

All this is for your benefit, so that the grace that is **reaching** more and more people may cause thanksgiving to overflow to the glory of God.

- 2 CORINTHIANS 4:15

REACH DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

As we engage in these devotionals, we encourage you to reach for God's Word and to commit 10 – 15 minutes each day in quiet time with the Lord. The pages that follow provide three daily devotionals a week for five weeks. We encourage you to use the other days of each week for prayer, solitude, worship or any other spiritual discipline that you would like to practice.

WORSHIP NOTES WEEK ONE

VISION

SERMON NOTES | JOURNAL | ACTION STEPS

Attend worship each week and use this book to journal your own thoughts, ideas and prayers taken from the weekly sermon message. Use the lined sections as your own space, or create action steps to help you grow and develop your unique role in our ministry during the REACH campaign and beyond.

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WEEK ONE | LIGHT THE WAY DAY ONE

READ 2 CORINTHIANS 4:5-12

Over 2,000 years ago, the darkness of the night was 1. What do you think is the "treasure" in verse 7? pierced by angels shining with the glory of the Lord all around them as they heralded the arrival of our savior, Christ the Lord. Love came down, and the light of the world lit up the darkness. Not just on that night, but on every night to come. As Christ's body, the Church gets the blessing of shining the light of Christ into every corner of the world so that all people might know God's glory. With each act of love and obedience done in the name of Jesus, the light gets a little brighter.

But sometimes it feels like the darkness is getting darker too. As the verse says, we can be afflicted, perplexed and persecuted. While we might not undergo the physical persecution that some of our brothers and sisters in Christ endure around the world, we live in a society that often rejects the light of Christ and ridicules those who carry that light.

We light the way by relying on the strength and power of the Holy Spirit.

Take heart, friends, for even though we are but earthen vessels, we have the power and strength of the Holy Spirit. We have the promise of Jesus that He will be with us always. We know that because of Jesus, we are more than conquerors.

This week, let's consider how we might light the way by pointing others to the One who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life of Jesus Christ.

2. When have you felt the strength and power of the Holy Spirit at work in you?
3. Spiritual disciplines can be a wonderful way to stay connected to God and grow in relationship with Him. These include prayer, studying and meditating on God's

time in nature. What are some ways that you stay

connected to God on a daily basis?

LET US PRAY

Dear God, thank You that when we are weak, You are strong. Help us to give ourselves over for Jesus' sake so that His light can shine through our earthen vessels. Give us fortitude during the next five weeks to engage in these devotionals as a means of listening for Your wisdom and guidance. Show us. Lord. how to best reach into the darkness with the light of Christ. May we light up the darkness with Your love, grace and hope. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

Notes:	

DAY TWO

READ DEUTERONOMY 6:4-9

Today's verses teach us that God's Word is to be a part of all that we do on a daily basis. Israelite parents would teach these verses, known as the *Shema*, to their children. In fact, these were the first verses the children would learn and recite every night before going to sleep. When we do something often enough, we are able to do it almost automatically. Elite athletes and musicians practice over and over again so when the day of competition or performance arrives, they operate from muscle memory and nerves and stress don't inhibit their ability to act. Likewise, God's Word should be at the forefront of our minds and thoughts in such a way that it becomes a natural, integral part of who we are as people and as the Church.

Often children are quicker to learn and remember something than adults. Their minds are sponges, soaking in all that they see and hear. Jesus said, "Let the little children come to Me and do not hinder them" (Matthew 19:14). Part of our job as the Church is to teach the younger generations about God so that when times of trouble or stress come, they operate out of a deeply ingrained knowledge of God's Word. In essence, God's Word is to be what molds and shapes them as they grow. That duty of teaching children about God belongs to all of us, whether we have children living in our home or not.

We light the way by passing on our faith to future generations.

