

# UNdivided

A 5-week journey exploring  
an UNDIVIDED life of discipleship

## JOURNEY GUIDEBOOK



# WELCOME!

## HOW TO DO THE JOURNEY

UNDIVIDED is a five-week experience exploring things Jesus calls us to be undivided on as his followers.

Each week follows the same three-part rhythm:

### GO TO WORSHIP ON THE WEEKEND

Each Journey week begins here. In worship you will be introduced to a theme, provoked by art, video and music, encouraged by preaching, and join others in giving praise to God. It's important. Be there!

### GO TO YOUR JOURNEY GROUP

In this fun and relational environment, you will share what you're learning, dig deeper into scripture and conversation, and strengthen relationships.

### DO YOUR CHALLENGE

At the end of each Journey Group, you will receive a challenge to live UNDIVIDED in the coming week. Do the challenge during the week and record what happens in the guide. You will also see some family challenges and social media prompts (if that's your thing) to consider doing as a way to engage more fully as a community.

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# Ground Rules

Over the next few weeks, your Journey Group will be encouraged to get pretty vulnerable with each other, so it's probably a good idea for everyone to be on the same page.

First of all, know that your host is simply a fellow learner, not a Bible expert or professional guru. While your host can be your contact for finding more information, the discussion and learning in the group is everyone's responsibility.

Second, to help keep the group experience a safe, healthy way to grow, here are some ground rules:

1. **Be a great listener.** Make eye contact. Don't interrupt.
2. **Be real.** Honesty is the best policy. Be your authentic self and trust each other.
3. **Keep it confidential.** Gossip is lame.
4. **Share examples, not advice.** Better to hear, "Oh, I experienced something like that once..." versus "Listen, here's what you need to do."
5. **Show up.** Honor the commitment you made to the group.
6. **Unplug.** This is a great opportunity to be present with others. Don't let phones be a distraction.

# Introduction

**Read this section before your group meets for the first time**

The guide you hold in your hand is a physical representation of a spiritual journey. The journey began for me a number of years ago during a very honest and open conversation with a childhood friend who had "given up" on the "whole Christianity thing." During our conversation, my friend voiced his frustration with fellow Christians, churches, and even the Bible. He described his struggle to understand how God could be one of love, when most of the Christians he knew reflected so many of the divisions in the world. He told me in that conversation that he was "throwing in the towel" and giving up on it all. The guide you hold in your hand is a physical representation of a

spiritual journey. The journey began for me a number of years ago during a very honest and open conversation with a childhood friend who had “given up” on the “whole Christianity thing.” During our conversation, my friend voiced his frustration with fellow Christians, churches, and even the Bible. He described his struggle to understand how God could be one of love, when most of the Christians he knew reflected so many of the divisions in the world. He told me in that conversation that he was “throwing in the towel” and giving up on it all. Our conversation served as extra motivation for me as I started my seminary studies the next fall. I understood that part of God’s calling on my life was *to help others, like my friend, make sense of what it looks like to live an undivided life of following Jesus*. From that conversation ten years ago until now, I have encountered many other people like my friend, who also struggle to understand what living as a Jesus-follower actually looks like in a world with competing ideas and ideals. I’m excited to welcome you as a fellow traveler on this journey towards an undivided life of discipleship. And before we begin, I want to answer the most important question to ask about all of this – why are we doing it?

## A CULTURAL WHY:

**The world is more divided than ever.**

I know, it’s disheartening isn’t it? It seems as though there is no escaping a prevailing level of “tension” in our society. Simply turn on the evening news, scroll through Facebook, or eavesdrop over someone’s conversation at the local coffee shop, and it doesn’t take long for us to encounter the scores of ideas, topics, and thoughts that divide people. Politics, social issues, creed, race and religion...all hold the potential to divide. It’s important as we embark on this journey that we commit ourselves to recognizing that the continuing polarization of people that leads to bitterness, anger and even hatred of “the other” is not of God. It’s not our differences that are a bad thing; it’s how we often allow those differences to divide us that can become toxic. Our world has a need and, I think, a desire for something different. UNDIVIDED is a place to begin talking and processing what it might look like to work towards restoration in our world.

# A SPIRITUAL WHY:

Unity is God's desire for us.

Christian unity is a key theme woven throughout the New Testament. Jesus' prayer of unity for his disciples is recorded in the Gospel of John where he pleads that we "may be brought to complete unity". As theological differences arose in the early years of Christianity, the global church sought to define our unity through councils and creeds. The Apostles Creed (below) serves alongside the Nicene and Athanasian Creeds as the central confessions of faith for Christians globally.

I believe in God, the Father almighty,  
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died, and was buried;  
he descended to the dead.  
On the third day he rose again;  
he ascended into heaven,  
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,  
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic Church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting. Amen.

