A CONTRARIAN’S GUIDE TO KNOWING GOD: SPIRITUALITY FOR THE REST OF US

LEADER’S GUIDE
Welcome to A Contrarian’s Guide to Knowing God Bible Study. Your download includes Leader’s Guide notes and group handouts for all five sessions, information on how to use the Leader’s Guide, and several other resources that will help you take this content to your group. Here’s an outline of all the materials included:

**GETTING STARTED**
- Welcome Letter
- How to Use the Leader’s Guide
- Larry Osborne Bio

**LEADER’S GUIDE**
- Session 1: Leave the Rules Behind
- Session 2: You Don’t Need More Faith or Passion
- Session 3: You Don’t Need Someone Else’s Habits or Gifts
- Session 4: Don’t Let Tools Become Rules
- Session 5: Is It a Sin to Be Average?

**PARTICIPANTS’ HANDOUTS**
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- Session 5 Participants’ Handout
I am a doer. I get excited about completing tasks and checking them off my list. But my doer personality can bleed into my relationship with God.

What I love about Larry Osborne’s teaching in this new Bible study is that he challenges us to look at scripture and discover what God is really calling us to. Is it accomplishing things? Completing tasks? No, in A Contrarian’s Guide to Knowing God, we are encouraged to love God, and follow Him in whatever situation He has us in today.

I believe this Bible study could help you and your group have a fresh perspective on how we pursue God and our spiritual development.

Blessings,

Brian Mosley
President, RightNow Media
Every group meeting is an improvisation. No matter how much you prepare, there’s always a chance that someone will ask a question you can’t answer or that the discussion will go somewhere unexpected. Maybe someone in the group has a crucial need you will have to address. Or maybe the Spirit will give you a new understanding of how a passage applies to your group.

This Leader’s Guide is a tool that helps you unpack the study. But it can be more than that. We’re giving you a document full of possibility.

If you’re new to group leading, you can simply follow along step by step. Remember that your job is to ask questions, not necessarily to give all the answers. It’s okay to let silence stretch its arms as your group thinks through the discussion. As you honor participants’ answers—even the half-baked ones—they’ll be encouraged to participate even more. Some of those answers may get fully baked in the group oven.

If you’re accustomed to doing your own thing, go for it! This guide provides ideas to help you do your job even better. Whether you’re a novice or a veteran, read through each lesson in advance. Know your options. Plan out those parts you’ll probably use. Develop a game plan.

We’ve provided handouts to use with each lesson. You’ll need to make enough copies for your entire group beforehand so participants can make notes along the way and remember the Scripture used in the Bible study. The handouts also include activities for further study during the week.

With that in mind, let’s preview the guide. The main body of the Leader’s Guide is written as a conversation you would have with your group. When there’s a specific question to ask, it appears in bold type. When we want to whisper directions in your ear, we’ll get your attention with Leader: then use italic type. (If you’re looking for a quick answer, the suggested answer sometimes appears in parentheses after the question or in an italicized list.) But many of the questions are open for discussion, so they have no suggested answers. Instead, the paragraphs that follow after might include thoughts you could add to the discussion.

Each lesson has particular sections...

**OPEN**

This is an icebreaker. Adjust it to the character of your group, but don’t skip it, for several reasons. (1) Every group needs some transition time. (2) Everyone gets to know each other. (3) The introductory questions draw out practical connections between the subject matter and their lives.

**VIEW**

Now it’s time to watch the video. Make sure to set the audio at a comfortable level before beginning the session and everyone can see the screen. You don’t want your group to miss anything.
**REVIEW**
People can forget what they see unless they review it right away. The discussion questions in this section help your group remember what they just viewed from the teaching. But other questions try to connect the video to their emotions or experience. How did you feel when Larry said that? Is that true in your life? Do you have the same issue?

You, as the leader, will set the tone. If you offer a comment that’s authentic, vulnerable, or a bit challenging, then others will feel that they have permission to do the same—and you will have meaningful discussion and growth.

**BIBLE EXPLORATION**
This is a Bible study, so each session is grounded in Scripture. Within your group, you may find different levels of faith. This is a time to open up the Bible and help them grow in their faith.

**LAST WORD**
This is an opportunity for your group to be challenged to do something with what they’ve learned. This section will direct the group to reflect on how they live out their faith in their daily lives.

**DEEPER WALK**
These are suggestions for individuals to do, read, and reflect on their own during the week for further study. Encourage your group to dive deeper, but don’t demand it.
Dr. Larry Osborne has served as one of the senior pastors at North Coast Church in Vista, California since 1980. He has helped oversee the growth of the church from a fledgling group of 128 meeting in a rented school to a multi-site ministry that reaches over 11,000 in weekend attendance.

Larry has a passion for leadership, spiritual formation, and discipleship. As a nationally recognized trainer of leaders, pastors, and church planters, he travels extensively, speaking at conferences and mentoring events. His books include: *Innovation’s Dirty Little Secret*, *Sticky Teams*, *Sticky Church*, *Accidental Pharisees*, *Mission Creep*, *10 Dumb Things Smart Christians Believe*, *The Contrarian’s Guide to Knowing God*, and *The Unity Factor*.

Larry holds both a Master’s of Divinity and Doctorate from Talbot Theological Seminary. He and his wife, Nancy, live in Oceanside, CA. They have three married children.
SESSION 1:

LEAVE THE RULES BEHIND

Quick Start

Read
Take some time in advance to read and consider the Bible study questions and come up with personal examples to encourage discussion.

Print
Before meeting, make enough copies of this session’s handout for your entire group. The handouts came with your download.

Watch
Make sure everyone can see the screen and the audio is at a comfortable level.

Note: For more detailed information, please see the How to Use The Leader’s Guide document.
LEAVE THE RULES BEHIND

OPEN

**Leader:** Open the session with prayer. Pass out the Participants' Handout to everyone in the group. If your group is brand new or if everyone doesn’t know each other well, spend time getting to know each other before asking the opening question.

Do you or have you ever had two very different friends? People you like but you think wouldn’t ever get along?

How was your relationship with each of those people different? Why did it “work” with each person?

In this series, Larry Osborne is going to look at the relationship with God we've been given through Jesus Christ. It’s messy. It’s not formulaic. It looks and smells and tastes different for each and every person. And that’s okay.

VIEW

Show Session 1: Leave the Rules Behind (8 minutes)

REVIEW

Larry introduced this session with a question: **Have you ever wondered why all the books on the spiritual life seem to be written by introverts or intellectuals?**

If you had to describe the “perfect” spiritual life based on things you’ve heard or read, what would it look like?

