURCH
TABLE, LETS NOT
FORGET THAT IT
IS MEANT TO BE A
SERVICE OF LOVE**

Did you know that there is an arrow hidden within the FedEx logo? If you go and look at the logo, tucked in between the E and X is an arrow. If you had no idea before now, good luck not focusing in on it every time you see it from now on. When I was first shown the arrow I was completely blown away! I remember I could not believe that I had seen that logo so many times, and had never seen the arrow until it was pointed out to me. My inability to see the arrow though was not because it was not there; instead, it was all about my focus. I was simply choosing to focus on the larger logo, and completely missed something that seems so obvious now.

Everyone who calls on the name of Jesus to be saved is sealed with the Holy Spirit, and empowered by Him with a gift to help build the body of Christ. Like me with

the FedEx logo though, often times we can fixate on the gift given and miss out on something more important. As Paul closes out 1 Corinthians 12, a chapter all about the Holy Spirit giving spiritual gifts to benefit and build the members of the church, in verse thirty-one he lays a foundation in order to set our focus on what really matters when it comes to these gifts.

But desire the greater gifts. And I will show you an even better way. (1 Cor. 12:31)

Every follower of Jesus is called to use their gift in service to the body of believers for their benefit to build them up. When we use the gift that God has given us in order to benefit our brothers and sisters in Christ we are loving them. Following 1 Corinthians 12 is 1 Corinthians 13 (no duh, Grant, that's how numbers work), which is a chapter all about the characteristics of love and how love will endure even when spiritual gifts fade. Paul's better way is love. So, as we get excited about bringing our spiritual gift to the church table, let's not forget that it is meant to be a service of love for the benefit of others instead of using it as a means to bring attention on ourselves.

Holy Spirit, You are the spiritual gift giver!
You empower me and equip me with a gift,
that I might love others by using it to equip and
benefit the church.

Would You help me to always focus on using my gift
as a means to love and benefit others, instead of
focusing in on the gift itself.

Amen.

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Day 15: A Part To Play //

Sergio Surrano

With only weeks left before the concert, the conductor prepares his music arrangements for the orchestra's first rehearsal. Just over a few dozen freelance musicians have been scheduled. The majority of them have never even met in person before, let alone had previous chemistry or experience working together. The day of rehearsal comes. Everyone arrives from different cities to the venue. In the first few minutes, they are welcomed and thanked by the conductor, quickly introduced to one another and positioned in their designated sections, according to their families of instrumentation. Percussionists in the percussion section. Brass players in the brass section--just behind the woodwind players. Lastly, the string family, in the section closest to the conductor. A complimentary pianist is added to complete the modern symphony orchestra. About an hour goes by. They perform Handel's music, flawlessly.

How can a group of individuals come together and function so effectively and beautifully? There are a few quick observations with a group like this. They have all discovered their gifts and know their roles. They have all honed and sharpened their craft. Most importantly, they are all using their gifts.

We all have a part to play. Each one of us has God given gifts and we all play a unique role in the bigger picture within the Kingdom of God. This is a tremendous privilege! We get to partner with God in His great purposes! We get a front row seat to see His great works! Not one role is better or more important than the other. We are interdependent and connected.

Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.

(1 Peter 4:10-11)

When we use our gifts in the power of the Holy Spirit, it blesses others, it fulfills the purpose we were created for and it brings glory to God. Sounds like a win-win-win! Let's win together, by serving and stewarding the gifts that God has graced us with. Even though God can and will do

great things through you, individually, He wants to do even bigger things through us as a community of activated servants. We all have a part to play.



**EVEN THOUGH GOD
CAN AND WILL DO
GREAT THINGS
THROUGH YOU,
INDIVIDUALLY, HE
WANTS TO DO EVEN
BIGGER THINGS
THROUGH US AS
A COMMUNITY**

Heavenly Father, You're thoughts about us are wonderful and purposeful. Thank you for choosing and calling us to be a part of Your family. May Your will be done in and through me. I surrender to Your leading and Your purpose. Show me & give me eyes to see the gifts You have given me. Use me and use the gifts within me for Your glory, to expand Your kingdom.
In Jesus name, Amen!

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A group of people are silhouetted against a bright, low sun in a wooded area. The sun is positioned in the center of the frame, creating a strong lens flare and illuminating the scene with a warm, golden light. The people are seen from behind, looking towards the horizon. The background consists of various trees and foliage, some of which are in sharp focus while others are blurred. The overall mood is peaceful and contemplative. The image is framed by a dark blue triangle in the top right corner and a dark grey triangle in the bottom left corner.

ROMANS 12:9-13

SESSION IV

Life in Community

// Introduction

One of my Mom's favorite sayings when I was a kid was, "Don't cut off your nose to spite your face!"

Usually it was directed at me when I begrudgingly responded to her authority with a bad attitude. Have you noticed how our attitude affects everything? I love this quote on a superior attitude from Chuck Swindoll:

"The longer I live, the more I realize the impact of attitude on life. Attitude, to me, is more important than facts. It is more important than the past, than education, than money, than circumstances, than failures, than success, than what other people think or say or do. It is more important than appearance, giftedness, or skill. It will make or break a company...a church...a home. The remarkable thing is we have a choice every day regarding the attitude we will embrace for that day. We cannot change our past...we cannot change the fact that people will act in a certain way. We cannot change the inevitable. The only thing we can do is play on the string we have, and that is our attitude. I am convinced that life is 10 percent what happens to me and 90 percent how I react to it. And so it is with you... We are in charge of our attitudes. A superior attitude will produce superior results!"

Romans 12:9-13 describes the kind of attitude that encourages and blesses others in the Church. A superior attitude will change us and the Church.

// VIDEO SEGMENT

Now, as a group, turn on your TV or Laptop and watch the video for Session 4, Life in Community.

2 WAYS TO WATCH

1. Through RightNow Media (Learn How on Page 86)
2. Go to crosslinechurch.com/XII

After watching, take a moment to initially respond with your thoughts about the video.

Read

Romans 12:9-13

Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. ¹⁰ Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. ¹¹ Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. ¹² Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. ¹³ Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality

Ephesians 4:1-3

As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. ² Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. ³ Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.

Discuss

1. John Maxwell, famous leadership guru, says, "Attitude determines altitude!" Why do you think our attitude is so important in our relationship with God and others?

2. Look at Romans 12:9-13, what kind of attitude contributes to healthy relationships with one another in the Church?

Devotions

Read

Study

Pray

Day 16: AS ONE //

Greg Munck

We are not created to do life alone. That is a lie the world purports for some reason. We really do need each other. When I went to Marine Corps Recruit Depot in San Diego for Basic Training in March of 1989, I learned quickly that you cannot go it alone. Even though I love the movie, “Rambo”, going it alone is not how to survive. For thirteen weeks it was drilled into our heads that if the platoon does not work “AS ONE” people get hurt or die. It’s that simple. One discipline and exercise the instructors teach you is “Drill”. It’s the art of marching as one platoon on a large parade deck with your weapons, listening to every command and responding accordingly.

