

Destined for Eternity

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Destined for Eternity

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NOTE: All Bible passages quoted in this notebook are taken from the New International Version (NIV) unless otherwise indicated. Others cited include:

New American Standard Bible (NASB)
New Living Translation (NLT)

destined

Introduction to *Destined for Eternity*

OVERVIEW

Destined (des'tind) set apart for a particular use, purpose.

Random House Webster's College Dictionary. Copyright 2001 by Random House, Inc.

You have been destined for a life of passion and purpose as a deeply loved member of God's family. He desires that you experience intimacy in your relationship with Him and in your relationships with others. He also wants to equip you for a lifetime of ministry, enlarging His family and equipping others who want to follow Him.

You realize that you cannot do it alone. You have decided you would like to learn from God's Word along with another follower of Jesus, not someone who has arrived, but someone who is on the journey with you. The one-to-one discipleship process you are beginning is intended to help you understand and experience the passion and purpose for which you were created.

LEARNING OBJECTIVE:

You will make a lasting difference for God's kingdom as you invest your life in discipling others and helping carry out Jesus' mission: the Great Commission.

Most believers desire to make a lasting difference for the kingdom of God. Yet, we know that desiring to make a lasting difference and actually doing it are two different things. In this study guide, we will consider how to make an eternal impact during the remainder of our time on this earth. In order to do this, we will explore the character of God, look at principles from Jesus' ministry, develop our own ministry strategy, and discuss what it takes to finish well. As you work through the *Destined for Eternity* sessions, our hope is that you will internalize the above learning objective and allow it to affect your attitudes, actions, and relationships.

APPLICATION STEP:

Take the initiative to pass on to someone what you have learned in this discipleship process.

As we spend time praying for people and communicating our faith, we will eventually cross paths with those who want to grow in their relationship with God. During your time in this study guide, you will actively pursue the opportunity to disciple someone else.

EXPECTATIONS

With any undertaking, it is important to know what is expected. Here is what will be asked of you:

1. Meet regularly with your discipleship partner to work through the *Destined for Eternity* lessons.
2. Continue the practice of regular Bible reading.
3. Look for ways to demonstrate God's love to others.
4. Be sensitive for opportunities to communicate with others about your faith.

HELPFUL HINTS

Here are two things to remember as you work through this study:

1. Any question is a good question. The person who takes you through this material may not always have the answer, but he or she can work with you to find the answer.
2. The goal is not to get through one session per meeting, but to learn to apply biblical principles to your life. If you need more than one meeting to cover a lesson, take some extra time and enjoy the process.

THE FAITH PRINCIPLE

A principle we will come back to again and again throughout the discipleship process is that of faith. The Bible defines faith as "being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see" (Hebrews 11:1). What this means for followers of Jesus is that, even though we may not fully understand what is going on around us, we can have confidence that God is completely trustworthy and has our best interests in mind at all times.

Consider this illustration. An airplane pilot may have his view obscured by clouds, but he has been trained to rely on his instrument panel to give him the accurate information and direction he needs to safely navigate his course. At times, a pilot's senses will tell him one thing, and his instrument panel will indicate something else. It would be unwise, however, for the pilot to trust his senses. A pilot is trained to depend upon his instrument panel rather than his senses to know the true altitude, location, and orientation of his aircraft.

In a similar way, the follower of Jesus is to live by faith in God and His Word on a daily basis. Here is a definition of faith we will refer to regularly:

Faith is choosing to live as though the Bible is true regardless of circumstances, emotions, or cultural trends.

For example, since people are imperfect, followers of Jesus may sometimes have feelings of condemnation and shame. We all fail. When we do, we may have thoughts like "I'm such a loser!" or "How stupid can I be?" The Bible teaches, however, that there is **no condemnation** for those who belong to Jesus (Romans 8:1). When our inevitable failures come, we can look at ourselves from God's

perspective and experience hope, or we can choose to look at ourselves from our finite, human perspective and move toward despair.

In the sessions that follow, we will cover biblical principles about God, our relationship with Him, and our relationships with others. As we apply these principles to our lives, we will learn to make decisions of faith. We will learn to trust and act on what God says is true versus what we are told by our emotions, circumstances, or cultural values.

To help you apply the faith principle, periodically we will make use of the following icon and chart throughout the lessons.



MY EXPERIENCE MIGHT SAY	GOD'S WORD SAYS
I'm such a loser!	(Rom. 8:1) I'm not condemned
.....
.....
.....

In order to understand the meaning of this icon, take a moment and hold up your **left hand**. This hand represents the reality of your life experiences, both positive and negative: your relationships, your upbringing, your emotions, your painful events, your successes, your failures. All of these experiences have shaped you and continue to affect your attitudes and actions. Sometimes this effect is positive. At times it is not. Our successes can cause us to become puffed up with pride; our failures may cause us to be burdened with guilt and shame. The voices of others can cause us to believe we will never amount to anything.

Now hold up your **right hand**. This hand represents the reality of God's perspective of you as revealed in His Word, the Bible. God's reality indicates that although, as followers of Jesus, we are finite, fallen human beings, we are also radically new people who are completely forgiven, unconditionally accepted, absolutely approved, never condemned, and recipients of the very perfection of Jesus.

Our natural human tendency is to allow the reality of our experiences (the left-hand) to affect us more profoundly than the truth of God's perspective (the right hand). Our desire is that you will learn to allow God and His Word (the right hand) to have an increasing influence over your attitudes and actions. Whenever you see the **two hands** icon next to a particular Scripture, take a moment to fill in the corresponding "My Experience Might Say/God's Word Says" chart. In addition, pause to do three things:

Review Review the Faith Principle: Faith is choosing to live as though the Bible is true regardless of circumstances, emotions, or cultural trends.

Ask If you choose to live as though this Scripture is true, how would you be living? How would this truth affect your attitudes, actions, and relationships? (For example: "Romans 8:1 says that there is no condemnation for followers of Jesus. If you were living as though Romans 8:1 were true, how would you be living? How would Romans 8:1 affect your attitudes, actions and relationships?")

Pray Take a moment to ask God to make this biblical truth a greater reality in your thoughts and actions. ("God, remind me regularly that I am not condemned, but that I am completely forgiven through Jesus.")

ONE FINAL THOUGHT

Any spiritual study is in danger of becoming merely an academic exercise. Our desire is not simply to give you more information. Our prayer for you, as you experience this process, is that you will develop a passionate, intimate relationship with God and see Him transform your heart and your relationships through the power of His Holy Spirit. May God bless you with hope and expectancy on your journey as you grow in your faith and are part of expanding and strengthening the family of God.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We wish to acknowledge the role played in this discipleship training by Dr. Bill Bright, founder of Campus Crusade for Christ, International. Much of the discipleship process you hold in your hand was adapted from materials Dr. Bright developed. We are deeply indebted to him for this, as well as the example of his life and ministry.

SESSION 1

Living With an Eternal Perspective

GETTING STARTED

In this session, we will look at the difference between an eternal and a temporal perspective. We will evaluate the motivation behind our life decisions to see whether they are made according to the former or the latter. We will examine how the perspective we hold affects our view of time, truth, the world around us, and our own significance. Finally, we will consider how we can live more consistently according to an eternal perspective.

Core Concept Each day we must choose whether we will live according to the world's values and perspectives or in light of eternity and what matters in God's kingdom.

Memory Verse Write and memorize Matthew 6:33.

.....

.....

.....

.....

Faith Principle Faith is choosing to live as though the Bible is true regardless of circumstances, emotions, or cultural trends.

2 Corinthians 5:7 We live by **faith**, not by sight.

Hebrews 11:6a And without **faith** it is impossible to please God.

Galatians 3:11b The righteous will live by **faith**.

Romans 14:23b Everything that does not come from **faith** is sin.

CONSIDER

Temporal Versus Eternal

The Apostle Paul wrote these words to the first-century believers in Corinth concerning things that are visible and things that are invisible:

So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal (2 Corinthians 4:18).

Eternal refers to those things that last beyond life on this planet and are part of God's never-ending kingdom. Temporal refers to anything that is of this world and will not last forever. Most temporal things are not wrong in and of themselves. All that God created is for our use and enjoyment. However, God warns believers to guard against allowing temporal things to become central in their lives.

Discuss What factors can cause us to focus too much on the physical world and forget about the unseen world?

How Do You Make Decisions?

Look at the questions below. Place a check next to the two or three questions you are most likely to ask yourself when facing a decision.

- Will it help me get ahead?
- Will it draw people to Christ?
- Who will get the most glory and attention from this?
- In fifty years, will I be glad I chose to do this?
- Will this build someone up or tear someone down?
- Will this give me more security?
- How could this affect another believer?
- How will this affect my Christian growth?
- What kind of return will I get?
- Is this in line with God's Word?
- Is it to my advantage?

Now go back and place a "T" or an "E" next to the questions, indicating whether each question represents a temporal or eternal perspective.

Discuss Which view (temporal or eternal) has been most dominant in your life?

EXPLORE

A Temporal Versus Eternal Perspective

Where do we see the clash of these two views in the world around us? It can show up in four particular areas: truth, this world, significance, and time.

