

# MISSING

A Group Guide to Sharing Your Faith



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**MISSING**

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WEEK 1

*Missing*

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LUKE 15:1-32

**Main Idea**

Jesus used the word “lost” to emphasize the responsibility and necessity of believers to invite and welcome people who are apart from Christ into fellowship with Him. He calls us to be a search party for those who are missing.

**Introduction**

**In our culture we tend to see a difference when a person who is lost moves from being simply lost to being recognized as a “missing person.” What are some of the differences we might notice?**

**In your experience, have many followers of Christ dreaded telling others about His love for them? Why or why not?**

**For what reasons might people who do not know Christ resent the idea that Christians want to “fix” them?**

**How would you describe your relationship with people who are unchurched (i.e. distant—I don’t usually get involved with unbelievers; normal—I engage in those relationships the same way I would with anyone else; awkward—I want to have gospel conversations but am not sure how, etc.)?**

## MISSING

Oftentimes, our failures to share the gospel and our awkwardness in beginning those conversations are a result of misunderstanding. We think we don't know what to say or that we won't be understood. We're pretty sure people need to know Jesus, but we don't want to offend them by insinuating they're wrong and we're right. Understanding what Jesus meant when He used the word "lost" can help us relate to others in ways that demonstrate respect and naturally open gospel conversations. When Jesus used the word "lost," there was no hint of superiority; rather, His emphasis was on finding what was missing.

### Understanding

→ Ask a volunteer to read **Luke 15:1-10**.

Jesus gave the example of a shepherd with a flock of 100 sheep. Somehow, one sheep wandered from the flock and could not find its way back. Jesus described the sheep as "lost" from the flock, a word that implied a life-threatening situation for a sheep. The safety of the many did not remove the shepherd's concern for the missing one. He went looking for the lost sheep.

In the second parable, verses 8-10, Jesus gave another perspective, hoping His hearers would understand the idea. A woman had saved her small wages and gathered ten silver coins, her wages for ten days. When she lost one coin, she faced the same dilemma as the shepherd: should she spend time and energy searching for the one when she still had nine? Jesus taught that one coin was worth the effort.

**How did Jesus' parable of the sheep relate to the complaining of the Pharisees?**

**What are the similarities between the two parables in Luke 15:3-10?**

**In these parables, where did responsibility lie? Why?**

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**Do you think of yourself as being responsible for other people who do not know or follow Jesus? Why or why not?**

Both of these parables pointed to the finder's joy. Jesus said there is more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than the many—the 99—who don't need repentance. No one is so lost as those who fail to see their lostness. Jesus pointed out the need for His followers to diligently and intentionally pursue those who are without Christ and celebrate when people make Jesus Lord of their lives.

**Who is someone you long (or have longed) to see make Jesus Lord of his or her life? Who is someone you know but rarely give thought or prayer to whether or not they are walking with the Lord? Why do you think differently about these two people?**

**Do you think your view of evangelism would change if you considered every person who does not trust and follow Jesus not only as lost but also missing?**

→ Ask a volunteer to read Luke 15:3-32.

**What was the son saying about how he valued his father? Why do you think the father gave his son what he asked for?**

The son's request for his inheritance was like telling his father, "I wish you were dead." Inheritance comes when someone passes away; therefore, the son implied that he thought his father was worth more to him dead than alive. The father would have been heartbroken by the request, but he let the son have his wish and leave. Much like we do today, the son made idols out of the things his father could give instead of loving his father.

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**In your spiritual journey, what do you identify as your time in a “far country”? Where are you right now in your spiritual journey? How should remembering that you also were once lost impact your attitude about evangelism?**

**What did the son do to gain the affection of his father?**

**Why did the father respond the way he did? What does this teach us about God?**

Forgiveness is our greatest need and God’s greatest provision. It is God’s joy to welcome us. The prodigal reminds us of how gracious God has been to all forgiven sinners. Regardless of the depth of sin, every Christian is a product of amazing grace.

**How did the father offer grace to the older son as well? What does this teach us about God?**

The older son was jealous of the younger. The older son had been faithful to his father while his brother ran off, but his little brother was the one being honored. The older son wanted the gifts of the father as well and felt he deserved them. Grace, though, is not about deserving; by definition it is impossible to deserve. Grace is about trusting and receiving.

Self-righteousness is dangerous, and, if allowed to run its course, will eventually convince us that we don’t need God. The elder brother is the poster child for self-righteousness. We need to constantly examine our attitudes, for an elder-brother attitude can develop in each of us. Struggling against becoming self-righteous is a constant battle.



## **MISSING**

**With whom do you identify in the story: those who celebrated and welcomed the son, or the uncaring older brother who chose to stand at a distance? Why?**

**Look at the Adopt 7 card. Which of the seven steps listed on the card do you find illustrated in Luke 15?**

### **Application**

**Who in your life is “missing” from God’s family?**

**Pray for the names of seven people that you can include in your Adopt 7 list. Take some time in your group to begin to fill out your Adopt 7 list.**

**How does viewing them as “missing” change the way you relate to them?**

Complete your Adopt 7 list by the next time we meet.

### **Prayer**

Praise God for the grace He has given us. Thank God that He graciously gives what we cannot earn or work for. Ask God to continually remind you of His love and grace, so that you may begin to see other people like He does—missing and worth finding.

## *Luke 15:3-32*

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**15:3-6.** As a shepherd, you care for 100 sheep. One night, one lone sheep wanders from the fold. What do you do? You leave the 99 to fend for themselves in the relative safety of the open field and begin an immediate search-and-rescue mission for the lost sheep. Having found the sheep, you gather all your friends and neighbors and share the good news with them.

**15:7.** That is what heaven is like. Ninety-nine self-righteous people who keep all the rituals, festivals, and rules bring no joy to heaven. One sinner confessing his sin and repenting sets off celebration. God is concerned about the lost who admit they are lost and turn back to Him. He wants people to put the sinful life behind them and follow Him. Pharisees never do this, because they never realize they are lost. They always count themselves among the saved, even though they have never repented of their sins.