There is a reason they are called Drill Instructors and that Drill is a vital part of basic training. There is something motivating when you see and hear 80 recruits in your platoon slamming their boots into the ground in unison working as one. Semper Fi - “Always Faithful” is the Marine Corps motto, and I seek to live that out daily, being faithful to God, family, friends, church, and players. The sooner we realize that life is not all about us and that we need each other, the better our lives will be. I love what it says in Philippians:

Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in the one Spirit, striving together as one for the faith of the gospel.
(Phil. 1:27)

This passage is calling us to have a oneness of heart and affection for each other as believers. Though we are diverse, we stand firm in one Spirit, with one mind. "A manner worthy of the gospel of Christ" means sticking together as one body, being immovable when opposition and challenges come our way. As one we are stronger together than alone.

If you struggle being around people, don't believe the lie that you're better alone. God loves you and wants to impact your life and He uses other people in your life to do that. Continue to step out of your comfort zone and stay in community, just like when you said, "Yes" to this community group. Besides you being blessed, you may never realize what an amazing blessing you are in someone else's life that is in the group. We need to realize that there is a spiritual battle going on and people are lonely, when they are separated from the platoon and not living out "AS ONE" they can get injured or even die, it's that simple.

“

**IF YOU
STRUGGLE
BEING AROUND
PEOPLE, DON'T
BELIEVE THE
LIE THAT
YOU'RE
BETTER
ALONE.**

Lord, help me not to be selfish and think of others needs before our own. Help us realize the importance of being in community together as one, rather than being alone. Please use me in someone else's life to encourage them and bless them and help them not to feel alone. God, thank you for bringing me together with the people in my community group, I lift each of them up in you right now, please bless them in all things. In Jesus name, Amen!

**P
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Day 17: What Should We Do? //

Donna Jones

“What should we do?” Everyone seemed to be asking the same question. In their pajamas. A 6.8, middle-of-the-night earthquake jolted us awake. Neighbors--young and old, child and adult--streamed out their doors to seek refuge on our tiny neighborhood street, located just 18 miles from the epicenter of the well-known Northridge, CA earthquake.

There we all stood; some in PJ's, some in boxers, some in robes. All of us shaken to our core, wanting--no, needing--to know what to do to save our life, and the lives of those we loved. My husband held our son, Taylor, while I cradled our daughter, Kylie.

Most of our neighbors held flashlights, but we had no idea where ours were. Most had extra food and water lining their pantry shelves. I'd planned on grocery shopping the next day; our cupboards held nothing but the basics. And where were the bandages in case we needed them? Who knew? Not me.

We stood on our tiny street amidst our neighbors, as the weight of reality fell hard. The Jones family was utterly unprepared. My husband, JP, and I eyed one another, knowing the other's unspoken thought: We should we do now?

I wonder if this is what the crowd assembled on the street in Jerusalem thought. Jesus' crucifixion, resurrection, and outpouring of the Holy Spirit sent a jolt through their religious status-quo, shaking the foundation to its core, leaving them with the same question we had: What should we do?

A small mob gathered around the apostle Peter. This was a man who spent three years with Jesus. Saw him crucified. Saw him resurrected. His was a message worth hearing. “Therefore let all

Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah.” When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?” Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2:36-38)

Life altering moments raise life-defining questions. It did for us, and our neighbors. It did for the people on the streets of Jerusalem. It still does today. What should we do? The answer to that question can save your life.

“

**LIFE
ALTERING
MOMENTS
RAISE LIFE-
DEFINING
QUESTIONS.**

Lord, jolt me out of my complacency. I don't want to be unprepared when I face you. I believe that Jesus is Lord and Messiah. I repent of my sins and turn to you for forgiveness. Thank you, Jesus, for willingly dying for me so that I could be saved and safe. Amen.

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Day 18: The Perfect Attitude //

Nancy Matossian

I used to have a musical group we called Attitude. A group of middle school students auditioned and enlisted to perform at numerous venues. We based the title of the group from the passage in Philippians 2, which encourages believers to have the same attitude as Christ Jesus. The desire was to teach not only the student performers, but also anyone who asked about our name, that the perfect model of attitude to follow was exemplified in Jesus. In Ephesians 4:30-31 we see a list of things to eliminate from our attitudes for it grieves the Holy Spirit.

And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. (Eph. 4:30-31)

This list to get rid of in Ephesians 4:31, is not only a list of things that burn us up inside but also a list of distractions to the Gospel. It is a list of actions, when played out, actually have the potential to point people away from Jesus. Guard your actions to keep people focused on the one with the perfect attitude, the one who offers Salvation.

Dear God, my heart's desire is to be consumed with you.

To be overflowing with an attitude like Jesus. To be contagious to others with the life-giving power of Christ. Help me to eliminate all the distractions my actions could bring. Give me a heart to see you in everyone in my path and to show them who you are even through something as simple as my attitude.

PRAYER

Day 19: Imitating & Walking //

Grant Gunther

One of my favorite TV shows is called The Office. At the start of every episode they do a quick cold open before the opening credits, and some of the most iconic moments from the show are found in these first few minutes. Arguably one of the greatest cold opens in the show's nine season run was when Jim (one of the main characters) impersonated Dwight (another of the main characters). From the clothes, to the voice intonation, to the questions, and even to the mannerisms, Jim absolutely nails his impersonation of Dwight and it leads to one of the most classic moments in the show.

At the moment when we confess that Jesus is God and believe in his resurrection, our identity is forever changed. We are no longer children deserving the wrath of God, but now we are his beloved children. How do we show off this new identity? By using our lives to imitate God and walk like Jesus walked. Here's what Paul says at the beginning of Ephesians 5:

*Therefore, be imitators of God, **as dearly loved children**. And walk in love, as the Messiah also loved us and gave Himself for us, a sacrificial and fragrant offering to God. (Eph. 5:1-2)*



**CHRISTIANITY
IS ABOUT
EMBRACING
AND LIVING
OUT OUR NEW
IDENTITY IN
CHRIST THAT
HE DIED TO
GIVE US**

Christianity is not about following a set of rules for the sake of following rules and being better than others. Rather, Christianity is about embracing and living out our new identity in Christ that he died to give us. In our new identity, now as beloved children, we are called to imitate God and walk as Jesus walked in love. Consequently, when we imitate God and walk like Jesus did, we also give the world an opportunity to see and experience the God and Savior that we so dearly love.

Lord God, thank you for making me one of
Your beloved children!

Jesus, thank you for dying for me that I might
become a dearly loved child of God, like You are.
Holy Spirit, will You give me strength and wisdom
everyday to embrace and walk in my new identity in
Christ, and be an imitator of God.
Amen.

