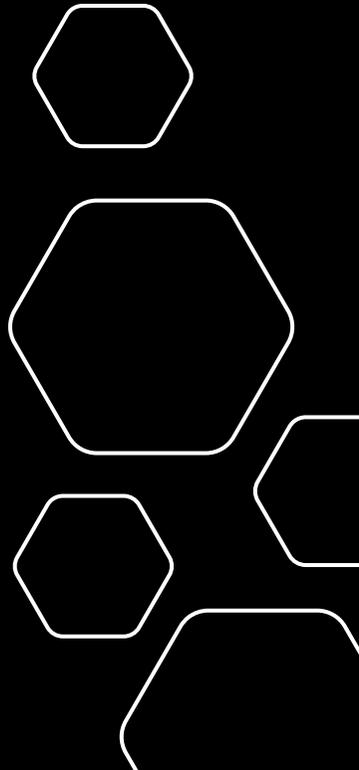




REALIZE YOUR
ROLE
— IN GOD'S —
STORY

PART GREEN:
GROWTH



This Journal Belongs to



Name



Email



Phone



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Printed in the United States of America

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Introduction

The journal you hold in your hands is an opportunity to have a daily encounter with the Creator of all things. It is an invitation to realize your role in God's story by pursuing him beyond Sunday mornings. This 18-week experience is one of six sessions over a three-year period that will cover the **7 parts of the story** as well as **9 essential roles** that Jesus invites us to play.

Each week begins with notes from the Sunday morning message. If you are not able to attend, you can catch the service live on Facebook or view it at mountainpark.org. Then, starting each Monday, there are five **Daily Encounters** that will expand on the message from that week. These are short and sweet and end with a simple prayer.

Each week also provides a guideline for a **Conversation**. It is a profound experience to share with others and to hear from others. Feel free to have this conversation with friends, family or one of many groups here at Mountain Park Church.

There is an amazing story of adventure and redemption that is going on around all of us, and that story centers on the person of Jesus. The incredible reality is that you and I are actually invited INTO that story!

7 PARTS OF THE STORY



I. Foundation

Timeline: creation - 930 B.C.

Scope: The beginning of the story through King Solomon

Summary: This is essentially the first half of the Old Testament. It covers the development and rise of the nation of Israel. God lays the foundation of his relationship with his people. This is a time of prosperity, leading up to King David and then King Solomon.

II. Exodus

Timeline: 930 - 6 B.C.

Scope: From the division of the Kingdom through the major and minor prophets

Summary: It covers the downfall of the nation of Israel. The central story is the Exile out of the Promised Land. Through the prophets, God warned his people prior to the Exile then comforted them after.

III. Messiah

Timeline: 6 B.C. - 30 A.D.

Scope: The story of Jesus, found in the four gospels

Summary: This is the crux of the story. It covers the life, teachings, death and resurrection of the Messiah.





IV. Revolution

Timeline: 30 - 100 A.D.

Scope: The story of Acts and the biblical letters

Summary: This is basically the second half of the New Testament. Once the followers of Jesus became filled with the Holy Spirit, they continued a revolution of love that spread from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth.

V. Church

Timeline: 100 - 2000 A.D.

Scope: 2000 years of church history

Summary: We cannot leap from the biblical story to now. Through many mistakes and great courage, the church has shaped the world. We cannot understand our current situation without exploring how we got here.

VI. Unwritten

Timeline: now

Scope: The decisions we have made, are making and will make

Summary: This grand story is not just ancient history. It continues and we all get to play a significant role in it. Our relationships, our sacrifices and our opportunities are important elements in this story.

VII. End

Timeline: unknown

Scope: Glimpses of the end of the story

Summary: There are many unknowns about the timing and the order of events at the end of the story, but the Creator has given us hints, and we are wise to pay attention to them.



9 ESSENTIAL ROLES

*nine
nine
nine*

1

Patient

We are broken. Trusting that Christ alone can make us whole, we freely admit our own brokenness and place our lives in his hands.

LUKE 5:31

*Patient
Follower
Worshipper*



2

Follower

We are all in. Holding nothing back, we will pursue his presence, prioritize his Word and align every area of our lives with his loving leadership.

MARK 8:34-35

3

Worshipper

We give God our full attention. This is more than just singing on Sunday mornings; this is rooting ourselves in the reality of his goodness.

DEUTERONOMY 6:5



4

Grace-giver

We pass it on. We humbly extend the same grace and forgiveness Jesus shows us.

COLOSSIANS 3:13

5

Truth-teller

We communicate well. It starts by listening and responding well. We also boldly speak the truth, whether it's challenging or encouraging.

JAMES 1:19

6

People-lover

We do life together. Committed to building community, we will inconvenience ourselves to initiate and deepen relationships with others.

JOHN 13:34-35

*Grace-giver
Truth-teller
People-lover*

7

Giver

We are generous. If we are not sure about our faith or our future, we can delay or avoid this role. But if we are committed to Jesus as Lord, this is the most wonderfully tangible role of them all.

MATTHEW 6:21

8

Servant

We are actively involved. We don't "attend" church; we are the church. We seek out and care for the physical, spiritual and emotional needs of others.

MARK 10:45

9

Witness

We have a story to tell. Witnesses do not describe what others have seen or heard; they share what they have personally experienced. The most compelling and inspirational story we can tell is our own.