**15:8-10.** Jesus gave another parable, hoping His hearers would get the idea. A woman had saved her small wages and gathered ten silver coins, her wages for ten days. Tragedy struck. She lost one coin. To search for a lost coin indoors required lighting a lamp since very few homes had windows. This search also required sweeping the house, because the floor was dirt. Jesus repeated the message of verse 7. Joy in the presence of God's angels speaks of God's joy over a repenting sinner.

**15:11-12.** Jesus turned to the family setting for this parable to illustrate why He associated with sinners. A younger son demanded his share of the estate and got it. We don't know why he wanted it or why the father so quickly gave it to him. The younger brother's portion was only a third of the estate if the entire estate were divided. By law, the older brother got a double portion (Deut. 21:17). Although this well-known parable (vv. 11-32) is usually called the parable of the prodigal son, the other son and the father are also important characters.

**15:13-16.** The younger son did not plan to return to his family. It is impossible to know whether his foolish living included "prostitutes" (v. 30), or if that was just an angry accusation made by the older brother. The irony of the younger son's new job was that pigs were unclean animals to Jews. He was at rock bottom in his new life.

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**15:17-19.** It took extreme poverty and hunger to bring the younger son to return and become one of his father's hired hands. The younger brother came to his senses: the day laborers on his dad's farm had enough to eat. The sinful younger brother had forfeited his position as son. He had no more claims on his father, so he applied for a new job—day laborer. Humans have the capacity to change. We do not have to remain in the pigpen. We do not have to continue to live as sinners. We can become responsible for our lives. We can come home.

**15:20-23.** Focus shifts from son to father. That the father saw his son coming from a long way off indicates that he habitually looked for his return. Perhaps the normal parental reaction to the younger son's return would be anger or at least deep disappointment, but this father's response displayed: (1) compassion, (2) love (threw his arms around his neck and kissed him), (3) celebration (a feast), and (4) joyful restoration of status for his son (a robe of distinction, signet ring of family authority, sandals worn by a son, in contrast to barefoot slaves).

**15:24.** At this point the parable ties to the two previous stories about God's joy in saving the lost. The father's celebration shows the way God the Father receives repentant sinners. How could the father act like this? Did he not know what the son had done? Of course, but the son had been given up for dead. The lost sheep is back. Certainly a lost-and-found son is worth much more than a coin or a sheep. What a picture of the Father in heaven.

**15:25-30.** Instead of the story ending on a note of joy and celebration, as might be expected, the spotlight shifts to the older brother. Unlike the father's positive attitude, the older brother (1) was surprised at the return of his sinning brother, (2) was offended and jealous at the father's celebration, (3) became angry at the father's forgiving love, (4) declared his own self-righteousness, and (5) focused on his brother's sinfulness rather than his newfound repentance. Jesus' representation of the religious leaders in the character of the older brother was a scathing rebuke of their self-righteousness.

**15:31-32.** The rebuke of the religious leaders continues. They did not understand (1) the opportunity for a close relationship with God, (2) the generosity of His grace, (3) His joy at the salvation of sinners, or (4) the profound transformation of conversion.

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WEEK 2

*Ordinary*

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PHILIPPIANS 2:5-8; JOHN 13:35; 15:10-11; 1 TIMOTHY 2:1-4

**Main Idea**

Being yourself is the best method of sharing Jesus with those who He misses most.

**Introduction**

**Were there any relationships this week that you saw and related to differently as you thought about people who are missing? Explain.**

**Were you able to identify seven people who are missing and in need of Jesus?**

**What steps did you intentionally take in relationships this week? What steps are you working toward in the days ahead?**

**Think about the people who have influenced you the most in following Christ. What have they done or not done and said or not said that contributed to the effectiveness with which they have led you?**

## MISSING

When we think about evangelism, we tend to put pressure on ourselves to say and do all the right things. The result is that we often feel paralyzed and end up doing nothing! This week's lesson is about learning to let yourself off the hook and trust that as you are faithful, God does the extraordinary work of drawing people to Himself. You don't have to be an expert apologist to share the gospel. The truth is that God wants to use you, even in your most ordinary moments, to share Jesus with the people He longs for.

### **Understanding**

→ Ask a volunteer to read Philippians 2:5-8.

**What do we learn about Jesus from Paul's description of Him?**

**Why do you think it was necessary for the extraordinary Jesus to become so ordinary?**

**Though culture often views humility as a weakness, in what ways did Jesus' humility convey and require strength?**

**Choose a step on the Adopt 7 card you want to put into practice in a relationship this week. What would it look like for you to carry it out with the attitude Jesus had?**

As we learned in this week's message, Jesus was extraordinarily ordinary! It wasn't only his birth, family, career as a carpenter, and economic status that made Him so. He also exhibited what some might consider an ordinary attitude as He related to people with humility, gentleness, and compassion. In short, He put the needs of other people first. Paul specifically pointed to Christ's love for others and His obedient service to God as examples for his Philippian friends.

## MISSING

We can easily make evangelism complicated and unnatural. But Jesus' example was uncomplicated and completely natural. He humbly shared the gospel with everyone He encountered. As we live by the Spirit, we can be like this as well.

→ Ask a volunteer to read **John 13:35** and **John 15:10-11**.

**These two verses aren't about evangelism directly, but how do they relate?**

**What if you don't feel joyful? Should you just not share the gospel on those days? Explain.**

**What are some steps we can take to recover the joy of our salvation when it has somehow faded?**

Joy is contagious! When people see genuine joy in the lives of those who follow Christ, they will become curious about it. In order to be joyful about our salvation and not take it for granted, it is helpful to look for God at work in the ordinary moments of each day and then thank Him for it. As we acknowledge His love for us, we extend it to others naturally through the joy that accompanies close fellowship with Him.