PRAYER

Day 20: A Life Worthy of the Call //

Taylor Jones

Every couple has those stupid jokes. You know the ones I'm talking about. Maybe they were funny the first couple times that you chuckled over them together, but you've repeated them ad-nauseam and they've long since lost their comedic punch. No one really laughs anymore and at this point, you mostly just repeat them out of habit. But hey, that's show-biz baby! For my wife and me, one of those jokes is a line we say nearly every time we have to type in a show's title letter-by-letter on Netflix or Amazon. Our TV runs a bit slow so it takes a long time to scroll through all the letters and type out the title. As we slowly scroll through each letter, one of us will turn to the other and whisper, "Earn this." It's a reference to a line at the end of the movie, Saving Private Ryan. In the movie (spoiler alert), a group of WWII soldiers embark on a mission to rescue one soldier. Each of the soldiers sent on the rescue mission is killed in the process and as the last soldier dies so that Private Ryan might live he leans over to Ryan and whispers, "Earn this."

Laying aside stupid jokes about earning the right to watch a TV show by doing the "hard work" of scrolling letter-by-letter on a streaming service's search bar, the "earn this" message at the end of Saving Private Ryan provides a helpful insight into life with Jesus. To be clear, the good news of grace is that it absolutely destroys any need to "earn" anything from God. He's already given us every spiritual gift in Christ. However, while receiving grace eliminates "earning," receiving grace should lead to effort. Ephesians 4:1-3 puts it like this:

I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. (Eph. 4:1-3).

Did you catch that? God's Word tells us to live in a way that is worthy

(or fitting) of everything that He has been done for us through Christ. And what would that kind of life look like? A life radically devoted to humility, gentleness, patience, love, unity and peace in our relationships with other people within our local church. In other words, to rightly respond to God's love for us is to love other people, beginning with the other people who make up our church. What will this look like for you? How might God be leading you to be more radically devoted to humility, gentleness, patience, love, unity and peace?

Lord, thank you for the great love that you have shown me through everything that you've done for me through Jesus. Thank you for paying the price of my sin even when it cost you dearly. Thank you for doing for me what which I could never have done for myself. Help me to live a life that fits with that kind of love. Help me to love others the way that you love me. Help we me to be radically devoted to humility, gentleness, patience, love, unity and peace with the people in my local church.

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ROMANS 12:14-21



SESSION V
Life for the
World

// Introduction

Have you ever thrown a rock into a small pond or lake?

You notice how the initial splash begins to move outward in concentric circles of every increasing distance. The rock in the pond illustrates the potential impact the Church can have in the culture. When the Church of Jesus is loving God, loving one another and loving their neighbor, then we are truly the light of the world. Our attitude and actions are to shine Jesus' light to a culture in desperate need of His love. Romans 12:14-21 describes the attitudes that bless and build up those outside the Church.

When you read the description of these winning attitudes you realize that they don't exist in a vacuum. Just like the engine in your car needs gasoline for fuel, every believer needs fuel to energize the winning attitudes that will influence their culture. This fuel comes only from Jesus. Colossians 1:27-29 states,

For God wanted them to know that the riches and glory of Christ are for you Gentiles, too. And this is the secret: Christ lives in you. This gives you assurance of sharing his glory. ²⁸So we tell others about Christ, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all the wisdom God has given us. We want to present them to God, perfect in their relationship to Christ. ²⁹That's why I work and struggle so hard, depending on Christ's mighty power that works within me. (NLT)

The author, the Apostle Paul, states that the secret is that Christ lives in you. It is Christ in us who empowers us to love others, serve others, share the good news with others and seek to help others become perfect in their relationship with Christ.

The Church collectively and each of us individually are called to demonstrate these winning attitudes to our culture. We shine Christ's light in Christ's power. This is being the Church!



// VIDEO SEGMENT

Now, as a group, turn on your TV or Laptop and watch the video for Session 5, Life for the World.

2 WAYS TO WATCH

1. Through RightNow Media (Learn How on Page 86)
2. Go to crosslinechurch.com/XII

After watching, take a moment to initially respond with your thoughts about the video.

Read

Romans 12:14-21

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. ¹⁵ Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. ¹⁶ Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited. ¹⁷ Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. ¹⁸ If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. ¹⁹ Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. ²⁰ On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head." ²¹ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Matthew 5:14-16

"You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. ¹⁶ In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

1 Peter 3:13-15

Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good? ¹⁴ But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. "Do not fear their threats; do not be frightened." ¹⁵ But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.

Discuss

1. Jesus said in Matthew 5:16, “Let your light shine before men in such a way, that others may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven”. What do you think about Jesus’ words? How can our words, attitudes and actions shine Jesus’ light?
2. Romans 12:14-21 describes the attitudes we are to demonstrate to the world. How do these attitudes shine Jesus’ light to the culture?
3. In what ways are the attitudes described in the passages above counter-cultural?

4. Think through the network of relationships you have with people outside the Church. (If you are new to faith, then think through the friends you have who are deeply in need). How can you be intentional in shining Christ's light and demonstrating the full life available in Jesus?

Apply

Think about those people in your life that you could potentially say "persecute" you. Maybe they are just the ones that frustrate or anger you. Take time to pray blessings for them every day this week and see how your attitude changes. Consider doing something particularly kind for them this week as a practice of Romans 12:14-21.

Devotions

Read

Study

Pray

Day 21: The Maglite of the Campsite //

Gigi Johnson

Our little cell phone flashlights are super helpful (I should know, I just used mine to fish out a magnet my son stuck up his nose the other day). However, if you go camping at night, you may find yourself in need of one of those big, intense Maglites to really help you navigate your trip. The batteries don't die multiple times a day (I need a new phone...), they're heavy and often can serve as a tool (or weapon) to help you through the wilderness, and the beam of light they provide is like nothing else. You seriously can see the light stretch all the way to the stars! Point that flashlight to the ground and it'll provide your entire group enough light to see their true surroundings, to spot danger, and even to make it to the always-far-away bathrooms in the chilly 2am air! But be careful, because if you happen to point that same light in someone's eyes, you could blind them!

In the Bible, Jesus Christ, himself, is described as the "true light that gives light to every man" (John 1:9) and that "shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it" (John 1:5). He is the brightest light in a world full of darkness. Then in all of His generosity, Jesus, the Light of the world, tells us, his followers and his disciples, that we are the light of the world. He states:

You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

(Matt. 5:14-16)

Jesus chose to reflect Himself through His people for the purposes of our Father receiving all the praise and glory He deserves. He's made us all-powerful and much-needed Maglites in the middle of a pitch-black night in the forest.

So, the question becomes what are we doing, as lights? Do we stay turned off because it's so clearly bright that someone might see it? Or do we offer ourselves as lights unto people's paths to help them find their way? Do we shine our light and do good deeds so that people can be reminded that surely light is available even when the darkness is overwhelming? And we should also ask ourselves, are we being a little blunt or harsh, irresponsibly shining our light directly into people's eyes, ultimately blinding them, causing them to look away and return to the comfortable darkness?

“

**DO WE STAY
TURNED OFF
BECAUSE IT'S
SO CLEARLY
BRIGHT THAT
SOMEONE
MIGHT SEE
IT?**

We are the light of the world—a world that can be really dark sometimes. We are called to live bright lives full of Jesus, and to boldly and confidently share His message.