The truth is that children are one of the greatest blessings for a church. They embrace faith with a purity and sense of joy that Jesus Himself heralded. One Christian author notes that if you ask a little child to pray for rain, you better bring an umbrella!

love God	ling to these verses, how are we supposed to ?
2. How do mind eac	o you keep God's Word at the forefront of your h day?
like little (told His disciples that they needed to become children if they hoped to enter the Kingdom of
Heaven (I	Matthew 18:3). What do you think He meant by ment?

LET US PRAY

Heavenly Father, thank You for the gift of your Word, which is a lamp for our feet. Give us a longing for it so that it becomes a part of who we are as Your children. Remind us of the joy we find in following Jesus, who is the Word made flesh. Like children, help us to express that joy without restraint. May your Word be written on our hearts so that it becomes the truth that guides us as we share Your Word with others. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

Notes:			

DAY THREE

READ MATTHEW 5:14-16

When God parted the waters of the Red Sea and delivered His people from the bonds of slavery in Egypt, He did not do so simply for the sake of bringing them out of the darkness. God freed the Israelites so that He might bring them into His presence to live amongst them and that they might go forth and bring His light to all the nations. God brings us out of darkness so that He can bring us into His light.

Therefore, when we enter into the light of Christ repenting of our sins and embracing God's grace and mercy, we too are called to bring God's light to others In order to do that, we have to follow Jesus and rely or the strength of the Holy Spirit. We have to pass our faith on to the generations that come after us and we have to go out into the world. We have to take the risk of letting our light shine before men rather than hiding away the light for ourselves.

We light the way by letting our light shine into the darkness of the world.

At the heart of God is a deep and unending reservoir of love. Jesus Himself said God is patient, wanting all people to come to Him (2 Peter 3:9). Thus, we have to be patient too, willing to reach out to all people and to love all neighbors as ourselves. We have to be willing to invite people into our church family.

The mission statement of our church is this: Reach People for Jesus Christ, Disciple Them in Faith, Help Those in Need. As we live into that statement, we become a light shining into the darkness.

1. Why do you think Jesus said, "YOU are the light of the world?"
2. How have you been the light of Christ to others in your family and community?
3. Where have you experienced the light of Christ at The Woodlands UMC?

4. When have you taken a risky leap of faith by showing

the light of Christ to others?

LET US PRAY

God in Heaven, thank You for the indescribable blessing of being called and equipped to share Your light with others as the Church. Help us to not take that calling for granted, nor to keep the light hidden away for ourselves. Lord, give us boldness and faith to let Your light shine brightly in and through us in our thoughts, words and actions. May the brightness of our light increase as we reach out to others with the love of Christ. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

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WORSHIP NOTES WEEK TWO

JESUS CHRIST

SERMON NOTES | JOURNAL | ACTION STEPS

Our mission statement begins with the phrase "reach" people for Jesus Christ. So this week, we will look at the ways in which Jesus called people to follow Him. How did Jesus "reach" people for Himself?

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WEEK TWO | REACH PEOPLE FOR JESUS CHRIST DAY ONE

READ MATTHEW 4:18-22

When Jesus comes calling, the most ordinary of days can become the most extraordinary. God's grace has a way of interrupting the mundane details of life, and we find that we are forever changed by the encounter.

For Simon Peter, Andrew, James and John, the day that Jesus called them started off as just that — an ordinary day. They were fishermen, preparing to catch fish, when the greatest fisherman of all cast His net in their direction. But unlike the fish, these men had a choice: to give up their livelihood and follow Jesus or to stay in familiar territory. Knowing how their story ends, we can read over these verses and miss the significance of the moment when these men left everything behind because of Jesus' call. Notice the common theme of both calls — the men responded right away. There was no hesitation. They dropped what they were doing and left the security of their nets and boats behind. They went "all in" for Jesus.

We reach people for Jesus Christ by meeting them where they are.

But also notice that Jesus met with them where they were. He didn't sit in the synagogue and wait for His disciples to discern that they needed to follow Him. Jesus met these men in their natural environment amongst the familiar, routine elements of ordinary life. Friends, that is the amazing grace of God. He pursues us. John Wesley called this prevenient grace — God's grace wooing us to Himself. Jesus meets us where we are, in the midst of our sin and brokenness, and He says, "Come. follow Me."