1. How we view truth.

We live our lives on the basis of our belief system. People act on what they believe to be true, even if those beliefs are not true. Being sincere about a belief does not make it true. As Christians, we acknowledge that the God of the Bible, the eternal Lord, has given us an objective, clear manual for truth in His Word and a living example of it in His Son. Against these two we compare all other claims of truth.

- *Temporal view.*

Our human perspective, based on our limited knowledge and experience, is incomplete and can change when influenced by the values of our culture. Every world culture contains some values that parallel Scripture and others that do not. Where culture departs from Scripture, we need to change. If we live according to a temporal perspective, then our measurement of what is true will be based on the world's values rather than God's.

Do not deceive yourselves. If any one of you thinks he is wise by the standards of this age, he should become a "fool" so that he may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness in God's sight. ... (1 Corinthians 3:18-19a).

Discuss How does an eternal or temporal perspective affect our view of truth?

- *Eternal view.*

An eternal perspective enables us to live in light of God's revealed truth, rather than what we perceive to be true through our limited knowledge. Living according to God's wisdom may appear to be foolishness to the world, but it is based on the true measure of reality: God's eternal truth.

We do, however, speak a message of wisdom among the mature, but not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. No, we speak of God's secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began. None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. However, as it is written: "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love Him" but God has revealed it to us by His Spirit. (1 Corinthians 2:6-10a).

All too easily we can believe the wisdom of men and pursue values that have our own interests and comfort as the goal. What satisfies and gratifies us now, however, is not necessarily in our best interests in light of eternity. Having an eternal perspective enables us to discern and apply God's truth.

Discuss Can you think of examples of a clash over truth in our culture?

2. How we view this world.

- *Temporal view.*

Read 1 John 2:15-17. How does this passage describe a temporal view of the world?

- *Eternal view.*

As you read the following passages, jot down key words and phrases which describe an eternal view of this world.

Philippians 3:20

Hebrews 11:13-16

Discuss What does it mean that our citizenship is in heaven?

What does it mean for a Christian to be an alien, or stranger, here on earth?

Since our citizenship is in heaven, how should we view our life here on earth?

3. How we view significance.

- *Temporal view.*

People who hold tightly to the world's values pursue all the world system offers. They try to find significance in acquiring wealth, having possessions, being influential, achieving important career goals, having social status, etc. While there is nothing wrong with these things, on their own they will never give true significance or be of eternal value.

- *Eternal view.*

People who see the world from God's viewpoint realize that significance comes through being rightly related to God. According to His Word, the only accomplishments of true, eternal significance are those that glorify God and serve to advance His kingdom rather than worldly interests.

Read Matthew 6:19-21, then answer the following questions:

What are we not to store up? Why not?

What are we to store up? Why?

4. How we view time.

- *Temporal view.*

This view says: "Our time on earth is all there is."

- *Eternal view*

In contrast, this view tells us that our time on earth is like a blink of the eye when compared to the scope of eternity.

Exercise Are you living for the dot or the line?

Take a piece of string and stretch it as far as it will go. The line of the string represents eternity. Now tie a knot somewhere on the string, then read the words of the Psalmist and James below:

Show me, O Lord, my life's end and the number of my days; let me know how fleeting is my life. You have made my days a mere handbreadth; the span of my years is as nothing before You. Each man's life is but a breath. Man is a mere phantom as he goes to and fro: He bustles about, but only in vain; he heaps up wealth, not knowing who will get it. (Psalm 39:4-6, NIV)

Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. (James 4:14, NIV)

The knot, a small point on the string, represents your life here on earth. From God's perspective, life here is like a mist or vapor, present for a moment and then gone.

Reflect In what will you invest your life, the temporal or the eternal?

Applying the Faith Principle to an Eternal Perspective

As you reflect on what Matthew 6:19-21 and James 4:14 say about an eternal perspective, write your thoughts in the chart below.



MY EXPERIENCE MIGHT SAY	GOD'S WORD SAYS
.....	Matthew 6:19-21
.....
.....	James 4:14
.....

Review Faith is choosing to live as though the Bible is true regardless of circumstances, emotions, or cultural trends.

Ask If you choose to live as though Matthew 6:19-21 and James 4:14 are true, how would you be living? How would these truths affect your attitudes, actions, and relationships?

Pray Take a moment to ask God to make these biblical truths a greater reality in your attitudes, actions, and relationships.

Developing an Eternal Perspective

Mark those things in this list which represent an eternal perspective to you.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> An Olympic gold medal | <input type="checkbox"/> Having lots of friends |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Forgiving someone who wronged you | <input type="checkbox"/> Making a hole-in-one |
| <input type="checkbox"/> The Word of God | <input type="checkbox"/> Knowing God |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Becoming partner/CEO | <input type="checkbox"/> Saving for retirement |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Discovering a cure for cancer | <input type="checkbox"/> Pastoring a mega-church |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Helping someone become a reproducing disciple | <input type="checkbox"/> Helping one person know Christ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Being a popular Christian musician | <input type="checkbox"/> Praying for suffering believers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Having a pre-Christian friend over for dinner | <input type="checkbox"/> Finishing the <i>Destined</i> series |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Memorizing Scripture | <input type="checkbox"/> Being open-handed with possessions |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Maintaining a 4.0 in school | <input type="checkbox"/> Owning a huge home |

You may have found some of these easy to evaluate while others took more thought. Perhaps you also noticed these things:

Observation #1—The list contains three main categories: God, His Word, and people.

Reflect Think about what you primarily have lived for during the last ten years. In which categories do they fall?

Observation #2—Some of the marked items need to pass a motive test or heart-attitude check. (In other words, what motivates me to do these? Is it for my honor or God's glory and use?)

Reflect Which items caused you to evaluate your heart attitude?

What will determine the temporal or eternal value of these items?

An Eternal Perspective: Why Pursue It?

Read the following passages. As you do, write down any principles you find which explain the benefits of living with an eternal perspective.

Matthew 6:25-34

Luke 12:15-21

2 Corinthians 4:16-18

How to Develop an Eternal Perspective

No one is born with an eternal perspective. If we are not intentionally seeking to develop and maintain an eternal perspective, we will become more and more temporal in our thinking throughout the course of our lives. For as long as we live, we will need to adjust our way of thinking by reading, understanding, and applying God's truth to life.

Read the following Scriptures and note the biblical advice for developing an eternal perspective.

1. Immerse yourself daily in God's truth.

Romans 12:2

Philippians 4:8

Colossians 3:16

2. Measure your values and decisions against the truth of God's Word.

Joshua 1:8

3. Make God's kingdom your highest priority each day.

Matthew 6:33

Colossians 3:1-3

4. Live by faith, not by sight.

2 Corinthians 5:6-7

Galatians 3:11

In addition to what you can apply from the above biblical insights, you can also learn from others who demonstrate an eternal priority. Invite someone like this to lunch and ask what has helped him or her to develop a perspective that follows God's eternal values. You can also learn from those who have gone before by reading their writings or the biographies of their lives. A few ideas: *Dream Big* (the story of Henrietta Mears), *The Journey Home—Finishing with Joy*, by Bill Bright, *Through Gates of Splendor*, by Elisabeth Elliot, among many others. Ask your discipleship partner for suggestions.

YOUR LIFE TODAY

Learn What have you learned from this lesson?



Apply

Faith is choosing to live as though the Bible is true regardless of circumstances, emotions, or cultural trends. What is a practical step you can take based on what you have learned?

BEFORE YOU FINISH

This week, be intentional about listening to your words and to those of others. Evaluate what you hear. Is it based on an eternal perspective or a temporal perspective? Ask God to help you think and live more and more in light of three eternal things: God, His Word, and people. Write your observations in your journal, if you keep one.

SESSION 2

Knowing God's Character

GETTING STARTED

In our last session, we saw that an eternal perspective affects how we view truth, time, this world, and our sense of personal significance. It also shows in our resulting lifestyle.

In this session, we will study God's attributes—His distinguishing characteristics. We will see that because of our knowledge of His attributes:

- We can know Him with greater appreciation.
- We can trust Him without reservation.
- We can imitate His character as children created in His image.
- We can mature in faith, power, and joy as we journey through life's challenges and opportunities.

Core Concept Left to ourselves, we tend to make God too small, one who falls far short of the God revealed in Scripture. We need to learn what He tells us is true about Himself and let that form how we think about and relate to Him.

Memory Verse Write and memorize Romans 11:33.

.....

.....

.....

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CONSIDER

Bill has been waiting for two months to see if he or another man will get a particular promotion. Bill has had a hard time sleeping at night. He's been on edge with his family and much less patient with everyone at work. He feels he deserves the promotion, but it's really out of his control.

Over breakfast, he tells his friend Neil what's been going on. Neil listens patiently, communicating understanding and affirmation through his responses. Eventually

Neil asks, "How might God be ready to show you something of who He is through this?"

Discuss How might a clearer understanding of God's character help Bill in this situation?

In his book *The Knowledge of the Holy*, A.W. Tozer wrote:

What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us. The history of mankind will probably show that no people has ever risen above its religion, and man's spiritual history will positively demonstrate that no religion has ever been greater than its idea of God. Worship is pure or base as the worshiper entertains high or low thoughts of God.