Dear Jesus, thank you that you've chosen me to be the light of the world. Help me to not unintentionally hide my light, nor to be too harsh about how I shine it. Instead, use me to give light to everyone you've placed around me. I pray that, ultimately, YOU would be seen and glorified as I make decisions that honor you, day in and day out.

PRAYER

Day 22: Suffering for Doing Good //

Greg Munck

Speaking truth in love and being assertive is a lost art. If we tell someone the truth that is on our hearts, it might make them sad or hurt their feelings or create conflict, so most people avoid it altogether. We live in a society sometimes too sensitive to hurting someone's feelings or offending them. From a young age I have been a heart-on-my-sleeve guy. What you see is what you get and you will always know where you stand with me. I speak my feelings of love and I speak my feelings of concern equally.

I understand why people avoid speaking the truth because most of the time when you call someone on their stuff or bring attention to something about them, it's personal, and they get defensive. In the short-term, you may avoid the conflict, but in the long-term, it's unhealthy because issues aren't being dealt with. Issues that aren't dealt with create resentment. When resentment builds up, it's never pretty when it finally comes out.

When I was in the Marine Corps, and a regional sales manager at QLogic and now with my role at Crossline, I have always been in the position of managing people. I'm an optimist and an encourager, so tough conversations are never easy for me. A lot of times people, even though you're calling them on something they know to be true, distance themselves from you, lash out at you or you give the cold shoulder. (Sometimes you can even get the evil eye from those around them that don't know the whole story.) You're trying to do something to better them and the organization, but you suffer as well in the process. It takes courage to speak the truth in love and we owe it to everyone we truly love to keep doing it.

But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander. For it is better, if it is God's will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil. (1 Peter 3:15-17)

The passage in 1 Peter starts by telling us to make an inner commitment to the Lord, so we are not speechless when called on to defend our faith; to have a readiness to answer with gentleness and respect. Our answer is always to be given in love--never in degrading terms. The passage continues by talking about keeping our conscience pure and free from guilt so that we don't fret when people falsely accuse us. Since you live a holy life in Christ, those who falsely accuse you will humiliate themselves. It's better to suffer for doing the right thing than suffer for doing the wrong thing. It takes courage to come out of the closet as a Christian and to share your faith/your story. Don't let that stop you or discourage you from sharing the truth of the gospel with people because it's the best thing for them and God's kingdom!

Lord, help us to speak the gospel of truth to everyone we come in contact with, help us to understand what it means to be a Christian and give us courage and opportunities to share the story that you have put on our hearts with everyone. Keep us from the schemes, lies, and traps of the evil one and help us live holy lives!

PRAYER

Day 23: I've Got This! //

Jordan Gash

My senior year of College was an incredible year of my life! I had a light load of classes, I was engaged to the girl of my dreams, I was in great physical shape and I had the two greatest roommates ever! Practically every night was the same routine—work on homework until 10pm, Go play racquetball at the Pay n' Play, get Slurpees, watch an episode of The Office and go to bed around 12:30am. We definitely were college students.

Playing racquetball every night, we decided that maybe we would try and play intramural Tennis—why not? We could be good, right?! Nope. We lost every match. However, then came the final match of the season. We were playing great. Everything was tied up and we were in the final game. If we won the game, we would WIN our only match! My roommate Shawn, the best of the three of us, was the obvious choice. Except, I was fired up! I exclaimed to my roommates, "Let me do it! I'VE GOT THIS!" They were hesitant. I kept saying, "Guys—I'VE GOT THIS!" They finally began to believe me and entrusted me with the match. Full of vigor and focus, I went out there swinging hard and strategically. The weight of responsibility motivated me!

As we think about the amazing gift of grace that we have received through Jesus, we need to have a healthy awareness of the responsibility that come with that. Consider what Paul says,

On the contrary, we speak as men approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel. We are not trying to please men, but God, who tests our hearts. (1 Thes. 2:4)

Can you believe that God has approved us and entrusted us with the transforming truth of the gospel? That nuts! Wouldn't it be a better strategy to just do it Himself or at least send some powerful angels? Yet, that's not His plan. He has given it to us. We have that

responsibility! Are you running from it or do you have a “I GOT THIS” attitude.

To close, here is what I truly want you to hear: That last tennis game—I lost. (My roommates still joke with me about it to this day). We ended up losing the match. Yet, when it comes to God, He loves a zealous heart. He doesn't promise that everyone we reach out to with the Gospel will result in a win here on earth. Nevertheless, the reward for the faithful, fervent servants awaits them in God's heavenly Kingdom. It is God we are seeking to please and as a community we need to encourage each other in that. Onward, my friends, we've GOT THIS!

“

**WHEN IT
COMES TO
GOD, HE
LOVES A
ZEALOUS
HEART.**

Lord Jesus, you are my God!
You are worthy of my all!

Empower me to not be afraid, but to be zealous for the purpose you have entrusted me with. Help me to not get discouraged in the moments that feel like failures. Help me to find joy in knowing you are with me. Teach me, by your Spirit how to love people well—both those with me and those in the world. Amen.

PRAYER

Day 24: Happy Face or Sad Face? //

Sarah Aungst



**AS WE GET EXCITED
ABOUT BRINGING
OUR SPIRITUAL GIFT
TO THE CHURCH
TABLE, LETS NOT
FORGET THAT IT
IS MEANT TO BE A
SERVICE OF LOVE**

Growing up my mom always used a specific question catch phrase to teach my siblings and I the power of words. She would always ask, “Happy face or sad face?” This question was in regards to whether our comment would give someone a happy face or a sad face and 99.9% of the time we were asked it after we said something not so nice. The point she was making was that our words have value! Words either add or subtract value from every situation. Kids of the social media generations, are experiencing this in a new way as they are consistently confronted with the fact that their words have power and permanence on social media. We have seen messages spread like wild fire with recent social and political movements through Youtube videos, Instagram stories, and Twitter feuds. Unfortunately many of

the words surrounding recent movements have been brash, one-sided, and polarizing. If words aren’t used for an impassioned cause, the remainders seem to be used for self-endorsement and attention. In my opinion, many words deserve a “sad face” these days.

Jesus distinctly understood the value of words and their ability to bring life. He chose His words so carefully, whether it was a sermon in front of thousands, an interchange between himself and a stranger, or a dinner amongst friends. He was an incredible example of using His words for others and not Himself. He used His words for the advancement of the Gospel and the blessing of people. We see a similar encouragement from Paul to mirror this value of Jesus in the book of Colossians:

Devote yourselves to prayer; stay alert in it with thanksgiving. At the same time, pray also for us that God may open a door to us for the message, to speak the mystery of the Messiah, for which I am in prison, so that I may reveal it as I am required to speak. Act wisely toward outsiders, making the most of the time. Your speech should always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you should answer each person. (Col. 4:2-6)

In this passage we see such clear direction to not use our words for our own advancement or glory but for the advancement of the Gospel. Our speech should be God-timed, gracious, appealing, and covered in prayer. We should be looking for opportunities and open doors to talk about the message of our King. So, let's do it! Let's use our words wisely by talking to God, talking about God, and speaking in a way that is appetizing (seasoned with salt) to non-believers.