As wonderful as the creeds are for fostering theological unity, they don't necessarily address Christian unity regarding how it is we *live* out our faith.

Philippians 2:1-5 is the focal verse for this journey. Paul writes:

*“If there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy, make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus...”*

The life and ministry of Jesus shows us the blueprint for living an undivided life. Each week of this journey we will look at a new concept that Jesus calls us to be undivided on as his representatives on earth. These are “core commitments” that help us truly live & love like Jesus. Just as the creeds help us to find unity in beliefs, this journey hopes to help us become unified in our practical *living* as disciples.

## A PRINCE OF PEACE WHY:

**Our mission is to live & love like Jesus.**

We aren't pursuing unity because it's politically correct. We aren't pursuing it because “it's a nice thing.” We are doing this because our mission to live & love like Jesus requires us to actually care about how Jesus lived & loved. By focusing not on what divides us, but on the non-negotiables of following Jesus that unite us, we can teach and model to others what a life of discipleship is actually about. So my prayer is that as you engage in this journey, you will not only desire to live undivided, but this will ignite a passion within you to help others embrace what it looks like to live & love like Jesus.

Over the next few weeks we will zero in on the following five areas where Jesus calls us to be undivided:

Week 1: Our need for Jesus

Week 2: Our need for community

Week 3: Our call to stand with the least of these

Week 4: Our call to radical generosity

Week 5: Our call to share the Good News

Welcome to the UNDIVIDED Journey.

Lorne Hlad

Pastor, Prince of Peace Lutheran Church



Week 1

We are undivided in...

Our need for Jesus

Mark 1:9-15

*In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased."*

*And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him.*

*Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news."*

This week's sermon notes/observations:

# Week 1 Journey Group Experience

HOST, BEGIN READING:

1 Hi, everyone. Welcome to week one of our Journey group. This journey group is where we'll process much of the UNDIVIDED Journey. You can expect this group time to be filled with lots of conversation, questions, scripture reading and prayer. Each week we will also be given a challenge to live out for the upcoming week. The point of this time is to grow together and build relationships as we more fully uncover what it looks like to live & love like Jesus. The group time won't always feel perfect; it might take a little getting used to or someone might talk too much or there could be awkward silences. But, in the end, we're certain it'll be a good time. So, to start this thing off right, let's go around the group, and everyone share your name and something that gets on your nerves/ a pet peeve of yours. Also, **share a habit or quirk about your own self that just might be someone else's pet peeve!**

2 Hopefully by now everyone has had a chance to read the introduction to the journey in the beginning of this field guide. **Did everyone have a chance to read the intro?** (If not, everyone take a few moments to look it over!)

3 Someone grab a Bible and read: **John 17: 20-26**

AFTER THE PASSAGE IS READ, SOMEONE ELSE CONTINUE READING:

4 In this passage, we encounter what is known as "The high priestly prayer" of Jesus. The words of his prayer are striking, and carry with them a great deal of significance contextually considering that he will be betrayed and arrested in a matter of moments.

Jesus words *"...that they may be one even as we are one..."* are often referenced in discussions about Christian unity. **What comes to mind when you think about the concept of Christian unity? Do you think it's possible? Impossible?** (be specific)

NEW READER:

5 Did you know that the Hamilton County Geological Society tracks 573 active churches across our city? These 573 churches represent a variety of denominations spread across various neighborhoods, each with their own unique expressions of worship, values, vision, and theological nuances. Considering the diversity among these churches, the call to “unity” can seem daunting, even impossible, especially if the goal of that unity is rooted in having exactly the same beliefs and expression of worship.

This journey cannot possibly address every aspect of Christian unity, but it will encourage us to consider five core ideas where Jesus calls us be undivided on as his followers, no matter what “tribe” we represent.

Over the next few weeks, we will be exploring the idea of what it might look like to find unity as we live & love like Jesus in our daily lives.

So where do we begin?

NEW READER:

6 We begin with the most primary, and arguably the most important idea: that we are called to be UNDIVIDED in....

## OUR NEED FOR JESUS

Representing Jesus can feel like a daunting task at times. We often want to have our belief system totally worked out, and we stress out about having the right things to say at the right time. We sometimes even reduce our Christianity down to a set of theological propositions. While our beliefs about who God is matter deeply, if our Christianity is only concerned about our heads and not also our hearts, perhaps we miss the point all together. **Can you think of a time when you had a conversation with someone who seemed to “have all the right answers” but lacked empathy? Have you ever met a “Christian know it all”?**

SOMEONE WHO HASN'T READ YET, JUMP ON IN:

7 Discipleship is about so much more than a life of learning about Jesus. It's also a life of learning to imitate Jesus. As people who are learning to become like Jesus, it's important that we focus on humility.

