



SEVENTH GRADE

Discipleship Essentials Pathway

DISCIPLESHIP ESSENTIALS PATHWAY

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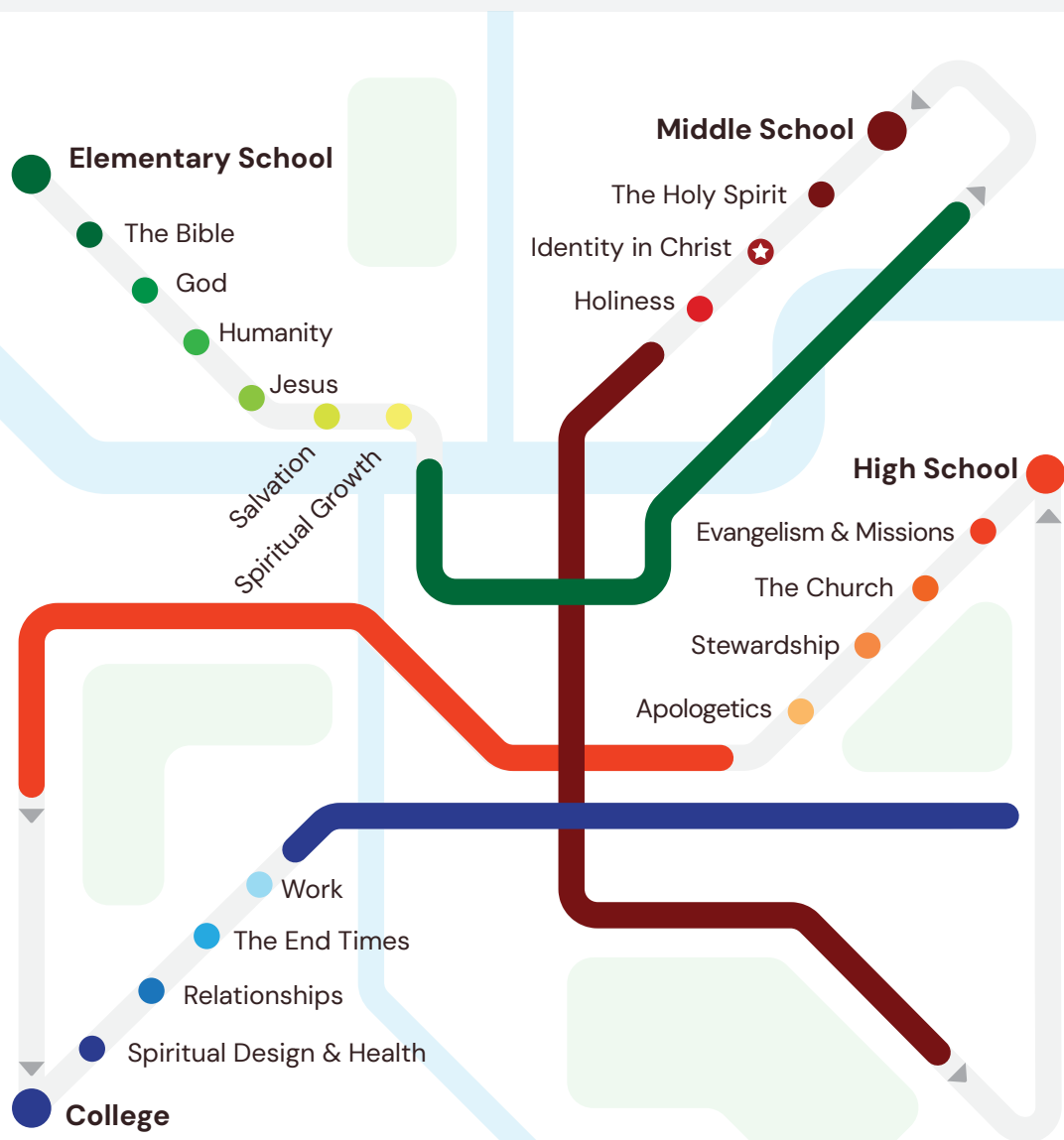
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Treasured by God

System Map

LEGEND

- Elementary School
- Middle School
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- College



Discipleship Essentials Pathway

Detailed Overview

Elementary Schoolers

- Kindergarten: The Bible
- First Grade: God
- Second Grade: Humanity
- Third Grade: Jesus
- Fourth Grade: Salvation
- Fifth Grade: Spiritual Growth

Middle Schoolers

- Sixth Grade: The Holy Spirit
- Seventh Grade: Identity in Christ
- Eighth Grade: Holiness

High Schoolers

- Ninth Grade: Evangelism and Missions
- Tenth Grade: The Church
- Eleventh Grade: Stewardship
- Twelfth Grade: Apologetics

College Students

- Freshman: Spiritual Design & Health
- Sophomore: Relationships
- Junior: The End Times
- Senior: Work

Introduction

Note: You may be a student going through this Pathway on your own. That is awesome! If you would like, continue through the Pathway on your own; but you may also consider doing so with a small group leader, friend, or mentor. This is also an opportunity to invite someone in your family to study with you. Feel free to reach out to the Student Ministry Team for help or guidance as you walk through your own discipleship journey.

To be a follower of Jesus means that we are to lead others to follow Jesus, too. Contrary to the spirit of the famous “The Buck Stops Here” placard on President Harry S. Truman’s desk, Jesus’ desk placard might have said something like “You’re One Link in a Long Chain.” You don’t have to disciple anyone alone; you’re an essential part of the process. To be a *disciple* of Jesus is to be a *discipler* of others, just as Jesus told us in what is known as the Great Commission:

Then Jesus came to them. He said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. So you must go and make disciples of all nations. Baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Teach them to obey everything I have commanded you. And you can be sure that I am always with you, to the very end.”
– Matthew 28:18–20

Often, when we think of people discipling to fulfill the Great Commission, we think of men and women discipling other men and women at coffee shops, a collegiate minister discipling students at the student union, or perhaps a church staff discipling its members on the church campus. All of that is true, of course, but one of the most important places for discipleship is our homes. As a Christian, God has called you to disciple others; as a Christian parent or guardian, He has called you to disciple your children. This is the central point of what God told His people, the Israelites, through Moses:

“The commandments I give you today must be in your hearts. Make sure your children learn them. Talk about them when you are at home. Talk about them when you walk along the road. Speak about them when you go to bed. And speak about them when you get up” (Deuteronomy 6:6–7).

This is your highest calling as a parent and family—and it’s what we want to help you with through the *Discipleship Essentials Pathway*.

How to Use the Discipleship Pathway

The *Discipleship Essentials Pathway* is built on a framework of seventeen modules to be used one per year. This book includes Module 8: Identity in Christ and is designed to be used with seventh graders. Modules 1–6 are to be used for kindergartners through fifth graders. Modules 7–9 are to be used with sixth through eighth graders. Modules 10–13 are to be used with ninth through twelfth graders. And finally, Modules 14–17 are to be used with college students. Throughout the seventeen modules, you will have the opportunity to engage with the core doctrines of the Christian faith and explore many practical aspects of following Jesus.

Each module contains twelve units, one for each month beginning in August and ending in July of the following year. Here’s how to use the *Pathway*:

The First Week of August

STEP ONE

Choose a day and time when it is easiest to block out about fifteen minutes for a family devotion each week. Many families find dinner time or bedtime as the ideal times for family devotions. Of course, if you already have a regular family devotion time, that would be the best time to choose.

STEP TWO

During your family devotion time in the first week of August, open the *Discipleship Essentials Pathway* book to August’s content.

STEP THREE

Begin by reading the catechism to your family. A catechism is a method of instruction based on a question-and-answer format that has been used throughout church history. The catechism provides the main idea your family will focus on for the month. You may notice definitions or further inspections provided. These are provided to help your child learn these important terms or dive deeper into the topic.

STEP FOUR

Next, read the Bible story to your family either from the *Pathway* book or from a Bible. The NLT is used in Modules 7 through 13.

STEP FIVE

Now, it is time to read the devotional to your family. Discuss the standing discussion questions.

STEP SIX

Next, find the memory verse and prayer prompt for week 1. These will provide your focus for the rest of the week. Begin by reading the memory verse a few times, inviting your seventh grader to say as much with you as they can. Then, close your devotional time in prayer, using the prompt as a guideline for what to pray about. Of course, you can pray about more than that, but be sure to at least pray about the topic provided.

That's it! You're done.

You will notice that each unit concludes with a next step, challenging thought, or reflection questions. If you choose, you can use these during the week and on the rest of the family devotion days of the month.

During the week, look for opportunities to talk about the main ideas of the catechism, Bible story, and devotional you covered. This is in the spirit of Deuteronomy 6:7, which calls us to talk about God throughout the day in our homes. The goal is to help your child keep God at the top of the mind and deep down in the heart. Also, continue working on memorizing the memory verse and praying for the topic of the prayer prompt.

The Second, Third, and Fourth Weeks of August

STEP ONE

During your family devotion time on the second, third, and fourth weeks of the month, go over the catechism again, perhaps inviting your child to memorize it too, along with the memory verses.