God, help my words bring life. Help my speech to be attractive to all people and seasoned in such a way that it is winsome for you. Help me to see the doors you open for me to share about who you are and what you have done for us, and then give me the courage to walk through them! Amen.

PRAYER

Day 25: Rise and Shine //

Kenny Luck

If you are a follower of Jesus there is a tension you feel inside. Percolating underneath your world as you see it today, real existential threats are lurking that have to be confronted. Real women and children in besieged cities and communities are suffering. Real orphans, real sexual slaves, real fatherlessness, real domestic violence, real suicides, real mass shootings, and real death is being seen nightly on all our screens in all places around the globe all at once! Thanks to digital technology, it's now, literally, impossible to look away.

The bottom line result is that these clear and present sufferings spawn real fears that are metastasizing and diluting personal courage among Christians while, at the same time, they are creating a vacuum the wolves among us want to exploit. The phenomenon we all see and sense on our screens can be rightly called "history in the making." You will either be part of the problem or part of the solution, for good or for evil – but a moral blank you cannot be. Not making a choice to stand is making a choice.

The good news is that in a dark culture people of light can be easily seen if they choose to live out their truest identity. In this gloomy hour, Jesus calls us out of the darkness and to risk rising above culture in the power of the Spirit.

You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do

that? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.
(Matt. 5:43-48)

When you see the popular culture trying to make sense of things without God's perspective and His power to change the human heart it can be deflating. We know that reactions and protests address the evils in our culture from the outside-in, which by its very nature is doomed to failure and, in fact, has failed. Problems never exist at the level at which you see them – they are issues of the heart. Neither will salvation culturally come from the shallow waters of celebrity cult, over-hyped media movements, or identity politics. They are all paper tigers without fangs that can't stop a thing.

So Jesus says act the opposite of what you see everyone else doing. Don't worry about opposition – live for an audience of one. You can't take evil out of the world but you can shine the light of Christ by not acting like the world for his glory.

Father help me to rise and reflect the light of Jesus in my culture by living out my identity in Christ in the open and in the midst of the darkness.

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Appendix

INGREDIENTS FOR A GREAT GROUP

COMMITMENT CONTRACT

HOW TO ACCESS RIGHTNOW MEDIA

DESCRIPTIONS OF GOD

SPIRITUAL GIFTS TEST

ABOUT THE EDITOR

ABOUT CROSSLINE COMMUNITY CHURCH

// INGREDIENTS FOR A GREAT GROUP

Whether you have been a part of a group like this before or not, please take a look at the following guidelines to help your group function to its greatest possible potential.

Don't Miss! This first tip is a big one! As a community group, make a commitment to not miss! This includes being on time! If you are going to miss or be late, make it a commitment to let your host/group know ahead of time! (Not an hour before group starts!)

Assign a timekeeper! Amongst everyone in the group, there is bound to be someone who appreciates organization and timeliness—assign this person to be the timekeeper for group time together. Give this person permission to move things along to make sure everything gets done and group ends on time.

Keep it Confidential! One of the beautiful things about Community Groups is the deep, meaningful conversation that happens. A definitive rule for your group that everyone ought agree on is to keep sensitive things that are shared confidential!

R-E-S-P-E-C-T! Your group is likely comprised all sorts of people that come from all sorts of backgrounds—it's one of the great features of your group! As a group, commit to making your group a safe environment with mutual respect. Respect not only your fellow group members and your host, but also the property of who's home you are meeting at!

Have Fun! Don't forget to have fun! Laugh! Play games! You can even make specific space for that stuff!

EAT UP!! Food always provides a sense of comfort and unity in group settings, so whether it's a full meal, snacks, dessert or coffee—Eat up!

Take Turns! Many groups find ways for members to take turns on things such as providing food, leading prayer requests, texting reminders, or opening their home for group. It's always healthy to not have one person in charge of something every time. (You can even assign a group member to coordinate this).

Find your own groove! Here is what is important to know—no community group is the same and that’s okay! As a group, find your groove on how you do things and stick with it.

Don’t let kids control! If you are group with kids, make group time a priority. It’s easy to become overwhelmed with kids and their schedules and babysitters, but don’t let that control your involvement! As a group, figure out the best scenario for childcare early on so that you can fully participate in group. (E.g. Individual babysitters, group babysitter(s), putting on a movie in the back room, etc.)

// COMMITMENT CONTRACT:

(Some groups may want to consider utilizing this simple commitment contract as a way of keeping each other accountable to healthy group participation.)

- *I commit to taking this group seriously.*
- *I commit to being intentional with my attendance to this group.*
- *I commit to engaging in conversation.*
- *I commit to respecting my fellow group members and keeping everything I hear confidential.*
- *I commit to being honest.*
- *I commit to all the things listed above because I value community and I desire to grow closer to all those in my group.*

Sign: _____ Date: _____

// HOW TO ACCESS RIGHTNOW MEDIA:

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DESCRIPTIONS OF GOD

In the Psalms

Lord (1:2)
One Enthroned in Heaven (2:4)
Shield (3:3)
My God (3:7)
Righteous God (4:1)
King (5:2)
Most High (7:8)
Righteous Judge (7:11)
Refuge (9:9)
Stronghold (9:9)
Helper of the Fatherless (10:14)
My Rock (18:2)
My Fortress (18:2)
My Deliverer (18:2)
Horn of my Salvation (18:2)
Support (18:18)
Savior (18:46)
Redeemer (19:14)
God of Jacob (20:1)
Holy One (22:3)
The Praise of Israel (22:3)
My Strength (22:19)
Shepherd (23:1)
King of Glory (24:8)
Lord Strong and Mighty (24:8)
Almighty (24:10)
My Light (27:1)
My Salvation (27:1)
Stronghold of my Life (27:1)
Helper (27:9)
Fortress of Salvation (28:8)
God of Truth (31:5)
Hiding Place (32:7)
Help (33:20)
The Living God (42:2)
My Joy (43:4)
My Delight (43:4)
Ever-present Help (46:1)
Most Worthy (48:1)
Guide (48:14)

The Mighty One (50:1)
Judge (50:6)
The God of Israel (59:5)
Loving God (59:9)
Strong Tower (61:3)
My Mighty Rock (62:7)
Hearer of Prayer (65:2)
Hope of all ends of the Earth (65:5)
Him who rides on clouds (68:4)
Father to the fatherless (68:5)
Defender of widows (68:5)
One of Sinai (68:8)
Sovereign Lord (68:20)
Rock of Refuge (71:3)
Hope (71:5)
My Confidence (71:5)
Holy One (71:22)
Strength of my heart (73:26)
My Portion (73:26)
Resplendent with Light (75:4)
Majestic (75:4)
Sun (84:11)
Father (89:26)
Dwelling Place (90:1)
The God who avenges (94:1)
The Rock of our Salvation (95:1)
Maker (95:6)
Forgiving God (99:8)
(Awesome descriptions in 104)
My Song (118:14)
Your Shade (121:5)
Master (123:2)
Peace (125:5)
Mighty one of Jacob (132:2)
God of gods (136:2)
Lord of lords (136:3)
God of Heaven (136:26)
Spirit (143:10)
One who gives victory (144:10)



Spiritual Gifts

SPIRITUAL GIFTS ASSESSMENT

When you accepted Christ, you not only got saved...you were given something very special from God: a giftedness to serve God in a unique way. God's plan for your life is that you would meet a specific need in the church family, and He has gifted you in a special way to meet that need.