**What would you have to do?** (Read your Bible every day for an hour, pray for an hour, serve in a soup kitchen every week, etc.)

**What would you have to not do?** (E.g. never do anything fun when you could be reading your Bible.)
At some point or another, we've been exposed to Christian culture. For some of us, we've lived our entire lives with ideas about what makes a “good” Christian. For others, we've come into the Christian faith and had to learn the lingo.

**For you personally, what’s been the most difficult aspect of Christianity that you feel you've been expected to do—that without it, you’re not really a good Christian?**

**What aspects of Christian cultural practice have you encountered that simply don’t jive with how God made you?**

(Dyslexia or ADHD make prolonged reading hard, learn by doing—not by reading, not feeling comfortable sharing in public, not being able to fast because of hypoglycemia, etc.)

Each of us is different—and that’s good. God didn’t set out to create exact replicas of only one super-Christian. Instead, He set out to recreate each of us in the image of Jesus. Larry highlighted that we often throw around the description of Christianity as a “relationship, not a religion.”

But when we reduce the Christian life to only one set of practices, we ruin the health of the relationship.

**How did Larry’s description of his brother’s and his relationship with their dad sit with you? How does that picture—that God relates to us each uniquely—change your perspective of your relationship with your heavenly Father?**

Now, just because we all have unique designs and relate to God in different ways doesn’t mean God doesn’t have rules for His people. Larry used the illustration of house rules his dad set up when Larry was a kid.

**Why do you think it’s important that God have “house rules” for His people despite our different relationships?**

**What potential problems do we face with these house rules?**

Larry talked about legalism as a well-intentioned effort to prevent ourselves or others from breaking God’s rules. God’s rules for His people keep us safe and in good relationship with Him. But we’re often tempted to create extra rules as a way to prevent us getting close to breaking God’s rules.

**What “extra rules” in Christianity have you encountered? Which one of God’s rules were they designed to protect? Did it work? Why or why not?** (Don’t dance, don’t drink, don’t go to movie theaters, don’t listen to secular music, etc.)
Larry described his brother’s and his habit of “testing” the validity of danger signs on electric fences. **Given what we know about the human temptation to push the line, what’s dangerous about extra rules? What behavior does it encourage?**

**Where have you seen extra rules cause harm in your own life? How did the false fences affect your ability to respect God’s genuine house rules?**

We all know ourselves best. For some of us, we have personal boundaries we’ve set up to keep us in line with God’s moral will for His people (His “house rules”). We know our limits, our strengths, and our weaknesses.

But trouble comes when we think that one single relationship is the only way to relate to God. We either force our own rules on everyone else, or we adopt everyone else’s personal rules. Either one can be unhealthy.

**BIBLE EXPLORATION**

The issue of a one-size-fits-all spiritual life has been around since the beginning of the Church. In Romans, the Apostle Paul faced the problem head-on. We’re going to dive a bit deeper into the text that Larry mentioned in the session.

Read Romans 14:1–4.

Paul’s walking into a debate that was already in full-swing in the early churches. Jewish tradition dictated that any meat consecrated to a false god was inedible. And yet, the first churches were filled with believers that had come out of pagan religions. They followed Jesus, but still liked their local butcher.

Conflict popped up as individual believers tried to apply their personal relationship with God to everyone around them.

**In the first four verses we read, what is Paul’s opinion of the problem? What attitude does he want the Roman believers to have toward each other?**

**Where does Paul place the responsibility of each person’s actions before God?** (On the shoulders of each individual.)

The squabbles in the church at Rome came when individuals believed that their relationship with God was the only way anyone could relate to the Father. Paul’s quick to point out that our relationship with God is between us and God alone.

**In your experience, what are some extra rules that have caused divisions in the church?** (Some options may be: stance on alcohol, dancing, music; how music is used in worship; how personal devotions must be carried out; etc.)
What difference does it make in the way you approach your spiritual life knowing that you’re accountable to God for your actions?

How do Paul’s words in Romans 14 affect your perspective of your spiritual life?

How have you allowed others’ ideas about spiritual living to affect your own spiritual life?

Now, it’s worth stopping here for a moment to point out that Paul doesn’t mean we can live however we want and no one can call us out on sin. In this passage, Paul’s dealing with those “extra fence” rules that Larry mentioned.

When it comes to the parts of Christian living that God has set down immovable expectations, we must definitely hold each other accountable.

Read Romans 14:13–23.

According to Paul, what’s the point of allowing each other the latitude to grow in relationship with God in the way He’s designed us? (Look at verse 19.)

Paul’s challenging our very human tendency to see ourselves and our way of living as the only thing that matters. What instead does Paul want us to consider? (The wellbeing and righteousness of others.)

In verses 22–23, Paul boils his whole argument down to a single point—live out your individual relationship with God according to the faith that He has given you. Not your parent’s faith, not your pastor’s faith, but your faith.

According to verse 23, what determines whether or not our spiritual life is on track? (Whatever is not done from faith is sin.)

We’ll talk more about faith in the next session. But for now, the point remains: God designed you uniquely. Your relationship to Him will be unique. Live the way that He’s built you to live, and love Him in the way He guides you.

In light of what we’ve covered in this session, how have you been encouraged?
What questions do you have that might not have been answered?

**Leader:** Larry’s teaching in this series is sure to ruffle a few feathers in some people, and be a breath of life for others. As you weigh the reaction of your group, consider spending some time clarifying any sticky issues that may have come up during this session. Be sure to emphasize the difference between obeying the commands of God versus exercising our relationship.

**LAST WORD**

Most of us have heard the cliché that Christianity is a relationship, not a religion. But when it comes down to how we live out our spiritual life, we’d have to admit it looks more like a religion.

God has expectations for all of His people, but how we live in relationship to Him will be different to those around us. And that’s okay. Remember—you’re free to relate to God how He designed you. Don’t set up rules around God’s rules, and don’t follow someone else’s extra rules as if they’re gospel.

As you look at your spiritual walk this week, ask yourself what misconceptions you might have to correct. And then look at the options before you to relate to your heavenly Father.

**DEEPER WALK**

**Leader:** Encourage your group to pick at least one of the following suggested applications to put into practice this week. You may even invite them to circle the one they choose. Follow up at the beginning of the next session to see how it went.

**Read:** Read Larry’s book *A Contrarian’s Guide to Knowing God*, chapters 1–4. Think through the implications of that content on your own spiritual life.

**Write:** Take five minutes and think through your personality—your likes and dislikes, your temperament, your hobbies. Write down a short description of what your relationship with God would look like played out in your personality.