STEP TWO

You do not need to read the Bible story or devotion again, but of course, you can if you want.

STEP THREE

Spend more time working on the memory verse.

STEP FOUR

Close your time in prayer, once again using the prayer prompt as your baseline.

The First Week of September

Once the calendar flips to September, it's time to move on to the next unit, repeating the process. Then, once July arrives, it will be time to get Module 9 to begin using that next August.

A FEW FINAL TIPS

If you have multiple children going through different modules, that's awesome! As a family, go through the lesson with the youngest child in the first week, and move to the second youngest the next week, and so on. As you move to the new lessons, review the others together as needed, and turn your prayer prompts into a prayer list!

If you miss a family devotion one week, that's okay! Give yourself grace and pick back up next week. Consistency over the long term is the key to family discipleship.

As you and your family grow more comfortable using the *Discipleship Essentials Pathway*, try to encourage your child or student to ask questions. Dialogue is always better than monologue when it comes to discipleship.

If you are just starting your journey using the *Discipleship Essentials Pathway* with this Module, you might consider using what you have missed during Christmas break, Spring break, or the summer as a short-term intensive, covering one unit per day instead of per month, and forgoing memorizing the memory verses. Of course, there's also nothing at all wrong with starting right where you are and moving forward without ever looking back!

If you already have a family devotions plan, or if you find one along the way, feel free to couple it with the *Pathway*. Do both on the same day, or perhaps choose a second day to stretch your discipleship efforts further throughout the week.

The *Discipleship Essentials Pathway* doesn't provide you with all the answers about our faith, but it should give you a solid framework from which you can explore additional questions as they come up.

The Gospel Message

In the beginning, God created the universe (Genesis 1:1). He formed light and darkness, land and sea, fish and birds, plants and animals. But on the final day of creation, He saved His best work for last: He made people. God created us in His image (Genesis 1:27) and designed us to love, trust, worship, and follow Him.

However, God didn't force us to love Him; He gave us a choice. We can choose to trust and obey Him, or we can go our own way. When we choose to go our own way instead of God's way, that's called sin, and sin breaks our relationship with God. The Bible tells us: "Everyone has sinned. No one measures up to God's glory" (Romans 3:23). The bad news is that our sin separates us from God, and we cannot fix this problem alone. We need help.

The good news is that God, in His great love, made a way for us to be forgiven through Jesus. God sent Jesus, His one and only Son, to live a perfect life and take the punishment for our sins by dying on the cross (John 3:6, 2 Corinthians 5:21). But He didn't stay dead. On the third day, He rose again, defeating sin and death so we could have new and eternal life in Him. Jesus did for us what we could never do for ourselves.

God now offers each of us the opportunity to be restored to a right relationship with Him. This requires us to turn away from sin and choose to put our faith in Jesus as Savior and Lord. The Bible tells us: "If you openly declare that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." (Romans 10:9). We trust Jesus as Savior, because His death in our place is the only way we can be forgiven for our sins. We trust and follow Jesus as Lord, meaning we use our lives for Him above all else. When we trust Jesus, we receive forgiveness and are saved from the power and punishment of our sins.

If you're ready to follow Jesus, here's what you need to do:

01

Admit that you are a sinner in need of forgiveness.

02

Believe that Jesus is God's Son, who died for your sins and rose again.

03

Confess Jesus as your Savior and Lord, choosing to follow Him daily.

The following is an example of what to pray if you are ready to put your faith and trust in Jesus as your Savior and Lord today. The words themselves aren't special. It's your heart behind them if you believe it.

Dear God,

I know that You created me in Your image to love, trust, and follow You. But I confess that I have sinned against You. I have chosen my own way instead of Yours, and my sins have separated me from You. And I know that I cannot fix this problem on my own.

Thank You for loving me so much that You sent Your Son Jesus to die on the cross for my sins. I believe that He paid my punishment, and I believe that He rose from the dead, defeating sin and death so that I could have new life in Him.

Today, I turn away from my sin and I surrender my life to You. I ask for Your forgiveness and place my faith in Jesus as my Savior and Lord. Please change my heart, help me to follow You daily, and give me the strength to live for You.

Thank You for Your love and the gift of salvation.

In Jesus name I pray, Amen.

SEVENTH GRADE

If you just prayed that prayer for the first time, don't keep it to yourself, share it with someone! Tell a parent, guardian, pastor, or trusted Christian friend. They would love to celebrate with you, encourage you, and help you to take your next steps in following Jesus.

Who Am I?

Who am I?

You are created by God, intentionally designed and made with a purpose: to bring Him glory. You are made in His image to reflect His nature and character to the world around you. You are infinitely valuable, and God loves you.

Bible Story

¹³ You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body and knit me together in my mother's womb. ¹⁴ Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex! Your workmanship is marvelous—how well I know it. ¹⁵ You watched me as I was being formed in utter seclusion, as I was woven together in the dark of the womb. ¹⁶ You saw me before I was born. Every day of my life was recorded in your book. Every moment was laid out before a single day had passed.

¹⁷ How precious are your thoughts about me, O God. They cannot be numbered! ¹⁸ I can't even count them; they outnumber the grains of sand! And when I wake up, you are still with me!

— Psalm 139:13–18

Discussion Questions

01 What do these verses tell us about God, Jesus, or the Holy Spirit?

02 What does this tell us about ourselves or other people?

03 Based on these verses and truths, what should I stop doing, start doing, or keep doing?

Devotion

“Who Am I?” is a perfectly appropriate question to ask in today’s world. In an era where people increasingly believe they can define their identity and purpose, it can be confusing to understand who we are and why we are here. If you explore our culture or social media,

you’ll discover countless answers to this question. Are we defined by our future careers or jobs? Or are we defined by the status of our families? Does our race or gender shape who we are? Is it our preferences that matter most? “Who am I?”

God's perspective on our identity is radically different from the world's. And more importantly, God's truth is the right one. Scripture reminds us that our true worth is not found in our achievements or the labels that society assigns us but in our Creator's divine and perfect love. Psalm 139:14 (NIV) proclaims, "I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made," or in our translation above, "Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex!" What is important in that verse is the *You: God*. God created and loves us, and because He created us, He tells us who we are.

So, who does God say we are? Genesis 1:27 reveals that we are all infinitely valuable creations, man and woman, made in the image of God. Every single person, a follower of Jesus or not, is made in the image of God. Every one of us is crafted with intentionality and care. God gives each individual unparalleled worth and dignity. Christian scholar

R.C. Sproul once said, "To be made in the image of God is to be valued beyond measure." Read this twice so you believe it: your value does not change based on your grade on your last test, your performance in last year's play, or how many points you scored last season. It doesn't come from what society or your friends think about you. Your worth and identity aren't derived from external standards but from God's fingerprints stamped on your life, body, and soul.

Our identity as God's creation means we are not accidents or products of circumstance; we are deliberate works of art designed for a unique purpose. God's overruling declaration offers a lasting promise in a culture that constantly seeks to measure identity and worth by external standards. You are cherished, loved, and eternally valuable because God made you. Walk confidently in the truth that who you are is defined not by the world but by the Creator.

WEEK ONE

Memory Verse

So God created human beings in his own image. In the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. — Genesis 1:27

Prayer

Thank God for creating you in His image so you can be like Him in certain ways.

WEEK TWO

Memory Verse

But the person who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with him.
— 1 Corinthians 6:17

Prayer

Ask God to remind you each day that you are one with Jesus, giving you limitless worth.

WEEK THREE

Memory Verse

I knew you before I formed you in your mother's womb. Before you were born I set you apart and appointed you as my prophet to the nations. — Jeremiah 1:5

Prayer

Thank God for having a specific plan for your life.

WEEK FOUR

Memory Verse

And I will be your Father, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.
— 2 Corinthians 6:18

Prayer

Ask God to help you feel the truth of your identity as His son or daughter deep within you.



Challenging Thought

God has much to say about who you are, and since He created you, His word is true. If someone asked you, "Who are you?" how would you answer? Which is better: your answer or the identity that God provides?

Notes:

AUGUST

Following Jesus in the World

How do I follow Jesus in a world that lives against Him?

Even as we hold on to our identity as God's creation and as followers of Jesus, God desires for us to flourish and engage within the broader world and the cultures in which we live. We are meant to be God's image bearers, reflecting that identity to those around us.

Bible Story

¹⁰ All who are mine belong to you, and you have given them to me, so they bring me glory. ¹¹ Now I am departing from the world; they are staying in this world, but I am coming to you. Holy Father, you have given me your name; now protect them by the power of your name so that they will be united just as we are. ¹² During my time here, I protected them by the power of the name you gave me. I guarded them so that not one was lost, except the one headed for destruction, as the Scriptures foretold.

¹³ "Now I am coming to you. I told them many things while I was with them in this world so they would be filled with my joy. ¹⁴ I have given them your word. And the world hates them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. ¹⁵ I'm not asking you to take them out of the world, but to keep them safe from the evil one.