"As each one of us has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God." (1 Peter 4:10)

If you have trusted Christ, then you have a spiritual gift! Even if you don't know what it is or don't feel particularly gifted in a specific area, the Bible teaches that you do have a special gift that you can use to serve God. And, believe it or not, your gift is vital to the work of God in our church family, otherwise God would not have placed you here.

God's Word teaches that as a member of His Body, you are important to His work in this place. He has appointed you a gift and a purpose for being here...and you will greatly enjoy discovering and using that gift for His purposes!

WHAT SHOULD YOU DO WITH THIS SPIRITUAL GIFT?

First Peter says that God wants you to be a "good steward" of His gift to you! The best way to do that is to begin now discovering, developing, and using your gift to serve the Lord and His church. The great result of using your gift is that the entire church family ministers to each other and to the community. That's the way the church, the Body of Christ, is supposed to work!

TAKING THE SPIRITUAL GIFTS ASSESSMENT

- To complete the assessment, answer every question in order by circling the number, 0 to 5, that most accurately describes yourself.
- While answering, refer to the scale indicator above the questions.
- When completing the spiritual gifts assessment, do not think as much as react.
- For the most accurate assessment answer quickly and honestly.

For best results, PRAY BEFORE ATTEMPTING.

	Never	Rarely	Occasionally	True Sometimes	True most of the time	Always True
	0	1	2	3	4	5
1. I relate & measure everything I experience accordingly to God's Word.	0	1	2	3	4	5
2. Others seem to look to me for advice and help.	0	1	2	3	4	5
3. I'm easily bothered by others' lack of compassion.	0	1	2	3	4	5
4. I don't take anything at face value.	0	1	2	3	4	5
5. I can visualize the "big picture" of a major project.	0	1	2	3	4	5
6. When others are in my home I like to wait on them "hand and foot."	0	1	2	3	4	5
7. I feel compelled to give financially to others.	0	1	2	3	4	5
8. I will speak the truth whether or not it causes hurt feelings.	0	1	2	3	4	5
9. I can organize and delegate people and resources easily.	0	1	2	3	4	5
10. I feel compelled to share knowledge.	0	1	2	3	4	5
11. Discouraged people are often encouraged by my words.	0	1	2	3	4	5
12. I neglect my own work in order to help others.	0	1	2	3	4	5
13. I easily identify tasks that need to get done and do them myself.	0	1	2	3	4	5
14. I enjoy doing little things to help people.	0	1	2	3	4	5
15. My natural tendency is to step up and take control.	0	1	2	3	4	5
16. I cheerfully give time or money, regardless of how much I have to give.	0	1	2	3	4	5
17. I have compassion for all living creatures.	0	1	2	3	4	5
18. I don't hesitate to give constructive criticism.	0	1	2	3	4	5
19. People see me as a frank and outspoken person.	0	1	2	3	4	5
20. People seem to learn easily from me.	0	1	2	3	4	5
21. I can be described as responsible, charitable, and disciplined.	0	1	2	3	4	5
22. I don't expect repayment for favors I do for others.	0	1	2	3	4	5

	Never	Rarely	Occasionally	True Sometimes	True most of the time	Always True
	0	1	2	3	4	5
23. Others tell me I'm a good listener.	0	1	2	3	4	5
24. Communicating the facts in a situation is something I do well.	0	1	2	3	4	5
25. I am a task oriented person.	0	1	2	3	4	5
26. I find it easy to maintain an optimistic outlook.	0	1	2	3	4	5
27. I will stand alone on something I believe in strongly.	0	1	2	3	4	5
28. I will not confront others if I feel it may hurt them.	0	1	2	3	4	5
29. I give well above my tithe to the Body of Christ.	0	1	2	3	4	5
30. While I'm frugal in personal spending, I'm often led to give to others.	0	1	2	3	4	5
31. I enjoy research as well as sharing what I find.	0	1	2	3	4	5
32. I am compelled to comfort people who are hurting or suffering.	0	1	2	3	4	5
33. Deadlines challenge me & I usually meet them on time.	0	1	2	3	4	5
34. I can discern the motives of others fairly easily	0	1	2	3	4	5
35. I find strength from bearing other's burdens.	0	1	2	3	4	5
36. My use of knowledge may appear prideful.	0	1	2	3	4	5
37. I can create order out of organizational chaos.	0	1	2	3	4	5
38. I volunteer my time and talents to worthwhile causes.	0	1	2	3	4	5
39. I'm moved with compassion to cry with others.	0	1	2	3	4	5
40. I can select the best person for particular tasks.	0	1	2	3	4	5
41. My focus on right and wrong may be read as being judgmental.	0	1	2	3	4	5
20. People seem to learn easily from me.	0	1	2	3	4	5
42. I enjoy helping others develop a plan of action to deal with their concerns.	0	1	2	3	4	5

Spiritual Gifts Test Scoring Key

Directions: Transfer the number you circled to the blank beside the corresponding question. Add the totals up in each column. The highest possible score in one column would be 30.

	1.	6.	4.	2.	7.	5.	3.
	8.	12.	10.	11.	16.	9.	17.
	19.	13.	20.	18.	21.	15.	28.
	27.	14.	24.	23.	22.	33.	32.
	34.	25.	31.	26.	29.	37.	35.
	41.	38.	36.	42.	30.	40.	39.
Totals							
	Prophet/ Perceiver	Server	Teacher	Exhorter/ Encourager	Other	Leader/ Administrator	Mercy/ Compassion

SPIRITUAL GIFTS:

// PROPHET/PERCEIVER

The God-given ability to communicate God’s message in relation to the truth already revealed (Jude 3).

It is not necessarily or even primarily a prediction. Rather, it is done for the purposes of encouraging, strengthening and comforting (1 Cor. 14:3). These have the ability to perceive the spiritual needs of others and meet those needs through Scripture.

