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PART I: Understanding the Gospel

Lesson 1 – Three Aspects of the Good News

Meeting 1

Story

Meeting 2

Identity

Meeting 3

Kingdom

Goal: *To help you develop skills that will enable you to readily understand the Gospel, and be equipped to clearly articulate it in three main aspects.*

Objectives:

One: Investigate how the Gospel can be understood as Story, Identity, and Kingdom.

Two: Explore various Bible passages with these aspects of the Gospel in mind.

Three: Consider and describe how these Gospel aspects inform and transform us.

Understanding the Gospel

The Gospel of Jesus is rich and complex, yet simple. It has multiple aspects. At The Village, we think of the Gospel in a way that strives to honor its broader message, while acknowledging its simplicity and transforming power for our daily lives.

Therefore, we focus on three aspects or parts of the Gospel: Story, Identity, Kingdom.

Story:

Focuses on Jesus' story, His life, death, resurrection, ascension, and return. You should strive toward a point when you are able to open your Bible to specific passages and from them understand and explain Jesus' story. You should strive also to explain how His story intersects with yours and its basic implications: forgiveness of sin, day-to-day practical living, and hope of eternal life.

Identity:

Focuses on God's identity as a 'triune' God and also the new position and standing He offers us once we believe in Jesus and embrace His story. You should strive to understand the scope of this identity, rest in and relish it, and explain it to others.

Kingdom:

Focuses on the reign of God advancing in this world and how our lives are now repositioned to align with His will, rather than ours. You should strive to seek first God's kingdom, submit to his will, and be prepared to describe what this life looks like as you study Scripture.

The Gospel in a Large Brush Stroke: At The Village, we also recognize the grand narrative of God's story expressed in terms of Creation (God creates), Fall (humankind falls into sin), Redemption (God redeems fallen humankind), and Restoration (God's purpose includes restoring humankind and creation).

PART I:

MEETING 1 – Understanding the Gospel as STORY . . .

Note From Pastor Eric:

In 1 Cor 15, Paul says “For I passed on to you as of first importance what I also received – that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day according to the scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.” This is the most basic form of Jesus’ story. He came, he died, he appeared to his disciples, and he ascended into heaven. The entire Bible is a creative telling and retelling of these basic elements of the story of Jesus the Messiah. Since we can’t put the whole Bible into this study, we have taken one very succinct, artistic, elegant account of His story, as told by John, to consider and learn from. Our purpose in examining this story form is that we would understand the core of our own salvation and become fluent in the language of the gospel so we can tell others about Jesus in ways that make sense to them.

Below is a passage from John 1:1-18 to look at and study as we explore Jesus’ STORY, the first of three aspects of the Gospel.

What To Do: Set aside at least one (1) full hour to complete this lesson before Pilgrim Group meeting.

Pray, asking the Holy Spirit to lead you into truth.

Next, read the passage slowly and silently several times.

Further, remain open to what He is revealing to you.

Finally, based on the passage, answer each question in the ‘Considering the Text’ and ‘Personal Reflection’ sections.

John 1 – The Word Became Flesh . . .

1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was fully God. 1:2 The Word was with God in the beginning. 1:3 All things were created by him, and apart from him not one thing was created that has been created. 1:4 In him was life, and the life was the light of mankind. 1:5 And the light shines on in the darkness, but the darkness has not mastered it. 1:6 A man came, sent from God, whose name was John. 1:7 He came as a witness to testify about the light, so that everyone might believe through him. 1:8 He himself was not the light, but he came to testify about the light. 1:9 The true light, who gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. 1:10 He was in the world, and the world was created by him, but the world did not recognize him. 1:11 He came to what was his own, but his own people did not receive him. 1:12 But to all who have received him – those who believe in his name – he has given the right to become God’s children 1:13 – children not born by human parents or by human desire or a husband’s decision, but by God. 1:14 Now the Word became flesh and took up residence among us. We saw his glory – the glory of the one and only, full of grace and truth, who came from the Father. 1:15 John testified about him and shouted out, “This one was the one about whom I said, ‘He who comes after me is greater than I am, because he existed before me.’” 1:16 For we have all received from his fullness one gracious gift after another. 1:17 For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came about through Jesus Christ. 1:18 No one has ever seen God. The only one, himself God, who is in closest fellowship with the Father, has made God known.

Considering The Text – Understanding the Gospel as STORY . . .

‘Considering The Text’ Questions:

Reflect on how John tells Jesus' Story. What impressions do you have about how John tells it? How does his style strike you?

What does John 1:1-18 teach us about God? Make a list.

What does it teach us about Jesus? How is He described?

Who is John? Is he important? Why or why not?

According to this passage, how was the world created? Specifically, by whom?

How does John describe the fall of humankind? How does he describe sin? What is it?

'Considering The Text' Questions Continued:

According to this passage, how is humankind saved? Why is it important that the Word become flesh?

From your perspective, what does it mean for John that we 'receive' & 'believe' in Jesus?

What does the passage say about family?

Compare and contrast 'law' and 'grace & truth' from v 17. Why does John emphasize them?

What does 1:1-18 teach us about our identity or who we are when we receive & believe in Jesus?

What sense or rumor does John give about what new life in God's Kingdom may look like?

Personal Reflection

What do you believe God is asking you to RECEIVE and BELIEVE from this passage?