— John 17:10–15

Discussion Questions

01 What do these verses tell us about God, Jesus, or the Holy Spirit?

02 What does this tell us about ourselves or other people?

03 Based on these verses and truths, what should I stop doing, start doing, or keep doing?

Devotion

God created us and loves us. We are made in God's image, carefully designed to reflect His glory to the world. This identity comes from God—and is both an ultimate truth and a calling that requires a response. We live from our calling, living for Jesus and according to His

direction. However, many people do not see things through the lens of Jesus. They often live for themselves, trying to define their identity by choosing their own values and placing them above everything else. This can lead to conflicts between our lives and theirs.

So, how should we respond? Should we isolate ourselves, only associating with other Christians who share our views? As appealing as that might seem, the answer is no. In John 17:10–15, Jesus prayed that we would not withdraw from the world. Instead, He wants us to engage with our culture while remaining distinct through Him. Jesus' prayer shows us that even though His followers face challenges because they are not "of the world," He does not want us to give up our daily lives. Being in the world as followers of Jesus is not easy, but we cannot retreat into isolation. In verse 15, Jesus prays, "I'm not asking you to take them out of the world, but to keep them safe from the evil one." Our identity as Christians is not based on staying away from society but on a transformative relationship with Christ that helps us live faithfully in it.

God tells us who we are. We carry that identity into the world, showing others the impact of the incredible purpose given to us. We go through our lives—in our schools, families, and communities—standing tall because of who God says we are. We don't hide or let others shake us from this truth, even if some try to discredit it. Instead, with God's protection

and presence in our lives, we love humbly while remaining in the world. Christian scholar John Stott said, "The church is not to withdraw from the world but to be in it, reflecting Christ's light in every part of life." By loving and living with humility, we can show God's love to those who have not yet become followers of Jesus.

Now, is that always easy? No. In the next lesson, we will talk about a battle plan to help us influence the world instead of the other way around. But first, we must recognize what Jesus has asked us to do and believe we *can* do it with His help.

By embracing our identity and saying yes to Jesus' mission for us—to engage positively with the culture, carrying the hope of the gospel—we become living examples of God's grace. You can do this! Step courageously into wherever God has placed you, knowing that Jesus has prayed for your protection and that your presence can bring His light to every part of the world around you.

WEEK ONE**Memory Verse**

For the whole law can be summed up in this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself."
— Galatians 5:14

Prayer

Ask God to help you love all those who are in the world around you.

WEEK TWO**Memory Verse**

"And work for the peace and prosperity of the city where I sent you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, for its welfare will determine your welfare." — Jeremiah 29:7

Prayer

Ask God to use you to bring good to the community in which He has placed you.

WEEK THREE**Memory Verse**

"But to you who are willing to listen, I say, love your enemies! Do good to those who hate you. Bless those who curse you. Pray for those who hurt you." — Luke 6:27–28

Prayer

Pray for those in your life with whom you have conflict and ask God to help you love them.

WEEK FOUR**Memory Verse**

Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds us all together in perfect harmony. — Colossians 3:14

Prayer

Ask God to bring you into unity with other people through the love for them that He gives you.



Reflection Questions

01 Does anything scare you about being a follower of Jesus in the world today?

02 What stops you from sharing God's truth with non-believers?

03 Where do you have the most contact with non-Christians? How is your relationship with people who aren't yet believers?

Notes:

Living Differently From the World

How can I live as a Christian with the temptation of the world all around me?

Followers of Jesus can live the Christian life, even in the world, by remembering their heavenly citizenship, staying connected to other believers, and locking into God's word. We are also encouraged that God is working to protect us from the devil's plans.

Bible Story

⁹ "My prayer is not for the world, but for those you have given me, because they belong to you. ¹⁰ All who are mine belong to you, and you have given them to me, so they bring me glory. ¹¹ Now I am departing from the world; they are staying in this world, but I am coming to you. Holy Father, you have given me your name; now protect them by the power of your name so that they will be united just as we are. ¹² During my time here, I protected them by the power of the name you gave me. I guarded them so that not one was lost, except the one headed for destruction, as the Scriptures foretold.

¹³ Now I am coming to you. I told them many things while I was with them in this world so they would be filled with my joy. ¹⁴ I have given them your word. And the world hates them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. ¹⁵ I'm not asking you to take them out of the world, but to keep them safe from the evil one. ¹⁶ They do not belong to this world any more than I do. ¹⁷ Make them holy by your truth; teach them your word, which is truth. ¹⁸ Just as you sent me into the world, I am sending them into the world. ¹⁹ And I give myself as a holy sacrifice for them so they can be made holy by your truth.

²⁰ I am praying not only for these disciples but also for all who will ever believe in me through their message. ²¹ I pray that they will all be one, just as you and I are one—as you are in me, Father, and I am in you. And may they be in us so that the world will believe you sent me.”

¹ And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him. ² Don’t copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God’s will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.

— John 17:9–21; Romans 12:1–2

Discussion Questions

01 What do these verses tell us about God, Jesus, or the Holy Spirit?

02 What does this tell us about ourselves or other people?

03 Based on these verses and truths, what should I stop doing, start doing, or keep doing?

Devotion

Imagine an undercover spy working deep within a foreign country. Talk about a stressful job! This scenario is often portrayed in movies, but real people serve as intelligence agents all over the world—you can actually apply to become a special agent on the FBI's website! How can one succeed in this role when the objective is to serve a land that isn't their own? The agent represents their home country and must stay focused on their objectives while navigating a different culture, set of values, and group of people. For lack of a better term, they exist in the country but are not of it.

This is the life of a Christian. In the previous lesson, we discussed how God does not want us to withdraw from the world around us. So, how can we live for God while navigating a world that doesn't share our perspective? First, we must be like the secret agent. We aren't out to harm anyone or target the people in our surroundings. However, we must not conform to or mirror the world in which we live. We need to remember our true citizenship. Once we become followers of Jesus, we

receive a new identity—we aren't merely made in God's image; we become members of God's family. Our home is not this earth. Heaven is. When we recognize that we are called to a higher purpose and are part of an everlasting kingdom, we will prioritize what God thinks over what the world thinks. We will begin to serve for a lasting impact instead of temporary rewards. In doing so, we'll move closer to the freedom necessary to fully obey God.

Secondly, we must stay connected to other believers. Jesus mentions unity in verses 11 and 21. He desires for us to be unified as if we were one, just like God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit are one. We need to be focused on the same mission: working for God's glory and His kingdom. We are called to love and humbly serve one another, fostering unity. Community is also essential, meaning we share our lives with fellow believers. We cannot live as isolated followers of Jesus. We need to depend on each other to combat the world's temptations, distractions, and stresses.

Lastly, we must remain intimately connected to God's word. In verse 17, Jesus asks God the Father to keep us holy through His word. Jesus emphasizes that God's instructions set us apart—they make us distinctive. However, this only occurs to the degree that we read, study, and obey them. Therefore, it's imperative that we stay engaged with God's word and heed its teachings. We can listen to the Bible, read it, and watch sermons; we

should absorb God's word through songs, wise counsel, and fellowship with other believers. The more we follow what God says in His word, the better equipped we will be to resist the devil's schemes and temptations. Beyond just instructions, the Bible reveals Jesus to us. And the more we emulate Jesus, the greater influence we can have on the world, even those we believe are beyond change. We attract them by living differently; we carry with us the love of Jesus.

WEEK ONE



Memory Verse

Think about the things of heaven, not the things of earth. For you died to this life, and your real life is hidden with Christ in God.
— Colossians 3:2–3

Prayer

Ask God to renew your mind by helping you focus on heaven, not earth.

WEEK TWO



Memory Verse

Do not love this world nor the things it offers you, for when you love the world, you do not have the love of the Father in you. — 1 John 2:15

Prayer

Ask God to help you desire heavenly treasures, not earthly ones.

WEEK THREE



Memory Verse

The world would love you as one of its own if you belonged to it, but you are no longer part of the world. I chose you to come out of the world, so it hates you. — John 15:19

Prayer

Ask God to increase your love for His instructions, not the world's directions.

WEEK FOUR



Memory Verse

A final word: Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on all of God's armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil.
— Ephesians 6:10–11

Prayer

Thank God for giving you the Holy Spirit, who helps us stand against the devil's temptation.



Next Steps

Apply to be a special agent on the FBI's website! Just kidding.

Remember that you are a special agent for Jesus! In what areas of your life are you already living for Heaven? What of this world catches your attention more than it should? Pray that God would increase your strengths and work through your weaknesses as you seek to be *in* the world, but *not of* the world.

Notes:

OCTOBER

Created by God

Why is it important that God created us?

Because God created us, He alone provides our purpose and identity. In a world that questions both purpose and identity, remembering that we are created by God assures us that we are purposeful, intentionally designed for eternity, and made in His Image. Our true value and significance are as God's creation.

Bible Story

¹ In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. ² The earth was formless and empty, and darkness covered the deep waters. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters.

³ Then God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. ⁴ And God saw that the light was good. Then he separated the light from the darkness. ⁵ God called the light "day" and the darkness "night."

And evening passed and morning came, marking the first day.