Consider this passage from The Gospel of Matthew:

*Do not judge, so that you may not be judged. For with the same judgment you make you will be judged, and the measure you give will be the measure you get. Why do you see the speck in your neighbor's eye, but do not notice the log in your own eye? Or how can you say to your neighbor, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' while the log is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your neighbor's eye.*

NEW READER:

**8** Take a few moments to individually reflect on your relationship with God through the following questions. Use the space below to collect your thoughts.

Can you think of a time that you have been judgmental towards others and their actions or opinions?

Are there certain “trigger” topics for you that tend to bring out your desire to remove another’s “speck”? (examples: politics, faith, money, etc.)

Can you think of a time or two when you felt judged by others unfairly?

AFTER THE ACTIVITY, CONTINUE READING:

**9** Would anyone be brave enough to share what they wrote down or reflected upon?

WHEN PEOPLE ARE DONE SHARING, READ ALOUD:

**10** We are all human, and we all fall short in representing Jesus, but there can be a real harm done to others (and ourselves) when we express judgment towards others.

Nationwide surveys in the 1970's and 1980's found that fewer than 1 in 10 U.S. adults said they had no religious affiliation, but as of 2016, 23% now describe themselves as atheists, agnostics, or "nothing in particular." This same study finds that of the top reasons people who were previously committed to a faith have turned away is because of "judgmental and hypocritical" people within those faith communities.

There really is nothing "new under the sun", and just as Jesus encouraged his first followers to embrace humility, we need to be reminded continually that we ALL need the forgiveness, grace and mercy offered through Jesus.

#### NEW READER

**11** Scripture tells us that ALL have fallen short of God's glory (Romans 7:23). It's something we intuitively know in an intellectual sense, yet it's a truth we often have a hard time accepting. Even the first followers of Jesus were caught arguing about who deserved "to be seated on the right and on the left of Jesus."

Throughout the gospels, Jesus encouraged his disciples to live not concerned about being honored or glorified, but rather to live with humility. And the good news is that God offers grace and forgiveness again & again.

**Can you think of a time when you experienced grace? Describe what it was like.**

#### ONCE THE GROUP HAS FINISHED SHARING, HOST, BRING US HOME:

**12** As people who are seeking to become more like Jesus, we focus on our life-long formation into his image. We are called to be UNDIVIDED in our understanding that we have all fallen short of the glory of God and are in need of Jesus. When we examine our own lives instead of spending so much time and energy judging others, we often find that we embrace a more grace-filled attitude to life.

## Close in prayer...

*God, we confess that often we find faults in others while ignoring our own brokenness. Forgive us for the sin of passing judgment on others, and help us to see that we can find unity with everyone when we focus on our collective need for God's grace. Help us to extend the same measure of grace to others that we so desperately want to receive from you. In the name of Jesus, Amen.*

## Discipleship:

The lifelong process of learning to follow Jesus

## THE I NEED JESUS/I SEE JESUS CHALLENGE

### INDIVIDUAL CHALLENGE

God empowers ALL people with gifts and vocational callings. We each have a story and we are all still on a journey of discovering who we are in Christ. This week your challenge is to spend some time reflecting on the following questions

- 1 I need Jesus because: (list all the reasons you need God's grace)

After you have made your list say the following prayer:

*Merciful God, you know my faults, my failures, my sin. Forgive me Lord for the times when I pass judgment on others while neglecting my own need for mercy. Renew my spirit, and equip me to live into the freedom your son Jesus offers. Amen.*

2 Can you picture that co-worker that drives you up a wall? That neighbor who is not so neighborly? A person you'd rather not think much about? This week your challenge is to try and SEE Jesus within them. Instead of focusing your energy on all the things you don't like that can lead you down the path of judgment, focus on finding something about them to celebrate and honor. In moments when it seems hard to extend graciousness to that individual, pull out this notebook and say the following prayer:

*God, you have created \_\_\_\_\_. She/he is your child and your love for them is strong. Help me to see \_\_\_\_\_ as a brother/sister who is just as deserving of grace as I am. Fill my heart with love and help me to live a gracious life. Amen.*

## FAMILY SUMMARY

Read Romans 3:23.

Whether it seems like a big sin or a little sin, a purposeful or an accidental sin, all of us have done things that hurt other people, hurt God or hurt God's creation. Because we have all messed up sometime, we all need Jesus and God's gift of grace. How would you describe grace? When we realize how much we need grace, it becomes easier to show that grace to other people. When is a time that you have experienced grace?

## FAMILY CHALLENGE

This week, try the "I need Jesus/I see Jesus" Challenge with your entire family. Here's how:

This week you will be writing short notes to one another expressing what you appreciate about them and the ways you see God active in their lives and character. Each person writes a note to every other member of the household.