ACTS 1:8

*Giver
Servant
Witness*



UNNATURAL

WEEK
11

PART 2

Receiving Grace

Receiving Grace

HEBREWS 4:16

Before we challenge ourselves to be extravagant givers of grace, let's reflect on why grace is so powerful. If you have ever been shown tremendous grace, how did that affect you? Perhaps this can be inspiring as we explore the Unnatural habit of extending grace to others.



NOTES

A large grid of dotted lines for taking notes, consisting of 20 rows and 20 columns of dots.

Monday



But Joseph said to them, "Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. So then, don't be afraid. I will provide for you and your children." And he reassured them and spoke kindly to them.

GENESIS 50:19-21

This was Joseph's response to his brothers who had sold him into slavery. What do you think the brothers were expecting from Joseph at this moment?

Do you identify more easily with Joseph or his brothers? Why?

Tuesday



But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?" EXODUS 3:11

Forty years earlier, Moses foolishly took the law into his own hands and killed an Egyptian - disqualifying him from the role as liberator of the Israelites. But God is offering him a second chance. How do you think Moses has changed?

If you felt as unqualified as Moses did, what would it take for you to embrace the role and head back to rescue the Israelites?

WEEK 11: RECEIVING GRACE

DAILY ENCOUNTERS

Wednesday



When the trumpets sounded, the army shouted, and at the sound of the trumpet, when the men gave a loud shout, the wall collapsed; so everyone charged straight in, and they took the city [Jericho].

But Joshua spared Rahab the prostitute, with her family and all who belonged to her, because she hid the men Joshua had sent as spies to Jericho—and she lives among the Israelites to this day. JOSHUA 6:20,25

Rahab played a significant role in helping the Israelites. Based on what these verses say about her, why might Rahab feel unworthy of God's grace?

Is there part of your story that makes you feel unworthy of God's grace?

In what ways do you think Rahab may have matured through her involvement with the Israelite spies?

Thursday



When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today." So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly. All the people saw this and began to mutter, "He has gone to be the guest of a sinner." But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount." LUKE 19:5-8

Why did Zacchaeus respond so generously to the presence of Jesus in his home?

What does this story tell us about the power of grace?

If you were shown significant grace by someone today, what might it look like for you to respond extravagantly?

Friday



"We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong." Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."

Jesus answered him, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise."

LUKE 23:41-43

This is part of the conversation between two criminals who hung on crosses next to Jesus. Why do you think Jesus chose to give such grace to this man?

There is no record of how this man responded to the words of Jesus. What do you think he might have said?

Prayer



Father, help me understand the power of grace. Help me understand the magnitude of the grace you offer me so that I can increasingly be motivated to offer grace to others. Your mercy has changed me; allow my mercy to change others. Amen.

CONVERSATION

Seed

- • • Have you ever been cut from a team, overlooked for a promotion, or missed out on an opportunity that you were excited about?
- • • How would it have felt if someone came to you afterward and said, "There's been a mistake. You've made it. You're in. Congratulations!?" Do you think you would appreciate it more than if you had simply made it in the first place?

Plant



The king asked, "Is there no one still alive from the house of Saul to whom I can show God's kindness?" Ziba answered the king, "There is still a son of Jonathan; he is lame in both feet. When Mephibosheth son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, came to David, he bowed down to pay him honor. David said, "Mephibosheth!" "At your service," he replied. "Don't be afraid," David said to him, "for I will surely show you kindness for the sake of your father Jonathan. I will restore to you all the land that belonged to your grandfather Saul, and you will always eat at my table." Mephibosheth bowed down and said, "What is your servant, that you should notice a dead dog like me?" II SAMUEL 9:3,6-8

- • • David followed Saul as king of Israel. Read I Samuel 18:10-11 to catch a glimpse of their relationship while Saul was still king. How might this have shaped Mephibosheth's fear?
- • • In what way was David's kindness extraordinary?
- • • Why did Mephibosheth refer to himself as a "dead dog"? Have you ever felt like a "dead dog" with no hope?
- • • How would you guess that Mephibosheth would respond once he realized that David's kindness was genuine?

Fruit

- • • Has anyone ever shown you extravagant grace? What was the situation and how did it affect you?
- • • Is there an area in your life where you would like to be shown grace? Why? What would be the benefit of receiving grace?



UNNATURAL

WEEK
12

PART 3

Being Gracious

Being Gracious

JOHN 1:14

Jesus came full of grace and truth. We naturally desire grace from others, then extend truth toward others. What would it look like to offer a cushion of grace to all we encounter? What would it look like to give people the benefit of the doubt and first assume their motives and intentions are good?



NOTES

A large grid of dotted lines for taking notes, consisting of 20 columns and 20 rows.

WEEK 12: BEING GRACIOUS

DAILY ENCOUNTERS

Monday



If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.

ROMANS 12:18

Why do you think it is important to live at peace with everyone?

How does it make you feel when you are not at peace with someone?

Do you think grace is necessary in order to live at peace with others? Why or why not?

Tuesday



Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. **COLOSSIANS 3:12**

Why do you think Paul takes time to point out that we are "God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved"?

What does it mean to clothe yourself with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience?

Which of these Godly characteristics do you struggle with the most?