For this reason the gravest question before the Church is always God Himself, and the most portentous fact about any man is not what he at a given time may say or do, but what he in his deep heart conceives God to be like.

—A.W.Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy*, Harper & Row, 1961, p. 9.

To answer the question "What is God like?" we must first say that God is not exactly like anyone or anything. He is the infinite Creator of the universe, and we are His finite, imperfect creatures. It would be foolish for a created being to think that he could completely understand his Creator. Fortunately for us, our Creator is a relational God who desires not only to know us, but also to be known by us. As a result, He has revealed to us His character, or His attributes, through His creation, through the person of Christ, and through His written Word, the Bible.

What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us. —A.W. Tozer

Discuss What comes to your mind right now as you think about God?

How can we discover what God is like? Obviously, since God is infinite, any study of His attributes will be limited. However, God does promise that those who seek Him will find Him. As we look into His Word to find out more about what He is like, God promises to reveal Himself to us.

You will seek Me and find Me when you seek for Me with all your heart (Jeremiah 29:13).

EXPLORE

Two General Types of God's Attributes

God's attributes can be grouped into two main categories:

Incommunicable Attributes: those which people cannot share nor imitate (for example, God knows all and is all-powerful).

Communicable Attributes: those which people can share and imitate (such as, God's love, peace, mercy, justice, etc.).

God's Incommunicable Attributes

Some of the attributes which are true only of God include:

1. God is unchanging (immutable). God does not change and cannot be changed by anyone. He never changes in His attributes or in His relationship to His creation. He is always true to His Word and His nature. Even though your circumstances or relationships may change, God will never change.

What words do you see in these passages that describe God's immutability?

James 1:17

Hebrews 13:8

2 Timothy 2:13

Discuss How do you respond to change in your life?

How would a better understanding of God's immutability help you deal with change?

2. God is all-knowing (omniscient). God knows all actual and possible things. Nothing ever takes Him by surprise. He has known exactly what would happen through all of time, even before time began. Although you do not know the future, God knows all about your entire life. God knows all your thoughts and the intentions of your heart.

How is God's omniscience described in the following passages?

Hebrews 4:13

1 John 3:20b

Discuss God knows everything about us and loves us anyway. How does understanding this truth make you feel?

How might trusting in God's omniscience enable you to live by faith? How would you handle fear of the future?

Were there even one datum of knowledge, however small, unknown to God, His rule would break down at that point. —A.W. Tozer

3. God is present everywhere (omnipresent). God is not in everything (an unbiblical belief called pantheism). Rather, God is everywhere present at all times. Wherever you are, He is there also.

What words do you see in these passages that describe God's omnipresence?

Psalms 139:7-12

Proverbs 15:3

Discuss Think of a time when you felt alone or isolated. How would a deeper understanding of God's omnipresence have helped you deal with the loneliness?

How does God also work through other believers to allow you to experience His omnipresence?

4. God is sovereign. He has all authority to complete His perfect will. The word sovereign means "supreme ruler, superior to all others." When we say God is

sovereign, we mean He is the supreme ruler over the entire universe. Ultimately, He is in complete control of everything that happens.

How is God's sovereignty described in the following passages?

Psalm 103:19

.....

Daniel 7:14

.....

Discuss In what situations are people most likely to doubt God's sovereignty?

Think of a circumstance in which you have found it difficult to trust God. How would a greater understanding of God's sovereignty enable you to express trust in that situation?

How Did They Do It?

Read the story of the imprisonment of Paul and Silas in Acts 16:19-30.

Discuss Which attributes of God do you think enabled Paul and Silas to pray and sing while under such great stress?

What were the results of their actions in these difficult circumstances?

Applying the Faith Principle to God's Attributes

As you reflect on the attributes you noted in the "How Did They Do It?" section, write your thoughts in the chart below.



MY EXPERIENCE MIGHT SAY	GOD'S WORD SAYS
.....	Acts 16:19-30
.....
.....
.....

Review Faith is choosing to live as though the Bible is true regardless of circumstances, emotions, or cultural trends.

Ask If you choose to live as though Acts 16:19-30 were true, how would you be living? How would these truths affect your attitudes, actions, and relationships?

Pray Take a moment to ask God to make these biblical truths a greater reality in your attitudes, actions, and relationships.

5. God is all-powerful (omnipotent). There is no limit to God's might. His power and ability are immeasurable and unlimited. God is able to do any and all things. What words do you see in these passages that describe God's omnipotence?

Psalm 147:5

Job 42:2

Jeremiah 32:17

Discuss In what areas of your life do you sense the need for God's power?

6. God is independent. God does not need people or any created thing. He is complete in Himself. Even so, He created us and desires to have intimacy with us. He made us for His joy and glory.

How is God's independence described in Romans 11:33-36?

God's Communicable Attributes

God intends for many aspects of His personhood to be reflected in those who love and follow Him, including these:

1. God is patient. God is slow to anger in His relationship with His followers. God is also patient toward those who don't yet know Christ, because He wants to give everyone the opportunity to come into a relationship with Himself.

What words or phrases in these passages describe God's patience?

Psalm 103:8-14

2 Peter 3:9

Discuss In what life situations are you tempted not to imitate God's patience?

How does it affect you knowing that God is patient with you?

2. God is just. God is completely fair, impartial, honest, and ethical. He is committed to righteousness and to those who obey His laws. Those who do evil will ultimately get what they deserve. When you are wronged, you do not have to take revenge because God is your defender and avenger.

What do these verses say about God's justice?

Psalm 11:7

2 Thessalonians 1:5-6

Deuteronomy 32:35

Discuss Think of a situation in which you were hurt or offended by someone. Next, think of a situation where you wronged someone else. How would an understanding of God's justice help you respond in these situations?

When I was hurt/offended:

When I wronged someone:

3. God is truth. God is completely consistent with Himself. He is ultimate truth, fact, and reality. He has revealed Himself as He truly is and these revelations are completely reliable.

How is the truth of God described in these passages?

Numbers 23:19

Isaiah 45:19

John 14:6

Discuss Why do human beings lie or shade the truth?

How are you tempted to lie or shade the truth?

If you were to be an imitator of God in truth, in what situations would you need to make some changes?

Do you see any particular pattern in those areas?

YOUR LIFE TODAY

God desires for us to know Him and love Him. We often lose a fresh connection with God when we forget that He is and has everything we need. In the midst of our difficulties, He is ready to display His glorious nature. Often we do not acknowledge who He is and try to substitute our own strength or wisdom for His. In so doing, we live in isolation. God beckons us to draw near and find true life in Him.

Our primary purpose in studying His attributes is to draw closer to Him. We need to know Him so our worship reflects the truth of His life and interaction with us. While there are practical benefits, our main purpose is not to live lives with fewer difficulties, but rather to become so overwhelmed with His completeness that we abandon all means of seeking fulfillment through our distorted, finite human efforts.

Discuss What is the greatest challenge you face right now?

What need in your life do you have difficulty believing God will meet?

Learn What attributes of God covered in this lesson relate most directly to your current challenge or need?



Apply Faith is choosing to live as though the Bible is true regardless of circumstances, emotions, or cultural trends. What is a practical step you can take based on what you have learned?

Read again the Scriptures listed under the attributes you have noted in the Learn question above. As you read, ask God to give you insight about Himself and how He wants to work in you as you face this challenge or need. Summarize your insights below in two or three sentences or, if you journal, write your thoughts to God there.

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BEFORE YOU FINISH

In this session, we have looked at nine of God's attributes. Below are listed five others, along with corresponding Bible verses. There are many more passages to consider for studying each attribute. This sampling will help you get started. Take some time this week during your regular Bible reading to study and reflect on the attributes listed below. Think about how each attribute of God applies to your life, relationships, and ministry.

God is eternal (Isaiah 44:6; 1 Timothy 1:17; Revelation 1:8).

God has always existed from eternity past and will exist in eternity future. He has no beginning or end. Nothing precedes Him. God is not bound by time, and He knows the future as well as He knows the past and present.

God is faithful (Deuteronomy 7:9; Deuteronomy 32:4; 1 Corinthians 1:9).

You can trust God; He will always keep His promises. He is dependable. He will comfort, protect, guide and deliver you.

God is loving (Isaiah 43:4; Jeremiah 31:3; 1 John 4:16).

God is compassionate and tender toward you. He is merciful. He longs to care for and be kind to you with perfect goodness. Love is the very nature of God. Because

God loves you with an everlasting love, you do not need to seek to earn or keep His love.

God is good (Psalm 34:8; Psalm 84:11; 1 Peter 2:3).

God never stops being good to you. His goodness to you is demonstrated in His love, mercy, and grace.

God is righteous (Ezra 9:15; Isaiah 45:20-25; Isaiah 41:10).

God is just, right, correct, and lawful. He is chaste, moral, blameless, pure, and virtuous. God is perfect in all of these characteristics. He is your righteous Savior.