Week 2

We are undivided in...  
*Our Need for Community*

John 13:12-20

After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had returned to the table, he said to them, “Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are right, for that is what I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them. If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them. I am not speaking of all of you; I know whom I have chosen. But it is to fulfill the scripture, ‘The one who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me.’ I tell you this now, before it occurs, so that when it does occur, you may believe that I am he. Very truly, I tell you, whoever receives one whom I send receives me; and whoever receives me receives him who sent me.”

*This week's sermon notes/observations:*



## Week 2 Journey Group Experience

HOST, READ OUT LOUD.

1 Welcome back, everyone. Before we jump into our discussion, we've got another icebreaker. **If you were a character on Gilligan's Island, which character would you be and why?**

NEW READER

2 Let's debrief our challenge from last week. **Did you "see" Jesus in anyone this week? Did anyone do the family challenge? How did it go?** Anyone can start, but make sure everyone shares.

KEEP READING.

3 The last time we met, we talked about our need for God's grace, and how easy it is to fall into the trap of "self-righteousness". The lesson was simple, yet difficult at the same time - God's grace frees us from our bondage to sin and Jesus calls us to see others with eyes of mercy. This week we will focus on being undivided in our need for community. Before we move on, let's get the conversation going a little bit. **When you hear the word *community*—what thoughts immediately come to mind?**

NEW READER = MOVE ONE TO THE RIGHT.

4 Driving through the streets of Port-au-Prince, Haiti is simultaneously captivating and terrifying. The narrow streets are packed with cars, motorbikes, tap taps (think taxi carrying 35+ people in the back of small truck bed), and pedestrians. Traffic is congested and you're always ½ inch away from a near accident. At first, things seem totally chaotic. There are literally hundreds, if not thousands, of people surrounding you in the streets. For a lot of Americans, the experience can seem terrifying at first, but if you're able to trust your driver and take a deep breath, you just might be able to see just how captivating the Haitian culture is. The streets are lined with women and men who everyday set up makeshift marketplaces, people are outside sitting on porches and balconies, kids are holding hands as they walk to school, and every now and then, traffic

will stand still because a couple hundred people are marching through the streets singing and dancing as part of a religious parade. **Describe what it is like to walk or drive through your neighborhood? What do you see?**

NEW READER = ONE TO THE RIGHT AGAIN.

5 *"Where is everyone? Where are all the people?"*

That was the question my friend Maya from Haiti asked me this last fall when I took him to downtown Cincinnati on a Thursday afternoon for lunch and a museum tour. He was shocked to say the least as he stood underneath towering buildings and next to massive sports stadiums as we counted about 12 people in our near vicinity.

Over lunch, I asked Maya what he thought about America and Cincinnati in particular. He said, *"It's amazing in so many ways, but it seems like people are so disconnected from one another."*

I think Maya is right.

SOMEONE NEW, CONTINUE READING.

6 We have all been baptized into the culture of American Individualism. It's woven into the fabric of our society in nearly every aspect. There are countless clues within our society that back up this notion.

**Complete the following sentences:**

- The goal of good parenting is to help our children become \_\_\_\_\_-sufficient.
- More people spend time on their \_\_\_\_\_ porch compared to their \_\_\_\_\_ porch.
- \_\_\_\_\_ fences are the #1 selling fence type in America.

Also, consider the following facts:

The percentage of Americans who responded that they regularly felt lonely in the 1970's was around 11%. That number is now reported to be around 43%.

The proportion of Americans who live alone has grown from 5% in the 1920's to 27% in 2013 according to the US Census Department.

Can you name other examples of individualism in our society?

Can you name examples of how individualism has crept into church culture?

AFTER THE ACTIVITY, CONTINUE READING:

7 If our mission is to LIVE like Jesus, then community must be prioritized. For the purpose of this journey we will define community in the following way:

**Community:**

*A collection of interdependent people who experience life together while growing, serving, and supporting one another.*

Someone grab a Bible and read **Mark 10:17-22**

SPEND SOME TIME DISCUSSING THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.

8 What do you think is the meaning of this passage? Discuss.

What do you think Jesus understands the “one thing” to be that this man lacked?

TAKE SOME TIME DOING THE FOLLOWING ACTIVITY:

**9** We often think this story is simply about money. If the rich young ruler could only part with his material goods, then he would inherit eternal life. What might change if we read this passage with “community” as our lens? In verse 20 the man tells Jesus that he has essentially been living a good, yet independent, life of faith. He has individually followed all the right commands. So what does Jesus do? He invited him to practice living out his faith in community. First, to sell his “personal riches” and to share with others, and secondly to actually leave behind his independence for a life of communal living.