**Discuss:** Find ten minutes this week and have a conversation with someone you know who has a thriving relationship with God. Ask them what they do to best relate to God.

**Create:** Use your creativity and make something that will remind you daily that God designed you to uniquely relate to Him. Set it somewhere you’ll see it on a regular basis.

**Pray:** Ask God to open your eyes to the spiritual life He’s called you to, and to help you see and remove those unnecessary trappings of clichéd spirituality.
REVIEW

If you had to describe the “perfect” spiritual life based on things you’ve heard or read, what would it look like?

What would you have to do? What would you have to not do?

For you personally, what’s been the most difficult aspect of Christianity that you feel you’ve been expected to do—that without it, you’re not really a good Christian?

What aspects of Christian cultural practice have you encountered that simply don’t jive with how God made you?

Why do you think it’s important that God have “house rules” for His people despite our different relationships?

What potential problems do we face with these house rules?

BIBLE EXPLORATION

**Romans 14:1–4.** In the first four verses we read, what is Paul’s opinion of the problem? What attitude does he want the Roman believers to have toward each other?

Where does Paul place the responsibility of each person’s actions before God?

In your experience, what are some extra rules that have caused divisions in the church?

What difference does it make in the way you approach your spiritual life knowing that you’re accountable to God for your actions?

How do Paul’s words in Romans 14 affect your perspective of your spiritual life?

How have you allowed others’ ideas about spiritual living to affect your own spiritual life?
Romans 14:13–23. According to Paul, what’s the point of allowing each other the latitude to grow in relationship with God in the way He’s designed us?

According to verse 23, what determines whether or not our spiritual life is on track?

In light of what we’ve covered in this session, how have you been encouraged?

What questions do you have that might not have been answered?

DEEPER WALK

Read: Read Larry’s book *A Contrarian’s Guide to Knowing God*, chapters 1–4. Think through the implications of that content on your own spiritual life.

Write: Take five minutes and think through your personality—your likes and dislikes, your temperament, your hobbies. Write down a short description of what your relationship with God would look like played out in your personality.

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Create: Use your creativity and make something that will remind you daily that God designed you to uniquely relate to Him. Set it somewhere you’ll see it on a regular basis.

Pray: Ask God to open your eyes to the spiritual life He’s called you to, and to help you see and remove those unnecessary trappings of clichéd spirituality.
A CONTRARIAN’S GUIDE TO KNOWING GOD

SESSION 2:
YOU DON’T NEED MORE FAITH OR PASSION

Quick Start

Read
Take some time in advance to read and consider the Bible study questions and come up with personal examples to encourage discussion.

Print
Before meeting, make enough copies of this session’s handout for your entire group. The handouts came with your download.

Watch
Make sure everyone can see the screen and the audio is at a comfortable level.

Note: For more detailed information, please see the How to Use The Leader’s Guide document.
OPEN

Leader: Open the session with prayer. Pass out the Participants’ Handout to everyone in the group. Begin by following up with the Deeper Walk section from session one. What exercise did everyone choose? How did it go?

Have you ever crossed a bridge or balanced on a chair, and wondered about its ability to hold you up? What happened? Did it collapse? Did you arrive safely on the other side?

What made you nervous about the thing’s ability to hold you up?

In this session, we’re going to look at faith and passion—do we need more? Can God work with scared and passionless people? The answer may surprise you.

VIEW

Show Session 2: You Don’t Need More Faith or Passion (10 minutes)

REVIEW

This session focused on two things: faith and fervor—passion for spiritual things. How have you defined faith in the past?

Is it something you can get more or less of?

If you had to describe someone who had a lot of faith, what would that person look like? What about someone with only a little faith?

Larry described his own perspective of faith—the one he grew up with. It was something that had no room for doubt. That he
had to envision the future he hoped for and hold onto it. But ultimately those perspectives of faith simply weren’t biblical.

**What did Larry point to as the biblical definition of faith?** (Hebrews 11:1–2)

**What was the distinctive characteristic of faith that Larry emphasized?** (Obedience)

When we think about faith, it’s tempting to treat it like some resource we accrue and then spend when we need it. Facing cancer? Tough luck unless you’ve built up a big enough reservoir of faith. Have a difficult career decision ahead of you? Take a risk and get a big deposit in your faith bank.

**What would change in how you live your life if you embraced the faith-as-obedience model?**

Throughout the Bible—and particularly in the “faith chapter,” Hebrews 11—the defining characteristic of those who show faith is obedience. Larry recapped the story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

**What stood out to you about the three young men’s obedience?**

**What was the source of their faith?** (God’s ability to deliver them.)

**What do you find compelling about the three men’s attitude?**

Take a moment to reflect on Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego’s situation. **What kind of faith do you feel like they exhibited? Was it free of doubt? Do you think they thought they were building their faith-bank by taking a risk?**

Often we miss the short little qualifier that the three young men throw into their statement of defiance: “Even if God doesn’t deliver us, we still won’t bow down.”

**What does that statement say about the three men’s confidence in their “desired future”?**
What does it say about them that they were willing to obey no matter the outcome?

It’s a tiny qualifier—“even if He doesn’t”—but it’s an important one. We often think that faith makes the risk worth it or our desired future come true. But that’s not at all what’s going on here or in the next passage Larry looks at.

In the Acts 12 passage, what does it say about Peter and the people praying for him that they were all surprised that God answered their prayer the way they wanted?

What does it say about their faith? Was it strong? Weak? Why?

When we look at the concept of faith, it often comes paired with the idea of passion. If our faith is on fire, we’ll do great things for God.

What did Larry point out as the problem with “passion”? (It comes and goes and doesn’t mean we’re actually doing what God wants.)

What is the one single point of obedience that God expects us to act on? (Loving Him and others.)

Why does it take faith to love well? (It’s not in our natures to be others-focused. It requires obedience.)

When it comes right down to it, our task as the people of God is to obey our Master. He has asked us to love Him and to love His people.

BIBLE EXPLORATION

We tend to create the mental image of people-with-faith as totally confident risk-takers that never doubt their path in life. However, as Larry has challenged us, faith is both smaller and bigger. Smaller, because it only asks that we obey God in the next step. Bigger, because obedience isn’t easy.

Read Matthew 26:36–46.
First off, what’s the context for this passage? (Jesus was preparing to be betrayed and crucified.)

In light of what we’ve discussed about faith, what stands out to you about Jesus’s words to His Father?