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whether the more spector to reach	on a mome nat call was th ific call to an a n out with Chri hat were you o	e initial call area of minis st's love to	to follow Hin stry, to fulfill a	n, or a need,
their past They had t to go "all in	w Jesus meant vocations bel to go "all in." W n" now? What ever you are a	hind and o Vhere might is keeping y	ften family as God be callir ou from gett	s well. ng you
4 Who in	your life need	ds to overs	rianca Gad's	

mercy and love? Write their names down. How can you

meet them where they are?

LET US PRAY

Heavenly Father, thank You for sending your Son, Jesus, to enter into the world and meet us where we are, and to make a way for us to follow Him back to You. Thank You that Your love and grace makes the ordinary ... extraordinary. Give us hearts that long for You. Give us the courage to "go all in" as we follow the feet of Jesus and the courage to become "fishers" of men and women. May we be obedient to Your call. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

WEEK TWO | REACH PEOPLE FOR JESUS CHRIST DAY TWO

READ JOHN 4:7-29, 39-42

When Jesus met the Samaritan woman at the well, she was going about the ordinary, daily business of drawing water. That particular moment became an extraordinary one that changed her life and the lives of many of the people in her village. Even though we presume that she was avoiding the people of her town by drawing her water from the well during the heat of midday when most people did not venture out, after she met Jesus she did not hesitate to run and tell those same people about her encounter. Not only does Jesus call us to follow Him, He calls us to join in the extraordinary blessing of sharing His Good News with others.

When we share our stories — our testimonies — from a place of authentic joy and thanksgiving, we invite others to get to know Jesus for themselves. Some of the other Samaritans believed in Jesus because the woman told them about her encounter. But, more significantly, her story was the spark that ignited their desire to know Jesus for themselves. The Bible tells us that they invited Jesus to stay with them and many more became believers.

The Bible also tells us to be prepared to give an answer, with gentleness and respect, for the hope that we display to others (1 Peter 3:15). If we are following Jesus, our walk should look different from the rest of the world. The way we live becomes its own testimony, inviting others to walk alongside us and eventually to follow Jesus of their own accord. But the way we live becomes an invitation for others to ask us about our hope, our joy and our love. Our answer can be as simple as saying, "I do it all because of the grace of God," or it can be a story that we tell over coffee. Whatever our story is and wherever we are called to tell it, let's be ready.

2. According to verse 29, what did the Samaritan woman say to the others in her town? 3. Have you ever shared your story or testimony with another person? What was the result? 4. If someone asked you why you have hope, what answer would you give that person?	1. In verses 13 and 14, what does Jesus say He is of the woman?	fering
3. Have you ever shared your story or testimony with another person? What was the result? 4. If someone asked you why you have hope, what		
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another person? What was the result? 4. If someone asked you why you have hope, what		
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5. What are some ways you can live out your faith on a daily basis?		n on a

LET US PRAY:

Dear God, thank You for the living water that Jesus offers to all of us. Help us to drink deeply from this water so that we can live in a way that brings You glory. Give us courage to share our testimony through conversations and moments of shared grace with other people. May we live out our hope in such a way that others are drawn to your love, mercy and grace. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

Notes:

Jesus told His disciples that the greatest commandment and support others.

WEEK TWO | REACH PEOPLE FOR JESUS CHRIST DAY THREE

READ LUKE 19:1-10

The story of Zacchaeus has some familiar echoes to the other two passages we have read this week. Like the disciples and the woman at the well, Jesus met Zacchaeus where he was (literally up in a tree), and Zacchaeus' response was immediate. However, in this story. Zacchaeus is looking for Jesus: straining to see a glimpse of Him as he passes by, unaware that Jesus is heading straight for his tree. Sometimes we think we are the ones searching for God. What joy we feel when we realize that God has been pursuing us all along.