Following Jesus is not an individual activity. From the very start, Jesus called his followers to be undivided on the importance of sharing life together. Faith is made whole in community.

As followers of Jesus we must continually work against the forces of individualism to embrace a life of interdependence. TOGETHER we make up the Body of Christ.

**What do you think it really looks like to be part of a faith community?  
What are your hopes for building authentic Christian community?**

HOST, BRING US HOME.

**11** Close out the night by reading the following verse and praying.

ACTS 2: 42-47

They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

*God, we confess that often we think about our faith in individual terms only. Forgive us for our self-centeredness and help us to foster deep and meaningful relationships with others. Show us how to practice interdependence and to embrace the journey of faith in community. May our lives be an offering to you. Amen.*

# CHALLENGE: LIVING INTO COMMUNITY

## INDIVIDUAL CHALLENGE

Acts Chapter 2 tells us that the early Christians devoted themselves to three important practices that helped to foster community: worshipping together, breaking bread together, and sharing resources.

Your individual challenge this week consists of three parts:

- 1: Come to worship next weekend. (make it a priority to be a part of the community)
- 2: Share a meal with someone this week from your faith community. (consider coming to POP Wednesday at 6pm)
- 3: Share a resource you have in a way that benefits others. (time, money, a possession)

## FAMILY SUMMARY

Read Acts 2:42-47.

Following Jesus is not an individual activity. From the very beginning, Jesus' followers shared everything they had in order to take care of each other. What is a community? What communities do you belong to?

## FAMILY CHALLENGE

This week, do the challenge with your family.

Here's how: 1. Schedule a night this week for an intentional family dinner.

2. During the meal do the Faith 5 together:

Everyone **share** their highs and lows of the day

**Read** Hebrews 10: 24-25 together

**Discuss** the reading together

**Pray** for one another

**Bless** each other (trace a sign of the cross on one another's foreheads and say *"The Peace of Christ be with you" or another blessing*)

## Week 3

# We are undivided in... Our Call to Stand with the Least of these

### Matthew 25:31-40

When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. Then the king will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.' Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?' And the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.'

*This week's sermon notes/observations:*

## Week 3 Journey Group Experience

HOST, READ OUT LOUD.

1 Hello Journey people, welcome to Week 3. We know what you are thinking. You're thinking, "How about another icebreaker?" **Have you ever participated in a protest throughout your life? If so, describe the setting and issues.** (if not, could you ever see yourself doing so? Why or why not?)

2 Before we move into the lesson for today, let's consider last week's challenge about living into community. **Discuss last week's challenge? How did it go?** Anyone can start, but make sure everyone has an opportunity to share.

NEW READER

3 Week 1 we began by focusing on our relationship with God as being centered in grace and mercy. Last week, we talked about how Jesus calls us to be undivided in our need for community and how God created us to share life interdependently. This week we turn our focus outward by focusing on our call to stand with those who are marginalized. Before we move on, let's get the conversation rolling. **Have you ever felt left out? Have you ever experienced discrimination in any form? Have you felt like an outsider?** Anyone can start.

NEW READER = MOVE ONE TO THE LEFT.

4 This week we are going to get right to the point. As Christians, Jesus wants us to be undivided in our call to stand with the 'least of these' in our world. Jesus cares deeply about those in our world who are poor, oppressed, or victims of discrimination and exploitation. Looking within the Gospels we see that Jesus was a welcoming leader. He invited people from all walks of life to come and follow on his mission of love. From young fishermen, to tax collectors, to rich young rulers and women fetching water at the local well, Jesus invited others into the life of discipleship.

In the gospels Jesus also embodied compassion, and expected his disciples to be devoted to those in society who were disadvantaged.

Someone grab a bible and read **Matthew 25:31-40**.

AFTER THE SCRIPTURE IS READ, CONTINUE READING.

**5** The ministry of Jesus begins in Matthew's Gospel account with his teaching called the Beatitudes, where Jesus announces God's favor for those who are poor, those who mourn, and those who are meek. In what could be considered his last teaching in Matthew's Gospel before his crucifixion, Jesus drives the same point home. Whatever is done for one of the "least of these" on earth (the sick, the prisoner, the stranger, the naked, the hungry) is done unto Jesus. In other words – Jesus calls us to see the very essence of God in those who are marginalized and experience great suffering.

**1 John 3:17** puts it bluntly: *But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him?*

CONTINUE WITH THE INDIVIDUAL ACTIVITY BELOW.

**6** Spend a few moments reflecting on the "least of these" in our society and world. Use the space below to reflect on the following questions:

Where do you see people being marginalized in our world today?

*A moment for honest self-reflection* – What attitudes/behaviors have you exhibited towards the poor throughout your life that are not in alignment with God's Spirit?