**What does authentic joy look like and not look like? What about authentic love?**

In this week's message we were encouraged to, "Like Jesus, give people an experience of love in reality, not a speech about it. When people experience our attention, love and genuine interest in them, they begin to feel differently."

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**Look at the Praying for Adopt 7 Training Outline at the back of this book. What steps do you find listed that point to realness and authenticity? Explain.**

→ Ask a volunteer to read 1 Timothy 2:1-4.

**What insight do these verses give us into the connection between prayer and evangelism?**

**Do you tend to think of prayer as important part of evangelism? Why or why not?**

**How do these verses echo the truth that God uses ordinary people and things in extraordinary ways?**

**According to verse 4, why is God pleased by your prayers for those who are missing from God's family?**

Paul directly connected evangelism with pleasing God. Prayer for the lost pleases God because God desires everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. As we learned in this week's sermon, praying for others who may not know Jesus counts as evangelism!



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### **Application**

**What hangups keep you from believing that being yourself is the best method of sharing Jesus with those who are missing?**

**What are some ordinary moments you experience in daily life that God might be wanting to use as a springboard for drawing others to Him? What is your responsibility in that process?**

**How does this lesson help you better understand why praying for others is number 2 on the Adopt 7 card? Who are you praying will be open to the gospel as you have ordinary opportunities to be real with them about your faith?**

**How can this group help you move past your hangups so that you can joyfully and authentically share the gospel?**

### **Prayer**

Use the Praying for Adopt 7 Training Outline “Tips for Praying in LifeGroups” to help guide your prayer time together. Consider incorporating today’s scripture passages about love and joy (John 13:35 and John 15:10-11) as you pray in unity, sincerity, and faith for God to use the ordinary people in your group in extraordinary ways to share the gospel with those who are missing.

Commentary

## *Philippians 2:1-11*

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**2:1-11.** Paul built his challenge for unity on the reality of Christ within each believer. The phrase encouragement in Christ refers to encouragement that comes from Christian commitment. That Christ lived in the Philippians' hearts was indeed a great blessing for them. The term comfort from love refers to Christ's love for them. Believers are the eternal recipients of God's tender affection not because they deserve love, but because it is God's nature to love. The participation in the Spirit emphasizes the shared nature of the Christian life. The presence of the Holy Spirit makes possible the proper functioning of the body of Christ. With the expression affection and sympathy, Paul pointed to the mercies the Lord had given the believers at Philippi. The Holy Spirit provided rich fellowship among them (v. 1).

In verse 2 Paul shifted from the spiritual blessings the believers enjoyed together to their responsibility to him. The Philippian believers had a heartfelt concern for Paul. He planted the church at Philippi. They watched as he invested his life in their lives. Now he called them to continue what they started.

In contrast to his positive instructions, Paul also detailed for the Philippians what attitudes to avoid in pursuing unity. The word nothing (v. 3) emphasized Paul's conviction that rivalry or conceit should not taint any aspect of the church's life. The term rivalry implies a selfish ambition that causes disputes and divisions. The sense is that the problems facing the Philippians caused members to choose sides. Paul saw schisms in the church as contrary to the testimony of Christ and dishonoring to God's name. Also the word conceit describes what is vainglorious or groundless pride. The cornerstone of Christian faith is that humans are powerless to save themselves and must trust Christ to provide all that is necessary for salvation. Thus the believer has no basis for arrogance toward others. Furthermore, arrogance strikes at the heart of Christian unity, spoiling the testimony of the faithful.

To avoid such a destructive mind-set, Paul directed the believers to consider fellow Christians and their needs as more important than their own interests and concerns (v. 4). The church's antidote for selfishness and divisions is an abiding concern for the welfare of others. Paul called the believers to take careful note of the concerns others hold. Such willing consideration of others erases the gaps between individuals and builds a strong unity.

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The apostle then gave the Philippians a vivid illustration of the perspective he intended them to have. He showed them Christ. Verses 5 through 8 paint a poignant picture of the humility Christ revealed in His incarnation and His substitutionary death. Paul urged them to exchange their selfish motives for the Savior's attitude. While Christ has all cause for glorying, being God Himself, He willingly surrendered Himself for the needs of others. The Son of God did not seek His own advantage, that is, He refused to ignore others' needs. The passage states that Jesus Christ made himself nothing. The result was that the Savior set aside His glory to minister grace and mercy to those who are most undeserving of such blessings. Assuming the form of a slave, the Lord placed Himself under the authority of His Father. The focus of the Son was to please the Father, and in doing so He sacrificed Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death—even to death on a cross.

## *John 13:34-35; 15:10-11*

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**13:34-35.** Jesus invited His followers to embrace His love and to express His love through their interactions with each other. His commandment to them was not new in the sense that it was different in substance. Rather, it was new in application—one's neighbor was anybody. It also was new in its model—Jesus' self-sacrificing love, especially displayed later on the cross. In an encounter with a scribe, Jesus summarized the commandments in the Mosaic law (Mark 12:28-31). Stated in two Old Testament passages (Lev. 19:18; Deut. 6:4-5), the Mosaic commandments directed believers to love God wholeheartedly and to love one's neighbor as one's self.

As Jesus prepared His disciples for their future in His body, the church, He yearned for them to experience the new commandment in their relationships. He had corrected their earlier ambitions over position and greatness by His own humble service of washing their feet. As Judas left the Passover supper the disciples were eating with Jesus, He focused attention on their covenant commitments to one another. Three times in two verses, Jesus repeated the essence of His teaching. To love one another was the supreme means of identification for His disciples.

The kind of love Jesus commanded the disciples to give was not merely the brotherly love of human fellowship. Even unbelievers related to others on that level of love. Jesus wanted His followers to experience and to express God's love. Each of the four occurrences of the Greek word translated "love" and "loved" in

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John 13:34-35 uses a Greek word meaning God's kind of love. This love seeks the good of another rather than benefit for self. It sacrifices without condition and serves without motive of personal gain.