We tend to think of Jesus like we do of people who have “big faith.” That everything He did was easy—a matter of having so much faith in his faith-bank that the world just bent around Him.

In this passage, what picture do we get of Jesus? What very human emotions do we see in Him? (Doubt, fear, pain, reluctance)

What request does Jesus make of His Father three times? (To not have to endure the coming betrayal and crucifixion.)

What did Jesus want from His disciples? (Companionship in His struggle.)

In Gethsemane, we see a recreation of the Garden of Eden and Adam’s choice to obey or disobey. Just like He had for Adam, God had a task for Jesus. For Adam, it was to enjoy the garden, rule it well, and trust God’s provision (which meant not eating from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil). For Jesus, it was to march obediently to the cross, carrying the sin of all humanity.

If we understand faith to mean simple obedience, what does that tell us about Jesus versus Adam? Who demonstrated faith? How do you know?

What does Jesus’s reluctance to accept God’s will—to act in obedience—tell you about faith? Is there room for fear? Doubt? Hesitation?

Ultimately, what separated Jesus from Adam was a single act of obedience—an act of faith. Jesus’s decision to obey the Father in many ways reflects Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego’s decision: trust in God’s direction regardless of the outcome.

For both the Hebrew boys and for Jesus, that meant ultimate deliverance. But that’s not always the case.

What are the two outcomes that the people of faith experienced? (Some found victory, others defeat.)

Is outcome a good determiner of faith? Why or why not?

When you look at your own life—the way you've thought of faith—what might need to change in light of this session? What have you been doing well?

What small step of obedience do you see in your life that you can respond to today? This week?

How can this group come around you and help you in taking that step?

How does the freedom to doubt in the midst of obedience affect your willingness to obey?

The writer of Hebrews concludes the “faith chapter” by pointing out that everyone in it didn’t receive the thing they were chasing—it’s waiting for them as we take our turn. Just as they obeyed God step by step, we, too, now have the opportunity to live by faith. Obey God’s call in this moment. Trust Him to do the rest.

LAST WORD

We drive across bridges all the time—often without even noticing it. Usually the bridge will have to span thousands of feet of river before we pay attention to it holding us up. But we trust the bridge without even thinking, and we act in faith by driving over it.

Our faith is only ever as strong as the thing (or Person) we put it in. God has called us to follow Him with every aspect of our lives. The question that remains for us is whether or not we will obey.

Faith looks at God and says, “I know Your character. I can trust you.” And then it steps out onto the bridge. Sometimes that bridge will look like a bit of rope and a plank or two bobbing over a canyon. But God’s character never changes, no matter how bleak the step in front of us.

As we practice taking steps of faith—obeying in the next thing—we will grow more and more confident in God’s character and kindness. Doubts may still linger, but we’ll have driven over enough bridges to know that they’ll hold.

And that’s enough faith. Just one more step.
DEEPER WALK

Leader: Encourage your group to pick at least one of the following suggested applications to put into practice this week. You may even invite them to circle the one they choose. Follow up at the beginning of the next session to see how it went.


Write: Take ten minutes this week and write out the way you’ve historically defined faith and passion. Then, below that, write out what you believe about God’s ability to deliver on His promises. Remember to focus on the object of your faith this week.

Connect: Spend ten minutes talking with a family member or friend about a time in your life when you saw God come through despite your own doubts, concerns, or anxiety. Use the opportunity as a chance to practice small, obedient faith.

Memorize: Commit the definition of faith found in Hebrews 11:1 to memory. Reflect on that verse this week.

Pray: Spend five minutes in prayer with God this week and ask Him to give you a clearer picture of His character and dependability.
REVIEW

What was the distinctive characteristic of faith that Larry emphasized?

What would change in how you live your life if you embraced the faith-as-obedience model?

What did Larry point out as the problem with “passion”?

What is the one single point of obedience that God expects us to act on?

Why does it take faith to love well?

BIBLE EXPLORATION

Matthew 26:36–46. In light of what we’ve discussed about faith, what stands out to you about Jesus’s words to His Father?

In this passage, what picture do we get of Jesus? What very human emotions do we see in Him?

What request does Jesus make of His Father three times?

If we understand faith to mean simple obedience, what does that tell us about Jesus versus Adam in Eden? Who demonstrated faith? How do you know?
Hebrews 11:32–40. What are the two outcomes that the people of faith experienced?

Is outcome a good determiner of faith? Why or why not?

When you look at your own life—the way you’ve thought of faith—what might need to change in light of this session? What have you been doing well?

What small step of obedience do you see in your life that you can respond to today? This week?

DEEPER WALK


Write: Take ten minutes this week and write out the way you’ve historically defined faith and passion. Then, below that, write out what you believe about God’s ability to deliver on His promises. Remember to focus on the object of your faith this week.

Connect: Spend ten minutes talking with a family member or friend about a time in your life when you saw God come through despite your own doubts, concerns, or anxiety. Use the opportunity as a chance to practice small, obedient faith.

Memorize: Commit the definition of faith found in Hebrews 11:1 to memory. Reflect on that verse this week.

Pray: Spend five minutes in prayer with God this week and ask Him to give you a clearer picture of His character and dependability.
SESSION 3:

YOU DON’T NEED SOMEONE ELSE’S HABITS OR GIFTS

Quick Start

Read
Take some time in advance to read and consider the Bible study questions and come up with personal examples to encourage discussion.

Print
Before meeting, make enough copies of this session’s handout for your entire group. The handouts came with your download.

Watch
Make sure everyone can see the screen and the audio is at a comfortable level.

Note: For more detailed information, please see the How to Use The Leader’s Guide document.
YOU DON’T NEED SOMEONE ELSE’S HABITS OR GIFTS

OPEN

**Leader:** Open the session with prayer. Pass out the Participants’ Handout to everyone in the group. Begin by following up with the Deeper Walk section from session two. What exercise did everyone choose? How did it go?

Think about a personal hero you might have. What attracted you to that person in the first place? What about them do you admire?

How has a hero let you down?

In this session, we’re going to look at the way in which shaping our lives like people we admire can cause more harm than good. Sometimes it’s okay to be just ourselves.

VIEW

**Show Session 3:** You Don’t Need Someone Else’s Habits or Gifts  (9 minutes)

REVIEW

In this session, Larry introduced the idea of “best practices overload.” What, exactly, is best practices overload?

What does it look like in the life of a believer?

What kinds of Christians do you admire? What about their lives is attractive? What would you like to emulate?

Have you ever experienced the problems that Larry described—trying to emulate Christians you admire, but getting overloaded?
Have you ever felt pressure to be like certain Christians? As if they’re the only ones that are doing the Christian life correctly?