CHARACTERISTICS OF A PROPHET / PERCEIVER:

1. Able to recognize good and bad and hates what is bad.
2. Sees everything clearly not dimly; no foggy or indefinite areas
3. Recognizes character in people, whether good or bad
4. Encourages repentance for the glory of God
5. Is an introvert rather than an extrovert?
6. Sees the Bible as the foundation for truth
7. Courageously holds to spiritual truths
8. Outspoken

9. Powerful and persuasive speaker
10. Distraught over the sins of others
11. Sees their own shortcomings and those of others
12. Desires to see God's plans take place
13. Promotes spiritual growth in others
14. Fanatical about integrity
15. Strongly communicates what they perceive
16. Self-examiner
17. Opinionated and holds to convictions
18. Holds to a high standard
19. Desperately desires to obey God

CHALLENGES OF THE PROPHET/PERCEIVER:

1. May be judgmental and upfront
2. Delights in goal accomplishment not forward progress
3. Forcefully pushes others toward spiritual growth
4. Intolerant of other views
5. Struggles with self-image

PLACES IN THE CHURCH BODY WHERE THIS GIFT COULD BE UTILIZED:

1. Small group leader
2. Any type of lay counseling
3. Security at any church function
4. Providing oversight of any ministry function
5. Great mentors and peacemakers

// SERVER

A server has the God-given ability to recognize a need and administer assistance to others. In relation to other believers, this releases them to utilize their God-given gifts (e.g. Deacons in Acts 6:1-6; 1 Corinthians 12:28; and Romans 12:7).

CHARACTERISTICS OF A SERVER:

1. Willingly meets the needs of others
2. Has a hands on approach
3. Precise and orderly
4. Detail oriented
5. Friendly

6. Has trouble turning others away
7. More interest in others than self
8. More short term orientated than long term
9. Actively expressive rather than verbally expressive
10. Desires appreciation
11. Goes above and beyond what is asked of them
12. Enjoys being helpful
13. High energy level
14. Orderly; does not like clutter
15. Perfectionist
16. Places an importance on serving
17. Would rather do than delegate
18. Supports the leadership

CHALLENGES OF THE SERVER:

1. Criticizes those who are not serving
2. Helps others to the extent of neglecting personal family
3. So enthusiastic to help, may come across as pushy
4. Does not like to be served
5. Saddened when unappreciated

PLACES IN THE CHURCH BODY WHERE THIS GIFT COULD BE UTILIZED:

1. Hospitality ministry
2. Children's ministry
3. Homeless ministry
4. Taking meals to ill or injured
5. Set-up or tear down at special events
6. Serving anywhere, anytime, anyway
7. Construction of any type
8. Maintenance of anything
9. Putting together anything with the hands

// TEACHER

The God-given ability to study, research, explain and communicate truth (e.g. Paul and Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:2).

CHARACTERISTICS OF A TEACHER:

1. Logical presenter of truth
2. Confirms truth by examining facts
3. Enjoys study and investigation
4. Knows how to do word studies
5. Uses biblical illustrations
6. Detests Scripture used out of context
7. Establishes truth biblically
8. Objective rather than subjective
9. Extensive vocabulary
10. Accurate presenter of truth
11. Tests the information of others
12. Favors teaching over evangelism
13. Starts with Scripture when answering questions
14. Intellectual
15. Disciplined
16. Emotionally stable
17. Has a close circle of friends
18. Strong convictions based on solid research
19. Believes God's truth leads to life change

CHALLENGES FOR THE TEACHER:

1. Can neglect application in exchange for information download
2. Slow to accept views of other
3. Prideful due to knowledge
4. May be legalistic and dogmatic
5. Easily distracted by love of new interests

PLACES IN THE CHURCH BODY WHERE THIS GIFT COULD BE UTILIZED:

1. Small group leader
2. Bible study leader - Men's ministry, Women's ministry, Children's ministry
3. Rock U instructor
4. Research assistant

5. Developer of curriculum
6. Child, youth, teen mentor

// EXHORTER

The God-given ability to draw near to individuals in time of need; encouraging and counseling them accurately with the Word of God; and persuading them to take courage in the face of something they must do or assuring them to take comfort because of something that has occurred (E.g. Barnabas in Acts 4:36-37; 9:26-27; 11:19-26; and 15:36-41).

CHARACTERISTICS OF AN EXHORTER:

1. Verbally encouraging
2. Likes to apply the Word rather than investigate it
3. Prefers practical application over theological truth
4. Works best with others
5. Verbally encourages others to excel in ministry
6. Loves to do personal counseling
7. Loves to talk
8. Excels in communication
9. Perceives trials as opportunities for personal growth
10. Has a positive attitude
11. Easily makes decisions
12. Prefers to quickly resolve problems
13. Needs to bounce ideas off others

CHALLENGES FOR THE EXHORTER

1. Frequently interrupts others
2. Uses Scripture out of context
3. Out spoken and opinionated
4. Slightly overconfident

PLACES IN THE CHURCH BODY WHERE THIS GIFT COULD BE UTILIZED:

1. Lay counseling
2. Stephen minister
3. Table facilitator
4. Hospitality ministry
5. Drama ministry

6. Nursing home ministry
7. Homeless Ministry Team
8. Small group leader
9. Anyplace where encouragement is needed

// GIVER

The God-given ability to give freely of what God has entrusted to them. This includes giving time, material goods and financial resources with joy and eagerness and without any “ulterior motives” that would benefit the giver (E.g. David in I Chronicles 29:1-19).

CHARACTERISTICS OF A GIVER:

1. Gives as led by the Spirit
2. Freely and happily gives
3. Often gives anonymously
4. Understands giving is an intricate part of serving
5. Takes pleasure in meeting the needs of others
6. Gives not only quantity but quality
7. Gives to bless and enhance ministries
8. Sees hospitality as a chance to give
9. Financially wise
10. Strongly believes in tithes and offerings
11. Understands that God owns everything
12. Strong business skills
13. Appreciates value
14. Is not gullible

CHALLENGES FOR THE GIVER

1. Tends to be controlling with money
2. Pressures others to be more generous
3. May over commit
4. Uses financial giving as a way out of other requirements
5. Leads others on guilt trips

PLACES IN THE CHURCH BODY WHERE THIS GIFT COULD BE UTILIZED:

1. Homeless ministry
2. Small group leader
3. Fundraising

4. Any serving opportunity
5. Hospitality ministry
6. Financial counseling ministry Team
7. Support of church special projects (i.e. building)
8. Financially support any ministry

// LEADERSHIP / ADMINISTRATION

The God-given ability to lead others in meaningful endeavors which demonstrates personal care and concern in order to meet the needs of others and encourage their growth (E.g. Fathers in I Tim. 3:4-5; 12).

CHARACTERISTICS OF LEADERSHIP / ADMINISTRATION:

1. Motivates others to action
2. Clearly communicates
3. Thrives when given authority
4. Happily receives authority when given
5. Naturally assumes leadership when there is a lack
6. Takes on long-term projects
7. Is a visionary
8. Has good networking abilities
9. Delegates well
10. Takes criticism well
11. Is passionate and enthusiastic
12. Enjoys accomplishing goals
13. Gives credit to others
14. Meets challenges as they arise
15. Is a natural and capable leader
16. Understands the Big picture
17. Discards what does not work and keeps what does
18. Enjoys people
19. Dislikes the mundane routine

CHALLENGES FOR LEADERSHIP / ADMINISTRATION:

1. May have trouble dealing with opposition
2. May become callous due to constant criticism
3. Pushes hard to the point of neglecting family
4. Ignores family responsibilities due to love of work

PLACES IN THE CHURCH BODY WHERE THIS GIFT COULD BE UTILIZED:

1. Small group leader
2. Jr. High ministry
3. High School ministry
4. College ministry
5. Singles ministry
6. Prison ministry
7. Any type of leadership/oversight role
8. Creator of new ministries
9. Coach of Sports ministries

// MERCY / COMPASSION

The God-given ability to have immediate compassion for those who are suffering combined with great joy in meeting their needs (E.g. the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:30-37).