The source of such love is the Lord Himself. Jesus knew human nature does not love sacrificially and unconditionally as God loves. He reminded the eleven disciples of the way He loved them. The words Just as meant they were to love one another in the same way and to the same degree He loved them. Their only hope for success in loving this way lay in their relationship with Him. As they were channels, receiving and passing on Christ's love, they could fulfill His intention for their lives.

The object of the disciples' love was one another. Jesus certainly was not excusing the disciples from loving other people who were not His disciples. He was not suggesting they form an exclusive club in which they loved each other but not those outside their group. Rather, Jesus was setting a new standard for love among believers.

The disciples' purpose in showing godly love was to witness for Jesus. According to Him, only the disciples' love for one another showed the world they were His disciples. Only by love would they endure together and impact their world.

Jesus calls Christians to love one another, as He said, "Just as I have loved you." We who have received Christ's sacrificial love are to extend that same love to others. His love transforms our hearts so we cannot help but love. If we fail to love, we should examine ourselves to see if His love truly resides in our lives (1 John 4:7-8).

Love among believers provides the foundational testimony to the lost. Unbelievers may criticize Christians, but many do have high expectations of those who claim Christ's name. They look for holy lifestyles among believers and love in their relationships with one another. Weak love among believers results in weak witness to nonbelievers. Worse, when Christians argue and fight with one another, lost people use their bickering as an excuse to reject Christ. The world judges our love for God by the love we have for one another.

Christians should love one another to glorify God. Just as children's behavior reflects on parents' character, even so our love paints a portrait of our Heavenly Father. Just as you are glad when people comment on the good behavior and loving attitudes of your children, so our Heavenly Father rejoices to see His children living in harmony and love.

**15:10-11.** Obedience is not all gloom and doom; rather, it's a source of joy. The OT prophets envisioned a period of great end-time rejoicing (Isa 25:9; 35:10; 51:3; 61:10; 66:10; Zech 9:9).

# 1 Timothy 2:1-4

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**2:1.** Paul didn't write 1 Timothy as an exhaustive treatise on church organization. Instead, he wrote to give Timothy confidence to face those who spread false doctrine and undercut the church's commission to evangelize. Therefore, Paul's first line of defense was prayer. In this verse, the apostle mentioned four different words for prayer. Petitions included requests individuals made of God. The term prayers was the most general word. Intercessions included prayers for other believers. The thanksgivings Paul mentioned probably included gratitude for God's blessings. The apostle may not have intended any sharp distinction among the four terms. The use of all four terms emphasizes the importance of prayer in overcoming the false teaching in Ephesus and in winning the lost to Christ. The subject of these prayers included everyone—indicating the breadth of Paul's concern.

**2:2.** Paul encouraged Timothy to pray for governmental authorities who could help provide an environment conducive to evangelism.

**2:3.** A quiet life of dignity and godliness pleases God. God is also pleased when believers express concern for the salvation of others.

**2:4.** Paul directly connected evangelism with pleasing God in this verse. Prayer for the lost pleases God because God wants everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. The false teachers promoted lies, but Paul encouraged Timothy to pray that those lies would be exposed. "Come to the knowledge of the truth" is a way of referring to being converted. "The truth" is often used in 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus as a synonym for the gospel.

The Greek word translated "saved" can convey various meanings, including "to deliver, preserve, protect, heal," and "make whole." In the context of 1 Timothy 2:4 the word refers specifically to conversion, to the transformation that occurs when a person accepts Jesus Christ as Savior. Paul understood salvation in the believer's experience as embracing the past, present, and future. The initial moment of salvation, occurring when an individual accepts Christ as Savior, is sometimes referred to as justification. At that moment a believer enters into an eternally secure relationship of peace with God. Salvation, however, also continues in a process called sanctification or becoming more like Christ. The believer is enabled to progress toward spiritual maturity through the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. Ultimately the believer's salvation will culminate in a future glorification, or deliverance from the power of sin. Such is the final blessed and abiding state of the redeemed with Christ. These various aspects of salvation motivated Paul to share the gospel with unbelievers.

**MISSING**

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WEEK 3

*Freedom*

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MATTHEW 10:26-31; EPHESIANS 6:11-18

**Main Idea**

God's Word helps us overcome the obstacles that hinder us from being Christ's witness in the world.

**Introduction**

**What ordinary opportunities did God give you to participate in His extraordinary kingdom purposes this week?**

**What steps from Adopt 7 did you intentionally take in relationships this week? What steps are you working toward in the days ahead?**

**Has fear ever hindered you from being Christ's witness in the world?**

**Explain.**

We know that Christ came to set us free, but most of us also understand there are some areas we still feel like we don't have the freedom to fully follow His commands, especially when it comes to evangelism. We know we should pray, serve, and share, yet often we hold back...or feel like something or someone else holds us back. Last week we talked about the importance of being real—in today's session, that's exactly what we're going to do. As we seek to pray, serve, and share effectively, it's imperative that we recognize and acknowledge the obstacles that keep us from being Christ's witnesses in the world.

## **Understanding**

→ Ask a volunteer to read Matthew 10:26-31.

**What specific promises do you find in this passage for the disciple?  
Which one is most encouraging to you right now? Why?**

**What is most difficult for you about Jesus' teaching in this passage?**

**What kinds of circumstances might cause fear in the life of a disciple in today's culture?**

**Does this passage mean nothing bad will happen to those who serve Christ? If not, what does it mean?**

The implication for the disciple in these verses is twofold. First, we owe a higher allegiance to God because of our desire to obey Him, an allegiance that can help us overcome our fear of sharing the gospel and living for Him. Second, because God is more powerful, we can trust Him to care for us in our work. Hardship and struggles are guarantees for the disciple of Christ. The world rejected Him when He was on earth, and it continues to reject His message today. But in these verses Jesus encourages us that in spite of all the bad things we may endure, not instead of, we are His and can rest secure in that truth.