Zacchaeus' response reveals the transformative power of Jesus' call. Just as the disciples were willing to leave everything, and the Samaritan woman was willing to go and tell her good news, Zacchaeus was transformed from a person who took to a person who gave ... generously. In proclaiming that he would give back four times the amount of money he gained by misusing his position in the community, Zacchaeus was going over and above what was expected.

Zacchaeus didn't earn his salvation because he was willing to give away his money; he received his salvation because he believed in Jesus. His willingness to give was evidence of the transformation that took place within his heart when he invited Jesus into his home. A heart that has been transformed by the power of Jesus Christ is a heart that is willing to give one's time, talents, money and resources generously.

is to love God and the second greatest is to love our neighbor as ourselves. We demonstrate our love by giving of ourselves to strengthen, empower, comfort

1. According to verse 10, what has the Son of Man com to earth to do?
2. How do you give of your time, talents, money an resources to others?
3. When have you given above and beyond what wa expected? What was the result?
4. Where can you step out of your comfort zone an give extravagantly?

LET US PRAY

God in Heaven, thank You for the indescribable blessing of being called and equipped to share Your light with others as the Church. Help us to not take that calling for granted, nor to keep the light hidden away for ourselves. Lord, give us boldness and faith to let Your light shine brightly in and through us in our thoughts, words and actions. May the brightness of our light increase as we reach out to others with the love of Christ. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

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WORSHIP NOTES WEEK THREE

DISCIPLE

SERMON NOTES | JOURNAL | ACTION STEPS

After we "reach" people for Jesus Christ, we then "disciple" them in faith. This week we will explore this second component of our mission statement as we look at examples of discipleship from the early church. How did the first followers of Jesus disciple one another?

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WEEK THREE | DISCIPLE THEM IN FAITH **DAY ONE**

READ ACTS 2:42-47

The early church understood the importance of community. Branded as suspicious by the Roman government and heretical by the Jewish leaders, the church needed to band together as a family to resist the temptation to give up their faith amidst temptation, trials and persecution. This week we will study three passages from the Book of Acts, which records the earliest efforts at discipleship, aided by the power of the Holy Spirit.

In today's passage, we read that the early believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teachings. The Greek word for devoted, proskartereo, means to "continue steadfastly," to "give one's self continually" or "to persevere and not faint." This wasn't a once-a-week commitment — it was a continual, daily activity. Once we answer the call to follow Jesus, we have to keep following Him. As we walk in His footsteps, He continues to transform and refine us, making us into disciples. Take note, friends, discipleship is a process meant to be shared in community. How can we be transformed unless we are demonstrating that transformation as we live life alongside other people? We all know that people can be wonderful at times and at other times, people can be ... not so wonderful. Jesus calls us to love all of those people, and we learn how to do that by the grace of God and through experience.

The result of the discipleship of the early believers in community was that the Lord increased their number on a daily basis. Growth occurs when the Holy Spirit is on the move and when we allow the Spirit to work in and through us. We are more effective at serving Jesus as we learn what it means to follow Him and we allow the Spirit to knit us together into a community.

1. To what four activities did the community of believers devote themselves?
2. How has being a part of a church community impacted your own walk with Jesus?
3. What are some of the discipleship opportunities at the church in which you currently participate? How have these strengthened your faith?
4. What new opportunity would you like to try?

LET US PRAY

Dear God, thank You for giving us the Church, the body of Christ. What a blessing to be able to join together in community as we grow in faith. As we reflect on the discipleship opportunities available to us, give us guidance and wisdom as to where You are calling us to get plugged in to the life of the church. May we be people who show our devotion to Christ by devoting ourselves in love to one another. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

Notes:

WEEK THREE | DISCIPLE THEM IN FAITH DAY TWO

READ ACTS 6:1-7

The joy of discipleship within a church community is that no one person is responsible for meeting every single need. Some of us really need to hear that message! We don't have to say yes to everything. Even the twelve disciples, who were full of the Holy Spirit and capable of performing miracles in Jesus' name, learned the importance of delegation. Specifically, they needed help doing tasks that they weren't necessarily gifted to do, so that they could fulfill the tasks to which God had called them. As we learn more about God and how to serve Him, including identifying our spiritual gifts, we can be more effective in ministry as a church. The end result is that the body of Christ grows because of the powerful, prayerful witness of the combined gifts of the Church.