Can you list aspects of Jesus life & ministry that reflect God's heart for the "least of these"?

AFTER THE ACTIVITY, CONTINUE READING.

**8** What do you think it looks like in today's world, practically speaking, to LOVE like Jesus? What are the barriers?

NEW READER.

**9** Time and again, we read stories in scripture that highlight God's heart and desire to invite all people into a deeper, more abundant life that is rooted and grounded in relationship. As followers of Christ who are continually invited, forgiven, and embraced by God, we are called to share this invitation with others. Living & loving like Jesus is a call to discern which people around us, neighbors, spouses, coworkers and friends, that we can invite into deeper, Gospel-filled, relationship.

Take some time to discuss – **Building on the theme from last week, how has being a part of a faith community helped you stay faithful to Jesus call to service and love for those who suffer?**

## Host, close in prayer...

*God, we confess that we often neglect to care for those in our world who are disadvantaged. Wake us up from our spiritual apathy and cure us of the disease of judgmentalism. Help us to see your presence in everyone we encounter and move us to respond to the needs of others in pursuit of a world restored. Thank you for never giving up on us. Amen.*

## CHALLENGE: LOVE like Jesus

### INDIVIDUAL CHALLENGE

This week your challenge is to take one small step towards more fully loving like Jesus. Don't overthink this challenge, but when an opportunity arises this week to extend love to someone in need, do it, no questions asked. Trust me, there will be many opportunities that present themselves. Will you have eyes to see?

What opportunity arose this week for loving like Jesus?

What did you do in response to the situation?

## FAMILY SUMMARY

Read Matthew 25:37-40.

When have you ever felt left out? Jesus calls us to take care of those who are left out in our world - those who are poor or homeless or sick. What are some ways we can take care of others in need?

## FAMILY CHALLENGE

This week, try the challenge with your family.

Here's how:

1. Call a "household" or family meeting and gather everyone together.
2. Name a few options for serving together that you put on the calendar.
3. Discuss the options and come to a consensus about how you will serve together as a family.

\*\*If you need ideas for service don't hesitate to reach out to Pastor Lorne at [plhlad@popluther.org](mailto:plhlad@popluther.org) or check out the page "serve near" on [popluther.org](http://popluther.org).

## Week 4

# We are undivided in... Our Call to Radical Generosity

### Luke 12:13-21

Someone in the crowd said to [Jesus], “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me.” But he said to him, “Friend, who set me to be a judge or arbitrator over you?” And he said to them, “Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of possessions.” Then he told them a parable: “The land of a rich man produced abundantly. And he thought to himself, ‘What should I do, for I have no place to store my crops?’ Then he said, ‘I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.’ But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your life is being demanded of you. And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?’ So it is with those who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich toward God.”

**This week's sermon notes/observations:**

# Week 4 Journey Group Experience

HOST, READ OUT LOUD.

1 Hello everyone! Thanks for showing up and staying committed to this journey. This week we will be talking about generosity. To begin, **everyone take turns sharing about a favorite gift you have received.**

Last week, everyone was challenged to respond to someone's need in a practical way. **Share the opportunities that arose for you to LOVE like Jesus.**

NEW READER.

2 Let's think about the term "lifestyle" for a moment.

*The deep need to take control of one's life and to have things one's own way is the fuel that drives the American pursuit of a lifestyle. The word lifestyle is relatively new on the American scene. From my experience it has come to mean the convergence of such things as geographical location, home, setting, family, career, material possessions, activities, interests, leisure, commitments, future plans and hopes, and spirituality that collectively "feel right." \**

OK, spend a moment discussing what "lifestyle" is idealized in our culture. What does the "ideal American lifestyle" look like? Share with the group.

*The challenge the church faces is that within one's lifestyle matrix the role of the church is usually just one of the many components contributing to that lifestyle. In triaging of the various components in order of importance, the church might rise to one of the higher levels in the personal or family food chain, but it is still only a component. This compartmentalized thinking means that instead of the church and its sacred story being the organizing principle that informs, gives shape and holds together a lifestyle, the lifestyle is what is finally served. After all, I am in charge, and I will choose what is right for me.\**

What do you think it might look like for the Gospel (the sacred story of Jesus) to be the organizing principle that informs, gives shape and holds together one's life?

\*Excerpt from *A New & Right Spirit*, Barger.

KEEP READING.

3 God desires us to live a fully integrated life of discipleship. It's tempting to keep faith compartmentalized in our lives. You know, something we do on Sundays. When we do this, faith becomes just one aspect of our lives, instead of the defining force that permeates all areas of our lives. Our mission as followers of Jesus is to learn to live & love like him in a holistic way.