⁶ Then God said, "Let there be a space between the waters, to separate the waters of the heavens from the waters of the earth." ⁷ And that is what happened. God made this space to separate the waters of the earth from the waters of the heavens. ⁸ God called the space "sky."

And evening passed and morning came, marking the second day.

⁹ Then God said, "Let the waters beneath the sky flow together into one place, so dry ground may appear." And that is what happened. ¹⁰ God called the dry ground "land" and the waters "seas." And God saw that it was good.

¹¹ Then God said, "Let the land sprout with vegetation—every sort of seed-

bearing plant, and trees that grow seed-bearing fruit. These seeds will then produce the kinds of plants and trees from which they came.” And that is what happened. ¹² The land produced vegetation—all sorts of seed-bearing plants, and trees with seed-bearing fruit. Their seeds produced plants and trees of the same kind. And God saw that it was good.

¹³ And evening passed and morning came, marking the third day.

¹⁴ Then God said, “Let lights appear in the sky to separate the day from the night. Let them be signs to mark the seasons, days, and years. ¹⁵ Let these lights in the sky shine down on the earth.” And that is what happened. ¹⁶ God made two great lights—the larger one to govern the day, and the smaller one to govern the night. He also made the stars. ¹⁷ God set these lights in the sky to light the earth, ¹⁸ to govern the day and night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good.

¹⁹ And evening passed and morning came, marking the fourth day.

²⁰ Then God said, “Let the waters swarm with fish and other life. Let the skies be filled with birds of every kind.” ²¹ So God created great sea creatures and every living thing that scurries and swarms in the water, and every sort of bird—each producing offspring of the same kind. And God saw that it was good. ²² Then God blessed them, saying, “Be fruitful and multiply. Let the fish fill the seas, and let the birds multiply on the earth.”

²³ And evening passed and morning came, marking the fifth day.

²⁴ Then God said, “Let the earth produce every sort of animal, each producing offspring of the same kind—livestock, small animals that scurry along the ground, and wild animals.” And that is what happened. ²⁵ God made all sorts of wild animals, livestock, and small animals, each able to produce offspring of the same kind. And God saw that it was good.

²⁶ Then God said, "Let us make human beings in our image, to be like us. They will reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the wild animals on the earth, and the small animals that scurry along the ground."

²⁷ So God created human beings in his own image. In the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

²⁸ Then God blessed them and said, "Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth and govern it. Reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, and all the animals that scurry along the ground."

²⁹ Then God said, "Look! I have given you every seed-bearing plant throughout the earth and all the fruit trees for your food. ³⁰ And I have given every green plant as food for all the wild animals, the birds in the sky, and the small animals that scurry along the ground—everything that has life." And that is what happened.

³¹ Then God looked over all he had made, and he saw that it was very good! And evening passed and morning came, marking the sixth day.

— Genesis 1:1–31

Discussion Questions

01 What do these verses tell us about God, Jesus, or the Holy Spirit?

02 What does this tell us about ourselves or other people?

03 Based on these verses and truths, what should I stop doing, start doing, or keep doing?

Devotion

Reading fiction books is a favorite pastime for many people. Fiction readers love to imagine the intricate worlds the authors create. Think of C. S. Lewis's *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* or J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*. Entire worlds, civilizations, creatures, and characters are brought to life with the stroke of a pen. Finding the right words to paint such a vivid picture and breathe life into what is completely made up is quite a gift. But that's all imaginary. None of it has to work in real life. So, when we consider that the Creator of the real universe has designed everything to work together in such a mind-boggling, perfect way, we can only be left in complete awe of Him! Now, follow this logic. If God created everything perfectly, and He created us, then He created us to be exactly who He wanted us to be. The Bible says that we are His "image bearers" – that is our identity. Not "the cheerleader," "the straight-A student," "the gamer," "the artist," or anything else. Our identity is not one we create for ourselves; our identity is given to us by God.

God created us, so He is the only one to tell us how we work. That's the blunt truth of it. As much as we want to determine our identity for ourselves, that's not how it works. The good news for us is that the identity of God's "image bearers" is a better identity than any we could dream up. We were made to reflect God to the world around us. We were made to rule over the rest of creation, taking care of everything. Our worth is found in who God says we are, not in what the world says or how we might sometimes feel. Instead, our identity is fixed by what God's Word proclaims about us. God created us. God loves us. And God tells us who we are as an unshakable fact. This is not a fictional tale spun by an author to entertain; it is eternal truth given by the Creator of all. As you spend time growing in your understanding of your identity in Christ, you should strive to be constantly aware of who God is and who He has made you to be for His glory.

So, how do we live as reflections of God? We learn about who He is and what He is all about. As we grow in knowledge about God, we learn more about who we are made to be. For example, as we learn about God's unconditional love for those who follow Him, we realize the importance of showing that same love to others. When we learn that God loves justice, we do our best to be fair and honest with the people around us. And there are infinitely more things we can learn about God and exemplify in our own lives! The cool thing is, the more we live as God made us to be, the better it is for us—because we are doing exactly what we were made for.

To begin to understand your identity, recognize God as your Creator. Genesis begins with God creating the whole world, including humans. Knowing God created man and woman in His image, for His glory, helps us to know who we are in light of who He is. We are created by Him and for Him!

WEEK ONE

Memory Verse

But for us, there is one God, the Father, by whom all things were created, and for whom we live. And there is one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things were

created, and through whom we live.
— 1 Corinthians 8:6

Prayer

Thank God for making us,
as people, His most special
creation of all.

WEEK TWO

Memory Verse

Then God said, "Let us make human beings in our image, to be like us. They will reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the wild animals on the earth, and the

small animals that scurry along the ground." — Genesis 1:26

Prayer

Ask God to help you see your
unending worth based on Him
making you in His image.

WEEK THREE

Memory Verse

God created everything through him, and nothing was created except through him. The Word gave life to everything that was

created, and his life brought light to everyone. — John 1:3–4

Prayer

Thank God for giving you life and
then going even further by giving
you eternal life through Jesus.

WEEK FOUR

Memory Verse

Acknowledge that the Lord is God! He made us, and we are his. We are his people, the sheep of his pasture. — Psalm 100:3

Prayer

Ask God to help you remember
that He is your Creator
and he loves you.



Reflection Questions

01 What identity are you tempted to hold on to most?

02 Why is it important that we were created by God and not a result of an accident?

03 In what area of your life do you need to reflect God more?

Created for God

Why did God create us?

God did not create us because He needed us or because He was lonely. Rather, God made us because it pleased Him and to express His love and glory. In turn, we exist to bring God glory, primarily by having a relationship with Him through Christ Jesus, and by loving Him, obeying Him, and living for Him.

Bible Story

¹ Since you have been raised to new life with Christ, set your sights on the realities of heaven, where Christ sits in the place of honor at God's right hand. ² Think about the things of heaven, not the things of earth. ³ For you died to this life, and your real life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ And when Christ, who is your life, is revealed to the whole world, you will share in all his glory.

⁵ So put to death the sinful, earthly things lurking within you. Have nothing to do with sexual immorality, impurity, lust, and evil desires. Don't be greedy, for a greedy person is an idolater, worshiping the things of this world. ⁶ Because of these sins, the anger of God is coming. ⁷ You used to do these things when your life was still part of this world. ⁸ But now is the time to get rid of anger, rage, malicious behavior, slander, and dirty language. ⁹ Don't lie to each other, for you have stripped off your old sinful nature and all its wicked deeds. ¹⁰ Put on your new nature, and be renewed as you learn to know your Creator and become like him. ¹¹ In this new life, it doesn't matter if you are a Jew or a Gentile, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbaric, uncivilized, slave, or free. Christ is all that matters, and he lives in all of us.

— Colossians 3:1–11

Discussion Questions

01 What do these verses tell us about God, Jesus, or the Holy Spirit?

02 What does this tell us about ourselves or other people?

03 Based on these verses and truths, what should I stop doing, start doing, or keep doing?

Devotion

Have you ever played hide and seek? You might not have played recently, but surely you remember how it goes. It's often more difficult to find a good hiding spot than to find the other players when you are the seeker. The best spots usually had one thing in common: they were

unexpected. You might squeeze into a tight space, shimmy under a bed, or wind up tucked away in the attic if you're really brave. The key is to find a spot where the seeker would never think to look. And so, you think about where a person shouldn't fit or belong, and then you do your best to

contort yourself into that space and hope for the best.

That might work for a game, but it's a terrible way to live. Unfortunately, we sometimes find ourselves doing just that. We try to fit into places we weren't made for: chasing approval, popularity, achievements, or whatever else makes us feel like we are somebody and that we belong. There isn't anything inherently wrong with these things, but none of them were ever meant to define us.

Colossians 3:3 says, "for you died to this life, and your real life is hidden with Christ in God." In other words, if you follow Jesus, your identity isn't found in what you do, how many friends you have, or what people think of you. It's found in Jesus! You don't have to squeeze into the world's expectations because you already have a place where you fit perfectly—in Christ. You were made by Him and for Him!