What EMOTIONS are stirred up in you as a result of studying this passage?

How will you LIVE differently having been confronted with the truth of this passage?

What do you believe is the MAIN THEME of this passage? Describe Jesus' story briefly.

Which VERSE was especially meaningful to you? Write it on a memory card & keep it for reference.

MEETING 2 – Understanding the Gospel as IDENTITY . . .

Note From Pastor Eric

Romans 8:14-16 says, “For all who are led by the Spirit of God are the sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery leading again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption, by whom we cry, ‘Abba, Father.’ The Spirit himself bears witness to our spirit that we are God’s children.” The result of the gospel story (Jesus’ death, resurrection, appearance, ascension) is that we, through faith, can become children of God. As adopted children, we gain a relationship with the Father which allows us to cry out in dependence on Him. The Holy Spirit continually affirms this new identity, freeing us from fear. The study below examines various facets of our identity in Christ in context of the community of faith. Our purpose in examining Peter’s words is that we would become deeply rooted in who we are in Christ and be able to call our friends out of slavery and into the family of God.

Below is a passage from 1 Peter 2:1-12 to look at and study as we explore our IDENTITY, the second of three aspects of the Gospel.

What To Do: Set aside at least one (1) full hour to complete this lesson before Pilgrim Group meeting.

Pray, asking the Holy Spirit to lead you into truth.

Next, read the passage slowly and silently several times.

Further, remain open to what He is revealing to you.

Finally, based on the passage, answer each question in the ‘Considering the Text’ and ‘Personal Reflection’ sections.

1 Peter 2 – A Newly Discovered Identity

2:1 So get rid of all evil and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander. 2:2 And yearn like newborn infants for pure, spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up to salvation, 2:3 if you have experienced the Lord’s kindness.

2:4 So as you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but chosen and priceless in God’s sight, 2:5 you yourselves, as living stones, are built up as a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood and to offer spiritual sacrifices that are acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. 2:6 For it says in scripture, “Look, I lay in Zion a stone, a chosen and priceless cornerstone, and whoever believes in him will never be put to shame.” 2:7 So you who believe see his value, but for those who do not believe, the stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone, 2:8 and a stumbling-stone and a rock to trip over. They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do. 2:9 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of his own, so that you may proclaim the virtues of the one who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. 2:10 You once were not a people, but now you are God’s people. You were shown no mercy, but now you have received mercy.

2:11 Dear friends, I urge you as foreigners and exiles to keep away from fleshly desires that do battle against the soul, 2:12 and maintain good conduct among the non-Christians, so that though they now malign you as wrongdoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God when he appears.

Considering The Text – Understanding the Gospel as IDENTITY . . .

‘Considering The Text’ QUESTIONS:

What does Peter mean by ‘therefore’ in verse 1? What does he say we should do? Why?

In what ways does Peter describe Jesus’ followers in 2:1-12? Make a list.

What does this passage teach us about God? About Jesus? How is He described?

How do Peter’s Old Testament quotations help us better understand Jesus’ identity? Ours?

In verse 9, Peter begins with ‘but.’ To what contrast is he drawing our attention?

Describe what Peter means by ‘chosen people,’ ‘royal priesthood,’ ‘holy nation,’ and ‘God’s people.’ How does each look on us?

'Considering The Text' QUESTIONS Continued:

How do we obtain this new identity? For what purpose has God given it? (verses 9-10)

How does Peter describe believers in verse 11?

List the commands given in vrs 11-12? How can we obey them? Where do we obey? For what purpose?

How does living 'good lives' demonstrate who we are? How does it glorify God? What does Peter mean by 'on the day he visits us'?

What does 1 Peter 2:1-12 teach us about Jesus' story and how our story intersects with it?

What sense or rumor does Peter give about how our new identity is expressed in God's Kingdom?

Personal Reflection

What do you believe God is asking you to RECEIVE and BELIEVE from this passage?

Which EMOTIONS are stirred up within you as a result of studying this passage?

How will you LIVE differently having been confronted with the truth of this passage?

What do you believe is the MAIN THEME of this passage? Describe Jesus' identity and ours.

Which VERSE was especially meaningful to you? Write it on a memory card & keep it for reference.

MEETING 3 – Understanding the Gospel as KINGDOM . . .

Note From Pastor Eric

Paul says in Romans 12:1, “Therefore I exhort you, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a sacrifice – alive, holy, and pleasing to God – which is your reasonable service.” The gospel story and the identity we receive from it are the very mercies of God: His death covers my sin, His resurrection gives me hope in life, His covering gives me freedom and joy. Life in the kingdom of God, then, is a response to these realities. We present ourselves as a sacrifice in response to Christ’s sacrifice. Our sacrifice may be lived out in a variety of ways, but at the core it is a life given in service to God. In our study we have decided to focus on a specific calling inherent to this life of service which is our role as reconcilers and ambassadors. Our purpose in this section is that we would better understand our job as royal priests, wherein we mediate between people and God, focusing outward in a way which allows us to become the voice of Jesus to a lost world.

Below is a passage from 2 Corinthians 5:11-21 to look at and study as we explore KINGDOM, the third of three aspects of the Gospel.

What To Do: Set aside at least one (1) full hour to complete this lesson before Pilgrim Group meeting.