WEEK 12: BEING GRACIOUS

DAILY ENCOUNTERS

Wednesday



Because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment. JAMES 2:13

Is there anyone you have withheld mercy from? Why?

Are there certain behaviors or attitudes you struggle to show mercy towards? What are they?

Who do you need to show mercy to today? No excuses!

Thursday



And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, "The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin." EXODUS 34:6-7

Underline the words used to describe God. What words would you like to define your character?

Name a time when you were not slow to anger. What was the result of losing control?

How can these truths about God help us show grace to others?

Friday



For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord bestows favor and honor; no good thing does he withhold from those whose walk is blameless.

PSALM 84:11

In what ways is God a sun and shield in your life?

What kinds of favor and honor has God given you?

If God has done this for you, what can you do to demonstrate his grace to someone else today?

WEEK
12

Prayer



Jesus, I want to be honest, sometimes it is hard to love like you, forgive like you, and be filled with compassion and grace like you. You make it seem so easy because you do it so well with each of us. I need your help responding to others as you respond to me. I know that the same Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from the dead lives in me. This means I can be compassionate, kind, humble, gentle and patient with everyone - even when I don't feel like it. Help me to be more like you. Amen.

CONVERSATION

Seed

- • • Have you ever done something nice for someone who didn't deserve it? What was your motivation?
- • • What is your first and most natural response to someone who annoys you?
- • • Is it harder to show grace to those you love the most or to strangers whom you have never met?

Plant



Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. EPHESIANS 4:29

- • • These verses provide good guidelines for being gracious with our words. How would you summarize them?
- • • Think about a conversation you are going to have today. What do you think are the needs of the other person? How can you meet them?
- • • Who should our words benefit? What would it look like to approach conversations with this in mind?
- • • What words can you say to build up those who annoy you the most?

Fruit

As children of God we are expected to show grace towards others. When we choose to speak highly of those we dislike and look for positive things to say, instead of nasty comments, it can actually change our heart (how we think and feel) for that person - which makes it easier to show mercy and grace.

- • • The concept of grace is very simple but yet so hard to do. God shows mercy and grace towards us so we should also show mercy and grace with others. Why do you think it is so hard to simply show grace?
- • • Write a note or letter to someone using Ephesians 4:29 as a guide. It doesn't have to be long, just enough to communicate something meaningful.



UNNATURAL

WEEK
13

PART 4

Giving Grace

Giving Grace

COLOSSIANS 3:12-14

The past three weeks have been a warm up to this. Offering grace and mercy to those who have wronged us is a painfully Unnatural thing to do. But scripture offers no alternative. If we want to experience spiritual growth, we must offer forgiveness to others. Their hearts need it - and so do ours.



NOTES

A large grid of dotted lines for taking notes, consisting of 20 columns and 20 rows.

Monday



Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

GALATIANS 1:3-5

These verses are at the beginning of Paul's letter to the Galatians. Why do you think he begins as he does?

According to this passage, what is the purpose of God's forgiveness?

If forgiveness helps rescue people "from the present evil age," what do you think unforgiveness does?

Tuesday



As God's co-workers we urge you not to receive God's grace in vain.

2 CORINTHIANS 6:1

Have you ever given someone a present only to find out they got rid of it, gave it away, or neglected it?

What do you think it means to "receive God's grace in vain?"

How can you be a co-worker for God's grace today?

WEEK 13: GIVING GRACE

DAILY ENCOUNTERS

Wednesday



But you, Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness. PSALM 86:15

Are these the attributes that come to mind when you think of God? If not, which ones do you tend to think of first? Why?

If you replaced the names "Lord" and "God" with your own name, how do you measure up?

What would you say to some who responded to the question above by saying, "Oh, I could never measure up to that, why try?"

Thursday



So watch yourselves. 'If your brother or sister sins against you, rebuke them; and if they repent, forgive them. Even if they sin against you seven times in a day and seven times come back to you saying 'I repent,' you must forgive them. LUKE 17:3-4

When someone sins against us, it often causes pain, hurt, and frustration. Jesus doesn't ignore those things. In fact he went through them himself. Forgiveness doesn't mean you're done hurting, it just means you're done hating. Is there any pain or hurt in your life that is keeping you from showing forgiveness?

What do you think God thinks of your pain?

Why do you think Jesus uses the word "must" when it comes to forgiveness? Is there a next step you need to take to follow this command?

Friday



Come now, let us settle the matter," says the Lord. "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool. ISAIAH 1:18

Think of someone you need to forgive. How has your unforgiveness affected you? Them? Other people?

Why do you think God uses the color red to represent sin and white as forgiveness?

What would it look like for you to tell someone else the same words that God said through Isaiah?

Prayer

God, your grace is so big and so strong that we could come to you with the longest list of mess ups and you would never think, "I can't love you." To the world, the good news of Jesus dying for me to forgive my sins may seem too good to be true, but it is good and it is true.

Help me to believe that you forgive me. But, don't let me stop there. Help me to forgive others and give them the same grace you have given me. Help me to let go of the hurt, the pain, the rejection, the gossip, the backbiting, the name calling, and the selfishness others have shown towards me. God, your grace is so big it can take on all these things and help me to forgive. Amen.