The Apostle Paul had a lot to say about this topic. In 1 Corinthians 12, he wrote that all spiritual gifts are given by the Spirit for the good of all. No one gift is better than another. Likewise, to be most effective, our gifts need to be used in tandem to share the power of God with others. But most important of all, our gifts have to come from a place of love. Paul followed his discussion on spiritual gifts with a word about love in 1 Corinthians giving, leadership, serving, teaching)? 13. Simply put, our spiritual gifts are not worth anything unless they come from the fruitfulness of God's love manifested in our own hearts.

Discipleship enables us to love God more fully as we learn more about Him and draw closer to Him. Discipleship also helps us to experiment, trying different ministries and serving in different ways as the Holy Spirit reveals and hones the gifts that God has given to us. This is how we use our gifts to share God's love with others.

We disciple people in faith by giving them opportunities to use their spiritual gifts.

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men who	were	chosen	to	care	for	the	widows	of	the
communit	y?								

- 2. Have you ever thought about what gifts God has given you? Can you name a gift or two that you know you have (for example: gift of hospitality, encouragement,
- 3. How have you used your gifts?

LET US PRAY

Heavenly Father, thank You for giving us spiritual gifts to use in tandem with other believers as we meet the needs of our community. Lord, please give us knowledge and an awareness of our specific gifts as You challenge us to step outside of our comfort zones and use those gifts to bring You glory. Help us to hone our gifts for the benefit of building up the body of Christ. May we be people who use our gifts out of love for You and one another, so that our gifts bear much fruit for the sake of Your Kingdom. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

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WEEK THREE DISCIPLE THEM IN FAITH **DAY THREE**

READ ACTS 18:1-3, 23-28

The growth of the early church was, and is, exponential. The seeds of faith spread from the apostles in Jerusalem r to the corners of the world in ever-widening circles. Paul met Aquila and Priscilla in Corinth. After spending considerable time with them there, they all journeyed to Ephesus where Priscilla and Aquila remained to disciple those believers. One of those people was Apollos, who journeyed to Achaia where he helped disciple other believers after learning at the feet of Priscilla and Aquila.

The body of Christ continues to grow through the process of discipleship because God uses us as the vehicles through which the Spirit spreads the Good News of Jesus Christ. The global Church radiates into every corner of the world via the power of the Holy Spirit. Like a grassroots organization, churches grow as they develop leadership from within their community.

Although we might think of leadership as a character trait — something we are born with, leadership needs to be developed and taught as well. In the Church, we have the best example of leadership in Jesus Christ, who led from a place of humility and service. Jesus washed the feet of His disciples, teaching them that they should do the same for one another. In this way, we lead by serving and loving one another with the realization that we are all children of God. But just as we need to try out different areas of service to discover our spiritual gifts, we need to embrace all the leadership roles in our lives and allow God to grow our leadership skills.

You might be thinking, "But I'm not a leader!" We tend to think of leadership as something attached to fairly visible positions of authority like politicians, businessmen and women, clergy and leaders in education. The truth is, we are all called to leadership, whether at home or at work. We are called to be leaders as we "lead" others to Christ and disciple one another in the faith.

How many towns and geographic areas were nentioned in these verses? How many people were nentioned as serving or teaching?
Who do you think has been an effective leader (past or present)? Why?
. What does it mean to be a servant leader?
Where do you have opportunities to be a leader? Where is God calling you into additional leadership oles?

LET US PRAY

Heavenly Father, thank You for giving us the best example of leadership in the life and ministry of Your Son, Jesus. As we follow in His footsteps, empower and strengthen us to be effective leaders who contribute to the growth of the Church. As we lead, may we remember to do so with the hearts of servants, who think of others before themselves. Show each of us where we are in a leadership position and help us to embrace Your call to lead others to Jesus. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

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WORSHIP NOTES WEEK FOUR

HELP THOSE IN NEED

SERMON NOTES | JOURNAL | ACTION STEPS

This week we will look at the final portion of our mission statement, helping people in need. As the body of Christ, how can we be most effective in reaching out to others?