Pray, asking the Holy Spirit to lead you into truth.

Next, read the passage slowly and silently several times.

Further, remain open to what He is revealing to you.

Finally, based on the passage, answer each question in the ‘Considering the Text’ and ‘Personal Reflection’ sections.

2 Corinthians 5:11-21 – A Newly Discovered Ministry: reconciliation

5:11 Therefore, because we know the fear of the Lord, we try to persuade people, but we are well known to God, and I hope we are well known to your consciences too. 5:12 We are not trying to commend ourselves to you again, but are giving you an opportunity to be proud of us, so that you may be able to answer those who take pride in outward appearance and not in what is in the heart. 5:13 For if we are out of our minds, it is for God; if we are of sound mind, it is for you. 5:14 For the love of Christ controls us, since we have concluded this, that Christ died for all; therefore all have died. 5:15 And he died for all so that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised. 5:16 So then from now on we acknowledge no one from an outward human point of view. Even though we have known Christ from such a human point of view, now we do not know him in that way any longer. 5:17 So then, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; what is old has passed away – look, what is new has come! 5:18 And all these things are from God who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and who has given us the ministry of reconciliation. 5:19 In other words, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting people’s trespasses against them, and he has given us the message of reconciliation. 5:20 Therefore we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making His plea through us. We plead with you on Christ’s behalf, “Be reconciled to God!” 5:21 God made the one who did not know sin to be sin for us, so that in him we would become the righteousness of God.

Considering The Text – Understanding the Gospel as KINGDOM . . .

‘Considering The Text’ QUESTIONS:

What does Paul mean when he says ‘we know what it is to fear the Lord.’ What does this ‘fear’ motivate us to do? Why?

Describe Paul’s basic argument in verses 12-15. What is the basis of salvation? Who saves? How?

Explain what is going on in verse 17. How does one become ‘new’? What does this look like?

Define ‘reconcile’ from verse 18. Look it up. What does it mean that we are reconciled to God?

Define ‘ambassador.’ Look it up. What does an ambassador do? From vv 11-21, what message do Jesus’ ambassadors declare? Why?

'Considering The Text' QUESTIONS Continued:

What does the word 'ministry' mean? Look it up. What possible responses to this ministry can be expected?

As Christ's ambassadors, how can our homes be used as 'embassies'? How might this look?

Look up the word 'extraterritoriality.' Write out the definition here.

As embassies, if we think of our homes as enjoying 'extraterritoriality,' how might it be expressed in our particular neighborhood?

Explain how verse 21 summarizes Jesus' story, our identity, and life in the Kingdom of God.

Personal Reflection

What do you believe God is asking you to RECEIVE and BELIEVE from this passage?

Which EMOTIONS are stirred up in you as a result of studying this passage?

How will you LIVE differently having been confronted with the truth of this passage?

What do you believe is the MAIN THEME of this passage? Briefly describe the life of ministry.

Which VERSE was especially meaningful to you? Write it on a memory card & keep it for reference.

PART II: Embracing the Gospel ...

Lesson 2 – Basic Life Implications of the Good News

Meeting 4

Discovering Our Story

Meeting 5

Putting On Our New Identity

Meeting 6

Advancing the Kingdom

Goal: *To help you develop skills that will enable you to articulate how your life story fits within Jesus' story, how your particular identity changes once you trust Jesus, and how you live out this new identity in the Kingdom of God.*

Objectives:

One: Explore how our life story changes when we meet and believe in Jesus.

Two: Investigate various Bible passages to learn about our new identity.

Three: Consider how our identity can most naturally be lived out in God's Kingdom.

Seeing our Story in Jesus' Story

Jesus' story is paramount to our understanding of the Gospel. Developing the ability to see how our life story is born – and develops – under the shadow of Jesus' story is also important. The three lessons of PART II explore basic issues relating to our story, our identity, and our kingdom fit.

Your Story:

We remember Jesus' story – His life, death, resurrection, ascension, return – as we see how our story fits in it. Consider your story on several levels: you as a child of your parents, a sibling, a disciple of Jesus, a member of the Village, a resident of Tucson, a US citizen. Strive to explain how Jesus' story intersects with yours: forgiveness of sin, daily living, hope of eternal life, etc.

Your Identity:

We remember who God is – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – as we consider the new identity He offers us when we trust Him. Consider your new identity on several levels: your particular brokenness, how Jesus is restoring you, the lies that hook you, and the false identities that snare you. Explore the unique identity given to you that combats the false identity and lies particular to your story.

Your Kingdom:

We remember God's Kingdom and reign – advancing today in the world and in our lives - as we consider how we might best live out our new identity. Consider how you are wired, what you are doing when you experience the pleasure of God in you, how you best serve God as you.

PART II:

MEETING 4 – Seeing Our Story In Jesus’ Story ...

Note From Eric

We’re all made up of stories, from what we eat to the movies we like to watch, from the kinds of friends we enjoy to the things we think about when we’re alone. All these elements and more arise from specific events that have happened in our lives and the ways we have responded to them. Our brokenness and sin is unique to our own story, as is the impact of the gospel and our identity in the kingdom. The purpose of this section is that we would be able to articulate who we are and how this weaves into the story of Christ. This will give us the ability to better understand how pervasive the effects of the gospel are in our own lives and the tools to tell those around us how the gospel applies to their stories.