CONVERSATION

Seed

- • • Have you ever been involved in a court case of any kind? What was your part?
- • • Why do you think our country has punishments for certain crimes?
- • • Have you ever gotten away with something you should have been punished for? Was it because you were never found out or because you were shown grace? What impact did that have on you?

Plant



Who is a God like you, who pardons sin and forgives the transgression of the remnant of his inheritance? You do not stay angry forever but delight to show mercy. You will again have compassion on us; you will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea.

MICAH 7:18-19

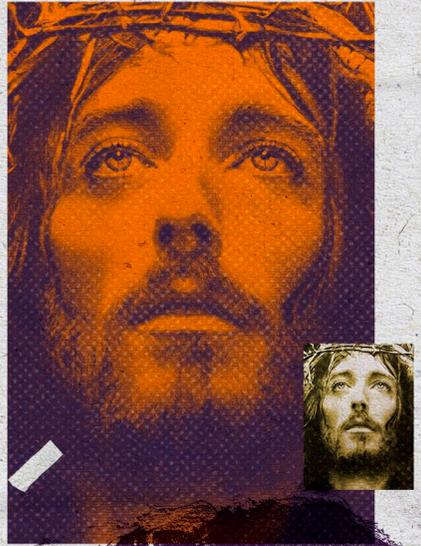
- • • God doesn't ignore our sin. While there may be things we think, feel, and do that no other person knows, there is nothing that God misses - and his response is always the same. According to these verses, what does God do with our sin?
- • • If you were to tell God about how someone had sinned against you, what are some things you think he would say?

Fruit

- • • Are there any sins you think you have gotten away with? If you are uncomfortable sharing them, take some time to write them down as a confession to the Lord. Remember how God responds to our sin.
- • • What are some relationships or circumstances where you are struggling to show forgiveness. Rewrite the second sentence of these verses in the first person ("I will not stay angry. . .") as a commitment to express God's mercy.
- • • Take some time to pray for those who have hurt you or sinned against you. You can use the prayer below or write your own.
God, please bless _____ (the person you're forgiving). Bless their relationships, their finances, their success, and above all, their relationship with you. Thank you for helping me to forgive them and bless them just like you have forgiven and blessed me.



the **CHALLENGE**
of **JESUS**



PART 1

WEEK
14

**From External
to Internal**

From External to Internal

MATTHEW 5:21-48

Jesus is the focus of all seven parts of the story and he's the perfect model of all nine roles. Through his teachings and example, he challenges us to change and grow. In the Sermon on the Mount, he repeatedly says, "You have heard that it was said... but I tell you..." He is taking us to a new place. It is one thing to alter our outward appearance and actions. It is a whole other thing to search deeply within ourselves and be transformed internally.



NOTES

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Monday



Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. ROMANS 12:9-10

How can you have sincere love for someone you dislike?

Why is "Hate what is evil; cling to what is good" in the middle of these verses about loving others?

Have you ever tried to "honor" someone else above yourself? What might that look like?

Tuesday



In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven. MATTHEW 5:16

What does it mean to "let your light shine before others"?

What is the difference between doing good works so that others will praise God, and doing them so that others will praise you?

What can you do today that would cause someone to praise God?

WEEK 14: FROM EXTERNAL TO INTERNAL

DAILY ENCOUNTERS

Wednesday



A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.

PROVERBS 15:1

What does a “gentle answer” say about what’s in your heart? A harsh answer?

Why do you think God wants us to respond to others in a way that “turns away wrath?”

What are you trying to accomplish when you answer someone harshly?

Thursday



Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much.

LUKE 16:10

What does it mean to be trusted with much?

Think about the times that you have been dishonest. What was the motivation of your heart?

Are there any lies you have told so often that you have begun to believe them yourself? Confess them to God now.

Friday



Like a city whose walls are broken through is a person who lacks self-control.

PROVERBS 25:28

What do you think might happen to a city (in biblical times) that didn't have walls?

How is a lack of self-control like a city with broken walls?

What appetites or desires do you find difficult to control?

Write a prayer that surrenders those desires to the Lord.

Prayer



Holy Spirit, I surrender to Your leadership today. Lead me to the way of love. Lead me to the way of joy. Lead me to the way of peace. Lead me to the way of patience. Grant me the courage and power to show kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, and especially self-control. Amen.

CONVERSATION

Seed

- • • What's your favorite fruit?
- • • Have you ever grown your own fruit?
- • • How does the growing environment affect the quality of fruit?

Plant



But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

GALATIANS 5:22-23

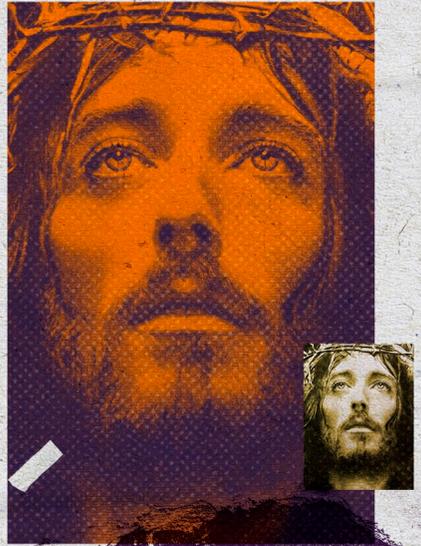
- • • Why is it important for our lives to produce good fruit?
- • • Why does this verse end with "Against such things there is no law?"
- • • How does the environment of our lives affect the quality of the fruit we bear?
- • • Read Galatians 5:13-21. What insight does this context give us about the fruit of the spirit?
- • • How are the "acts of the flesh" different than the "fruits of the spirit"?