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WEEK FOUR | HELP THOSE IN NEED DAY ONE

READ ISAIAH 58:9-12

Today's verse encapsulates so much of what we have discussed during the first three weeks of this devotional series. If we help those in need, our light shines and we raise up the foundations of future generations as we reach people for Jesus Christ and disciple them in faith. Helping others is how we live out our faith and our love for God.

In the Revised Standard Version of the Bible, Isaiah 58:10 reads, "if you pour yourselves out for the hungry." Remember on day one when we read in Matthew that we are earthen vessels that enable God's glory to shine through us because we have to rely on His strength? The word "pour" reminds us of that idea. We are vessels. pouring out the love, gifts and resources God has given us for the sake of filling up the vessels of others. In return, Isaiah tells us that God Himself will satisfy our needs, strengthen us and make us a spring whose waters never fail. The more we pour ourselves out for the sake of others, the more effective we become because we make room for God to work in and through us as He refills our cup with His living water. That is quite a promise!

In many ways, these verses contradict the teachings of our society, which emphasizes meeting one's own needs, finding one's own path to happiness and working hard for one's own benefit. God calls us to give ourselves away, to pour ourselves out, trusting that He will provide for us in return. That doesn't mean we don't put up boundaries or that we say yes to every single opportunity that comes our way. What it means is that we stay connected to God, seek His will, and when He calls us to pour ourselves out, we get busy!

1. According to verse 10, what happens when we focus on helping others?
2. How have other people helped you in a time of need?
3. When have you been able to help someone in need? Were you operating out of God's strength or your own? What was the result?
4. What boundaries can you put in place to make sure that you don't exhaust yourself as you pour yourself out for others?

LET US PRAY

Dear God, thank You that when we pour ourselves out on Your behalf. You refill our cups with Your strength, love, grace and mercy. Thank You, Lord, that You bless us so that we can bless others in return. As we seek out ways to pour ourselves out for those in need, help us to maintain boundaries of rest and renewal and to operate out of Your strength rather than our own. May we be people whose cups overflow into the lives of all those we encounter. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

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WEEK FOUR | HELP THOSE IN NEED DAY TWO

READ MATTHEW 25:34-40

It is all too easy to pass by the least and the lost of this world without even seeing them. Rather than seeing their humanity, we only see the need, which often isn't pretty. There isn't much beauty to be found in prison, on the street corner, or in the sterile confines of a hospital room. It takes courage to move into the forgotten places of this world and allow God to open our eyes to the pain and heartache that surrounds us. Sometimes, it might seem easier to simply keep our eyes closed and move right on by.

We help those in need by seeing each other's humanity.

But today we read that Jesus is found in those places and with those people whose needs can seem overwhelming. Jesus told us that He didn't come to save the righteous, but to save the sick. He came to bring love and hope to those who have forgotten what love and hope look like. Jesus invites us to join Him in the midst of people's needs, to allow Him to break our hearts for the things that break His heart so that we see past those needs and into the heart of the people.

Friends, love and hope looks like you and me — the Church — reaching out in love to help those who can't help themselves. Love looks like having the courage to allow God to open our eyes and move our hearts and see every single human being as a person whom God loves and adores. Love looks like stepping into uncomfortable places and reaching out as the hands, feet and voice of the body of Christ.

1. What are the different situations of need described in this passage?	that are
2. What needs stir your heart with love and com	passion?
3. Have you ever participated in a local or globa project or trip? How did you feel before that exp How did God grow your faith through the expe	erience?
4. How can you boldly reach out with the love o	of Christ?