SESSION 3

Intensifying Your Passion for the Great Commission

GETTING STARTED

In our last session, we focused on the character of God: who He is, and what is true of Him. We can trust a God who is holy, true, righteous, loving and so much more that is wonderful. He desires that we increasingly reflect His image in our lives.

In this session, we will look at the great honor God has given us: to help fulfill what is commonly referred to as the Great Commission. We will answer three questions regarding the Great Commission: What is it? Why should I be passionate about it? How can I help fulfill it?

Core Concept The Great Commission reflects the heart of God. If I love God, what matters to Him will matter to me.

Memory Verse Write and memorize Matthew 28:18-20.

.....

.....

.....

.....

CONSIDER

What Matters Most to You?

Although we express emotions differently, we each experience certain events, convictions, and values which touch us emotionally and bring about a strong response. Certain things make us laugh, others make us angry, and still others can make us weep.

Look over the list below. On a scale of 1-5 (1 being low and 5 being high), rate how strongly you feel about each event.

- ___ Your team wins the Super Bowl, the Stanley Cup, or the World Series.
- ___ Your car is vandalized in the parking lot of the grocery store.
- ___ A family member receives a promotion at work.

- _____ A friend tells you about a relative who has become a follower of Christ.
- _____ A well-respected local politician is convicted in a financial scandal.
- _____ Your child or sibling does well on an exam at school.
- _____ A Christian friend takes steps to make her relationship with God her highest priority.
- _____ You see a news report about a tragic earthquake in another country.

Whether or not we outwardly express our feelings about them, particular things can stir us emotionally and move us to action. At other times, the flame of our enthusiasm seems to have gone out; we feel “passionless.” There may be many reasons for this. Frequently, however, our enthusiasm wanes because we have lost sight of the significance of our lives.

In this session, we will look at an aspect of the Christian life about which God wants to make us passionate people. He wants us to intensely, enthusiastically care about that which is at the center of His plan for the ages. For believers in Christ, this is part of remembering who we are and the significant purpose to which we have been called.

EXPLORE

Let’s take a fresh look at the greatest plan ever given by the greatest Person who ever lived, concerning the greatest power ever revealed, and with the greatest promise ever recorded. Let’s look at Christ’s Great Commission.

What Is the Great Commission?

Prior to His ascension into heaven, Jesus said this to His followers:

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)

As one’s life nears its end, last words are usually important words. Here and in Acts 1:8, which we will examine later, Jesus is giving a final charge to His disciples. In the three short sentences we read here, Jesus crystallizes the mission of His body, the church: to make disciples of all nations. God desires for everyone in the world to have a chance to hear about His Son, Jesus. He also longs to see everyone who responds in faith to Him to grow as a disciple, a follower of Jesus Christ.

Unfortunately, throughout the history of the church, Jesus’ forward-thinking strategy of making disciples has often been overlooked in favor of short-term strategies for reaching large audiences.

The costly principles of leadership development and reproduction seem to have been submerged beneath the easier strategy of mass recruitment.

—Robert Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, p. 104

A closer look at Matthew 28:18-20 reveals the main thrust of the passage: make disciples. Jesus directed believers in Him to make disciples of all nations. We do this by:

Going As you are going, in your daily activities be intentional about making disciples.

Baptizing Baptism is an external expression of an internal commitment to the person of Jesus Christ. Our responsibility as disciples is to help others commit to follow Christ by receiving Him as Savior and Lord, then follow His example by being baptized, in connection with a local church.

Teaching Teaching helps the disciple learn what it means to obey Jesus.

Look again at Matthew 28:18-20. What do you observe about Jesus in these verses?

Jesus, the One who gives this charge, possesses all authority in heaven and on earth. It is He who promises to be with believers—always—as they carry out the Great Commission. This is as true today as for those first men and women who obeyed His command (see Hebrews 13:8).

Discuss What relevance does Jesus’ authority have to the Great Commission?

Why is it important for believers to know that Jesus is with them as they work to help fulfill the Great Commission?

None of us has a long time here on planet Earth. It's kind of a staging ground. It's our split second in eternity when we have an opportunity to invest our lives, our time, our talent, and our treasure to fulfill what our Lord came into this world to do and commissioned us to do. —Bill Bright

In another passage, the Apostle Paul gives further insight into our mission of making disciples. In his letter to the church in Colossae, Paul writes:

And we proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, that we may present every man complete [mature] in Christ. (Colossians 1:28, NASB)

Paul passionately wanted to give everyone in the world the opportunity to enter into a relationship with Jesus. He was equally committed to helping every believer become mature, or built up, in his or her faith. Paul realized that if his objective was simply to make converts, then the fledgling church would quickly be eaten alive by a Roman culture focused on pagan gods, pleasure, and prosperity. On the other hand, if he could teach, encourage, build up, and equip believers to be Christ-centered and Great Commission-focused, then the church would continue to extend Christ's love—eventually to every person on the planet.

Everyone deserves at least one chance to hear about Jesus.
—Paul Eshleman, The JESUS Film Project

Discuss What are some of the main barriers that prevent believers from making disciples?

What is the greatest hindrance for you in making disciples?

Why Should I Wholeheartedly Help to Fulfill the Great Commission?

As you read the following passages, note the principles listed that tell why believers are to give their lives to helping fulfill the Great Commission. Feel free to add your own observations.

1. Read Matthew 28:18-20. Jesus has commanded us to make disciples.

Discuss How do people in our culture tend to respond to commands from those in authority?

Have you ever struggled to respond well to someone's direction? Why or why not?

Can you think of a fear you have experienced in following Jesus' commands? If so, around what did it center?

2. Read John 14:6 and Acts 4:12. Jesus is the only source of forgiveness and eternal life. There is salvation in no other.

Discuss What challenges can you see in living according to these truths in this current culture?

Why is it important that we have a personal conviction based on God's Word concerning these truths?

Sometimes it helps to see how we are living out what we intellectually believe. Consider the following statements and evaluate yourself on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 = never, 3 = sometimes, 5 = constantly):

- _____ I think of my non-believing co-workers, neighbors, friends, and family members as being separated from God forever without Jesus.
- _____ I pray for the salvation of those I know who do not yet know Jesus.
- _____ I look for opportunities to influence others for Christ.
- _____ I make it a high priority to help believers be effective in evangelism and discipleship.

Applying the Faith Principle to the Great Commission

As you reflect on what John 14:6 and Acts 4:12 say about the source of forgiveness and eternal life, write your thoughts in the chart below.



MY EXPERIENCE MIGHT SAY	GOD'S WORD SAYS
.....	John 14:6
.....
.....	Acts 4:12
.....

Review Faith is choosing to live as though the Bible is true regardless of circumstances, emotions, or cultural trends.

Ask If you choose to live as though John 14:6 and Acts 4:12 are true, how would you be living?

How would these truths affect your perspective on talking with others about Christ?

Pray Take a moment to ask God to make these biblical truths a greater reality in your attitudes, actions, and relationships.

3. Read 2 Corinthians 3:1-3 and 2 John 4. There is incredible fulfillment in reaching and discipling others.

Discuss Think of someone who has had a positive impact in your life.

Describe what he or she did and how it affected you.

Give an example of how you have had a positive impact on someone else. How does it make you feel knowing that you affected someone else for the better?

4. Read Matthew 9:35-38. People desperately need a relationship with the God who loves them.

Discuss Can you think of a time when you talked with someone who seemed very open to knowing Christ?

How could you tell that he or she was interested in Him?

What if I Lack Passion for the Great Commission?

First, remember that for some people, strong emotions do not always mark their wholehearted desire to follow Christ. If you want to obey and please Him, and your life shows your commitment to seeing others come to Christ and grow as disciples, you have "passion" whether you feel it or not!

If, however, you lack such evidence, deal with it as with any area in which you fall short: go to Him. Speak honestly with the Lord and admit where you are. Prayerfully examine His Word and commit again to obey. Ask Him to change your heart to better reflect His. Remember to yield to the Holy Spirit—the one who gives us enthusiasm about the things of God and power to act. Then, whether you feel differently or not, you can step out in faith to help accomplish God's will.

How Can I Help Fulfill the Great Commission?

1. Keep the overall strategy in mind. Read Acts 1:6-9.

Jesus spoke these words to His followers after He had risen from death and just prior to His ascension into heaven. He had already given the charge to make

disciples of all nations by going, baptizing, and teaching. Now He gives them, and us, a strategy to implement.

- Begin with those in your immediate spheres of influence: your Jerusalem.
What people do you know at work, in your neighborhood, or at school who appear to need a relationship with God?

What Prayer-Care-Share step might you do with at least one of these? (See *Destined for Ministry*)

What believers do you know who are not yet involved in reaching and discipling others?

- Be available to influence those outside of your Jerusalem: your Judea and Samaria.

NOTE: Judea for those early disciples was the area surrounding Jerusalem. Our equivalent might be a county, state or province. However, although geographically not that far apart, cultural and religious differences created a definite strain between those in Jerusalem and the Samaritans. Our equivalent today could be someone or somewhere outside our existing “comfort zone.”

When do you come in contact with people outside of your neighborhood, school, or work environment?

How would your influence with these people be different from that which you have with those in your Jerusalem?

Can you think of a Samaria equivalent for you?