Fruit

- • • Which of these "fruits" do you struggle with the most? Why?
- • • What lies, feelings, or attitudes of the heart might be preventing these fruits from growing?
- • • What changes to your environment can you make to improve the fruit in your life?



the **CHALLENGE**
of **JESUS**



PART 2

**From Self
to Sacrifice**

WEEK
15

From Self to Sacrifice

LUKE 9:23-25

Jesus gives a bold challenge when he asks us to “deny ourselves.” How could we possibly do that when the world tells us to “look out for number one”? The alternative Jesus offers is that we “take up our cross.” This made absolutely no sense to his disciples and remains a head-tilting plan for us today.



NOTES

A large grid of dotted lines for taking notes, consisting of 20 columns and 20 rows.

Monday



What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith. I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead. PHILIPPIANS 3:8-11

Immediately before these verses, Paul lists some qualifications that would have been very impressive to the Jews of his day. What motivated Paul to “consider them garbage”?

Do you know someone who has given something up or sacrificed something valuable in their pursuit of Jesus?

Looking at the last sentence, how should the gospel change the way we view suffering and sacrifice?

Tuesday



He told them: “Take nothing for the journey—no staff, no bag, no bread, no money, no extra shirt. Whatever house you enter, stay there until you leave that town. If people do not welcome you, leave their town and shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them.” LUKE 9:3-5

Underline all of the things Jesus told his disciples to leave behind. What were they giving up – or sacrificing – by leaving those things?

What do you think was Jesus' motivation in preventing them from taking very practical things – like an extra shirt?

How did Jesus prepare his disciples for rejection?

WEEK 15: FROM SELF TO SACRIFICE

DAILY ENCOUNTERS

Jesus called the disciples to intentionally put themselves in a position of vulnerability in order to share the gospel. What might he be calling you to give up in order to increase your dependence on him?

Wednesday



Once when Jesus was praying in private and his disciples were with him, he asked them, "Who do the crowds say I am?" They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, that one of the prophets of long ago has come back to life." "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" Peter answered, "God's Messiah." LUKE 9:18-20

Why would Jesus be interested in this opinion poll about who people think he is?

What impact do you think this confession had on Peter? How might it have impacted his decisions after Jesus had left the earth - decisions that led him to being flogged (Acts 5:41) and imprisoned (Acts 12:3-4).

Have you ever verbally confessed who you believe Jesus to be? How might that confession - that conviction - empower you to take up your cross and follow him (Luke 9:23)?

Thursday



A dispute also arose among them as to which of them was considered to be greatest. Jesus said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors. But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves." LUKE 22:24-26

This is the second time in Luke's gospel that we see the disciples arguing about who was more important (the first is in Luke 9). What does this reveal about their misconceptions about Jesus and what it means to follow him?

Are there any of those misconceptions you struggle with as well?

What might you have to sacrifice in order to become "the one who serves?"

Friday



The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. JOHN 10:10

What did Jesus have to do to give us life?

What is the difference between a hired hand and a good shepherd?

What can you do to become more like Jesus - the good shepherd - as opposed to a hired hand?

Prayer

Father God I give you all the praise for sending your son, Jesus, to die on the cross for my sins. Please expose any selfishness in my heart that is holding me back from following you wholeheartedly. Help me guard my heart against bitterness when I have selfish expectations that go unmet. Remind me daily of the joy that is found in denying myself and giving you lordship over every area of my life. Lead me to others who I can encourage to more fully surrender to Christ this week. Amen.

CONVERSATION

Seed

- • • Name a time when someone failed to meet your expectations.
- • • How did you respond?
- • • Has there ever been a time when an unmet expectation caused you to walk away from a relationship?

Plant



While Jesus was in Bethany in the home of Simon the Leper, a woman came to him with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, which she poured on his head as he was reclining at the table. When the disciples saw this, they were indignant. "Why this waste?" they asked. "This perfume could have been sold at a high price and the money given to the poor."

Aware of this, Jesus said to them, "Why are you bothering this woman? She has done a beautiful thing to me. The poor you will always have with you, but you will not always have me. When she poured this perfume on my body, she did it to prepare me for burial. Truly I tell you, wherever this gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her."

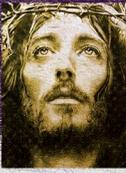
Then one of the Twelve—the one called Judas Iscariot—went to the chief priests and asked, "What are you willing to give me if I deliver him over to you?" So they counted out for him thirty pieces of silver. From then on Judas watched for an opportunity to hand him over.