LET US PRAY

Notes:

Heavenly Father, help us to see those in need through Your eyes. Break our hearts for what breaks Yours, God, and equip us to move into those places of need and serve as Your hands, feet and voice. Give us the courage to step into the brokenness of the world with the faith that You, God, move mountains. May we be people who love all people with the love given to us through Christ. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

WEEK FOUR | HELP THOSE IN NEED DAY THREE

READ 1 JOHN 3:16-24

We know that Jesus Christ loves us because He laid down His life for us; so we are called to lay down our lives for one another. The concept sounds familiar doesn't it? Isaiah said something similar when he called us to pour ourselves out for one another. We learned from Jesus' calling of the disciples that we need to go "all in" for Jesus, but it seems we need to go "all in" for one another as well.

Does this seem difficult or downright impossible? The only way we can possibly love one another as God loves us is by first abiding in God's love. John says it in the reverse when he questions how the love of God could abide in anyone who doesn't have pity on a brother or sister in need. Jesus talked about this concept himself in John 15, telling us that unless we abide in Him, we will not bear fruit. Apart from Jesus, we can do nothing. With Jesus, we can be earthen vessels who are never emptied even though we continually pour ourselves out for others.

And so it seems we have circled back around to where we began this devotional — whatever we do, we have to do it through the strength and power of the Holy Spirit. Whether we are reaching people for Jesus Christ, discipling them in faith, or helping those in need, we have to first make sure we are abiding in Christ so that we can love God and others with all that we have to give.

This is the collective call of the Church. Jesus stands at the altar and says, "Come, follow Me. Follow Me when you are scared and when you are confident, when you have sorrow and when you have joy, when you are in the valley and on top of the mountain." If we stay close to Jesus, if we abide in His love together as a church, we will be blessed beyond measure as we extend our blessings to those who need them the most.

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LET US PRAY

Heavenly Father. Thank You for the gift of the Holy Spirit who gives us assurance that we are abiding in Jesus even as He abides within us. Help us to focus daily on abiding in Your love so we can love others well. As we meet the physical needs of our community. may we reach their spiritual needs as well by pointing them to Jesus Christ. As we extend our hospitality, may we open the doors wide and invite people to participate in the life of this church. As we grow, may it be a fruitful growth that brings glory to You and increases the power of Your Kingdom. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

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WORSHIP NOTES WEEK FIVE

REACH FOR WHAT MATTERS

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WEEK FIVE | REACH FOR WHAT MATTERS DAY ONE

READ PROVERBS 3:3-6

When is a building project about so much more 1. How are we called to action in verses 5 and 6? than plaster, wood, nails and concrete? When we are building for the Kingdom of God. We are called to build relationships, to build up the body of Christ and to build up individual people as we encourage them to grow closer to God. Sometimes that means building literal buildings, increasing classrooms and making more room within our walls so we can continue to invite people into the family of faith and meet their physical 2. and spiritual needs.

It takes trust, obedience and a willingness to submit ourselves to God's call to build up His Kingdom. We can't do it out of our own strength. Proverbs tells us that love and faithfulness should never leave us and so we are to trust in God and lean on Him. We are to embrace the challenges that lie ahead and keep our eyes focused 3 on what matters — reaching people for Jesus Christ, sto discipling them in faith and helping those in need.

We reach for what matters by reaching out in love.

We keep on building the Kingdom because of love. We keep on building the Kingdom with the love of God that abides in us in order to extend that love to others. We keep on building the Kingdom because it matters to God. He longs for all of His children to come home. It is because of His love that God sent His only Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ, to make it possible for every last person on earth to have the chance to find their way back to the heart of God. And so for the sake of God's love, we pour out ourselves for others. For the sake of God's love, we reach out into the darkness without fear For the sake of God's love, we never stop reaching out in love. We make room within our hearts and within our walls.

What matters most to you?
What fears or discomforts might you have about epping out of your comfort zone and reaching out to hers in love?
How have you reached out to someone with the love Christ? What was the result?