Below are selected passages that help us think about how our life story intersects with, changes direction, and is transformed by Jesus’ story.

What To Do: Set aside at least one (1) full hour to complete this lesson before Pilgrim Group meeting.

Pray, asking the Holy Spirit to lead you into truth.

Next, read the passage slowly and silently several times.

Further, remain open to what He is revealing to you.

Finally, based on the passage, answer each question in the ‘Considering the Text’ and ‘Personal Reflection’ sections.

Philippians 3:3-11 – A Story Within A Story

3:3 For we are the circumcision, the ones who worship by the Spirit of God, exult in Christ Jesus, and do not rely on human credentials 3:4 – though mine too are significant. If someone thinks he has good reasons to put confidence in human credentials, I have more: 3:5 I was circumcised on the eighth day, from the people of Israel and the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews. I lived according to the law as a Pharisee. 3:6 In my zeal for God I persecuted the church. According to the righteousness stipulated in the law I was blameless. 3:7 But these assets I have come to regard as liabilities because of Christ. 3:8 More than that, I now regard all things as liabilities compared to the far greater value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things – indeed, I regard them as dung! – that I may gain Christ, 3:9 and be found in him, not because I have my own righteousness derived from the law, but because I have the righteousness that comes by way of Christ’s faithfulness – a righteousness from God that is in fact based on Christ’s faithfulness. 3:10 My aim is to know him, to experience the power of his resurrection, to share in his sufferings, and to be like him in his death, 3:11 and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.

Considering The Text – Seeing Our Story In Jesus' Story ...

'Considering The Text' QUESTIONS:

Look at verse 3. Describe what Paul means by “we who worship by the Spirit of God are the ones who are truly circumcised.”

Why is having 'confidence in human effort' a problem for Paul? Explain.

Describe what 'human effort' looks like for Paul.

What does 'human effort' look like for you? How has it hindered or helped your spiritual life?

Paul describes his story in detail both as a non-Christian and as a Christian. What was the event or process that caused his spiritual life to change trajectory? Explain.

'Considering The Text' QUESTIONS:

In a page or less, write out your story. Include brief details about what makes you who you are. Where are you from? How did your family and context shape you? What issues do you have? What event or process changed the trajectory of your life? How did your story intersect with Jesus' story?

Personal Application

What do you believe God is asking you to RECEIVE and BELIEVE from this passage?

Which EMOTIONS are stirred up in you as a result of studying this passage?

How will you LIVE differently having been confronted with the truth of this passage?

Which VERSE was especially meaningful to you? Write it on a memory card & keep it for reference.

MEETING 5 – Putting On Our New Identity ...

Below are selected passages that help us think about how our life story has shaped us in particular ways and has given us many false identities which foster unbelief and hinder us from embracing the freedom and joy that the Gospel offers us.

What To Do: Set aside at least one (1) full hour to complete this lesson before Pilgrim Group meeting.

Pray, asking the Holy Spirit to lead you into truth.

Next, read the passage slowly and silently several times.

Further, remain open to what He is revealing to you.

Finally, based on the passage, answer each question in the 'Considering the Text' and 'Personal Reflection' sections.

1 Corinthians 6:9-11

6:9 Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived! The sexually immoral, idolaters, adulterers, passive homosexual partners, practicing homosexuals, 6:10 thieves, the greedy, drunkards, the verbally abusive, and swindlers will not inherit the kingdom of God. 6:11 Some of you once lived this way. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

1 Peter 2:1-3, 9-10

2:1 So get rid of all evil and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander. 2:2 And yearn like newborn infants for pure, spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up to salvation, 2:3 if you have experienced the Lord's kindness. 2:9 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of his own, so that you may proclaim the virtues of the one who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. 2:10 You once were not a people, but now you are God's people. You were shown no mercy, but now you have received mercy.

Considering The Text – Putting On Our New Identity ...

'Considering The Text QUESTIONS:

Look at the 1 Corinthians 6:9-10. Paul describes a list of strongholds. They are 'identity builders' and 'shame producers'.

Describe your particular brokenness: Write out a few former or present strongholds with which you wrestle. Where did you come from? What has shaped you and made you who you are? What past identity (s) defined you? Why? What are the lies that hook you? Which false identities snare you?

What does Paul say in verse 11? How does God give us a new identity? What is the basis of this new identity? What IS this new identity?

What does Peter say about who we are? What are the implications of this new standing?

Describe your particular restoration: How has God washed and cleansed you? How is Jesus restoring you? What particular identity and uniqueness is Jesus restoring in you?

What is the unique identity the Holy Spirit is building in you that counters and combats the false identities and lies of your past life?

'Considering The Text' QUESTIONS Continued:

How do these false identities and lies compete with the new identity Jesus offers today?

The simple bottom line: Why did Jesus die?

What identity does Jesus offer you today?

Will you embrace it?

How might our victory over false identities and lies help us to engage others with the Gospel?

What sense or rumor does Peter give about how our new identity is expressed in God's Kingdom?

Personal Reflections

What do you believe God is asking you to RECEIVE and BELIEVE from this passage?

Which EMOTIONS are stirred up in you as a result of studying this passage?

How will you LIVE differently having been confronted with the truth of this passage?

Which VERSE was especially meaningful to you? Write it on a memory card & keep it for reference.