Someone grab a Bible and **read Mark 10:35-45**

**How does this passage relate to generosity?**

NEW READER

4 This passage highlights Jesus' call to live oriented towards generosity. The question James and John ask is telling. They are even bold enough to tell Jesus before they ask their question that they want him "to do for us whatever we ask of you." They want to sit in glory next to Jesus. They want to be honored and exalted above the other disciples. They are focused on the "Kingdom of Self", and they want a divine blessing in their pursuits for self-glory.

Jesus seizes on the opportunity their question presents to clearly state that while the rest of the world may prioritize self important and selfish ways, that it *"will not be so among you"* and that *"whoever would be first among you must first be a servant of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve."*

In other words, Jesus calls his disciples to be undivided in living a radically generous life that is oriented towards others, not self.

**Can you think of examples from the life of Jesus that point to the spirit of radical generosity?**

AFTER SHARING, CONTINUE READING.

5 Christian generosity is rooted in the understanding that everything we have has been given to us as a gift from God. We are not owners, but rather stewards who are called to care for the gifts of God. Our resources (financial and material), our bodies, our time, our attention, our very presence, when oriented towards radical generosity, reflect more fully the heart of Jesus to others.

While no person can be 100% altruistic, the example of Jesus shows us that real abundance is defined not by what we earn or own. Jesus shows us that real, abundant life is found by orienting life in a spirit of radical generosity towards others.

**Can you think of someone who has displayed or modeled radical generosity in your life?**

ONE LAST ACTIVITY.

**6** Spend a few moments thinking to yourself about your own life and what it might look like to live into the spirit of generosity. Once you have identified some practical next steps, write them in the space below.

I could live more generously with my **time** by:

I could live more generously with my **resources** by:

I could live more generously with my **presence** by:

I could live more generously with my **talents** by:

## Discuss and close in prayer...

*God, Thank you for this journey experience and the people in this room. Help us into a posture of generosity. Show us ways, large and small, that we can embrace our calling to serve others and the world you made. We pray in Jesus name.*

*Amen.*

## CHALLENGE: LOVE like Jesus

Your challenge this week is to do one (or more) challenges from the list below:

- Make a Donation to a cause or organization you care about.
- Write a card or send a note to someone who could use some extra encouragement.
- Go out to lunch with a coworker or friend and pick up the tab.
- Give a restaurant you frequent an awesome review online.
- Turn off your phone and spend quality time being present with your family or a friend.
- Babysit for free.
- Donate blood.
- Or add a new idea!

## FAMILY SUMMARY

Read Luke 21:1-4.

Everything that we have belongs to God. Our resources do not belong to us, but God asks us to care of them and to be generous with them. What is generosity? When has someone shown you generosity?

## FAMILY CHALLENGE

Gather the family together for a family meeting and explain to your kids that you are going to donate some resources to an organization that does great work. (Visuals often help with kids, so it's a good idea to actually have some cash or a check on hand.)

Have a few options for choices in mind on where you could direct the funds, but invite the whole family to make the decision together. You could spend some time looking at the organizations websites!

Once you have made up your mind – make the online donation together or lick the envelope!

Need a suggestion on a great organization? Check out our website to learn more about many of our partners: [www.popluther.org/serve-near](http://www.popluther.org/serve-near).



Week 5

We are undivided in...

Our Call to share  
The Good News

Mark 13:9-13

“As for yourselves, beware; for they will hand you over to councils; and you will be beaten in synagogues; and you will stand before governors and kings because of me, as a testimony to them. And the good news must first be proclaimed to all nations. When they bring you to trial and hand you over, do not worry beforehand about what you are to say; but say whatever is given you at that time, for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit. Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death; and you will be hated by all because of my name. But the one who endures to the end will be saved.”

*This week's sermon notes/observations:*



## Week 5 Journey Group Experience

HOST, READ OUT LOUD.

**1** Hello everyone, it's our last week! For tonight's icebreaker **everyone share what their favorite movie is and why.** You know the drill by now; anyone can start, but make sure everyone shares.

Last week, everyone was challenged to focus on generosity. **How did it go? What challenge did everyone choose?**

NEW READER.

**2** So far we have gathered together to take a closer look at four key concepts that Jesus calls us to embrace without division. These have all been elements of our discipleship that are simple in concept, yet prove to be challenging in our daily living.

Let's reflect on our lessons from the last few weeks.

We are called to be undivided in....

**OUR NEED FOR JESUS** (we embrace: God's grace for others and ourselves)

**OUR NEED FOR COMMUNITY** (we embrace: Living out our faith in community)

**OUR CALL TO STAND WITH THE LEAST OF THESE** (we embrace: Those who experience pain, sickness, suffering, and discrimination as God's beloved children)

**OUR CALL TO RADICAL GENEROSITY** (we embrace: holistic generosity with our time, talents and treasure)

**Have any of these themes tugged at your heart or mind more than the others? Which of these areas might be your biggest growth area?**

## KEEP READING.

3 For our last week together we are going to turn our attention to the calling Jesus gives us ALL: to share the Good News.