Larry highlighted the fact that, though we often may feel like we have to conform to other people’s way of living, we’re just as susceptible to the temptation to think others should do what we do.

Have you ever identified the ways in which God had gifted you to serve His Church? If so, what are they?

Do you like your gifts—the way God’s designed you? What gifts feel more enticing? What about less enticing? Why?

Part of our struggle with either wanting to be someone else, or projecting our gifts on other people comes from a place of dissatisfaction with our lives. We either want what we perceive to be a better part to play in God’s story, or we want to make sure that everyone’s doing what we are.

When you reflect on the core heart-issues that prompt the kind of problems that Larry addressed, what do you think the solution is?

How have you combated the grass-is-greener temptation in the past? What’s helped you succeed? Where have you failed?

If we’re going to grow as the Christians God wants us to be, we need to be willing to be ourselves. It sounds like a Disney cliché, but it’s true—we are different for a reason. God has certain tasks and roles for each of us to fill. Some are flashy, some aren’t.

In this next section, we’re going to look at why it’s important for each of us to do what God’s asked of us, and let others do the same.

**BIBLE EXPLORATION**

We’re going to dive into a portion of Paul’s first letter to the Corinthian church in order to unpack this concept of being who God made us to be.

Read 1 Corinthians 12:12–31.
Having read the passage, what problem do you think Paul’s addressing?

How is it similar to the issue that Larry raised in this session? How is it different?

If we think we’re the first Christians to ever wrestle with gift-envy, we’re fooling ourselves. It’s been an issue since the beginning of the Church, and we have to deal with it the same way.

In the passage, what did Paul say was the source of our unity? (We share the same Holy Spirit, v. 13.)

What’s the metaphor Paul uses to describe that unity? (We’re a body.)

We use the “body of Christ” language often in our conversations about the Church. But the implications of that language go beyond just a strange way to talk about Sunday morning. A body is made up of various parts that are interdependent on each other for survival.

What example does Paul use in verses 14–20 to explain the importance of different parts of the body?

Why would it be foolish to want to play a role in God’s kingdom that we’re not designed to play?

Have you ever experienced a situation where team members don’t play their part? What happened? Why?

Knowing that we all play a unique role in God’s kingdom (the body of Christ) should encourage us to not only be satisfied with what God’s entrusted to us, but also challenge us to do our jobs to the best of our abilities.

In verses 22–25, what does Paul point out about the “weaker” or “less honorable” parts of the body (roles in God’s kingdom)?

How would that impact your perspective of what God has called you to do?
Is there any role that’s insignificant or unimportant? Why or why not?

What risk do we run when we inflict best-practices overload on ourselves, according to Paul? (We suffer, and so the church suffers.)

What would your local church look like if everyone played their part perfectly? What would happen? How would the church appear to outsiders?

What could you do this week to take a step toward maximizing your role in the church?

Consider the following questions:

What do you get excited about doing? What energizes you? What kind of job could you do for hours and never get tired?

What are you good at? What skills, talents, or work comes naturally to you?

What are you not good at? What would you need other people to help you with?

What have other people told you they think you’re gifted in doing? What have others appreciated about you in the past?

Leader: It may be worth taking time to discuss the gifts and talents of your group members. Many people have taken a “spiritual gift” inventory at one point or another in their lives. But those rarely give practical advice on how to actually engage with the local church in their areas of gifting.

First Corinthians 13—the “love chapter”—follows the one we’ve been studying. We hear it read at weddings, but the context for Paul’s long description of love comes from his argument here in chapter 12.

Read 1 Corinthians 13:1–3.
According to these verses, what's the most important thing we need as we participate in God's kingdom? (Love)

What makes loving others in the body of Christ hard?

One of the biggest reasons we face the temptation to “gift project” is to make it easier to like our brothers and sisters. It’s easier to relate to people who live life the way we do.

But according to Paul in this passage, what value are our gifts if we fail to love our brothers and sisters?

Which do you find easier—using your gifts in the church or loving your fellow believers? Why?

What challenges do you face in showing love to your brothers and sisters?

When it comes to the body of Christ, we all have a role to play. We're tempted to do or be what our heroes do and are, but often that can leave us dissatisfied with how God's designed us. Rather than wishing we were someone else (or expecting everyone else to be like us), we’ll find satisfaction in playing the role that God has for us in His church.

**LAST WORD**

Being ourselves is often harder than we think. Yet in the context of God’s kingdom, it’s more than just a cliché. The Church has people of all kinds for a reason—together our differences work to create a healthy body.

It’s easy to watch the success of others and become envious, or to decide that our ways of serving God are the only viable ones. But God has made each of us to be part of something bigger than ourselves, and that makes everything we do an opportunity to serve the Church.

As you look at your own gifts, passions, and desires, consider how you can serve your brothers and sisters.
DEEPER WALK

**Leader:** Encourage your group to pick at least one of the following suggested applications to put into practice this week. You may even invite them to circle the one they choose. Follow up at the beginning of the next session to see how it went.

**Read:** Read Larry’s book *A Contrarian’s Guide to Knowing God*, chapters 13–14 and reflect on how the content might impact your own spiritual walk with God.

**Write:** Take ten minutes this week to sit down and write out two sentences: the first describing what you do well, and the second describing a way you could use that gift to serve God’s people.

**Connect:** Sit down with your pastor or trusted leader and ask them how they see God using you to serve His Church. Then, this week, do that one thing at least once.

**Walk:** Take a walk this week—by yourself or with someone whose company you enjoy. Enjoy being you without the pressures of responsibilities for the moment, and consider what God has equipped you to do.

**Pray:** Take two minutes this week to ask God to open doors for you to serve Him and His people the way He designed you to work best. Then look for those doors to open and step through.
REVIEW

What is best practices overload? What does it look like in the life of a believer?

What kinds of Christians do you admire? What about their lives is attractive? What would you like to emulate?

Have you ever felt pressure to be like certain Christians? As if they’re the only ones that are doing the Christian life correctly?

Have you ever identified the ways in which God had gifted you to serve His Church? If so, what are they?

Do you like your gifts—the way God’s designed you? What gifts feel more enticing? What about less enticing? Why?

How have you combated the grass-is-greener temptation in the past? What’s helped you succeed? Where have you failed?

BIBLE EXPLORATION

1 Corinthians 12:12–31. Having read the passage, what problem do you think Paul’s addressing? How is it similar to the issue that Larry raised in this session? How is it different?