MEETING 6 – Advancing God’s Kingdom . . .

Below are selected passages that help us think about how our story and new particular identity qualify us in unique ways to serve God and express His image like only we can.

What To Do: Set aside at least one (1) full hour to complete this lesson before Pilgrim Group meeting.

Pray, asking the Holy Spirit to lead you into truth.

Next, read the passage slowly and silently several times.

Further, remain open to what He is revealing to you.

Finally, based on the passage, answer each question in the ‘Considering the Text’ and ‘Personal Reflection’ sections.

Matthew 28:18-20 – The Big Gig

28:18 Then Jesus came up and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 28:19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, 28:20 teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

Acts 1:8 – Jesus Last Words

1:8 “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the farthest parts of the earth.”

Romans 12 – Alive and Sacrificing

12:1 Therefore I exhort you, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a sacrifice – alive, holy, and pleasing to God – which is your reasonable service. 12:2 Do not be conformed to this present world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may test and approve what is the will of God – what is good and well-pleasing and perfect. 12:3 For by the grace given to me I say to every one of you not to think more highly of yourself than you ought to think, but to think with sober discernment, as God has distributed to each of you a measure of faith. 12:4 For just as in one body we have many members, and not all the members serve the same function, 12:5 so we who are many are one body in Christ, and individually we are members who belong to one another. 12:6 And we have different gifts according to the grace given to us. If the gift is prophecy, that individual must use it in proportion to his faith. 12:7 If it is service, he must serve; if it is teaching, he must teach; 12:8 if it is exhortation, he must exhort; if it is contributing, he must do so with sincerity; if it is leadership, he must do so with diligence; if it is showing mercy, he must do so with cheerfulness. 12:9 Love must be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil, cling to what is good. 12:10 Be devoted to one another with mutual love, showing eagerness in honoring one another. 12:11 Do not lag in zeal, be enthusiastic in spirit, serve the Lord. 12:12 Rejoice in hope, endure in suffering, persist in prayer. 12:13 Contribute to the needs of the saints, pursue hospitality. 12:14 Bless those who persecute you, bless and do not curse. 12:15 Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. 12:16 Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty but associate with the lowly. Do not be conceited. 12:17 Do not repay anyone evil for evil; consider what is good before all people. 12:18 If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all people. 12:19 Do not avenge yourselves, dear friends, but give place to God’s wrath, for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay,” says the Lord. 12:20 Rather, if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in doing this you will be heaping burning coals on his head. 12:21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Considering The Text – Advancing God’s Kingdom . . .

‘Considering The Text’ QUESTIONS:

What do the three passages (Matthew 28, Acts 1, and Romans 12) have in common? Describe.

What are the particular themes of each one? Write them out here.

In Matthew 28:19, the main verb is ‘make’ and ‘go’ should be read as ‘going.’ The sense is, “In your going, make disciples ...” How does this change the way you think about, understand, and obey Jesus command?

In Acts 1, Jesus focuses on ‘power’ (dunamis, same word dynamite is named after). From what source does this power come? What does it enable us to do? What is your experience with it?

Consider Romans. What does Paul mean that we should offer ourselves as ‘alive sacrifices’? Is he making a connection with sacrifices in the Old Testament? How does this look today for us?

'Considering The Text' QUESTIONS Continued:

What is the main message Paul is conveying in the rest of chapter 12? Write it out.

Using Romans 12 as a guide, consider these questions: How are you wired? What are doing when you feel the pleasure of God in you? How are you set apart? What do you put on? Who is greatest in God's Kingdom?

In light of these three passages, how are you living out your identity in God's Kingdom? Write a brief paragraph about how it looks.

How might 'making disciples' and 'being witnesses' look different in different cultures such as Japan, Nepal, or Kenya? What aspects should flex and which should remain untouched?

In what ways might living out your identity in God's Kingdom change over time? Could/should it?

Personal Reflections

What do you believe God is asking you to RECEIVE and BELIEVE from this passage?

Which EMOTIONS are stirred up in you as a result of studying this passage?

How will you LIVE differently having been confronted with the truth of this passage?

Which VERSE was especially meaningful to you? Write it on a memory card & keep it for reference.

PART III: Advancing the Gospel ...

Lesson 3 – Basic Approach to Engaging Others with the Good News

Meeting 7

Context, Culture, City

Meeting 8

Connecting Friends to Jesus

Goal: *To help you develop skills that will enable you to exegete – draw out the meaning of – your context, culture, and city in order to prepare you to engage your friends with the Gospel.*

Objectives:

One: Reflect on how our context, culture, and city shape us, how we shape it, and how our understanding of it equips us to communicate the Good News.

Two: Prayerfully consider our friends and those around us and investigate how we can best engage them relationally and connect them with Jesus.

Advancing the Gospel of Jesus

Jesus came not to be served but to serve and give His life as a ransom for all (Mark 10:45). At the core, God is concerned with increasing His glory by redeeming fallen sinners. To accomplish this action, God sends the Son who redeems, and the Son sends the Spirit who applies Jesus' redemption. And we have an integral role. God chooses to use us to be heralds and ambassadors of His kingdom. He makes His appeal through us as we plead with friends and neighbors to be reconciled to God. We have a responsibility to be messengers of the Good News. It is an exciting task but one that requires the strength and beauty of the local community for success: we have differing gifts that the Spirit coalesces to engage and gather His people from death to life.