MATTHEW 26:6-16

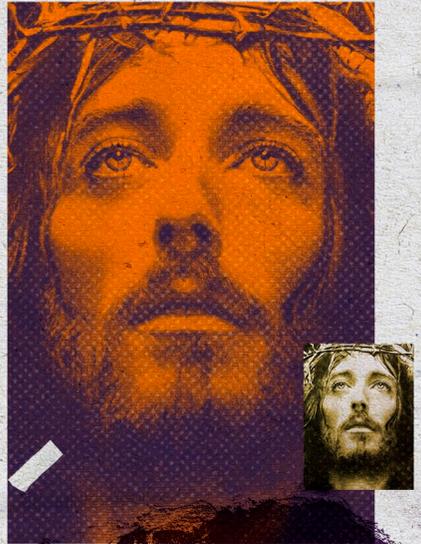
- • • How do you think Judas felt about what Jesus said and did in the home of Simon the Leper? Read John 12:4-6 for additional context.
- • • How might this scene have changed Judas' perspective on who Jesus is and whether or not to follow him? Or did it just reveal something that had been there all along?
- • • Although it says the "disciples" (plural) protested the woman's actions, only Judas made the decision to betray Jesus. Why do you think that is?

Fruit

- • • It's probably safe to say that Judas had some expectations of Jesus - and what it would be like to follow him - that didn't align with Jesus' purpose. What ideas about Jesus, or following Jesus, might you have to give up in order to fully embrace his purposes?
- • • Read Jesus' warning to the Pharisees in Luke 11:39-43. Is there anything in your heart (such as greed or self-importance) that might cause you to abandon - or even betray - Jesus?
- • • What might it look like for you to surrender all your desires and expectations to Jesus this week?



the **CHALLENGE**
of **JESUS**



PART 3

**From Safe
to Dangerous**

WEEK
16

From Safe to Dangerous

MATTHEW 14:22-33

Eleven of the twelve disciples naturally chose the safety of the boat. But Peter was the one who took a risk. Our journey with Jesus begins as a safe one. He is merciful, forgiving and welcoming to all. But in order to grow from who we are to who we could be, we must go beyond safe and trust Jesus as we take some dangerous steps.



NOTES

A large grid of dotted lines for taking notes, consisting of 20 columns and 20 rows.

Monday



Then Moses summoned Joshua and said to him in the presence of all Israel, "Be strong and courageous, for you must go with this people into the land that the Lord swore to their ancestors to give them, and you must divide it among them as their inheritance. The Lord himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged." DEUTERONOMY 31:7-8

For years, Joshua stood safely in Moses' shadow. Now, the leadership of the nation of Israel is falling on his shoulders. His first job? Lead millions of people into the land of Canaan (remembering that the last time Moses tried that they rebelled against him) and defeat numerous enemies (including a particular city with giant walls around it).

What dangers was Joshua facing as he stepped into this role?

What are some responsibilities and/or leadership roles God has given you?

What are the dangers of failing to fully walk out those responsibilities in a godly way?

Tuesday



Your path led through the sea, your way through the mighty waters, though your footprints were not seen. PSALM 77:19

Sometimes God's path leads through something that is impossible for us to get through on our own. Is there a path God is calling you to take that seems too big or too dangerous for you?

What might you be missing out on if you decide to take a different path?

What are some things we are called to do as believers that might require us to take a risk? How many of them are you doing?

WEEK 16: FROM SAFE TO DANGEROUS

DAILY ENCOUNTERS

Wednesday



Then they (the Jewish leaders) called them (Peter and John) in again and commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John replied, "Which is right in God's eyes: to listen to you, or to him? You be the judges! As for us, we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard." ACTS 4:18-20

What risks were Peter and John taking by defying the leaders of their day?

What are some ways you feel pressured - by an individual or by society in general - to compromise your faith in Jesus?

What question do Peter and John ask in response to the Sanhedrin? What can you do to remember this question when you are faced with the choice of dangerously following Jesus or playing it safe and following the dictates of this world?

Thursday



If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you. Remember what I told you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. JOHN 15:18-20

Being a follower of Jesus sometimes means we are at odds with the practices and beliefs of those around us. What are some of the things Jesus calls us to that are counter-cultural?

Jesus never shrank back from the hatred of those who opposed him. Are there ways you are refusing to follow him because you know others won't like it?

While there were those who hated Jesus, he never hated them back. Instead, he gave his life for them. What would it look like for you to take a risk and sacrificially love someone who doesn't like you?

Friday



David also said to Solomon his son, "Be strong and courageous, and do the work. Do not be afraid or discouraged, for the Lord God, my God, is with you. He will not fail you or forsake you until all the work for the service of the temple of the Lord is finished." 1 CHRONICLES 28:20

It took Solomon 20 years to build the temple. God has a plan and a purpose for you, but it will require your participation, effort, and perseverance. Spend some time in prayer and ask God if there is something - a project, ministry, volunteer role - that he would like you to commit to for 1 year. Write his answer below. If you don't hear a clear response, write down some opportunities you are aware of and comitt to praying over them.

What reservations or hesitations do you have about stepping into what God has asked of you? Underline the parts of the verse above that can help you overcome your worries.

Prayer

God, thank you for your provision over my life, and for the calling you have given me. Help me walk boldly in faith along the path you have designed specifically for me, to trust you fully, and follow you faithfully through the storms of life. When I am weak, may I keep my eyes on you. I know I can rest assured in my faith, knowing you have given me all the courage and strength I need to do the work you have called me to. May my life be a reflection of your love, and bring you honor and glory all the days of my life. Amen.

CONVERSATION

Seed

- • • What is one of the riskiest things you've done? Why did you do it?
- • • How do you intuitively respond to risk and/or danger? Is your first impulse to press on with enthusiasm and confidence, or to step back into safety?
- • • Does your response change if someone you trust asks you to take a risk with them?
- • • How about if you know that taking the risk would benefit others?