Just before Colossians 3:3, we see this: "Think about the things of heaven, not the things of earth." That's the key to understanding our identity. Our perspective of life shifts when we understand that we were made *by* God and *for* God. Life isn't

about proving ourselves or living for temporary success. It's about recognizing how to live confidently, knowing God made us to glorify Him and enjoy Him forever. When we do this, we can focus on what truly matters—knowing Him, following Him, and reflecting Him in our daily lives—instead of chasing what won't last. We are called to live for Christ and no longer for ourselves!

This truly changes everything. It means we let go of things that pull us away from God, whether it's sinful, unhealthy habits, or the pressure to be someone we're not. Colossians 3:9–10 says that we've taken off our old self and put on the new self, meaning that this truth changes us. But we can easily forget this and lose sight of the wonderful truth that our existence is for God. Therefore, we must constantly be renewed by the Holy Spirit and the knowledge that we are made to reflect Jesus.

So, who are you? You are God's! Isn't it freeing to know you do not have to make a name for yourself? You are His, now and for eternity. Your life is hidden in Christ. You don't have to search for belonging elsewhere; He has already given it to you. You are made by Him and for Him.

WEEK ONE**Memory Verse**

For through him God created everything in the heavenly realms and on earth. He made the things we can see and the things we can't see—such as thrones, kingdoms, rulers, and authorities in the

unseen world. Everything was created through him and for him.
— Colossians 1:16

Prayer

Thank God for making you according to His perfect love and purposes.

WEEK TWO**Memory Verse**

In this new life, it doesn't matter if you are a Jew or a Gentile, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbaric, uncivilized, slave, or free.

Christ is all that matters, and he lives in all of us. — Colossians 3:11

Prayer

Ask God to help you remember that what matters most about you is Christ living in you.

WEEK THREE**Memory Verse**

Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for

you, which is good and pleasing and perfect. — Romans 12:2

Prayer

Ask God to help you turn from the ways of the world and, instead, to follow God according to His good plan for you.

WEEK FOUR**Memory Verse**

Bring all who claim me as their God, for I have made them for my glory. It was I who created them.
— Isaiah 43:7

Prayer

Thank God for making you for His glory.



Reflection Questions

01 What does it mean to set our minds on things above and not on earthly things?

02 What does it mean that your life is now hidden in Christ as a believer? Is that an encouragement to you? Why or why not?

03 How can you put off the old self (your sinful nature) and truly live as a new creation?

Notes:

DECEMBER



Loved by God

How does God show His love for us?

God shows His love by providing for our daily needs, ordering the world according to His purposes, and revealing His existence and character in creation and Scripture. God's greatest act of love was sending Jesus to earth to die on the cross. Because of His love for us, God made a way for us to have an eternal relationship with him.

Bible Story

¹⁶ "For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.

¹⁷ God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him."

¹⁸ "There is no judgment against anyone who believes in him. But anyone who does not believe in him has already been judged for not believing in God's one and only Son. ¹⁹ And the judgment is based on this fact: God's light came into the world, but people loved the darkness more than the light, for their actions were evil. ²⁰ All who do evil hate the light and refuse to go near it for fear their sins will be exposed. ²¹ But those who do what is right come to the light so others can see that they are doing what God wants."

— John 3:16–21

Discussion Questions

01 What do these verses tell us about God, Jesus, or the Holy Spirit?

02 What does this tell us about ourselves or other people?

03 Based on these verses and truths, what should I stop doing, start doing, or keep doing?

Devotion

Think about someone in your life who cares for you very deeply. Perhaps the person that comes to mind is a family member, a sibling, or a best friend. What do they do to show their love for you? Surely, this person has never done anything to hurt your feelings. This person has

forgotten and forgiven all the times you've done something wrong. This person is selfless and always willing to put you before themselves. They have never failed, disappointed, or let you down.

Now, that all sounds good, but is it true? The chances of that are slim to none. That's because of our sin. In our sinful nature, we don't do anything perfectly. We mess up and can hurt people, even people we love. We try our best, but our love is imperfect.

There is a lot of pressure for people to love and act without fault. Sometimes, without realizing it, we expect the people who love and care for us to do it perfectly. It is what our heart desires—perfect, unconditional love. But you can only find that kind of love in one place: in God.

God's love is greater than any love we can experience from another person. God is love (1 John 4:8), and He chose to pour that love out on us, even though we haven't earned it. Because of our sin, we don't deserve God's love. But in John 3:16–21, we learn that God gave it to us anyway, and in doing so, He

showed how deep His love truly is. God loves us so much that He sent His one and only Son so we can have a relationship with Him. God's love led Him to sacrifice His Son. He gave Jesus up for us.

That's the most important part of God's love, but it doesn't even scratch the surface. God loves us in a way that people around us can't; He loves us without fault or failure. Because of Jesus, He loves us unconditionally. There's nothing we can do to lose God's love. First Corinthians 13:4–8 goes even further and explains that God's love is patient and kind. Love isn't envious. Love isn't proud. Love keeps no record of wrong, as those who love us on earth often do. Love *always* protects, trusts, hopes, and perseveres. God's love *never* fails, and when you know God's love for what it truly is, it can change your life forever.

WEEK ONE**Memory Verse**

For this is how God loved the world:
He gave his one and only Son, so
that everyone who believes in him
will not perish but have eternal
life. — John 3:16

Prayer

Thank God for sending His Son
to die on the cross, proving His
amazing love for us.

WEEK TWO**Memory Verse**

But God showed his great love
for us by sending Christ to
die for us while we were still
sinners. — Romans 5:8

Prayer

Ask God to help you turn to the
cross whenever you feel unloved
or unimportant, remembering the
great love it took to send Jesus.

WEEK THREE**Memory Verse**

We love each other because he
loved us first. — 1 John 4:19

Prayer

Thank God for loving you first
and allowing you to be rescued
from sin and death.

WEEK FOUR**Memory Verse**

This is my commandment: Love
each other in the same way I have
loved you. — John 15:12

Prayer

Ask God to help you love others as
a response to the love that He
gives you.



Reflection Questions

01 How is God's love different from the love of anyone else?

02 What does it mean that God's love is unconditional?

03 How does the story of Jesus on the cross demonstrate the depth of His love for you?

04 Are there any characteristics of God's love that you have questions about?



Further Inspection

God is Love. He invented love and defines love. God loves every person because we are His creation. If you are a follower of Jesus, God loves you unconditionally; that is, there is nothing you can do to lose that love. Even when you mess up, God does not love you any less.

Notes:

Chosen by God

What does it mean to be chosen by God?

Being chosen by God means that God has set us apart to be known by Him, as we likewise know, love, and honor Him. In addition, God has chosen us for a purpose: to make Him known to others around us. God has chosen us not because of anything we have done, but solely because of His great love, grace, and goodness.

Bible Story

⁶ When they arrived, Samuel took one look at Eliab and thought, "Surely this is the Lord's anointed!"

⁷ But the Lord said to Samuel, "Don't judge by his appearance or height, for I have rejected him. The Lord doesn't see things the way you see them. People judge by outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart."

⁸ Then Jesse told his son Abinadab to step forward and walk in front of Samuel. But Samuel said, "This is not the one the Lord has chosen." ⁹ Next Jesse summoned Shimea, but Samuel said, "Neither is this the one the Lord has chosen." ¹⁰ In the same way all seven of Jesse's sons were presented to Samuel. But Samuel said to Jesse, "The Lord has not chosen any of these."

¹¹ Then Samuel asked, "Are these all the sons you have?"

"There is still the youngest," Jesse replied. "But he's out in the fields watching the sheep and goats."

"Send for him at once," Samuel said. "We will not sit down to eat until he arrives."

¹² So Jesse sent for him. He was dark and handsome, with beautiful eyes.

And the Lord said, "This is the one; anoint him."

¹³ So as David stood there among his brothers, Samuel took the flask of olive oil he had brought and anointed David with the oil. And the Spirit of the Lord came powerfully upon David from that day on. Then Samuel returned to Ramah.

— 1 Samuel 16:6–13

Discussion Questions

01 What do these verses tell us about God, Jesus, or the Holy Spirit?

02 What does this tell us about ourselves or other people?

03 Based on these verses and truths, what should I stop doing, start doing, or keep doing?

Devotion

Imagine getting ready to try out or audition for a team, sport, or club. You nervously wonder if you're good enough, strong enough, or smart enough. As you step forward to display your talent, the captain or coach suddenly stops you in your tracks. They announce that you've made it, before you even show what you're capable of. In fact, they choose you first! You haven't been chosen because of your skills, smarts, or strength, but rather simply because they wanted you on the team! That would be amazing, wouldn't it?

This is exactly how God has chosen us. God chose us not based on our popularity, abilities, achievements, strength, smarts, skills or anything else we can think of. Instead, He chose us simply because He loves us and He wants us! That might be hard to believe because it's the complete opposite of the way the world works. But God's ways aren't our ways. They're better. That's what we see in Him choosing David in 1 Samuel. God doesn't look at externals; He simply looks at the heart and chooses whom He desires.