Part three focuses upon building each of us into students of our culture and the people within it and equipping each other with a basic approach to engage friends and neighbors with the Gospel.

Your Context:

We remember the history of redemption – with its various cultures and peoples – as we consider the point in time and location God has placed us. Consider how your context has shaped you, how you might shape it, and how you may use knowledge of your cultural context to effectively engage others with the Gospel of Jesus.

Your Friends:

We remember God's heart – to seek and save the lost – as we engage our friends and neighbors with the Gospel. Consider that God has ordained the time and place, the life circumstance and details of your life to uniquely enable you to participate in his mission. How are you wired? What strengths do you have? Who can shore up your weaknesses? What part can you play in God's mission?

PART III: Since, then, we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade others. - Peter

MEETING 7 – Context, Culture, City . . .

Below are selected passages that help us think about how God has worked in the past, how our context, culture, and city shape us, how we shape it, and how our understanding of it equips us to communicate the Good News.

What To Do: Set aside at least one (1) full hour to complete this lesson before Pilgrim Group meeting.

Pray, asking the Holy Spirit to lead you into truth.

Next, read the passage slowly and silently several times.

Further, remain open to what He is revealing to you.

Finally, based on the passage, answer each question in the ‘Considering the Text’ and ‘Personal Reflection’ sections.

Acts 17:16-34 – Engaging The Local Culture With The Gospel . . .

17:16 While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, his spirit was greatly upset because he saw the city was full of idols. 17:17 So he was addressing the Jews and the God-fearing Gentiles in the synagogue, and in the marketplace every day those who happened to be there. 17:18 Also some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers were conversing with him, and some were asking, “What does this foolish babbler want to say?” Others said, “He seems to be a proclaimer of foreign gods.” (They said this because he was proclaiming the good news about Jesus and the resurrection.) 17:19 So they took Paul and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, “May we know what this new teaching is that you are proclaiming? 17:20 For you are bringing some surprising things to our ears, so we want to know what they mean.” 17:21 (All the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there used to spend their time⁷⁷ in nothing else than telling⁷⁸ or listening to something new.) 17:22 So Paul stood before the Areopagus and said, “Men of Athens, I see that you are very religious in all respects. 17:23 For as I went around and observed closely your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: ‘To an unknown god.’ Therefore what you worship without knowing it, this I proclaim to you. 17:24 The God who made the world and everything in it, who is Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by human hands, 17:25 nor is he served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives life and breath and everything to everyone. 17:26 From one man he made every nation of the human race to inhabit the entire earth, determining their set times and the fixed limits of the places where they would live, 17:27 so that they would search for God and perhaps grope around for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us. 17:28 For in him we live and move about and exist, as even some of your own poets have said, ‘For we too are his offspring.’ 17:29 So since we are God’s offspring, we should not think the deity is like gold or silver or stone, an image made by human skill and imagination. 17:30 Therefore, although God has overlooked such times of ignorance, he now commands all people everywhere to repent, 17:31 because he has set a day on which he is going to judge the world in righteousness, by a man whom he designated, having provided proof to everyone by raising him from the dead.” 17:32 Now when they heard about the resurrection from the dead, some began to scoff, but others said, “We will hear you again about this.” 17:33 So Paul left the Areopagus. 17:34 But some people joined him and believed. Among them were Dionysius, who was a member of the Areopagus, a woman named Damaris, and others with them.

Considering The Text – Context, Culture, City . . .

‘Considering The Text’ QUESTIONS:

In verse 16, Paul is ‘greatly distressed.’ What does this mean? Look it up. Write it out:

Why did the idols in Athens spark this response in Paul? What did Paul do with it? Why? What was the result?

Reflect on Tucson. What idols are here? What gut response do they spark in you? Why? What will you do in response to it?

Paul first went the “church” (God-fearers) to discuss what he was seeing. In your Pilgrim Group, discuss Tucson idols, how they influence you, and how you participate in their worship.

Use the Internet to learn about Epicurean and Stoic philosophy. Do you know any people who are like the Stoics and Epicureans. What has been their response to the Gospel.

'Considering The Text' QUESTIONS Continued:

List out all the different responses you have heard regarding Jesus and the Gospel.

Describe how Paul talked about the Gospel's 3 aspects (story, identity, kingdom).

List out the various ways Paul used his knowledge of the Greek culture to make the Gospel more understandable to his hearers.

What reasons may Paul have had for focusing mostly on God, and not on Jesus and the Spirit?

Describe how Paul presents who God is. Make a list. Now, briefly research Zeus. How do the two compare and contrast? What most strikes you?

If Acts 17 was about Paul visiting Tucson today, how might the details be different? What idols would Paul address? How would he present God? How would Paul describe you, your relationships, and your involvement in the culture?

Personal Reflection

What do you believe God is asking you to RECEIVE and BELIEVE from this passage?

Which EMOTIONS are stirred up in you as a result of studying this passage?

How will you LIVE differently having been confronted with the truth of this passage?

Which VERSE was especially meaningful to you? Write it on a memory card & keep it for reference.

MEETING 8 – Connecting Friends to Jesus . . .