In the passage, what did Paul say was the source of our unity? What example does Paul use in verses 14–20 to explain the importance of different parts of the body?

Why would it be foolish to want to play a role in God’s kingdom that we’re not designed to play?

In verses 22–25, what does Paul point out about the “weaker” or “less honorable” parts of the body (roles in God’s kingdom)? How would that impact your perspective of what God has called you to do?

Is there any role that’s insignificant or unimportant? Why or why not?

What risk do we run when we inflict best-practices overload on ourselves, according to Paul?
Consider the following questions:

What do you get excited about doing? What energizes you? What kind of job could you do for hours and never get tired?

What are you good at? What skills, talents, or work comes naturally to you?

What are you not good at? What would you need other people to help you with?

What have other people told you they think you’re gifted in doing? What have others appreciated about you in the past?

1 Corinthians 13:1–3. According to these verses, what’s the most important thing we need as we participate in God’s kingdom? (Love)

What makes loving others in the body of Christ hard? But according to Paul in this passage, what value are our gifts if we fail to love our brothers and sisters?

DEEPER WALK

Read: Read Larry’s book *A Contrarian’s Guide to Knowing God*, chapters 13–14 and reflect on how the content might impact your own spiritual walk with God.

Write: Take ten minutes this week to sit down and write out two sentences: the first describing what you do well, and the second describing a way you could use that gift to serve God’s people.

Connect: Sit down with your pastor or trusted leader and ask them how they see God using you to serve His Church. Then, this week, do that one thing at least once.

Walk: Take a walk this week—by yourself or with someone whose company you enjoy. Enjoy being you without the pressures of responsibilities for the moment, and consider what God has equipped you to do.

Pray: Take two minutes this week to ask God to open doors for you to serve Him and His people the way He designed you to work best. Then look for those doors to open and step through.
A CONTRARIAN’S GUIDE TO KNOWING GOD
SPIRITUALITY FOR THE REST OF US

SESSION 4:
DON’T LET TOOLS BECOME RULES

Quick Start

Read
Take some time in advance to read and consider the Bible study questions and come up with personal examples to encourage discussion.

Print
Before meeting, make enough copies of this session’s handout for your entire group. The handouts came with your download.

Watch
Make sure everyone can see the screen and the audio is at a comfortable level.

Note: For more detailed information, please see the How to Use The Leader’s Guide document.
Leader: Open the session with prayer. Pass out the Participants’ Handout to everyone in the group. Begin by following up with the Deeper Walk section from session three. What exercise did everyone choose? How did it go?

Have you ever had to balance several responsibilities at once? If we’re anywhere close to adulthood, the answer’s typically “yes.” Have you ever experienced imbalance—when things leaned just a little too far and the whole pile threatened collapse? What did that look like? How’d it feel?

Most of us at some point in our lives have or will experience that moment of panicked sinking-in-above-our-heads. In this session, Larry Osborne’s going to walk us through balance and discipline, and why it’s important to do what’s in front of us.

Show Session 4: Don’t Let Tools Become Rules (10 minutes)

Whether we want to or not, we all have to balance things in life. It’s just the simple nature of adult responsibilities. But we’re also finite. We can’t focus on everything at once. Inevitably that means prioritizing our time so that important responsibilities get attention first.

What does “balance” look like in your life? Do you feel like you’ve allotted your time perfectly? Why or why not?

What did Larry say about balance? Is it achievable?

Have you ever arrived at a point in your life where you felt like all your responsibilities were perfectly balanced? If so, how’d you get there? If not, what stopped you?
Even if we don’t live a fast-paced life and have to scramble from one thing to another, we’ll still have moments in life where certain responsibilities demand more attention than others.

And that’s okay.

**What three questions did Larry ask to help govern how we spend our time?** *(What season is this? What does Jesus want me to do today? Is anything so far out of balance that I’m going to fall over?)*

Larry mentioned several kinds of “seasons” you might find yourself in: parenting, starting a new job or career, transitioning life stages (single to married, parent to empty-nester).  

**How would you describe the season of life you’re in right now?**  
**What’s your primary focus?**

**What other responsibilities or obligations are competing for your time in this particular season of your life?**

**What kinds of things can you do (or have you already done) to make space for the important things in your life?**

**What kind of help could others offer you in stabilizing your priorities?**

Larry highlighted the nature of any “balancing” act—it’s not a matter of finding and maintaining perfect balance. Instead, it’s the very active process of correcting imbalance when it happens.

**How could Larry’s presentation of balance/imbalance change the way you look at your own life priorities?**

In a similar vein, Larry pointed out that we tend to look at the spiritual disciplines as mandatory-to-be-a-good-Christian.

**What spiritual disciplines are you familiar with?** Have any of them been presented to you as optional? Why or why not?

**Leader:** Some of the disciplines your group might mention are: Bible reading, prayer, silence, solitude, fasting, tithing, thanksgiving, worship. It may be worth mentioning that, in the history of the Church, spiritual disciplines have been almost codified into practices that can be helpful to produce spiritual fruit.
What success (if any) have you had with spiritual disciplines? Which ones? What did they accomplish in your life?

What failures (if any) have you experienced with disciplines? Which ones? Why did you feel like they failed?

The spiritual disciplines are tools—they aren’t discipleship, and we don’t become good disciples just by doing a variety of disciplines. You wouldn’t fix a broken pipe under your sink with a jackhammer.

What was the point of the disciplines, according to Larry? (Producing fruit.)

Our American Christian culture has—over the years—placed a premium on certain spiritual disciplines. Things like daily Bible reading or participating in small group Bible studies are a luxury of the wealthy and freedom-enjoying country in which we live. They’re good and great things! But they should never be mistaken for the important reality that we’re still called to grow in Christlikeness. If we’re not growing, maybe it’s time to trade the sledgehammer in for a gardening spade.

BIBLE EXPLORATION

In this Bible Exploration section, we’re going to dive into a rather unusual story about a couple who wanted to look like everyone else, but instead they ended up lying in ways that brought great pain.


In chapter 4, what standard had the church in Jerusalem set? What “discipline” were they participating in? (They were being generous, selling possessions and giving money to the poor among them.)

How do Barnabas’s actions at the end of chapter 4 set up the behavior of Ananais and Sapphira in chapter 5?

What did Ananais and Sapphira do? What did they want to appear to do? (They sold a field like Barnabas, but they only donated part of the funds while making it look like it was the full amount.)
This story feels very strange in the context of Acts. We’ve just read a beautiful description of the Church being the Church—loving Jesus and loving each other. Then we find this sudden one-eighty in a dark direction.