**In this week's message, numerous fears about evangelism were addressed—how others respond to us, failure, people seeing right through us, not having the right answers, having character flaws, not being gifted at sharing the gospel, being embarrassed, speaking to strangers, getting tongue tied and saying the wrong things, and being corrupted by unbelievers. Of those fears, which one resonates with you the most? Why?**



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**How can God's knowledge of you and your life help you not live in fear of that specific thing?**

Jesus' "Do not be afraid" has multiple implications. We should not fear slander, because harm to our reputation will be set right when the truth comes to light. We should not fear bodily harm, because harm to the body—even death—is enduring and insignificant compared to the value of the eternal soul. In fact, we have nothing to fear because our Father places such high value on us.

**In what specific ways does God's knowledge of everything comfort and assure you?**

**Is God's vast knowledge unsettling to you in any way? Why or why not?**

Jesus compared God's knowledge of the sparrows with His knowledge of you, a person created in His image. A penny is 1/16th of a day's wage. As inexpensive as two sparrows are, God knows when one of them falls to the ground. How much more, then, does He know each need and struggle we face? We all bear God's image and are the focus of His redemptive love. That is a tremendously encouraging thought. God is in the details of our lives.

→ **Ask a volunteer to read Ephesians 6:11-18.**

**Why is it so easy to underestimate our spiritual enemies? Why is that something we must never do?**

**In regard to evangelism, how have you become more aware that our battle is not against flesh and blood?**

## MISSING

Scripture does not go into a lot of detail about the dynamics of spiritual warfare, but it clearly indicates that spiritual warfare is very real and that believers need to be ready to do battle with Satan and his demons on a daily basis. Satan considers the mind of the believer to be territory he can use and control, even though it belongs to God. Thus, the battle for the mind is never over in this life.

**What must a believer do to be strengthened by the Lord? How would you face each day differently if you recognized you were always under attack?**

**Why is it a struggle to keep our spiritual armor on at all times? How does knowing that the battle has already been won affect the way you pray, serve, and share?**

**Considering the steps on the Adopt 7 card, identify some practical ways you can put on truth, righteousness, and peace. How do these offer us freedom from fear and Satan's influence, and freedom to love like Jesus?**

Victory in spiritual warfare demands strength that is greater than the enemy, meaning it must come from God, not ourselves. The specific reason given for needing such armor is so that we can stand against the tactics of the Devil. Paul called on believers to become stronger through the Lord's strength.

In their culture, the Ephesians would have been familiar with armor, as the Roman guards were visible all over the empire. Paul used a familiar sight as an analogy for the Christian life and the battle we must all fight. When we accepted Christ, we joined an army of Christian soldiers. We can trust that we haven't been sent unprepared to share with those who are missing. God has given us everything we need, but we must choose to utilize the things He's supplied to keep us safe.

**Look at the Praying for Adopt 7 Training Guide at the end of this book. Which of the tips for effective prayer relate to Paul's instructions in Ephesians 6? What other steps do you find that relate to Paul's words about arming ourselves for battle? Explain.**

## **MISSING**

**In contrast to Satan's influence, we learned in this week's sermon that God's Word gives us the freedom to love like Jesus, who would look at people through God's eyes, communicate with people, ask questions, listen, explore people's needs, be himself, allow God to work through Him, and be intentional but patient about guiding people toward faith. Which of those do you struggle to do? Why?**

### **Application**

**Where are you struggling most right now as it relates to your Adopt 7?**

**As a group, how can we help each other overcome the obstacles that keep us from being Christ's witnesses in the world?**

**How might our church be different if every one of us would seek to find Christ's freedom to pray, serve, and share? Our community?**

**Take a look at your Adopt 7 list. What is one way that we as a group can be praying for you as you seek to take a step towards sharing the Gospel with at least one person in your group?**

### **Prayer**

Thank God that He gives us the courage and strength we need to overcome the obstacles that keep us from being His witnesses in the world. Ask Him for new opportunities and relationships where we can, in faith, fearlessly step into His call to go and make disciples so that those who are missing would be found.

Commentary

## *Matthew 10:26-31*

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**10:26-27.** Part of the fear of persecution is that the truth of the injustice may never become known, and justice may never be served. But Jesus encouraged the Twelve not to fear injustice from the persecutors. Ultimately, any concealed truth will break into the open. In fact, he exhorted his disciples to be instrumental in making the truth known (10:27), that justice might be done.

**10:28-31.** Another fear related to persecution is the fear of bodily harm and death. But Jesus helped his disciples to shift their focus. He told them, in essence, “Do not worry about your body. It is expendable. Concern yourself, instead, with the condition of your soul-life, which is eternal, and which, if invested rightly now, returns great reward” (16:24-27). A believer who adopts this perspective will not be afraid of those who can kill the body but will fear God’ the Lord who has authority as judge to condemn the soul and the body to eternal destruction in hell. This healthy fear of God will cause a person to live by obedience, respecting the authority and power of the judge (Prov. 1:7).

To the stark truth of 10:28, Jesus added the comforting grace of 10:29-31, assuring the believer that the judge is also the Father, who values his children greatly and will always protect their souls.

Using a line of reasoning converse of that in 10:24-25, Jesus argued that because the Father cares what happens to the lesser (an insignificant sparrow), he will care much more deeply for the greater (a person made in his image—especially one who claims him as Father). The price of sparrows used in sacrifices (10:29), two for an assarion (the smallest copper coin), is intended to emphasize the insignificance of the bird; while the numbering of one’s hairs (10:30) by the Father emphasizes how much the Father values and cares for his child.

## *Ephesians 6:11-18*

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**6:11-12.** The full armor of God is required not only because we are weak but also because our spiritual enemies are strong. Our strongest adversary is the devil. We should never doubt that the devil is a real, supernatural person. He opposes God and His people with tactics, a term suggesting how wily he is. The believer's responsibility, once clad in God-given armor, is to stand. We need not flee the devil, but rather we are to boldly hold the fortress of our own souls. We do not face a physical army (flesh and blood, human beings). We face a spiritual army. Paul listed some of these evil beings. Evidently there is a hierarchy of evil spirit-beings in hostile opposition to God and His people.