LET US PRAY

Dear God, thank You that You have blessed us with resources to use in building Your Kingdom. Help us not to take these for granted and to use them in a way that allows us to make room for more people within our walls and hearts. Help us to trust You and submit to You with all our hearts. May Your love and faithfulness be with us always. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

Notes:	

WEEK FIVE | REACH FOR WHAT MATTERS DAY TWO

READ MICAH 6:8

As the body of Christ, the Church is called to walk in obedience to God's Word. We are to live in such a way that the world takes notice and God's name is glorified, and we accomplish that by residing in the world but abiding in God. In order to align our hearts with God's heart and reach for what matters, we have to be obedient.

Today's verse tells us that God requires us to act justly, love mercy and walk in humility. All the things we have talked about in the last five weeks fall into this requirement. Jesus is our example of how to do this well. As Methodists we believe that God's grace moves us towards perfection in Christian love. John Wesley called this sanctifying grace. This doesn't mean we are so perfect that we are incapable of sinning, it means that we believe God's power and strength can make our love for one another perfect ... holy. To get to that point, we walk in obedience and we strive to stay connected to God through Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit.

We reach for what matters by reaching out in obedience.

That's where the Church becomes such a gift in the life of a believer. We are to keep each other accountable and encourage one another as we follow after Christ. We are to bear one another's burdens and share in one another's joy and pain.

Our walk of faith will not be complete until we reach home and enter into God's presence in heaven. Until then, we should be seeking God, following after the footsteps of Jesus and going where He leads us, with obedience.

1. How are you obeying God's call and following Jesus?
2. Practically speaking, what would it look like to act justly, love mercy and walk in humility?
3. Pray and consider where God is calling our church to join Him in growing His Kingdom. What did the Spirit reveal to you? How can you be a part of that call?

LET US PRAY

Notes:

God in heaven, although we are finite beings and You are an infinite God, You have called us to make Your glory known to those who do not know You yet. What a remarkable blessing and privilege. Thank You. As we walk through life, show us how to seek justice, love mercy and walk humbly after Jesus. Encourage and strengthen us, convict and correct us, and guide us into perfect love and unity as the body of Christ. May we love one another with Your extravagant love. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

We reach for what matters by reaching out in thanksgiving.

Our passage begins with Paul reiterating that we speak because we believe. By faith we accept God's grace and mercy offered through Jesus, we trust Jesus as we follow Him back to the heart of God, and we reach out to others speaking God's truth because we know it to be true. We tell others about God's love because we know what that love feels like. We help people through the dark valleys, the bright mountaintops and every place in between because we are grateful for Jesus who leads the way and is The Way. We give with gratitude and thanksgiving out of the overflow of our gratitude and thanksgiving for God.

WEEK FIVE	REACH FOR WHAT MATTERS
DAY TH	REE

READ 2 CORINTHIANS 4:13-18

Being thankful matters. An attitude of gratitude can give us a more godly perspective on just about any situation. We have to be mindful that not only are we called to meet the needs of those around us in love, but for the ultimate purpose of causing thanksgiving to rise up and bring glory to God. We reach out to others in love and obedience, but also because we are thankful for what God has done and is doing in our lives. We are thankful that regardless of our circumstances, we can keep on moving forward without losing heart because we know that eternity awaits us. Eternity with God singing His praises in everlasting joy and peace. Ultimately, we are reaching out with things of this world — resources, time and people — for the purpose of reaching into eternity.

1. What are you most thankful for in your life?
2. What about The Woodlands UMC makes you thankfu
3. How can you demonstrate your thankfulness to others

4. Write a prayer thanking God for everything He has

LET US PRAY

Heavenly Father, as we have reflected and prayed for the specific ways You have worked in and through us in our personal lives, let us thank You for the powerful work You have done. are doing and will do through The Woodlands United Methodist Church. As we reach into the future, help us to listen to Your voice, follow Your call and give our resources with grateful generosity. Show us how we can continue to bring You glory as Your church as we reach people for Christ. disciple them in faith and help those in need. May we always remember to thank You and to live in a way that demonstrates our gratitude to You, God. May You continue to bless our church so that we can use those blessings to bless others. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