Did you know that God had a purpose and a plan for you before you were even born? He called you to be His follower and adopted you into His family so that you could walk in the way of Jesus and reflect His love to the world. This means your identity—how you define yourself—is found in who God says you are and not by what others might think. God says you are loved and that your life has an important purpose. That settles it.

To be clear, being chosen by God doesn't mean life gets easier, but it does mean that no matter how difficult it might get, God is right there with you. No matter what, He wants you on His team, part of His family. Remember, the Creator of the universe has chosen you! So, when you feel discouraged, left out, let down, or unsure of your identity or your future, listen to God, trust God, and follow God. Live confidently knowing you are His!

WEEK ONE**Memory Verse**

Even before he made the world,
God loved us and chose us in
Christ to be holy and without fault
in his eyes. — Ephesians 1:4

Prayer

Thank God for choosing you, not
because of what you've done, but
because of His great love.

WEEK TWO**Memory Verse**

But you are not like that, for you
are a chosen people. You are royal
priests, a holy nation, God's very
own possession. As a result, you
can show others the goodness
of God, for he called you out of
the darkness into his wonderful
light. — 1 Peter 2:9

Prayer

Ask God to help you remember
that He chose you for a wonderful
purpose that includes showing
others how great He is.

WEEK THREE**Memory Verse**

You didn't choose me. I chose you.
I appointed you to go and produce
lasting fruit, so that the Father will
give you whatever you ask for, using
my name. — John 15:16

Prayer

Pray for confidence in your
identity as a chosen child of God
rather than seeking approval
from the world.

WEEK FOUR**Memory Verse**

So I am willing to endure anything
if it will bring salvation and eternal
glory in Christ Jesus to those God
has chosen. — 2 Timothy 2:10

Prayer

Ask God to show you ways to
live out your calling by serving
and loving others.



Next Steps

Take some time to write down a few ways you currently see God's calling in your life. It could be through a passion, something you're talented at, or how you see and care for others. Pray through these things and ask God how you can use them to grow His kingdom and bring Him glory. At the same time, take a moment to encourage someone who may feel unseen or uncared for. Let them know that they were chosen by God! Remember: God chose you before you were born! Live with purpose, knowing He is going to use you.

Notes:

Child of God

What does it mean to be a child of God?

Being a child of God means that, through faith in Jesus, we have been adopted and placed into God's family. We are now God's sons and daughters; co-heirs with Christ.

Bible Story

²³ Before the way of faith in Christ was available to us, we were placed under guard by the law. We were kept in protective custody, so to speak, until the way of faith was revealed.

²⁴ Let me put it another way. The law was our guardian until Christ came; it protected us until we could be made right with God through faith. ²⁵ And now that the way of faith has come, we no longer need the law as our guardian.

²⁶ For you are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus. ²⁷ And all who have been united with Christ in baptism have put on Christ, like putting on new clothes. ²⁸ There is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male and female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ And now that you belong to Christ, you are the true children of Abraham. You are his heirs, and God's promise to Abraham belongs to you.

¹ Think of it this way. If a father dies and leaves an inheritance for his young children, those children are not much better off than slaves until they grow up, even though they actually own everything their father had. ² They have to obey their guardians until they reach whatever age their father set. ³ And that's the way it was with us before Christ came. We were like children; we were slaves to the basic spiritual principles of this world.

⁴ But when the right time came, God sent his Son, born of a woman, subject to the law. ⁵ God sent him to buy freedom for us who were slaves to the law, so that he could adopt us as his very own children. ⁶ And because we are his children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, prompting us to call out, “Abba, Father.”

⁷ Now you are no longer a slave but God’s own child. And since you are his child, God has made you his heir.

— Galatians 3:23—4:7

Discussion Questions

01 What do these verses tell us about God, Jesus, or the Holy Spirit?

02 What does this tell us about ourselves or other people?

03 Based on these verses and truths, what should I stop doing, start doing, or keep doing?

Devotion

According to the Bible, we were defined by our sin and rebellion against God before we met Jesus. Indeed, we were enemies of God (Romans 5:10), but something amazing happened at the moment of our salvation: that all changed. Now, we are no longer slaves to our sin and shortcomings. Our past failures no longer define us. Jesus has completely and irreversibly transformed our lives. What once labeled us before Christ no longer defines who we are. This is what Paul explained in Galatians 4:7.

How relieving it is to be able to let go of things in the past and move forward with a new identity in Christ! We are sons or daughters of God, our King, and we are also heirs of His Kingdom. This means we are promised eternity with Him. God the Creator has become God our Father through His adoption of us as His beloved children. God's perfect fatherly love, affection, and provision are fixed upon you.

This is a groundbreaking truth and the fundamental aspect of your new identity in Christ. Now, that's not to say that other marks of your identity no longer matter or that they shouldn't matter. It's good and fitting for you to be known as a good friend. In the same way, you should want to be known as a good student, a good family member, a good teammate, and whatever other roles you have in life. The caution though, is that these other roles and identity-markers should never take priority over being God's child. You can be a good friend, a great teammate, and an amazing son or daughter to your earthly parents, but you can live those roles significantly better when you know you are a child of God.

Being a child of God is the most important identity marker you hold. See yourself accordingly. Never doubt your value. And seek to live as the King's child each and every day.

WEEK ONE**Memory Verse**

Now you are no longer a slave but God's own child. And since you are his child, God has made you his heir. — Galatians 4:7

Prayer

Thank God that, through faith in Jesus, you have been adopted into God's family.

WEEK TWO**Memory Verse**

See how very much our Father loves us, for he calls us his children, and that is what we are! But the people who belong to this world don't recognize that we are God's children because they don't know him. — 1 John 3:1

Prayer

Ask God to help you stand firm with confidence no matter what, knowing you are His child.

WEEK THREE**Memory Verse**

And since we are his children, we are his heirs. In fact, together with Christ we are heirs of God's glory. But if we are to share his glory, we must also share his suffering. — Romans 8:17

Prayer

Thank God that you are a co-heir of all His promises and of His glory along with Jesus.

WEEK FOUR**Memory Verse**

For you are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus. — Galatians 3:26

Prayer

Ask God to help you see and love every other follower of Jesus as your brother or sister in Christ.



Reflection Questions

01 What does it mean to have an identity as a child of God?

02 Is it important to you that you are a child of God?
Why or why not?

03 How does being a child of God affect the way
you view yourself?

04 What other important identity markers do you hold? How
should being God's child shape each one?

Notes:

MARCH

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Purchased by God

How do we belong to God?

We belong to God because we were “bought” at a great price. Your salvation from sin, your eternal life with God, and your new identity as God’s child were not free. While you paid nothing for this transformation, Jesus did. Jesus paid the infinitely high price of His life to rescue you from sin and death. Now, you are free to follow Him.

Bible Story

¹⁸ Run from sexual sin! No other sin so clearly affects the body as this one does. For sexual immorality is a sin against your own body. ¹⁹ Don’t you realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourself, ²⁰ for God bought you with a high price. So you must honor God with your body.

²² For the one who was a slave when called to faith in the Lord is the Lord’s freed person; similarly, the one who was free when called is Christ’s slave.

²³ You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of human beings. ²⁴ Brothers and sisters, each person, as responsible to God, should remain in the situation they were in when God called them.

— 1 Corinthians 6:18–20; 7:22–24

Discussion Questions

01 What do these verses tell us about God, Jesus, or the Holy Spirit?

02 What does this tell us about ourselves or other people?

03 Based on these verses and truths, what should I stop doing, start doing, or keep doing?

Devotion

Slavery, especially what occurred in America, is one of the greatest evils possible. Men, women, and children were ripped from their homes, and families were often torn apart. Then, each of these image bearers was taken to a slave auction, where they were assigned a price based

on their perceived worth. Someone would then pay this price, and that person became their property. Being “bought” in that harsh reality meant you were no longer your own—you belonged completely to your new master.

As hard as it is to imagine, Paul uses this imagery of slavery because it perfectly paints our position both before Jesus and in Christ. Before Jesus, we were slaves to sin. Sin was our master. We belonged to it and could not escape its grasp. We sinned and couldn't stop. We were destined for death. But then Jesus stepped in and bought us from that slavery to sin at a price. What was that price? Jesus bought our lives by paying with His own life. This vivid but ultimately positive picture of salvation parallels the truth of our redemption: Jesus Christ paid the ultimate price—His life—to purchase our freedom from sin.

And now, as those who have been bought at a price, every aspect of our lives is to be committed to glorifying God because He paid such a high price. This is what Paul wanted us to understand in 1 Corinthians 6. Then, in chapter 7, he points out that we shouldn't let other people reign supreme over our thoughts and actions. This isn't about our parents or other God-ordained authorities, so don't try to use this verse to prove that you don't have to listen to them! Rather, what Paul has in mind here is that not even our parents or God-ordained leaders are *supreme*

over us—they are not our masters. God is supreme. God is our master. Why? Because He bought us!