Below are selected passages that help us think about how the Holy Spirit leads, guides, and directs us into his mission. Space in our lives, sensitivity to His leading, and obedience to his prodding are key.

What To Do: Set aside at least one (1) full hour to complete this lesson before Pilgrim Group meeting.

Pray, asking the Holy Spirit to lead you into truth.

Next, read the passage slowly and silently several times.

Further, remain open to what He is revealing to you.

Finally, based on the passage, answer each question in the ‘Considering the Text’ and ‘Personal Reflection’ sections.

Acts 8: 26-40 – The Holy Spirit Leads Us Into Mission

8:26 Then an angel of the Lord said to Philip, “Get up and go south on the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.” (This is a desert road.) 8:27 So he got up and went. There he met an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasury. He had come to Jerusalem to worship, 8:28 and was returning home, sitting in his chariot, reading the prophet Isaiah. 8:29 Then the Spirit said to Philip, “Go over and join this chariot.” 8:30 So Philip ran up to it and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. He asked him, “Do you understand what you’re reading?” 8:31 The man replied, “How in the world can I, unless someone guides me?” So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. 8:32 Now the passage of scripture the man was reading was this: “He was led like a sheep to slaughter, and like a lamb before its shearer is silent, so he did not open his mouth. 8:33 In humiliation justice was taken from him. Who can describe his posterity? For his life was taken away from the earth.” 8:34 Then the eunuch said to Philip, “Please tell me, who is the prophet saying this about – himself or someone else?” 8:35 So Philip started speaking, and beginning with this scripture proclaimed the good news about Jesus to him. 8:36 Now as they were going along the road, they came to some water, and the eunuch said, “Look, there is water! What is to stop me from being baptized?” 8:38 So he ordered the chariot to stop, and both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and Philip baptized him. 8:39 Now when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him any more, but went on his way rejoicing. 8:40 Philip, however, found himself at Azotus, and as he passed through the area, he proclaimed the good news to all the towns until he came to Caesarea.

Acts 16:11-15 – Paul Connects People To Jesus

16:11 We put out to sea from Troas⁴ and sailed a straight course to Samothrace, the next day to Neapolis, 16:12 and from there to Philippi, which is a leading city of that district of Macedonia, a Roman colony. We stayed in this city for some days. 16:13 On the Sabbath day we went outside the city gate to the side of the river, where we thought there would be a place of prayer, and we sat down and began to speak to the women who had assembled there. 16:14 A woman named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth from the city of Thyatira, a God-fearing woman, listened to us. The Lord opened her heart to respond to what Paul was saying. 16:15 After she and her household were baptized, she urged us, “If you consider me to be a believer in the Lord, come and stay in my house.” And she persuaded us.

Considering The Text – Connecting Friends to Jesus . . .

‘Considering The Text’ QUESTIONS:

How is the Holy Spirit active in the story recorded in Acts 8? Why is this activity important?

What is the particular result?

How does Philip respond to the Holy Spirit? What would it have looked like had he not listened to and obeyed the Spirit?

Read Acts 16:6-10. Describe what is happening to Paul. How is the Holy Spirit active here?

What are similar features of both stories? What gut response does the Holy Spirit’s leadership prompt within you?

Describe some of your own experiences when God spoke to you and/or led you into His mission. What happened? How did you respond? What didn’t happen? What could have happened had you responded in a different way?

Reflect on your sphere of influence and the circles you’re in. Who do you interact with

'Considering The Text' QUESTIONS Continued:

regularly? Cashiers. Bank tellers. Teachers. Moms. Co-workers. Students. Neighbors.

Who is the Holy Spirit specifically bringing to mind right now? Write down their names and how you know them. What is He asking you to do about or with them?

Considering what you know about them, how might Jesus' story intersect with their story in a unique way? How might you help them see it?

What would they be really good at offering God's kingdom on earth? Explain.

Reflect back on the February Drumming Circle. What did you learn about praying for your not-yet-Christian friends that is particularly helpful to you as you begin to think and act missionally with these friends?

Spend some time sharing their story in your group and praying specifically for them using the 'prayer tools' from February's Drumming Circle.

Personal Reflection

What do you believe God is asking you to RECEIVE and BELIEVE from this passage?

Which EMOTIONS are stirred up in you as a result of studying this passage?

How will you LIVE differently having been confronted with the truth of this passage?

Which VERSE was especially meaningful to you? Write it on a memory card & keep it for reference.

(Appendix 1): Your Identity In The Kingdom

MY RELATIONSHIP

I am reconciled to God - 2 Cor 5:18
I'm a child of God - He is my Father - 1 Jn 3:1,2
I am a saint - Eph 1:1; 1 Cor 1:2; Phil 1:1
I am Christ's friend - Jn 15:15
I am a fellow citizen in God's kingdom - Eph 2:19
I am born of God - 1 Jn 4:7
I have been brought near to Christ - Eph 2:13
I have been adopted by God - Rom 8:15
I'm to be righteous and holy like God - Eph 4:24
I have direct access to God - Eph 2:18