Someone grab a Bible and **read Matthew 28:16-20.**

## NEW READER

4 Jesus not only asks us to believe in the good news and follow him, but to bear witness to the world around us. Being a disciple is active, not passive. The reproduction of disciples is an essential part of that activity. Our obedience is a sign of our personal discipleship. What he did with us, we are to do with others as we seek to help others learn to live & love like Jesus.

Living an undivided life of discipleship means reaching out to others and living as a witness to the resurrection.

*But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. (Acts 1:8)*

## WHO ARE YOUR SAMARITANS?

5 Let's think about those places: Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the ends of the earth. They form concentric circles from wherever we are, from the closest to us to those farthest away from us.

It's usually easiest to love those in "Jerusalem and Judea". These are our neighbors, the people who are like us in culture, values, language, etc. It's also relatively easy to love people at the ends of the earth. They're far away; we can send them support and feel good about it. We can even go and visit for brief periods of time to build relationships, but the infrequency of our contact with them provides certain barriers to our daily living in community with them.

It's the "Samaritans" that present the real challenge to most of us – nearby, but different from us culturally. They may speak our language, but they don't usually share the same perspective. The "Samaritans" see things slightly differently. We may not want our kids to play with their kids for fear of a "bad influence." We may not approve of their lifestyle.

We may simply not like them for one or more reasons. It's our "Samaritans" who are the hardest to love. It's easier to love people across the ocean than those on the other "side" of the tracks/aisle/ideology, etc.

#### TAKE A FEW MOMENTS TO REFLECT INDIVIDUALLY

**6** Consider yourself. Consider your church. **Who are you neglecting? Who are your Samaritans?**

#### ONCE PEOPLE ARE FINISHED, CONTINUE:

**7** None of us can do everything, but all of us are called to do something. Find out where people are gathering and meet them there. Listen for the voice of the Holy Spirit, and have the courage to step out in obedience when you hear it. That's how we carry out the great commission. And that's how the gospel jumps from village to village, and from country to country.

**So what might it look like for you, and the church, to go across the tracks, both locally and globally?**

#### ONE LAST ACTIVITY:

**7** To close out our time together, we are going to do one last activity before we receive our final CHALLENGE. This activity is called **"Take Away, Leave Behind"**.

Spend a few moments thinking to yourself about what you want to leave behind as you move forward in life living out our core values. It might be something as simple as "Anxiety" or "Pessimism" or "an over-scheduled life". Once you have identified what you want to leave behind, write it in the space below.

*I am leaving behind...*

Then, spend some time thinking about what you are taking away from this journey that will help you live an undivided life of discipleship. For example, it could actually be one of our themes like “embracing Grace for myself” or “joining a grace group for community,” or it could be something else like “new friendships” or “better perspective”. Whatever it is, write it in the space below.

*I am taking away...*

Once everyone has completed the activity, spend time going around the room and share your reflections.

Hopefully now everyone has a clearer sense of who God is calling us to share the Good News with. **Spend your closing moments discussing practical ways you can share your faith.** (Helpful hint – think of things that help build relationships...)

## Closing prayer

*God, Thank you for this journey experience and the people in this room. Help us in our life long journey to follow you with passion & joy. Give us your spirit of hope, and clarity to see all the ways in which you are restoring the world with grace & peace. We pray in Jesus name.*

*Amen.*

## CHALLENGE: Find a group or create one!

Your final challenge is this: now that this journey has come to close, **consider joining or forming a group!**

Living an UNDIVIDED life of discipleship is more enjoyable, and doable when you have the support of others around you who are also seeking to live & love like Jesus. That is why we are encouraging everyone to **find a group** where you can belong.

Prince of Peace currently has a wide variety of groups that meet on a regular basis. Consider checking out one of them.

Grace Groups

Music Groups

Craft Groups

Social Groups

Youth Groups

<http://popluther.org/groups/>

You could also consider forming a new group! Gather a few people together, maybe it's centered on a book you are reading, or a hobby you enjoy.

If you would like help in the process don't hesitate to reach out!

plhlad@popluther.org - Pastor Lorne Hlad

kskarda@popluther.org - Karen Skarda, Director of Ministries

## FAMILY SUMMARY

### Read Matthew 28:18-20

This is the last thing that Jesus told the disciples and we are called to do the same thing. Jesus says that we are to go to all people to share the Good News. What are some ways that we can help others learn about who Jesus is and what Jesus has done for us?







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