**6:13.** For the second time, the apostle urged believers to use the full armor of God—the complete kit of spiritual equipment. God the heavenly Warrior-King wears such armor (Isa. 59:17). He has now shared it with His people. In this verse, the verb “take up” is parallel to “put on” in verse 11. Both verbs suggest intentional action. “To resist in the evil day” means during the days until Christ's return as the conquering King.

**6:14-15.** Paul likened the three pieces of equipment Roman soldiers put on at the beginning of a day to God-given character traits we believers are to build daily into our lives.

“Belt.” This wide leather strap kept a Roman soldier's undergarments from getting tangled and also held his sword at the side of his body. By application, the belt stands for truth. Many Bible students believe this refers to a Christian's sincerity or integrity of speech. For believers to lapse into intrigue or dishonesty is to fall into the devil's own game.

“Armor on your chest.” The metal breastplate was standard for a battle soldier; it protected his vital organs during combat. For the believer, it stands for righteousness. Since Paul had Isaiah 59:17 in mind, he meant uprightness of character (godliness or Christlikeness). To neglect developing our character according to God's standard of virtue is to give the devil a gaping hole through which he may attack us.

## MISSING

“Feet sandaled.” The Roman soldier’s hobnailed (cleated) shoes kept his feet from slipping. In the analogy, it stands for a Christian’s readiness for the gospel of peace. The meaning is probably the steadiness that comes to us because we have received the good news of Christ. Without assurance that we have peace with God through the gospel, the devil will gain a great advantage, throwing us into doubts of all kinds.

**6:16-17.** Paul went on to speak about three more pieces of equipment. Understanding these pieces shows us actions we can take when we face spiritual battles.

“Shield.” The Roman shield Paul had in mind was probably a long, oblong leather-covered device that covered much of the body during active battle. It was effective at dousing flaming arrows. In the analogy, this stands for a believer’s faith—active day-to-day trust in God to provide the strength to resist onslaughts that the evil one sends. Faith looks to the power of God when there is temptation.

“Helmet.” The soldier’s metal headgear provided both protection and decoration. Paul had written to the Thessalonians to put on “a helmet of the hope of salvation” (1 Thess. 5:8). So what is the salvation Paul had in mind? Probably he meant our hope or expectation of future deliverance when we receive full salvation at last. Confidence that we will be with Christ forever and that we will enjoy a future resurrection with Him provides believers strength to endure all devilish assaults.

“Sword.” The Roman short sword was used for both defense and offense. It was efficient in hand-to-hand combat. It stands for God’s Word. On the one hand, this refers to the entirety of the Scriptures, which has been inspired by the Spirit and is His gift to God’s people. On the other hand, it refers to the specific biblical message that is apt for the need at hand. (Ps. 119:11; Heb. 4:12).

**6:18.** Four times in this verse Paul used Greek forms for “all” or “every.”

- “All kinds of prayer.” There is more than one way to talk to God. Here, the apostle used both a general term (prayer) and a specific term (request).
- “All times of prayer.” There is no wrong time to pray! Morning prayers, mealtime prayers, bedtime prayers, and battle-time prayers are all acceptable. Yet they are to be motivated by the Spirit, not just become a ritual or something perfunctory. Believers are to stay alert in prayer.
- “All perseverance in prayer.” Prayer is to be continual. Jesus Himself made this clear in the parable of the persistent widow (Luke 18:1-8).
- “All objects of prayer.” Believers should pray for each other—all the saints—knowing that they are also experiencing spiritual warfare in their own lives.

WEEK 4

*Sharing Your Story and  
Sharing God's Story*

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ROMANS 10:14

**Main Idea**

God calls each of us to glorify Him by taking the gospel to the “missing people” in our lives.

**Introduction**

In today's session, we are going to practice telling two stories – our story and God's story. Today's LifeGroup will be a little different than most. We're going to take some time to write out our faith stories and then practice sharing the gospel.

**Writing Your Faith Story:**

If you are a follower of Jesus, you have a Faith Story. A Faith Story tells how God has worked in your life. Your Faith Story is a great opportunity to tell people the difference that Jesus Christ has made in you. Chances are there is something about how God has worked in your life that will connect with others.

Your Faith Story should clearly tell the story of how you became a follower of Jesus Christ and what God is doing in your life now. Remember, disciples are people who are following Jesus, being changed by Jesus, and living on mission for Jesus. When we live this way, our story continually has chapters added to it. Each chapter can be used by God to bless others.

## MISSING

Here are some guidelines to assist you in preparing and sharing your Faith Story:

**PRAYER:** Begin with prayer, asking God to help you in this process.

**CONTENT:** Be clear about how you became a follower of Jesus and what God has done in your life.

1. Be authentic – be you!
2. What was your story before you met Jesus? What motivated you? What did you worry about? What were you living for? Who were your influences? What were you feeling? What did you believe? etc.
3. How did you meet Jesus? Was it a moment? Was it a season of life? Were you introduced by a friend? Family member? Stranger? Event? What was it like to experience forgiveness, healing, hope, etc.?
4. How is your life different now because of Jesus? How have your priorities changed? Do you treat people differently? Have you experienced a new type of hope? Be real. Where do you still struggle? How has God made you new?
5. Remember this is your Faith Story, not your life story!
6. Remember that you are not teaching a lesson. You are telling your story.

**WRITE IT OUT:** On the next page, see if you can get your Faith Story down to 350-400 words. Then, write a longer version. You'll be amazed when you look back at how God has worked in you. You have a Faith Story that matters to God and can be used in the lives of others.

Take about 10-15 minutes on your own, and write out your faith story. Then, we'll break into groups of 2-3 people where we can take turns sharing our faith stories.