Ananais and Sapphira wanted to appear like they’d done just as Barnabas had done. There was a standard to be met—a discipline to be done. But they saw it as an end in itself.

**What did Peter condemn in their actions?** (That their lie wasn’t fooling God.)

Peter’s response to Ananais surfaced his motivations. The very thing that was a blessing to the church and to Barnabas—selling possessions and providing for God’s people—became a destructive force in Ananais and Sapphira’s life.

**What fruit was evident in Ananais’s and Sapphira’s lives? What did the discipline of generosity fail to accomplish in them? Why?**

**What was the consequence of the Ananais and Sapphira’s hypocritical behavior?** (Death.)

The story of Ananais and Sapphira isn’t intended to scare us into making sure we do everything just so to make sure God doesn’t strike us dead. Rather, it points out the danger of giving into the temptation to do spiritual things just because they appear right.

**Have you ever been tempted to participate in something for appearance’s sake? What was it? Why did you feel the need to do it?**

**What was the result?**

We can easily confuse the fruit of spiritual growth with the thing that caused the fruit. For Ananais and Sapphira, they thought that by doing the giving, they’d earn a place among God’s people. Instead, God’s people were so focused on loving each other, they began to give.
Whenever we treat the disciplines as ends in themselves, we run the risk of hypocrisy. Doing a discipline or trying to find balance because those around us make it look good isn’t reason enough.

Our goal in participating in any discipline—whether it’s focusing our time on important seasons of life or on particular spiritual activities—is healthy growing of fruit. If we ever find ourselves looking less and less like our Savior, we should stop to reevaluate our disciplines.

LAST WORD

For all of us, life feels like some sort of balancing act. Responsibilities—whether we asked for them or not—demand our time and our attention. At the center of our lives, however, lies our new identity in Jesus. We are disciples, growing ever closer to the pattern that our Savior shows us in Himself.

How we organize and live our lives must revolve around that central identity. We’re never going to find perfect balance. But we can ask questions of our lives to keep from falling over. And the disciplines we introduce into the rhythm of our everyday can keep us on track in producing the fruit that Jesus has called us to.

As you look at your own life this week, ask yourself the questions that Larry outlined for us. And then remember that you’re a disciple whose pattern is Jesus.

DEEPER WALK

**Leader:** Encourage your group to pick at least one of the following suggested applications to put into practice this week. You may even invite them to circle the one they choose. Follow up at the beginning of the next session to see how it went.

**Read:** Read Larry’s book *A Contrarian’s Guide to Knowing God*, chapters 15–18. Think through the implications of Larry’s points for how you structure your life.

**Write:** Take ten minutes this week to list off your responsibilities. Then, either by yourself or with help from a family member or friend, organize them according to what needs attention in this moment.

**Connect:** Take time out of your week to connect with someone you’ve missed out on in recent months. Give yourself permission to create the space needed to spend time with that person—talking, fishing, working out, or however you’ll best connect with them.

**Reflect:** Think through your life from morning to evening. What spiritual disciplines would help in the middle of your day? What could challenge you to grow in the fruit your spiritual life produces? Consider trying out a new discipline.

**Pray:** Ask God to help you narrow down your vision of balance to what’s important in this moment now, and to give you the strength to act on that truth.
REVIEW

What does “balance” look like in your life? Do you feel like you’ve allotted your time perfectly? Why or why not?

Have you ever arrived at a point in your life where you felt like all your responsibilities were perfectly balanced? If so, how’d you get there? If not, what stopped you?

How would you describe the season of life you’re in right now? What’s your primary focus?

What other responsibilities or obligations are competing for your time in this particular season of your life?

What kinds of things can you do (or have you already done) to make space for the important things in your life?

What kind of help could others offer you in stabilizing your priorities?

What spiritual disciplines are you familiar with? Have any of them been presented to you as optional? Why or why not?

What success (if any) have you had with spiritual disciplines? Which ones? What did they accomplish in your life?

What failures (if any) have you experienced with disciplines? Which ones? Why did you feel like they failed?

BIBLE EXPLORATION

Acts 4:32–5:11. In chapter 4, what standard had the church in Jerusalem set? What “discipline” were they participating in?

How do Barnabas’s actions at the end of chapter 4 set up the behavior of Ananais and Sapphira in chapter 5?

What fruit was evident in Ananais’s and Sapphira’s lives? What did the discipline of generosity fail to accomplish in them? Why?
What was the consequence of the Ananais and Sapphira's hypocritical behavior?

Have you ever been tempted to participate in something for appearance's sake? What was it? Why did you feel the need to do it?

What was the result?

DEEPER WALK

**Read:** Read Larry’s book *A Contrarian's Guide to Knowing God*, chapters 15–18. Think through the implications of Larry’s points for how you structure your life.

**Write:** Take ten minutes this week to list off your responsibilities. Then, either by yourself or with help from a family member or friend, organize them according to what needs attention in this moment.

**Connect:** Take time out of your week to connect with someone who’ve you’ve missed out on in recent months. Give yourself permission to create the space needed to spend time with that person—talking, fishing, working out, or however you’ll best connect with them.

**Reflect:** Think through your life from morning to evening. What spiritual disciplines would help in the middle of your day? What could challenge you to grow in the fruit your spiritual life produces? Consider trying out a new discipline.

**Pray:** Ask God to help you narrow down your vision of balance to what’s important in this moment now, and to give you the strength to act on that truth.
SESSION 5:

IS IT A SIN TO BE AVERAGE?

Quick Start

Read
Take some time in advance to read and consider the Bible study questions and come up with personal examples to encourage discussion.

Print
Before meeting, make enough copies of this session’s handout for your entire group. The handouts came with your download.

Watch
Make sure everyone can see the screen and the audio is at a comfortable level.

Note: For more detailed information, please see the How to Use The Leader’s Guide document.
IS IT A SIN TO BE AVERAGE?

OPEN

Leader: Open the session with prayer. Pass out the Participants’ Handout to everyone in the group. Begin by following up with the Deeper Walk section from session four. What exercise did everyone choose? How did it go?

What’s the silliest comparison you’ve ever made with someone else? Maybe who had the better shoes, or the longest eyebrow hairs. Why did you feel like that comparison was necessary?

In this final session, we’re going to look at discipleship—what it is and what it isn’t. It’s the same (and different) for all of us.

VIEW

Show Session 5: Is it a Sin to Be Average? (10 minutes)

REVIEW

This series is designed to open the door to a “spirituality for the rest of us.” As humans, it’s easy to fall into the trap of comparison. We aren’t extroverted enough, introverted enough, educated enough, smart enough, or disciplined enough.