Plant



Then I said to you, "You have reached the hill country of the Amorites, which the Lord our God is giving us. See, the Lord your God has given you the land. Go up and take possession of it as the Lord, the God of your ancestors, told you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. . . " But you were unwilling to go up; you rebelled against the command of the Lord your God. You grumbled in your tents and said, "The Lord hates us; so he brought us out of Egypt to deliver us into the hands of the Amorites to destroy us. Where can we go? Our brothers have made our hearts melt in fear. They say, 'The people are stronger and taller than we are; the cities are large, with walls up to the sky. We even saw the Anakites there.'" Then I said to you, "Do not be terrified; do not be afraid of them. The Lord your God, who is going before you, will fight for you, as he did for you in Egypt, before your very eyes and in the wilderness."

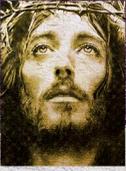
DEUTERONOMY 1:20-21, 27-31A

Moses had commanded the people to take heart, be courageous, and take the land God had given them as an inheritance. The foundation for their courage was to be the promise God would go before them into the land. God's ever-present provision, protection, and guidance was intended to give the people of Israel confidence as they journeyed into a land filled with enemies and unknown dangers.

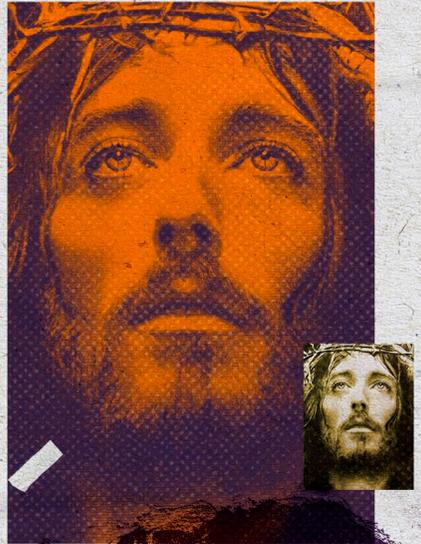
- • • What danger would the Israelites face if they followed God into the land?
- • • What reason did they have for doubting God's willingness and ability to overcome those dangers?

Fruit

- • • What are some dangers you might face if you were to follow God wholeheartedly - obeying his moral commands as well as his personal calling for your life?
- • • How do your dangers compare to the dangers facing the Israelites?
- • • What do you need to believe about God in order to take the risk he is calling you to?



the **CHALLENGE**
of **JESUS**



PART 4

**From Civilian
to Soldier**

WEEK
17

From Civilian to Soldier

JOHN 10:10

Jesus challenges us to embrace the reality of an unseen battle constantly going on around us. It is easier and perhaps more sensible to ignore this reality and remain simply a naïve citizen, but the Messiah is crystal clear: we are at war. There's a battle for your attention and your affection that requires you to suit up and fight.



NOTES

A large grid of dotted lines for taking notes, consisting of 20 rows and 20 columns of dots.

Monday



When the servant of the man of God got up and went out early in the morning, an army with horses and chariots had surrounded the city. "Oh no, my Lord! What shall we do?" the servant asked. "Don't be afraid," the prophet answered. "Those who are with us are more than those who are with them." And Elisha prayed, "Open his eyes, Lord, so that he may see." Then the Lord opened the servant's eyes and looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha. 2 KINGS 6: 15-17

How conscious are you of the fact that there is a spiritual army at God's disposal? Why would he need one?

Have you ever or do you know someone who has ever had a "supernatural" experience?

What do you think you would see if God were to open your eyes to the spiritual realm right now?

Tuesday



Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. JAMES 4:7-8

How are you submitting yourself to God on a daily basis?

What are some ways believers can resist the devil? Which of these are you practicing?

Are there any areas of your life where you might be double-minded? Are you allowing the things of this world to be more important than doing the will of God?

WEEK 17: FROM CIVILIAN TO SOLDIER

DAILY ENCOUNTERS

Wednesday



Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. COLOSSIANS 3:1-3

When is the last time you sat and thought about living for eternity in heaven?

What is hindering you from spending more time with God in prayer and in a quiet place?

What changes can you make to do so more?

Thursday



Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be courageous; be strong. Do everything in love. 1 CORINTHIANS 16:13-14

What should you be “on your guard” against?

Why do you think Paul uses the phrase “stand firm in the faith”?

What are some situations where you need courage and strength in order to love others as Jesus loves us?

Friday



Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings. 1 PETER 5:8-9

Are there any parts of this verse that sound like some other verses we have read this week? Why do you think they are in the Bible more than once?

Have you ever felt like you were being spiritually attacked?

What can you do to fight back?

Prayer

Heavenly Father—please help me to remember to set my mind and heart on YOU every day. You alone, Lord, give me victory over my enemies in the unseen world. Help me to stand firm in my faith, to submit to you, and to resist the devil. Make me aware when I can pray specifically for others who are experiencing spiritual warfare. Thank you in advance for the victory we have already in Jesus' name! Amen.

CONVERSATION

Seed

- • • What are some of your favorite war movies?
- • • Have you – or someone you know – ever been involved in a war or battle where their life was at risk? What impact did it have?
- • • What do you think it would be like to know that there are people attempting to take your life?