## MISSING

***Break into groups of 2-3 people. Each person should take turns sharing their faith story.***

**How did it feel to write out your faith story?**

**What did God reveal to you about yourself and what did He reveal to you about Himself as you wrote your story?**

**How were you blessed by hearing the stories of those in your group?**

After God gives us the opportunity to share our faith story, it's important to ask our friends if they would like to know how they can have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

## **Understanding**

→ Ask a volunteer to read Romans 10:14.

**What does this verse reveal to us about the importance of being ready to share the gospel?**

We've learned in this series that there are lots of forces fighting against the advancement of the Gospel. Sometimes it's our own fear, sometimes it's Satan's schemes, but regardless of what it is, we know that when we present the Gospel, God is right there with us. Trust the Holy Spirit to guide you as you share the hope of the gospel.

Here is one method for sharing the Gospel that Wooddale has used over the years. Some people call it the bridge illustration.

## MISSING

### The Bridge Illustration

We believe that God of the universe wants to connect with us. In fact, the Bible tells us that in the very beginning God was perfectly connected with humans in the Garden of Eden. He created it that way because He loves us and created us to be in relationship with Him.

However, we were separated from God when we chose to disobey God and chose to do things our way—we sinned. We sin by disobeying God and rejecting His will for our lives. The Bible says that we have all sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23) and that the penalty for sin is death (Romans 6:23). In other words, sin disconnects us from a real relationship with God.

**Write “ME” on left side, “GOD” on right side, and “SIN” vertically in the chasm.**



No matter what we try by our own effort, we can't get across this chasm to reconnect with God because He is perfect and Holy and we're not. Some people spend their whole lives trying to reach God by their own efforts through seeking to live a morally good life, being generous with their money, or doing good deeds for God...but the reality is that no effort of our own can ever resolve the problem of our sin. On our own, we are without hope.

## MISSING

BUT, Because God loves us so much, He sent his own Son, Jesus, to be the bridge which connects us back into a right relationship with Him. John 3:16 says: For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life (NIV). Jesus died for our sins upon the cross— dying the death we deserved and rising from death to offer us new life with Him. 2 Corinthians 5:21 says: “For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ” (NLT). 1 Peter 2:24 tells us that this was accomplished on the cross: “He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed” (NIV).

***Draw a cross in the middle of the chasm, going around the word “sin” at the bottom. Write Jesus across the bridge. The first S in Jesus’ name covers the S in “sin”.***

Many bridges have a name like the “Brooklyn Bridge” or the “Stone Arch Bridge.” The Bible tells us that this bridge that God built is called “Grace.” Listen to this: “8 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— 9 not by works, so that no one can boast.” (Ephesians 2:8-9, NIV) That means you simply must believe and receive Jesus as your way to connect with God.

If you never have done that before, or if you’re not sure you ever have, you can do that today by simply telling God through prayer that you’re choosing His pathway to connect.

Ask your friend if they would to pray to receive Christ as their Savior.

### ***Lead salvation prayer:***

*Dear Jesus, I know I’m a sinner. There’s nothing I can do to reach you by my own efforts. Today, I’m choosing the bridge of Grace, whose name is Jesus, to be my path back to you. I want a real relationship with Jesus. Please forgive me of my sins and help me to follow you all the days of my life. In Jesus name, Amen.*

## MISSING

*Split into groups of 2-3 people. Each of you should take turns sharing the bridge illustration. Here is a copy of the bridge for you to use:*



### **Application**

**How did you feel as you took turns sharing the Gospel?**

**How is this model helpful?**

**This is just one way of sharing the Gospel. What are some other ways that you have heard the Gospel presented?**

**How can we support each other so that sharing the Gospel becomes a regular part of our lives?**

**Think about your Adopt 7. Who on your Adopt 7 is most ready to hear the Gospel? What is keeping you from sharing the Gospel with them?**

### **Prayer**

Thank God for sending Jesus to die on the cross for our sins. Ask Him to help us understand the gospel so that we might clearly articulate it to those who don't yet know Him. Thank God for calling us out of our sin to join Him in His kingdom work. Ask God to give the members of your group boldness to speak the gospel to those around them this week.