Throughout these sessions, Larry has highlighted the value of slow, consistent faithfulness—taking the next step of obedience to Jesus. The one He wants each of us, specifically, to take.

In this session, Larry looked at the difference between discipleship (the job of every believer) and leadership (the job of specific believers).

How did Larry describe the difference? (Discipleship is the next step of obedience, but leadership is a front-of-the-line role with specific qualifications.)

In your experience, how have the concepts of leadership and discipleship been confused?

What have you felt like discipleship entailed? What had to be present for you to feel like you were growing as a disciple of Christ?
We live in a culture that has a very specific view of success—we move to the top, gain power and notoriety and income, and we lead. If you’re stuck somewhere in the middle, you might not be called a failure, but you certainly won’t feel like you’re winning.

**What similarities do you see between our culture’s view of success and the way we often view discipleship?**

**Who would you point to as a successful disciple? Why? What about their life shows their growth in discipleship?**

Think through your experience with believers who weren’t leaders, but still loved Jesus. **What makes them stand out to you? How did you know that they were loving and obeying Jesus?**

It’s easy to end up believing that the best disciples are also the most successful in leadership. After all, our pastors and leaders are all super-Christians, right? When we think that successful leadership equals outstanding discipleship, we run the risk thinking our pastors and leaders are perfect. So, when they have struggles in their own discipleship journey, we think they’ve failed.

**What might change in how we view our Christian leaders if we separate their leadership from their discipleship?**

**What might change in our attitude toward ourselves and others when we see discipleship as taking the next small step of obedience to Jesus?**

Larry made the point that it’s not a sin to be average. We don’t have to be at the front of the line or even moving forward to the front of the line. If we’re following Jesus’s commands in each step of our day, we’re growing up in our discipleship.

**BIBLE EXPLORATION**

Jesus was no stranger to disciples misunderstanding discipleship. Larry alluded to James and John asking if they could have the positions of highest power in Jesus’s kingdom. We’re going to look at a different passage.

Read John 21:1–19.
Set up the context here. **What had happened between Jesus and Peter earlier in the story that led to this moment?**  
(Peter had denied he knew Jesus three times prior to Jesus’s crucifixion.)

**What opportunity is Jesus offering Peter in this section of text?**

Peter was both a disciple and destined to be a leader among Jesus’s followers. But he had failed in a colossal way. Jesus came to him in compassion and offered him a chance to begin again.

**What step of obedience was Jesus calling Peter into?** (Caring for Jesus’s followers.)

**What did that step of obedience declare?** (That Peter loved Jesus.)

Discipleship is fundamentally obedience that stems from our love for Jesus. He’s saved us, called us into life, and offered us the hope of immortality. In light of that, He asks that we obey His commands. Those commands are general for all of us—what Larry called God’s house rules. But they’re also specific to each of us (Peter’s own special calling).

Read John 21:20–22.

**In light of our discussion about discipleship, what jumps out to you about Peter’s question to Jesus in verse 21?**

**How does Jesus respond?**

Even among the first of the disciples, they still struggled with the “what about him” question. Jesus answer then was, “It doesn’t matter. You follow Me.” And that’s still His answer today.

**What small act of obedience is in front of you today? What other non-essential aspects of discipleship stand between you and that act of obedience?**
What has to change in your view of discipleship in light of this discussion?

Are you being called to leadership in the church? If so, what can you do to protect your discipleship journey from getting confused with your leadership growth?

Discipleship is simple—follow Jesus. Everyone else in the church from the preachers to the janitors exists to make discipleship happen. When we miss that, when we focus on those things that aren’t actually discipleship, we get frustrated.

We need to hear Jesus say, “What does it matter? You follow Me.”

LAST WORD

This series is meant to set you free—to strip away all of the clichés and the assumptions we make about the Christian life and leave you with the simple call of “follow Me.” From spiritual disciplines to the role we play at church, none of it is necessarily bad or wrong. We just get it confused with the important things more often than not.

What changed for you in your view of your relationship with God through this series?

What can you do this week to put those changes into practice? How can this group help you?

We serve a God Who loves us and wants to have a thriving relationship with us. In light of that, we’re free to live the way He designed us—staying within the house rules. Grow in your relationship with Him. Take the next step of obedience. Follow Jesus.

That’s spirituality for all of us.
DEEPER WALK

**Leader:** Encourage your group to pick at least one of the following suggested applications to put into practice this week. You may even invite them to circle the one they choose.

**Read:** Read Larry’s book *A Contrarian’s Guide to Knowing God*, chapter 21–22. In light of everything we’ve looked at in this series, consider what it means for you to keep God at the center of your life.

**Write:** Take five minutes to think, and then write out on a small piece of paper what you believe your next small step of obedience is. Then put that note where you’ll see it every day.

**Connect:** Find someone in your church or family that you see as growing in their discipleship (not leadership) role. Ask if they’d be willing to talk to you about how they approach their everyday discipleship.

**Share:** Take two minutes this week to share one thing you’ve learned from this series (or a point that’s impacted your life) with someone else.

**Pray:** Thank God for His gracious gift of life, the promise of the resurrection, and the things He has and will continue to do in your life.
REVIEW

In your experience, how have the concepts of leadership and discipleship been confused?

What similarities do you see between our culture’s view of success and the way we often view discipleship?

Who would you point to as a successful disciple? Why? What about their life shows their growth in discipleship?

What might change in how we view our Christian leaders if we separate their leadership from their discipleship?

What might change in our attitude toward ourselves and others when we see discipleship as taking the next small step of obedience to Jesus?

BIBLE EXPLORATION

**John 21:1–19.** What had happened between Jesus and Peter earlier in the story that led to this moment?

What opportunity is Jesus offering Peter in this section of text?

What step of obedience was Jesus calling Peter into?

What did that step of obedience declare?

**John 21:20–22.** In light of our discussion about discipleship, what jumps out to you about Peter’s question to Jesus in verse 21?
How does Jesus respond?

What small act of obedience is in front of you today? What other non-essential aspects of discipleship stand between you and that act of obedience?

What has to change in your view of discipleship in light of this discussion?

**DEEPER WALK**

**Read:** Read Larry’s book *A Contrarian’s Guide to Knowing God*, chapter 21–22. In light of everything we’ve looked at in this series, consider what it means for you to keep God at the center of your life.

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**Pray:** Thank God for His gracious gift of life, the promise of the resurrection, and the things He has and will continue to do in your life.