- Remember that the entire world is our objective. Jesus includes the “ends of the earth” in the scope of His plan.

Not all Christians are called to go to far-distant lands, but all are called to have a vision for reaching the world for Christ. God may indeed lead you to travel elsewhere to help fulfill the Great Commission, but He also can use you right now, right where you are.

How can you help reach and make disciples for Christ to the ends of the earth without leaving your community?

There is no magic in small plans. When I consider my ministry, I think of the world. Anything less than that would not be worthy of Christ nor of His will for my life. —Dr. Henrietta Mears (teacher and mentor to many Christian leaders and discipleship mentor of Bill and Vonette Bright)

Jesus said that the harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few (see Matthew 9:37). How might God use you to raise up more workers? (One idea is found in verse 38.)

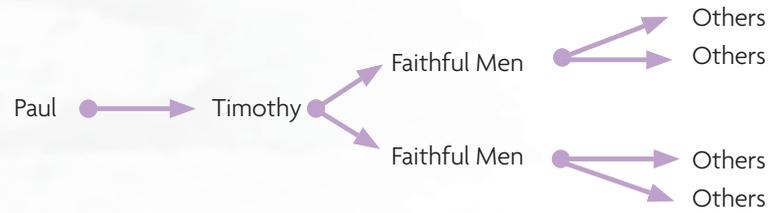
2. Make it your goal to raise up more workers for His kingdom, one at a time.

You expand your effectiveness by narrowing your focus. —Jim Henderson

When you introduce someone to Christ, you do spiritual addition. When you disciple a new believer and equip him or her to reach and disciple others who will reach and disciple still others, you participate in spiritual multiplication.

One letter that the Apostle Paul wrote was to Timothy, a young leader he had disciplined. Read Paul's charge to Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:1-2.

How many spiritual generations do you see in this passage?



If you were to do spiritual addition, bringing 10 people per year to faith in Christ for the next 10 years, you would have added 100 new people to the church. If you were to do spiritual multiplication for the next 10 years, discipling one person per year who then was equipped to reach and disciple one other person, who would reach and disciple another (etc.), more than 1,000 trained workers for the body of Christ would have been raised in a ten-year period of time.

Discuss If spiritual multiplication is so effective, why is it not done more often?

What can hinder you from multiplying spiritually?

3. Expand Your Vision for the World

A heartfelt commitment to the Great Commission develops over time and benefits from regular “feeding” throughout our lives. Some have found it helpful to:

- Take a short-term mission trip.
- Read missionary prayer letters and pray for the people and ministries they describe. As the Lord leads, you may also wish to invest in the work they are doing. According to Jesus (see Matthew 6:20-21), that’s a great way to get your heart “out there.”
- Pray for world leaders and news events. Both can affect a nation’s access to the gospel and the growth of the local church. The news also can give us glimpses of people’s needs, both physically and spiritually.
- Read missionary biographies and other books that show the heart of those who have given their lives to help fulfill the Great Commission. Look for books about the life and ministry of people such as: Hudson Taylor, Amy Carmichael, Jim Elliott, Henrietta Mears, William Carey, Bill Bright, and Billy Graham.

YOUR LIFE TODAY

Learn What have you learned from this lesson?



Apply Faith is choosing to live as though the Bible is true regardless of circumstances, emotions, or cultural trends. What is a practical step you can take based on what you have learned?

BEFORE YOU FINISH

Spend time with the Lord, reflecting on these question:

1. What am I currently doing to reach those in my Jerusalem?

Is the Lord giving me any ideas that I should begin to work on now?

2. If I make evangelism and discipleship a greater priority, what specific changes might I need to make to my schedule?

3. Who can I invite to be discipled so he/she can learn to disciple others one-to-one?

4. Am I willing to step out in faith and commit myself to discipling one or two people per year, as God leads? Talk with your discipleship partner about your response.

SESSION 4

Insights From the Ministry of Jesus

GETTING STARTED

In our last session, we considered the privilege we have of being a partner with God to help fulfill His Great Commission.

In this session, we will look at principles we observe in the ministry of Jesus and consider how to apply them to our own ministries.

Core Concept Jesus is the master evangelist and disciple-maker. We want to follow His model.

Memory Verse Write and memorize 1 Thessalonians 2:8.

.....

.....

.....

.....

Faith Principle Faith is choosing to live as though the Bible is true regardless of circumstances, emotions, or cultural trends.

2 Corinthians 5:7 We live by **faith**, not by sight.

Hebrews 11:6a And without **faith** it is impossible to please God.

Galatians 3:11b The righteous will live by **faith**.

Romans 14:23b Everything that does not come from **faith** is sin.

CONSIDER

Jesus' Method of Reaching the World

It all started by Jesus calling a few men to follow Him. This revealed immediately the direction His evangelistic strategy would take. His concern was not with programs to reach the multitudes, but with men whom the multitudes would follow. Remarkable as it may seem, Jesus started to gather these men before He ever organized an evangelistic campaign or even preached a sermon in public. Men were to be His method of winning the world to God.

—Robert Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, p. 27

Discuss Why did Jesus make discipling a few a higher priority than simply preaching to the crowds?

EXPLORE

The Ministry of Jesus

Jesus was the master evangelist and discipler. It makes sense, then, for us to see what we can learn from His ministry. Several principles from Jesus' ministry are listed below, along with corresponding passages of Scripture. As you read each Scripture, consider the ministry principle and its application to your life.

1. Immersion in the mission: Jesus began by recruiting people to His cause.

Read Matthew 4:17-25. As you do, take notes on the following, then discuss your thoughts with your partner.

What clues does His teaching reveal about His mission on earth?

How did Jesus recruit His first disciples?

What did these new recruits experience and observe when they were immersed in Jesus' ministry?

Picture yourself in the role of one of Jesus' first disciples. What might you have thought and felt as you began to watch Jesus work?

2. The way up is down: Jesus embodied servant-leadership.

What principles do you see in the following passages about leading others?

Matthew 20:20-28

John 13:1-20

Discuss How have others modeled this kind of leadership to you?

How do you envision this kind of leadership being demonstrated in your own ministry?

3. More is caught than taught: Jesus lived out what He believed.

Jesus regularly taught the Scriptures to His disciples or to others in the presence of His disciples (see Matthew 22:23-33). He also modeled the things He taught. Jesus knew that if He wanted His disciples to truly grasp His mission, they needed to see it lived out. Here are just a few of the things Jesus modeled:

- Compassion for people (Matthew 9:36-38).
- Dependence on the Father (John 5:18-19).
- Reaching across cultural and social boundaries (John 4:27-42).
- Time alone with the Father (Luke 5:16).
- The priority of prayer. A few examples include:
 - Jesus prayed all night, then chose the Twelve (Luke 6:12-16).
 - Jesus cried out in anguish to the Father when He faced His impending crucifixion (Matthew 26:36-39).
 - Jesus prayed for His disciples, both present and future (John 17:6-26).

Discuss Give an example from your life of someone who taught you by example. What effect did this person have on your life?

Have you known anyone who lived by the motto, "Do as I say, not as I do?" What effect did this person have on your life?

4. On-the-job training: Jesus involved His disciples in hands-on ministry.

Note your observations on how He does this in Luke 9:1-10.

In Luke’s account of the disciples’ mission trip, we observe Jesus calling the Twelve together, giving them authority and direction, and instructing them about the details of their assignment (Luke 9:1-5). After their departure, we see a brief description of what they did (Luke 9:6) and a report to Jesus of the “war stories” from their trip (Luke 9:10). Jesus gave them an assignment, sent them out to do it, and had them report back to Him when they were done.

Discuss What value do you see in the following components of Jesus’ training?

- Giving authority and direction.
- Giving specific instructions.
- Sending out on the mission.
- Reporting back after the mission.

Which of these training components are easiest for you?

In which training components do you need the most work?

5. Matters of the heart: Jesus emphasized heart attitude over outward appearance.

What principles about heart attitude do you see in the following passages?

Luke 18:9-14

Luke 21:1-4

Heart Check Things which positively influence my heart attitude toward God are:

Things which negatively influence my heart attitude toward God are:

Applying the Faith Principle to Heart Motivation

As you reflect on what Luke 18:9-14 and Luke 21:1-4 say about heart motivation, write your thoughts in the chart below.



MY EXPERIENCE MIGHT SAY	GOD’S WORD SAYS
.....	Luke 18:9-14
.....
.....	Luke 21:1-4
.....

Review Faith is choosing to live as though the Bible is true regardless of circumstances, emotions, or cultural trends.

Ask If you choose to live as though Luke 18:9-14 and Luke 21:1-4 are true, how would you be living? How would these truths affect your attitudes, actions, and relationships?

Pray Take a moment to ask God to make these biblical truths a greater reality in your attitudes, actions, and relationships.

6. Loving the unlovely: Jesus modeled unconditional acceptance.

Read the following passages and write down your observations of how Jesus accepted people whom others found disgusting.

Tax collectors and sinners (Matthew 11:19)

.....

Lepers (Luke 5:12-15)

.....

A woman caught in adultery (John 8:1-11)

.....

Enemies (Luke 6:27-42)

.....