This is why Paul also says that we shouldn't live for our old sinful nature, the approval of people, or even the goodness of our works. None of those things are our master, either. We are free from these things, and we must remain so. We must not allow our old, sinful habits or the world's temptations (even good ones) to reclaim us. Instead, we are called to live in the freedom Jesus gave us. Jesus Christ is our Lord, which means He is the only one who reigns supreme—our actions, choices, and attitudes should reflect the price He paid for our freedom.

Think about the weight of the chains that once held you captive. Now, envision those chains permanently broken by a sacrifice of immeasurable worth. God loves you so much that He sent His Son to free you. You've gone from being enslaved by sin to being a co-heir of God's eternal kingdom. Do not let anything in this world imprison you again. Use your freedom to live for God.

WEEK ONE**Memory Verse**

God paid a high price for you, so don't be enslaved by the world.
— 1 Corinthians 7:23

Prayer

Thank God for paying the infinite cost through Jesus to give you freedom from the world.

WEEK TWO**Memory Verse**

For God bought you with a high price. So you must honor God with your body. — 1 Corinthians 6:20

Prayer

Ask God to help you remember the unending depths of His love for you proven by the cross.

WEEK THREE**Memory Verse**

For you know that God paid a ransom to save you from the empty life you inherited from your ancestors. And it was not paid with mere gold or silver, which lose their value. — 1 Peter 1:18

Prayer

Ask God to help you value Jesus as your greatest treasure because of what He has done for you.

WEEK FOUR**Memory Verse**

And they sang a new song with these words: "You are worthy to take the scroll and break its seals and open it. For you were slaughtered, and your blood has ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation."
— Revelation 5:9

Prayer

Ask God to help you live in a way that shows others how worthy Jesus is of your love and obedience.



Reflection Questions

01 What does Jesus' sacrifice for your freedom mean to you?

02 In what specific ways does your freedom change your daily life?

03 Are there areas in your life where old habits still hold power over you? What are they?

04 What good things does the world offer that attempt to rule your life?

Notes:

APRIL



Saved by the Grace of God

What have we done to earn our new identity in Christ?

We have done nothing. God saved us solely through the work of Jesus by His death on the cross and resurrection from the grave. There was never anything we could do to earn our salvation, and there is nothing we can do after receiving it to maintain it; thus, we cannot boast about it.

Bible Story

⁴ But God is so rich in mercy, and he loved us so much, ⁵ that even though we were dead because of our sins, he gave us life when he raised Christ from the dead. (It is only by God's grace that you have been saved!) ⁶ For he raised us from the dead along with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ Jesus. ⁷ So God can point to us in all future ages as examples of the incredible wealth of his grace and kindness toward us, as shown in all he has done for us who are united with Christ Jesus.

⁸ God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. ⁹ Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it.

— Ephesians 2:4–9

Discussion Questions

01 What do these verses tell us about God, Jesus, or the Holy Spirit?

02 What does this tell us about ourselves or other people?

03 Based on these verses and truths, what should I stop doing, start doing, or keep doing?

Devotion

What would happen if you were drowning in the ocean, completely unable to swim? You'd feel yourself sinking, desperation rising within you as you struggle to keep your head above water. The cold waves would crash over you, and every breath would become a greater struggle. But then, imagine that just when it seems all hope is lost, a lifeguard leaps in. With strong arms, they pull you from the depths, back toward safety. As you break the surface, the refreshing air fills your lungs, and relief washes over you. In that moment, you realize you didn't save yourself—you couldn't even if you tried. You owe your very life to another.

This rescue is a vivid picture of what God accomplished for us. We could never save ourselves from sin no matter how much we might have tried. We might have attempted to do better, but we still sinned and that sin continued to separate us from God. No amount of effort or striving could ever restore that relationship. But then Jesus stepped in. Through His perfect life, undeserved death, and supernatural resurrection, He saved us.

Many people think they can earn their way to heaven by doing enough good things, going to church, helping others, living moral lives, or avoiding what they consider to be the worst of sins. However, the Bible makes it very clear: we are saved by God's grace through our faith in Jesus alone. Believing we can save ourselves from sin is even more foolish than thinking that a drowning swimmer can save themselves.

Our perspective can change when we see our salvation as a gift instead of something we earned. We can begin to receive God's love instead of striving to earn it. We can serve God joyfully and celebrate knowing we are saved instead of working to secure salvation. Who we are, the works we do, and how we live can be a response to the salvation we have already received through Jesus. We can rest assured in our identity of being God's child, made new in Christ.

WEEK ONE**Memory Verse**

For no one can ever be made right with God by doing what the law commands. The law simply shows us how sinful we are. — Romans 3:20

Prayer

Thank God for the gift of salvation through Jesus, which is completely undeserved and freely given.

WEEK TWO**Memory Verse**

And since it is through God's kindness, then it is not by their good works. For in that case, God's grace would not be what it really is—free and undeserved. — Romans 11:6

Prayer

Ask God to help you rest in His grace instead of striving to earn His love that He has fully given you in Jesus.

WEEK THREE**Memory Verse**

So we are made right with God through faith and not by obeying the law. — Romans 3:28

Prayer

Pray for those who are trying to earn their way to heaven; that they would understand the truth of the gospel.

WEEK FOUR**Memory Verse**

Yet we know that a person is made right with God by faith in Jesus Christ, not by obeying the law. And we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we might be made right with God because of our faith in Christ, not because we have obeyed the

law. For no one will ever be made right with God by obeying the law. — Galatians 2:16

Prayer

Pray that God would help you live in joyful response to His grace by serving and loving others because He first loved you.



Definition

Grace: Unmerited or undeserved favor; a gift that is freely given and cannot be earned.



Next Steps

Reflect on how you view your identity in Christ and your relationship with God. Do you feel you have to earn God's approval, or do you truly trust His grace? Write any ways you've been relying on your efforts instead of resting in what Christ has already done for you. Then, share this truth with someone who might be struggling with the idea of salvation by grace. Encourage them with Scripture and remind them that Jesus' work on the cross is enough. Remember: neither you nor they must work for God's love—you already have it! Live in the freedom and joy of His grace.

Notes:

MAY

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Given a Purpose by God

What is my purpose in life?

As a follower of Jesus, you have been given the great purpose of bringing God glory by loving and obeying Him and sharing Jesus with others. God invites you to be purposeful with what He has put before you, even though it may never be fully revealed how God will use you.

Bible Story

¹⁵ Christ is the visible image of the invisible God. He existed before anything was created and is supreme over all creation, ¹⁶ for through him God created everything in the heavenly realms and on earth. He made the things we can see and the things we can't see — such as thrones, kingdoms, rulers, and authorities in the unseen world. Everything was created through him and for him. ¹⁷ He existed before anything else, and he holds all creation together.

¹⁸ Christ is also the head of the church, which is his body. He is the beginning, supreme over all who rise from the dead. So he is first in everything. ¹⁹ For God in all his fullness was pleased to live in Christ, ²⁰ and through him God reconciled everything to himself. He made peace with everything in heaven and on earth by means of Christ's blood on the cross.

²¹ This includes you who were once far away from God. You were his enemies, separated from him by your evil thoughts and actions. ²² Yet now he has reconciled you to himself through the death of Christ in his physical body. As a result, he has brought you into his own presence, and you are holy and blameless as you stand before him without a single fault.

²³ But you must continue to believe this truth and stand firmly in it. Don't drift away from the assurance you received when you heard the Good News. The Good News has been preached all over the world, and I, Paul, have been appointed as God's servant to proclaim it.

— Colossians 1:15–23

Discussion Questions

01 What do these verses tell us about God, Jesus, or the Holy Spirit?

02 What does this tell us about ourselves or other people?

03 Based on these verses and truths, what should I stop doing, start doing, or keep doing?

Devotion

In 1766, a British cartographer, John Spilsbury, created the first jigsaw puzzle. His goal was to teach children geography, so he cut up a map of Europe into pieces. Now, in America alone, 1.8 billion puzzles are sold each year. For some, solving puzzles is a fun activity. It's fun to watch the pieces slowly come together. The long process doesn't bother them. For others, solving puzzles takes a long time, and they can't bear the thought of sitting through the process while they can accomplish other things instead.

Life is sort of like a puzzle. God's people are the individual pieces, and God's plan is the full puzzle. In a puzzle, each piece is part of something much greater than itself, and that's true for us, too. Also, like puzzle pieces, each person needs to be in their rightful spot. When God's people do this—when we all do our part in the greater thing going on around us—a beautiful picture is displayed, just like a completed puzzle.

And that's the goal, isn't it? To see how all the pieces come together to create an image. The thrill of puzzles is that each piece has its unique place in the bigger picture.

The same is true for followers of Jesus. God has given each person a purpose and a part to play in God's plan. Like a puzzle maker, God is the only one who knows exactly the role and purpose of each piece to complete the puzzle. We'll never know all the inner workings of God, but Paul reminds us that "everything was created through [Jesus] and for him" (Colossians 1:16). Our purpose is wrapped up in Jesus. We were made to live for Him and be a part of His body, the church. And as such, all that we do is to be done for God's glory. That includes loving and obeying Him, but it also includes being used by Him to introduce others to Him. The puzzle God is building is bigger than us. It's bigger than the church. It involves the entire world.