CHARACTERISTICS OF MERCY / COMPASSION:

1. Loves to love
2. Searches out the good in people
3. Brings out the good in people
4. Recognizes the spiritual and emotional condition of others
5. Acts out of concern for others
6. Cares for the emotional, spiritual, and physical well being of others
7. Considers others more important than self
8. Chooses words carefully
9. Recognizes the affect words can have
10. Detects insincerity
11. Loves to be thoughtful
12. Is trustworthy
13. Non-confrontational
14. Unusually cheerful
15. Thinks with the heart rather than the head
16. Rejoices and/or grieves with others

CHALLENGES FOR THE MERCY / COMPASSION:

1. Overly sensitive
2. Caring may be misunderstood by the opposite sex

3. Easily takes up others problems that are not their own
4. Thinking with their heart leads to indecision
5. Can be easily hurt by others unintentionally

PLACES IN THE CHURCH BODY WHERE THIS GIFT COULD BE UTILIZED:

1. Small group leader
2. Homeless ministry
3. Counseling ministry
4. Hospitality of any sort
5. Visitation and follow-up
6. Prison ministry
7. Greeters
8. Any type of phone work
9. Children's ministry

IMPORTANT REMINDERS

Keep in mind that oftentimes the Holy Spirit gives us more than one gift which serves to keep our other gift (gifts) in check or harmonize to create a blended gift that God uses in unique ways. This is another reason why each and everyone of us has a unique role to play in the Kingdom even if your gift may seem just like someone else you know!

1. Scripture commands us to minister in many areas whether or not we have the corresponding spiritual gift(s). For example Scripture clearly tells us that some have the following gifts, yet all are to minister in these ways...Gifts to some Commands to all
 - Ministering (serving) Serve one another (Galatians 5:13)
 - Exhortation Exhort each other (Hebrews 10:25)
 - Giving all give (2 Corinthians 9:7) Teaching Make Disciples (Matthew 28:19)
 - Showing Mercy Be kind (Ephesians 4:32)
 - Faith Walk by faith (2 Corinthians 5:7)
 - Evangelism all witness (Acts 1:8)
 - Oftentimes as we are faithful to these commands, after we discover our particular spiritual gift(s).
2. No matter what spiritual gift(s) we have received, the Christian virtue of love must accompany the exercise of those gifts;

otherwise, they will prove unfruitful. "If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing." 1 Corinthians 13:1-3

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN GIFTS AND TALENTS:

Talents have to do with techniques and methods; gifts have to do with spiritual abilities. Talents depend on natural ability, gifts on spiritual endowment. Talents instruct, inspire, or entertain on a natural level. However, when a gift is exercised, something supernatural happens in and through the one who is ministering.

CONCLUSION:

Your God-given personality, talents, abilities and spiritual gifts all work together to make you uniquely you! "Whoever serves is to do so as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen." 1 Peter 4:11

// ABOUT THE EDITORS:

JP Jones is the Founding Senior Pastor of Crossline Church in Laguna Hills, CA. JP is a graduate of Talbot Seminary where he did his Master of Divinity and Doctoral studies. A published author, JP has written the men's book, Facing Goliath and several small groups' curricula such as Transformed, Livin' Large and most recently, The Man. The Myth. The Legend. Getting to Know the Real Jesus. JP is a popular speaker at Men's events and conferences and his radio program, Truth that Changes Lives is listened to in all 50 states and over 150 countries of the world. JP is on the faculty of Biola University where he teaches Theology and Biblical Studies. JP is married to his wife Donna and they have 3 children.

Jordan Gash is the Community Life Pastor at Crossline Community Church in Laguna Hills, CA. He graduated from Azusa Pacific Seminary with a M.A. in Pastoral Studies. Jordan has been working in both the Church and Christian organizational spheres since 2006. In his role as Community Life Pastor, Jordan oversees and shepherds a vast network of Community Groups. He has contributed to multiple adult small group curricula and authored several youth ministry groups' curricula. As a speaker at conferences and youth camps, he is passionate about encouraging practical application to Biblical truths. He is married to his wife, Alexandra and has three young sons.

// ABOUT CROSSLINE COMMUNITY CHURCH:

Three words describe the history of Crossline Church: Prayer, Faith and Relationships. In the fall of 2004 I began to seriously pray about the future God had for me and my family. I was at a crossroads in ministry and needed clear direction from God. I went to Forest Home, a Christian conference center in the San Bernardino Mountains and earnestly sought the Lord. Praying on the spot where God spoke to Billy Graham, I asked God to speak to me about where and how He wanted me to serve Him. That time of prayer launched a 10 day period of prayer and fasting to seek the confirmation and leading of God. True to His Word, God spoke to me and others about the vision to start a church that would reach both seekers and committed disciples with the life-changing message of Jesus Christ. For a period of four months, a weekly prayer meeting gathered to pray and dream about God's direction. Following the pattern of the early

disciples in Acts 1-2, the founding core group of Crossline spent a focused 10 day season of prayer before it launched the first public worship services in February of 2005.

Our new congregation grew over the next 4 years to a little over 1,000 in attendance. With growth came good challenges and once again we spent a focused period of prayer concerning a move from the high school campus to a permanent home for our church. That season of prayer was answered miraculously by God and Crossline now meets at its 25 acre home in Laguna Hills, CA. Our congregation has grown to over 2,000 and prayer continues to be a core value for the daily life of Crossline, its vision and its future.

Crossline began as a commitment of faith. Not sponsored by any denomination, foundation or church, the Pastors and volunteers stepped into an initial ministry with a million dollar a year budget. Having no meeting place, offices or staff, within a few months God miraculously answered prayer and provided everything we needed to be a mobile church. From its inception, Crossline has had a core commitment to believe great things about God, to ask great things of God and attempt great things for God! What began as a prayer meeting with 16 people has grown to a local church of over 2,000.

Crossline Church is a body made up of ordinary people who believe in an extra-ordinary God. We believe that everyone is on a spiritual journey and whether you are a first time visitor or have been with us from day one, you are a vital part of our church right now and of the community He is shaping us to be for the future. At Crossline it our desire to connect people to Jesus Christ and to one another. Our motto is, "Love God, love people and have a blast!" We would love for you to join us. Together we can do great things for God!

JP Jones
Founding and Senior Pastor

Sunday Services: Main Services

9:00am & 11:00am – Worship Center

7:00pm (Young Adults/Summit) – Fellowship Center

Classic Service (Traditional)

9:00am – Chapel

Crossline En Español

11:00am – Chapel

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