Discuss Who are some of our modern-day tax collectors, lepers, and sinners?

Who are the unlovely people in your life?

How might God be calling you to respond to these people?

7. Jesus challenged people: He made clear the cost of being His disciple.

Read Luke 14:25-35.

Here we observe an account of Jesus' "membership drive": He was seeing how many His words would drive away! Luke says that "great multitudes were going along" with

Jesus. Rather than passing around the offering plate, Jesus turned to this crowd of people and told them that they really ought to consider the personal cost of being His followers.

Discuss Why did Jesus speak so strongly to those who seemed to be interested in following Him?

When might it be appropriate for us to make a similar challenge to followers of Jesus today?

8. Caring for the cares of others: Jesus met people at their point of need.

If something is important to us, it also is important to God. Sometimes in our efforts to minister to people, we focus too much on our own agenda and miss out on how God wants to meet their obvious needs. Throughout His ministry, Jesus cared about the things that were important to the people He encountered. He began where they were, not where He ultimately wanted them to be.

As you read the following passages, note Jesus' concern for the cares of others.

The miraculous catch of fish (Luke 5:1-11)

.....

The Samaritan woman at the well (John 4:4-42)

.....

The man lowered through the roof (Luke 5:17-26)

.....

Discuss What are some needs of the people you encounter each day?

What effect might your helping to care for these needs have on people?

9. A vision-caster: Jesus had a vision for the generations—physical and spiritual—that would follow.

What words and phrases in the following passage describe Jesus' vision for future generations of believers?

John 17:6-21

.....

.....

.....

Discuss From what you know of Jesus' ministry, how did He help the disciples think about future generations of believers?

How can you help those you disciple to have a vision beyond their immediate spheres of influence?

The Rewards of Your Efforts

Having continued this far in the *Destined* series, you have probably experienced the diligence required in communicating your faith and discipling others. You have likely experienced some joy and, very likely, some discouragement as well. At times, you may even have asked yourself, "Is it really worth it?" or "Is this really making a difference?"

Throughout the ages, others have faced similar challenges, yet they found the courage and commitment not to give up, even when they could not see the results. As you read the following passages, write down some of the rewards of discipling others that Paul and John experienced.

1 Thessalonians 1:1-10

.....

1 Thessalonians 2:19-20

.....

2 John 4

.....

Discuss What discouragements have you have experienced in your ministry of evangelism and discipleship?

What have been some of the joys and rewards?

What helps you see the importance of a continued commitment to this ministry in others' lives?

YOUR LIFE TODAY

Learn What have you learned from this lesson?



Apply Faith is choosing to live as though the Bible is true regardless of circumstances, emotions, or cultural trends. What is a practical step you can take based on what you have learned?

SESSION 5

Developing Your Ministry Strategy

GETTING STARTED

In our last session, we looked at principles from the ministry of Jesus, and we considered how to apply them to our own ministries.

In this lesson, we will study the components of a ministry strategy. We will examine how Jesus demonstrated those elements in His ministry and then plan specifics for our own.

Core Concept We need a plan for being regularly involved in evangelism, discipleship and mobilization.

Memory Verse Write and memorize Luke 19:10.

.....

.....

.....

.....

CONSIDER

Austin has been attending a growing church for a year. He loves the worship, messages, small groups, outreach, and many other volunteer opportunities. It seems every weekend he is signing up for something new. Austin is a very responsible person, so he works faithfully at each of his obligations. He has developed a reputation for dependability and a willingness to serve.

Lately, however, Austin's enthusiasm has begun to disappear. He is struggling with feelings of resentment toward those who ask him to volunteer. He also has begun to wonder if all his activity is truly having an impact in the lives of others. Is he really touching anyone deeply or developing anyone else to lead?

Discuss What insight would you offer Austin?

Christians can be involved in many good activities. Like Austin, however, too many activities with too little central purpose or direction can cause even the most dedicated of believers to lose enthusiasm. It is important for us to understand the components of a strategic ministry as demonstrated by Jesus. He has commissioned us to practice these same elements as we follow Him.

EXPLORE

Ministry Strategy: the Big Picture

There are three basic components to a purposeful ministry strategy: evangelism, discipleship, and mobilization.

Evangelism

Making disciples begins with introducing people to Jesus. Seeking to bring people into a relationship with God is at the core of the Great Commission. (See Acts 1:8.) Evangelism involves building relationships with those who do not yet know Christ, demonstrating God's love in practical ways, and having spiritual conversations, as well as explaining clearly the message of forgiveness and eternal life through Jesus.

Discipleship

Once a person begins a relationship with God through Jesus, it is essential for him or her to learn the basics of following Christ. Additionally, many people who have been believers for years have never had the opportunity to be discipled. Both newer and older Christians need to be taught and developed, so they, too, can reach and disciple others. (See Colossians 1:28-29.)

Mobilization

The nature of Jesus' message is such that it must be passed on to others, both those in our culture and those in every cultural/language group in the world. As people come to faith in Jesus and grow in their faith, there will be an internal motivation to reach and disciple others. Some will respond to this internal motivation quickly. Others will need more time, patience, and nurturing. Regardless of personality and giftedness, every believer can be equipped to reach and disciple others. (See 2 Timothy 2:2.)

JESUS' MINISTRY STRATEGY

Having studied the basic elements of a strategic ministry, let's examine how Jesus practiced those elements. Keep in mind that Jesus undergirded everything He did with talking to and listening to His Father.

1. Jesus had an overall mission in mind.

Read Luke 19:10. What was Jesus' purpose in coming to earth?

Read Luke 24:46-47. To what extent was His message to be proclaimed?

2. Jesus ministered to the masses (evangelism).

Read Luke 6:17-19. Why do you think Jesus spent time ministering to large groups?

3. Jesus spent focused time with a few (discipleship).

Read Luke 9:28. Why do you think Jesus spent focused time with Peter, James and John?

4. Jesus called people to reach the world (mobilization).

Read Acts 4:13. How does it make you feel to know God uses ordinary people to help reach the world?

5. Jesus called men and women to count the cost of embracing His strategy.

As you read the following passages, write key words and phrases which express the cost of being a disciple, a follower, of Jesus.

Luke 9:23-25
.....
.....

Luke 14:25-33
.....
.....

Discuss What are some of the potential costs to me of following Jesus' ministry strategy?

Applying the Faith Principle to the Cost of Discipleship

As you reflect on what Luke 9:23-25 and Luke 14:25-33 say about counting the cost of discipleship, write your thoughts in the chart below:



MY EXPERIENCE MIGHT SAY	GOD'S WORD SAYS
.....	Luke 9:23-25
.....
.....	Luke 14:25-33
.....

Review Faith is choosing to live as though the Bible is true regardless of circumstances, emotions, or cultural trends.

Ask If you choose to live as though Luke 9:23-25 and Luke 14:25-33 are true, how would you be living? How would these truths affect your perspective on the cost of discipleship?

Pray Take a moment to ask God to make these biblical truths a greater reality in your attitudes, actions, and relationships.

Jesus calls all believers to help give others the opportunity to know Him. While He was on earth, to ensure that everyone would have that opportunity, He ministered to the masses and spent focused time discipling a highly committed few who would multiply His ministry into many others. These first trained disciples would provide nurture and leadership for the multitudes who would choose to follow Jesus. If we are going to help take Jesus' message to every person in the world, we need to model our ministry strategy after His.

Discuss As you look at the above components of Jesus' ministry, in which areas do you feel most confident?

In which do you need more training?

YOUR MINISTRY STRATEGY:

PERSONAL PREPARATION

Personal preparation is critical to your ministry strategy. Remembering the condition of those without Christ builds compassion in our hearts. Being filled with the Holy Spirit gives us sensitivity to God's leading, along with the power and character to carry out our ministry strategy.

1. Prepare your heart for those who do not yet know Jesus.

As you read the following passages, jot down words and phrases which describe:

- **A person's worldview without Christ.**

1 Corinthians 2:14

- **A person's life pursuits without Christ.**

Ecclesiastes 1:1-2, 12-14

Ecclesiastes 2:10-11, 24-26

- **A person's eternity without Christ.**

Hebrews 9:27

Revelation 20:11-15

- **The need for humility in approaching those who don't yet know Christ.**

1 Timothy 1:15

- **A believer's role in helping those who don't yet know Christ.**

Mark 1:17

2 Corinthians 5:20

Colossians 1:28-29

Discuss Which of the above Bible passages has the greatest impact on you? Why?

Why is heart preparation necessary for believers who want to reach those who do not yet know Jesus?

All of humanity stands in need of Jesus so that we may not remain obstinate sinners to the end and be condemned. —Clement of Alexandria

2. Access your God-given resource: the Holy Spirit

In the following verses, note the role of the Holy Spirit in reaching pre-Christians with the gospel.

Acts 1:8

John 16:7-11

1 Corinthians 2:1-5

YOUR MINISTRY STRATEGY: MAKING A PLAN

As you yield to the Holy Spirit's direction, think through the following questions for each ministry area. Then write a simple, do-able goal for each. For example action plans and further help, see the "Resources to Help You Plan" section beginning on page 58 at the end of this lesson.