Plant



Prayer

But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed. LUKE 5:16

- • • Why do you think Jesus spent time in prayer?
- • • Are you more comfortable praying in a group or on your own? Why?
- • • About how much time do you spend in prayer daily?



God's Word

Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. EPHESIANS 6:17

- • • Why is God's word an effective weapon in spiritual warfare?
- • • Is a sword defensive, offensive, or both? What does that tell you about God's word?



Fellowship

But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called "Today," so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness. HEBREWS 3:13

- • • Notice how often it says believers should encourage one another. Why do you think that is?
- • • What might happen if we are not receiving encouragement – from somewhere – on a regular basis?



Fasting

While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." ACTS 13:2

- • • Fasting is time set aside, to get closer to God and can be extremely powerful. It's not just about giving something up, but setting it aside in order to seek the Lord. Why do you think fasting and worship could make a powerful combination?

Fruit

- • • All good soldiers consistently train in full armor and with their weapons. This is what makes them effective in battle. How can you implement the above spiritual disciplines in your daily life, to be more effective on a consistent basis in the war that is going on in the unseen world?
- • • What are some daily activities that you can cut out to make more room for spending more time in the Word and with God in prayer?
- • • What can you do to engage in the battle already going on in the spiritual realm?

**PATIENT
FOLLOWER
WORSHIPPER**

**GRACE-GIVER
TRUTH-TELLER
PEOPLE-LOVER**

**GIVER
SERVANT
WITNESS**

Had to Be There...

ROMANS 10:14-15

Followers of Jesus need to understand the world we're called to love. We need to experience how people are living in other parts of the world. We need to see it, smell it and touch it. We need to experience a lice-haired child hugging on our legs. We need to understand God's love for them. A short-term mission trip is an essential experience – and it is often life-changing. Those one to two weeks are often all that the church is supposed to be.



NOTES

A large grid of small dots for taking notes, consisting of 20 rows and 30 columns.

Monday



For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.

"Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?'

"The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'" MATTHEW 25:35-40

Are you convicted when you see the hungry, the thirsty, the homeless, the sick and the imprisoned? What are some things people under these conditions have in common?

The implication in this story is that the righteous people were willing to serve the sick, the stranger and the prisoner in the same way they might have served Jesus. In what ways do you find yourself picking and choosing who is worthy of your serving? What are the qualifications for being worthy of your concern?

What might you miss out on by choosing to serve only those who meet your criteria?

Tuesday



Better a small serving of vegetables with love than a fattened calf with hatred. PROVERBS 15:17

A fattened calf was generally reserved for guests of honor. Why might someone serve this "with hatred"?

How might a small act of service filled with love have big impact?

Ask the Lord to show you one way you can lovingly serve someone today. Write it in the space below.

WEEK 18: HAD TO BE THERE...

DAILY ENCOUNTERS

Wednesday



The word of the Lord came to Jonah son of Amittai: "Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me." But Jonah ran away from the Lord and headed for Tarshish. He went down to Joppa, where he found a ship bound for that port. After paying the fare, he went aboard and sailed for Tarshish to flee from the Lord. JONAH 1:1-3

Can you identify a specific outreach project or mission trip you believe God is calling you to serve on?

What obstacles are in your way?

Identify three steps you can take to remove those obstacles.

Thursday



The Lord had said to Abram, "Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great and you will be a blessing." GENESIS 12:1-3

This is a big ask from God. Leave your country, your people, your father - and all without knowing where you are going. What is the biggest ask God has made of you so far? How did you respond?

What did God promise Abram if he obeyed?

Have you ever experienced blessings as a result of your obedience?

Friday



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

Circle the commands Jesus gives his disciples in these verses.

Which of these have you followed?

Identify one of those commands you would like to fulfill next. Write down the name of someone you will talk to who can help you take a next step. Contact them today.

Prayer

God, give me the courage and fortitude to step outside my comfort zone and find a way to serve those in other countries who may be suffering. I ask this not for my own satisfaction but to obey your command to spread the gospel and help those most in need. I pray for humility in my efforts, love for others who don't look or think like me, and faithfulness in representing you well with me words and deeds. Amen.

CONVERSATION

Seed

- • • Have you ever been on a mission trip? If so, what was it like? If not, how do you think going on one might impact you?
- • • Make a list of all the mission trips and outreach projects Mountain Park participates in. If you need help, go to mountainpark.org/outreach and click on both "The City" and "The World".
- • • Which of these have you been a part of?

Plant



Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.

COLOSSIANS 3:23-24

- • • What do you think it means to work with "all your heart"?
- • • Who are your human masters? How can you work for them as if you were working for the Lord?
- • • Go back to the first three words of this passage. How are you doing with that?
- • • Are there any areas where your effort is half-hearted or apathetic?
- • • How might your attitude change if it was Jesus himself you were serving in those areas?

Fruit

- • • How has serving others in the church, in the city, or on a mission trip impacted you?
- • • How did it impact others?
- • • Go back to the list of outreach and missions that Mountain Park is involved in. Which of these do you feel most called to participate in? What next steps do you need to take in order to get involved?



NOTES

A large grid of small dots for taking notes, consisting of 20 columns and 30 rows.



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