WEEK ONE**Memory Verse**

For we are God's masterpiece.
He has created us anew in Christ
Jesus, so we can do the good
things he planned for us long ago.
— Ephesians 2:10

Prayer

Ask God to help you remember
that you are His masterpiece,
and He created you to do
good in this world.

WEEK TWO**Memory Verse**

And then he told them, "Go into
all the world and preach the Good
News to everyone." — Mark 16:15

Prayer

Thank God for giving you the
opportunity and the privilege
to tell others how they can find
forgiveness and purpose in Jesus.

WEEK THREE**Memory Verse**

For I can do everything through
Christ, who gives me strength.
— Philippians 4:13

Prayer

Thank God for giving you the ability
to do whatever He calls you to do.

WEEK FOUR**Memory Verse**

And we know that God causes
everything to work together for the
good of those who love God and
are called according to his purpose
for them. — Romans 8:28

Prayer

Ask God to help you believe deep
down in your heart that He is
always working out His good plans
in and through you.



Reflection Questions

01 Do you believe that you live with purpose? Are you aware of that purpose each day?

02 How does an active faith, rather than a passive faith, shape how you can live with a purpose?

03 What are some of your unique gifts and talents that you could use to fulfill your purpose?

04 What areas of your life do you need to adjust to better align with God's purpose for you?

Notes:

JUNE



Treasured by God

What does it mean to be treasured?

To be treasured is to be cherished and valued. When someone is treasured, value and worth are attached to that person. God treasures His children, and He chose to adopt us into His family even before the world was created to show us how much He loves and values us.

Bible Story

³ All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ. ⁴ Even before he made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in his eyes. ⁵ God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure. ⁶ So we praise God for the glorious grace he has poured out on us who belong to his dear Son. ⁷ He is so rich in kindness and grace that he purchased our freedom with the blood of his Son and forgave our sins. ⁸ He has showered his kindness on us, along with all wisdom and understanding.

— Ephesians 1:3–8

Discussion Questions

01 What do these verses tell us about God, Jesus, or the Holy Spirit?

02 What does this tell us about ourselves or other people?

03 Based on these verses and truths, what should I stop doing, start doing, or keep doing?

Devotion

Do you remember when you were younger and had a favorite “thing”? Maybe it was a toy, a stuffed animal, or even a blanket. Your favorite “thing” was something you loved so much that you always wanted it with you. You just couldn’t bear to be separated from it. There were probably days or nights when you lost your “thing,” and you and your family searched for it because the thought of not having it was so troubling to you. That “thing” was your treasure.

God looks at us like we once looked at our favorite thing! He sees us with such love and care that He couldn’t stand to be separated from us. As a result, He devised a rescue plan from the creation of the world.

Sin separated us from God; in other words, we were “lost.” But God made a way to bring us into His family so we could have a relationship with Him that would never end, lasting for all eternity. God’s perfect plan was to

sacrifice His only Son, allowing Jesus to take our sin upon Himself in the most selfless and incredible display of love in all of history.

God’s love for us is so great that He came down from Heaven to be closer to us and to save us! According to Scripture, we are God’s greatest and most treasured creation (Genesis 1, Ephesians 2). This is why He put so much care and intentionality into calling and adopting us into His family. The next time you are tempted to believe you aren’t valuable, reject the enemy’s lie. God treasures you and cares for you more than you could ever imagine. And He proved it. Remember what God gave up for you to prove you are a treasure. As you are tempted to think negatively of yourself, forget how priceless you are, or get down on yourself when you make a mistake, remember how precious you are to Him. See yourself through God’s eyes: God gave up His Son so He could have you!

WEEK ONE**Memory Verse**

For you are a holy people, who belong to the Lord your God. Of all the people on earth, the Lord your God has chosen you to be his own special treasure.

— Deuteronomy 7:6

Prayer

Ask God to help you see yourself as His treasured creation.

WEEK TWO**Memory Verse**

Now if you will obey me and keep my covenant, you will be my own special treasure from among all the peoples on earth; for all the earth belongs to me. — Exodus 19:5

Prayer

Ask God for an opportunity to be bold and share with others that He treasures them.

WEEK THREE**Memory Verse**

"They will be my people," says the Lord of Heaven's Armies. "On the day when I act in judgment, they will be my own special treasure. I will spare them as a father spares an obedient child." — Malachi 3:17

Prayer

Ask God to guide you to see all others as His treasured creation.

WEEK FOUR**Memory Verse**

But now, O Jacob, listen to the Lord who created you. O Israel, the one who formed you says, "Do not be afraid, for I have ransomed you. I have called you by name; you are mine." — Isaiah 43:1

Prayer

Thank God for the comfort He gives in knowing that you are His treasured creation.



Next Steps

This month, remind yourself that God treasures and loves you more than you ever imagined. Remember that God sees you as His unique treasure when you're feeling down or struggling with self-worth. Write down some of the encouraging things God says about you on a sticky note or piece of paper, and place it somewhere you'll often see as a reminder of how much God treasures you.

At the same time, remember that humanity was created in God's image; it's important to remember that God treasures everyone. Take some time this week to share God's love and value with those around you by sharing what you've learned.

Notes:

JULY

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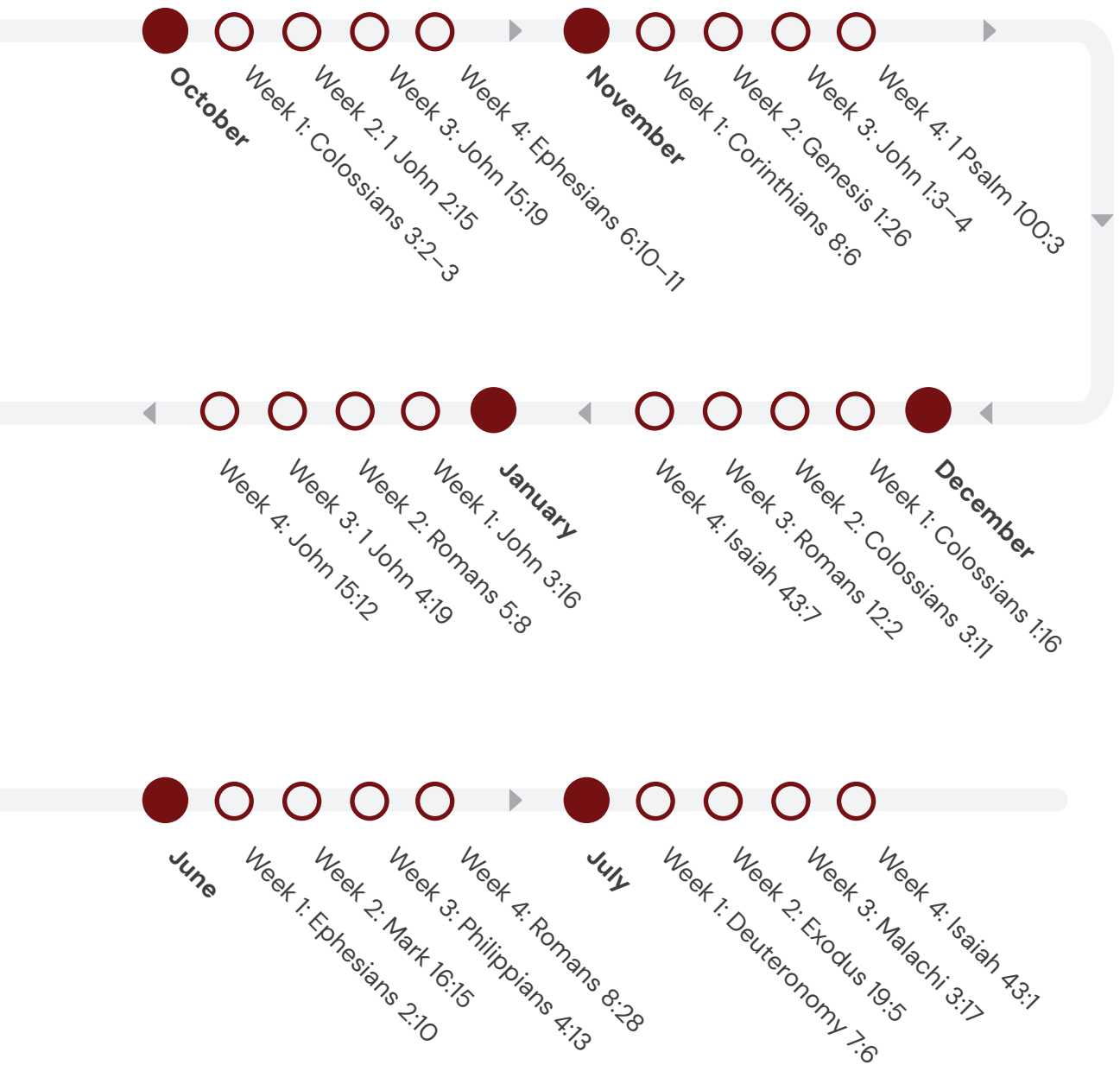
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Memory Verse Tracking Log



SEVENTH GRADE





NEW VISION