1. Evangelism

With whom do I regularly come in contact who may not yet know Christ?

In your evangelism plan, include the prayer-care-share steps we studied in *Destined for Ministry*.

PRAYER — I will pray for:

CARE — I see opportunities to demonstrate caring (whether by listening, helping, or in some other way) to:

SHARE — I will take the following step of faith to initiate a spiritual conversation by _____ (target date) with:

2. Discipleship

What new or young believers do I know whom I can begin discipling one-to-one?

Which person would I like to work with this year?

3. Mobilization

What mature believers do I know whom I can train in one-to-one discipleship, and who could then begin evangelizing and discipling others?

Whom do I feel the Lord leading me to invite first to do this?

When will I seek to challenge this person?

YOUR LIFE TODAY

Learn What have you learned from this lesson?

Apply Since faith is choosing to live as though the Bible is true regardless of circumstances, emotions, or cultural trends, what could be the impact of this lesson on your attitudes, emotions, and actions?

Resources to Help You Plan

EVANGELISM

Prayer. Talking with God prepares your heart and theirs.

Example action plan: Write the names of those who may not yet know Jesus on a Prayer-Care-Share card or in your journal and pray regularly for them.

Care. Demonstrating God's love in practical ways builds trust and opens doors. Look for opportunities God brings your way to do the following:

Acts of kindness. Some evangelism analysts indicate that it takes between 10 and 20 meaningful "touches" from Christians to move a person to the point of receiving Christ.

Listening. People do not care how much you know until they know how much you care. Ask questions about their life, work, activities, and relationships. Then close your mouth and open your ears.

Example action plan: Look for opportunities each day to demonstrate God's love to others through acts of kindness and listening.

Share. Answering questions and explaining Jesus' message helps seekers understand why they need a relationship with God.

Deeper conversations. As trust is developed, people become more open to questions about family background, life, relationships, goals, meaning, death, religious beliefs, and a relationship with God. Follow their answers with more questions (such as, "An interesting thought. Tell me more about that."). Stay away from leading questions (questions you ask in order to set them up for a speech or presentation).

Communicating the message. Your deeper conversations may often lead you into conversations about a relationship with God. A natural next step is to tell the story of your spiritual journey. If you sense a desire in the person to know more, there are many things you can do to help the person understand how to begin a relationship with God:

Ask, "Have you ever discussed with anyone how a person begins a relationship with God?"

Give your friend a *JESUS* video and ask to talk about it later.

If appropriate, read together through *The Four Spiritual Laws* booklet or a similar tool.

Example action plan: Look for open doors to deeper conversations. When the time is right, share your story and communicate the essence of the gospel.

DISCIPLESHIP

Example action plan: Take one new or young Christian, per year, through the *Destined* materials and discipleship process.

MOBILIZATION

Example action plan: Take one mature Christian, per year, through the *Destined* discipleship process, helping them quickly begin to use this discipleship training tool with another person.

SESSION 6

Finishing Well

GETTING STARTED

In our last session, we studied the components of a ministry strategy. We also examined how Jesus demonstrated those elements in His ministry and then planned specifics for our own strategy.

In this session we'll consider what it takes for followers of Jesus to finish well. Though there is no magic formula, the principles discussed in this lesson are characteristic of those who have followed well for a lifetime.

Core Concept God calls us to a lifelong commitment to walk faithfully and intimately with Him while living out His eternal priorities.

Memory Verse Write and memorize 2 Timothy 4:6,7

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Faith Principle Faith is choosing to live as though the Bible is true regardless of circumstances, emotions, or cultural trends.

2 Corinthians 5:7 *We live by **faith**, not by sight.*

Hebrews 11:6a *And without **faith** it is impossible to please God.*

Galatians 3:11b *The righteous will live by **faith**.*

Romans 14:23b *Everything that does not come from **faith** is sin.*

CONSIDER

John was 54, and retirement was just around the corner. He'd been looking forward to the next phase of his life for quite some time. His last few years at work had been more drudgery than satisfying. He couldn't wait to wrap up his final day at the office, then see the company headquarters in his rearview mirror for the last time.

Earlier in his career, John had been upbeat and optimistic. He had loved his job and the challenges he faced there. He also had been a devoted husband and father and passionate about his relationship with God. As a leader at church, he had regularly helped with outreach and discipleship efforts in his community.

After several promotions, a couple of buy-outs, three children, and a major church split, John's optimism had turned into disillusionment. The politics, back-stabbing, and relational stresses both at work and at church eventually took their toll on him. He decided to hunker down, do what he was told, pad his retirement account, and look forward to the day he would be free. His kids would have moved out, and he could enjoy what he loved best: travel and golf!

Discuss How did John's optimism turn into disillusionment?

Has your experience ever paralleled John's? In what way?

EXPLORE

You may have heard stories of people who started well in their relationship with God, but did not finish well. Some well-known and influential Christians have fallen so dramatically that their photos and stories have ended up in the news. These public failures can profoundly affect us. We may experience shock, fear, embarrassment, anger or shame. Sometimes we may even wonder, "How could they do that?" If we're honest, however, we realize that none of us is immune from setting a bad example for the body of Christ. We also realize that, even though we may never experience a public, dramatic failure, we, too, are susceptible to a subtle drift away from a life of passion and purpose for the kingdom of God. We know that it is possible to start well, yet not finish well.

What does it take to finish well? Though there is no magic formula, the following practices characterize disciples of Jesus who have followed well for a lifetime.

1. Keep Intimacy with God Your Highest Priority

Though I know not the way He leads me, well do I know my Guide.
—Martin Luther

Read Matthew 22:34-40. What did Jesus say matters most?

Jesus responded to the question “Which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” by quoting Deuteronomy 6:5: “*Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.*” The Bible is filled with commands, exhortations, encouragements, and corrections. Though all of them are important, God wants us to keep the main thing the main thing. If the focus of our relationship with God is on managing the behavior of ourselves and others, we will have missed the point. Believers are called to a never-ending love relationship with God. God desires more than anything else for us to know and walk with Him intimately. As we do, we experience His life-changing power in our lives.

The Apostle Paul's words to the church at Philippi show that the challenge of finishing well crosses time and culture.

Join with others in following my example, brothers, and take note of those who live according to the pattern we gave you. For, as I have often told you before and say again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things.

But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables Him to bring everything under His control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like His glorious body. (Philippians 3:17-21)

Discuss What helps you keep your relationship with God a high priority?

What can cause you to let other things crowd out the time and effort you give to knowing and walking with God?

2. Develop Consistency in the Personal Disciplines

Nurturing Your Spiritual Life

Throughout the pages of Scripture, we see exhortations and examples of personal disciplines or habits that contribute to personal wholeness and greater intimacy with God. The Apostle Paul encouraged believers to use their time wisely (Ephesians 5:16). Daniel had regular times of prayer each day (Daniel 6:10). Moses exhorted the people of Israel to teach their children God's law each morning, during the day, and again at night (Deuteronomy 11:19). The writer to the Hebrews told Christians to stay in the habit of gathering together (Hebrews 10:25).

Spiritual disciplines, when made a regular part of our lives, help us deepen our intimacy with God. When practiced out of a heart desire to know God more, the following list of some of these spiritual disciplines can strengthen your faith and increase your awareness of God's presence and work in your life.

- Prayer
- Scripture reading
- Journaling
- Silence
- Confession
- Fellowship
- Stewardship
- Worship
- Service
- Witness

A word about journaling. In his book *Honest to God*, Bill Hybels discusses an informal study of Christian leaders who finished well. Without exception, those who did had established the habit of daily journaling. Journaling slows down our thought processes, and allows us to reflect on the activities of and our responses to the day past, helping us consider possible changes for the future. As our world becomes more fast-paced and information-saturated than ever before, slowing down and reflecting is especially important. If you have not established the practice of journaling, consider beginning it today.

Taking Care of Your Body

Obviously, since life here also involves living in a body, it also is important to establish other healthy practices such as regular exercise and a healthy diet. In addition, remember to pace yourself, narrow your focus, and learn how to say “no.” We cannot do everything, but we certainly want to make sure we are spending time and energies on what matters most. While we are far from being in control of some health issues, it is wise stewardship to do what we can.

Common sense says You will last longer and make a much greater impact if you take care of yourself. It will be difficult to lead others for a lifetime if you do not lead yourself.

Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body. —1 Corinthians 6:19, 20

Discuss In which of the above habits and spiritual disciplines do you possess the most confidence?

In which do you need the most work?

What one habit or spiritual discipline could you seek to develop over the next year?

3. Maintain a Community of Healthy Relationships

Believers, as part of Jesus' body, need one another (Romans 12:3-5). We all have strengths, weaknesses, limitations, and blind spots. If we are to continue growing and leading for the long haul, we need help, encouragement, correction, and accountability. If we choose to isolate ourselves and go it alone, we will limit our impact and increase our chances of burning out. If you want to finish well, consider your need to give priority to the following people:

Primary relationships. These would include your spouse, children, parents, siblings, close friends, or others who have similar roles in your life.