MY INHERITANCE

I am a citizen of heaven - Phil 3:20
I am an heir of God - Rom 8:17
I've been rescued from Satan's domain - Col 1:13
I am a joint heir with Christ - Rom 8:17; Gal 4:7
I am hidden with Christ in God - Col 3:3
I am blessed with every spiritual blessing - Eph 1:3
I am chosen of God - holy, beloved - Col 3:12
I am a child of promise - Rom 9:8; Gal 3:14
I am a child of light, not darkness - 1 Thess 5:5
I've been given great promises - 2 Pet 1:4
I am a partaker of Christ - Heb 3:14
I'm one of God's living stones - 1 Pet 2:5

MY TRANSFORMATION

I'm a member of a royal priesthood - 1 Pet 2:9
I'm redeemed and forgiven - Eph 1:6-8
I'm to be a stranger to this world - 1 Pet 2:11
I've been justified - made righteous - Rom 5:1
I'm an enemy of the devil - 1 Pet 5:8
I have eternal life - Jn 5:24
I died w/Christ to the power of sin - Rom 6:1-6

MY CALLING

I am free from condemnation - Rom 8:1
I am to be salt on the earth - Mt 5:13
I have received the Spirit of God - 1 Cor 2:12
I am to be light in the world - Mt 5:14
I have been given the mind of Christ - 1 Cor 2:16
I'm chosen and appointed to bear fruit - Jn 15:16
I have been crucified with Christ - Gal 2:20
I am called to do the works of Christ - Jn 14:12
I am a new creation - 2 Cor 5:17

MY CALLING CONTINUED

I am to do what Christ commanded His disciples - Mt 28:20
I have been made alive with Christ - Eph 2:5
I have been given spiritual authority - Lk 10:19
I am God's workmanship - Eph 2:10
Signs should accompany my work - Mk 16:17-20
I have received fullness in Christ - Col 2:10
I am a minister of a new covenant - 2 Cor 3:6
I am a minister of reconciliation - 2 Cor 5:18,19

MY POSITION

I am to be an expression of life in Christ - Col 3:4
I am connected to the true vine - Jn 15:1,5
I am a partaker of a heavenly calling - Heb 3:1
I'm a willing slave of righteousness - Rom 6:18,22
I am a temple of God - 1 Cor 3:16; 6:19
I am one spirit with the Lord - 1 Cor 6:17
I am a member of Christ's body - 1 Cor 12:27

(Appendix 2) Intro to Pilgrim Groups

The Village Pilgrimage...

The spiritual disciplines create a path from our physical, material world into the new world of the kingdom of God, a world which is breaking in around us. On this path, we learn to think about and respond rightly to God. We open space in our lives to become aware of God interacting with us. We begin to see his beauty unfolding in and around us, and His work accomplished through us. This is the pilgrimage we are presently undertaking.

This Village journey has several objectives: first, to further develop community within the Village. Pilgrim Groups are a specific discipleship structure of the Village, and we ask that people who participate in them be active participants in the community, attending worship services at the Village and so forth during their time in the Pilgrim Group. Within this context, the Pilgrim Group is designed for the practice of some of the disciplines of the faith together (these may vary depending on the topic & structure of the particular study & group); to discuss our sexuality in healthy ways; to confess sin, pray for each other, and experience healing; to develop leaders (if you are part of a Pilgrim Group, you should expect to lead one in the future); to grow in knowledge and application of the Bible; and finally, to further the discussion of our vocation in the Kingdom of God.

The Gospel Study...

This particular Pilgrim Group study is focused on becoming acquainted in new ways with the gospel. We will consider it in the context of Scripture and as it applies to our lives and the lives of those around us. As we do this, we will study and discuss passages of the New Testament. We will also utilize the Hot Seat model which helps us to invite each other into a fuller experience of the gospel in our particular circumstances. We will explore new ways of praying together and tell our stories to each other.

The Discussion...

In response to another person's sharing, group members should refrain from giving advice or telling their own stories as a way of instruction. This is a time to pursue one another by asking open-ended questions and practicing active listening. Try to use clarifying statements like, "What do you mean by _____?" or, "Tell me more about _____." Instead of offering answers to people's problems, consider praying together with the laying on of hands as a default solution.

The Confession...

Confession is about our struggle to live "in the world but not of the world." This may include admitting to overt sins, but it may just as well be telling other people about our worldly patterns of thought that need to be transformed (Romans 12:1-2). Any way of thought or action that is not based on God's goodness and the life to which He calls us is fair game for confession. This should be followed by people praying for the confessee, as in James 5:16 and 1 John 1:9. God wants to renew our minds, and He does this when we ask in prayer. Sometimes areas of sin in our life seem subtle, or we hold them in denial, so conversation in your pilgrim group may also include helping guide someone toward seeing their own hidden sin and the impact it has. We need to be open to the voices of people in our community as they gently point out areas that need to be healed.

Discussing Sexuality...

As we consider our stories and tell each other about the experiences which have shaped us, our sexuality may be an evident force. God has designed us as sexual beings. Sexuality, however, which He created for good, has been twisted and abused in the dark world around us. We are each in the process of growing into wholeness in this area of our lives. Some of us struggle with addictions to pornography, some have long histories of sexual abuse, some have lived sexually impure lives, and most of us struggle to reconcile the worldly messages about sexuality with our own bodies, desires, and experiences.

As we seek to better understand God's view of sexuality and to become more comfortable with our sexual selves in Christ, it is important for us to create a safe space for each other where we can head toward the freedom from shame which God offers. Please honor sensitive conversations with appropriate confidentiality as well as gentle, active listening.