These relationships can be our greatest source of joy and encouragement or a heavy burden. Turbulence with those closest to you can cause turmoil in your ministry. In addition, if your family crashes and burns, your ministry could be discredited.

Discuss What things can enhance your primary relationships?

What things get in the way of the health of these relationships?

What changes might you need to make for the sake of these relationships?

Transparent and vulnerable relationships. In addition to healthy primary relationships, you need other people with whom you can be both transparent ("Here's the real me") and vulnerable ("I need your help"). Obviously, these kind of friendships are developed with people whom you trust and who will keep things confidential. We need people who can listen and understand without trying to fix us. They also may offer insight or direction when needed, but this is usually best received when it is requested. Unsolicited advice is often received as criticism.

For those who may struggle with areas of recurring sin or addiction, biblically-based recovery groups or professional counseling are extremely valuable, if not essential. A close friend can be there to support you even at your lowest point, but he or she may not have the insight or skill necessary to help you with very difficult issues. If you are struggling, swallow your pride and ask for help right away! Please do not wait!

Paul, Barnabas, and Timothy relationships. We need a combination of the following types of relationships:

Paul: those who are further along who can mentor us.

Barnabas: those at a similar place who can encourage us. In Acts 9 and elsewhere, we see Barnabas playing a variety of roles in people's lives, including mentor, instructor, and friend. He is best known to us, however, for how he encouraged people, including Paul, as they served together.

Timothy: those younger in the faith for us to disciple.

These individuals may change roles as you go through the years together, but it is always wise and healthy to intentionally seek to be involved in these three types of friendships.

Discuss Who has been a Paul for you?

Who has been a Barnabas?

Who has been a Timothy?

4. Identify and Live Out Your Life Mission

Here, as in all things, Jesus gave the example. In His intimate pre-crucifixion prayer, He said to His Father, *“I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do.”* (John 17:4)

This process of identifying and living out His mission for us is lifelong. Central to it is:

- Discovering what God has called us to do and doing it. This may involve a particular role, service, or career—and these may change, during different seasons of life. It certainly includes the privilege of building a godly family life, as much as you are able.
- As important as the knowing and doing is *how* we do these things: Our character, values, and means should reflect His.
- Identifying and using our spiritual gifts for the benefit of God’s people and kingdom play an important part. As we try different things, we increasingly discover what He has gifted us to do.
- This is not a stagnant script, but an ongoing adventure. We want to be alert to and take advantage of opportunities that the Lord brings across our path.
- Marking all these should be joy in carrying out His mission for our lives. If our life and work are drudgery, not only should we check our heart attitude, but we may also want to evaluate our career and ministry path. You have been given unique gifts, skills, and a personality in order to bring glory to God and fulfillment to you. Even though change is not always easy, don’t be afraid of prayerfully considering it. Sometimes God uses dissatisfaction to move us to change.

Discuss What is your current understanding of your life mission?

5. Stay Teachable and Humble

In light of eternity, we are all just getting started. The Apostle Paul wrote that all our knowledge here is like seeing in a mirror dimly. There will always be more depths to explore in knowing God, His Word, and His work in and through us.

Whether you are age 20, 40, 60, 80, continue to be a learner. Read books. Take training classes. Set goals for your life, work, and ministry. Have lunch with someone who has expertise that you don’t. Don’t ever stop learning!

6. Keep Life’s Circumstances in Perspective.

Someone wisely said: “Life is hard, but God is good.” Our view of God tremendously influences how we view and respond to the blessings of life—and its troubles. Here, too, an eternal perspective makes a difference. If we focus on difficulties as ends in themselves, they can draw us away from intimacy with God. If, however, we remember His goodness, His great love for us, His plan of the ages set in place before life here began, we can respond with faith, peace, even joy, when difficulties or disappointments crowd in. And believe this: They will. God’s Word tells us to expect them:

Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when His glory is revealed....So then, those who suffer according to God’s will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good (1 Peter 4:12,13,19).

Thankfully, His Word tells us that every season of suffering will have its end—and that there is never a moment when He is not walking through it with us, even carrying us when our strength fails.

God delights to increase the faith of His children. We ought, instead of wanting no trials before victory, no exercise for patience, to be willing to take them from God’s hand as a means. I say—and say it deliberately—trials, obstacles, difficulties, and sometimes defeats, are the very food of faith. — George Mueller

Applying the Faith Principle to the Circumstances of Life

As you reflect on what 1 Peter 4:12-13 and 1 Peter 4:19 say about our response to trials, write your thoughts in the chart below.



MY EXPERIENCE MIGHT SAY	GOD’S WORD SAYS
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Christians shouldn’t have trials	1 Peter 4:12-13
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Review Faith is choosing to live as though the Bible is true regardless of circumstances, emotions, or cultural trends.

Ask If you choose to live as though 1 Peter 4:12-13 and 1 Peter 4:19 are true, how would you be living? How would these truths affect your attitudes, actions, and relationships?

Pray Take a moment to ask God to make these biblical truths a greater reality in your attitudes, actions, and relationships.

7. Continue to Be Involved in Personal Ministry

It is our privilege and responsibility to be co-workers with the Lord in His spiritual harvest. As you have gone through these lessons and others in the *Destined* series, a foundation has been laid for Spirit-led involvement. This foundation is to be built upon; a process that continues throughout our life.

Continue to be faithful to use what you have already learned and work to increase your effectiveness in ministering to others as you witness and disciple. In these areas, no one ever “arrives” or reaches a point from which he or she can comfortably coast.

Some people reach retirement age and feel that their most effective years are over. Nothing could be further from the truth. Those who have reached the retirement season of life have key things to offer that others do not.

- **Wisdom, understanding, and expertise.** What could be more valuable to someone in their 20s, 30s, or 40s than the chance to be mentored by someone in their 50s, 60s, or 70s?
- **Extra time to minister and mentor.** Most bosses would frown on their employees taking three weeks off for a mission trip or having a two-hour lunch to mentor an up-and-coming leader. Those who are retired have a more accessible supply of that valuable commodity known as time. Of course, you should enjoy time with family, traveling, and other leisure activities. Nevertheless, be sure to enjoy the reward of passing on what you have learned to others.

The Apostle Paul modeled this when he wrote:

Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 3:12-14)

For What Do You Want Your Life to Count?

As we commit ourselves to being lifelong learners who follow one Leader, we embrace an ongoing adventure. At times, He will show us mid-course corrections that will help us, when this life ends, to look back and see what He has done as we were available and faithful. We do not have to look back in regret if we faithfully follow Him. May you continue to look for opportunities to grow in Him and His service. May you commit yourself, again and again, to finishing well.

YOUR LIFE TODAY

Learn What have you learned from this lesson?



Apply Faith is choosing to live as though the Bible is true regardless of circumstances, emotions, or cultural trends. What is a practical step you can take based on what you have learned?

BEFORE YOU FINISH

A. As you complete this lesson and book, prayerfully consider the principles of finishing well. Under each, note any application the Lord has impressed upon you during this study.

Keep intimacy with God your highest priority.

Develop consistency in the personal disciplines.

Maintain a community of healthy relationships.

Identify and live out your life mission.

Stay teachable and humble.

Keep life's circumstances in perspective.

Continue developing effectiveness in personal ministry.

B. Is there an area or two in which you sense the Lord is leading you for your next focus in spiritual growth?

Talk with your discipleship partner or another spiritual mentor on ways to approach this. Schedule when you will begin.

C. Consider those you are discipling.

Is there an area in which you are to particularly pray for him or her?

What steps could you take that would give encouragement?

Destined for Eternity Wrap-Up

Congratulations! You have completed the *Destined for Eternity* study. At the beginning of this process, you discussed expectations and the learning objective with your discipleship partner. Take a moment right now to review these together in this wrap-up.

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

You will make a lasting difference for God's kingdom as you invest your life in discipling others and helping to carry out Jesus' mission: the Great Commission.

Check which statements indicate your understanding and application of the learning objective.

- I've seen significant progress in my understanding and application of the learning objective.
- I've grown some in my understanding and application of the learning objective.
- I understand the learning objective, but I struggle applying it to my life and relationships.
- The learning objective is still confusing to me.
- I already had a clear grasp of the learning objective when I began this study.

Other:

Discuss What principles from *Destined for Eternity* have had the greatest impact on you? Why?

APPLICATION STEP

Take the initiative to pass on to someone what you have learned in this discipleship process.

Check which statements apply to you, in light of the application step.

- During the *Destined for Eternity* study, I've grown in my confidence and skill in discipling others.
 - The person I'm discipling is:
 - I was already discipling someone before I began this study.
 - Other thoughts:
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EXPECTATIONS

When you began *Destined for Eternity*, you agreed to the following expectations:

1. Meet regularly with your discipleship partner to work through the *Destined for Eternity* lessons.
2. Continue the practice of regular Bible reading.
3. Look for ways to demonstrate God's love to others.
4. Be sensitive for opportunities to communicate with others about your faith.

Take time right now to evaluate your progress on each expectation.

What went well?

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Which areas were more challenging?

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Do you have further questions or feedback?

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What's next?

Discuss with your discipleship partner ideas for continued involvement in communicating your faith and discipling others.