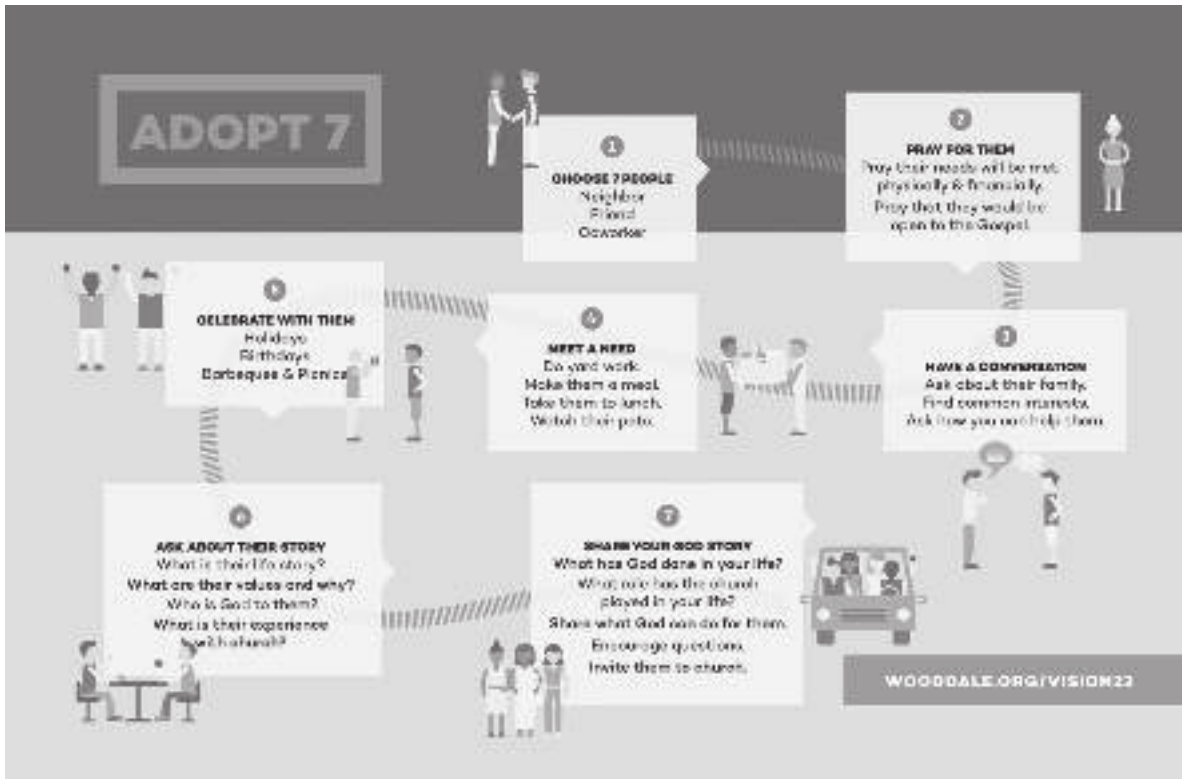
Commentary

## *Romans 10:14-15*

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**10:14-15.** Calling requires faith. In the Old Testament, calling on the name of the Lord was a metaphor for worship and prayer (Gen. 4:26; 12:8; Ps. 116:4). No one can call out to God who has not believed in Him. Faith requires hearing. More than anything else, this question is the crux of all missiological activity since the first century. God has ordained that people have to hear (or read, or otherwise understand the content of) the word of God in order to be saved. One who knows the gospel must communicate it to one who does not know it.

# MISSING



**ADOPT 7** 1/PRAY 2/SERVE 3/SHARE

*Your 7* ↘

**PRAY** For physical, emotional and spiritual needs to be met, for hearts to be opened and for opportunities to serve and share.

**SERVE**  
Shovel their driveway, mow their grass, make them a meal, offer to watch their kids or help with a house project.

**SHARE**  
Invite them to an event or service at Wooddale, share how God has changed your life and how his love can change theirs!

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# PRAYING FOR ADOPT 7

## EVANGELISTIC PRAYER TRAINING

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*The Lord is not slow in keeping His promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9).*

*I Myself will tend My sheep and have them lie down, declares the Sovereign Lord. I will search for the lost and bring back the strays. I will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak... (Ezekiel 34:15-16).*

### TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE PRAYER

- **Believe God will use you.** Continue to praise God and believe even when you don't see immediate results. Know that He is working.
- **Pray for opportunities to witness.** Then stay alert for God to open doors to conversations and encounters with people who don't yet know Him.
- **Persevere in prayer.** Don't let unbelief or delay discourage you. God does not want anyone to perish and loves your heart to see people come into relationship with Him.
- **Ask God to reveal obstacles or strongholds** in the person's life so you can pray strategically. Ask God to show you how and when to pray specifically for the person.
- **Be sensitive to the Spirit's leading.** When an unbeliever comes to mind, that's often a prompting to pray. If you feel led to take some kind of action such as calling them, be obedient.
- **Ask the person how you can pray for him or her.** Most people will welcome the prayer and it can open up a chance for meaningful dialogue.
- **Be prepared to lead the person in praying to make a faith commitment.**



# LOCAL PRAYERWALKING

- **Choose an area.** Ask God to guide you. Places of commerce, neighborhoods, city halls and school areas are great. Linger at places when you feel God prompting you to do so for more in depth prayer.
- **Join with other believers.** Pairs and triplets work best. Pray and speak naturally, with your eyes open.
- **Pray at elevated places.** That way you can pray “onsight with insight” over a greater territory.
- **Pray for the people you see.** Be sensitive to the Spirit’s leading in engaging them in spiritual conversations. Research the area ahead of time so you know more specifically how to pray for the people there.
- **Pray Scripture.** You can’t go wrong agreeing with God’s Word for a place and the people there.
- **Focus on God.** Make God’s promises rather than the enemy’s schemes the highlight of your prayer time.
- **Regather and report.** This will build faith and provide further insight for effective prayer.

# TIPS FOR PRAYING IN LIFEGROUPS

- **Make it safe for people to learn and grow through prayer.** Those with more experience who are comfortable praying out loud can guide and encourage those who are newer to it. Set the expectation that it’s an invitation to pray (rather than a command) and it’s fine to agree silently. It helps if the leader begins the prayer time and models what is expected and what the focus should be.
- **Pray with sensitivity to others in the group.** Make sure no one is monopolizing the prayer time. The length of our prayers should be adjusted to accommodate the size of the group and time allotted to pray. It can help to ask someone to open and someone else to close. The person closing should pause to make sure no one else wants to pray before closing.

## MISSING

- **Let the Spirit lead.** Our goal is to lay aside our natural inclinations, opinions, and reasoning to submit to the Holy Spirit's leadership in prayer. Be aware of themes that emerge in prayer and when the Spirit shifts the direction of prayer.
- **Incorporate Scripture.** It can help to prepare for a time of prayer by reading a brief portion of Scripture that relates to the focus. Encourage people to pray in agreement with God's Word in a positive manner.
- **Pray in unity and sincerity.** Prayer is primarily an activity of the heart. Prayers of agreement on a heart level with God and each other are powerful. It is not necessary to pray long, eloquent prayers or to impress others. Be yourself and use your own words.
- **Come into prayer with a reverent attitude.** Remember you are appealing to the Almighty God who is sovereign, holy, powerful and present.
- **Pray in faith.** Trust in the character of God and His desire to answer prayers in agreement with His will.

# GROWTH TRACK

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## THE PHRASES FROM THE STAGE

### DEAD

- *"I don't believe there is a God."*
- *"The Bible is just a bunch of myths."*
- *"Evolution explains away a need for God."*
- *"I am not a Christian because Christians are responsible for all the wars in history."*
- *"There are many ways to get to God."*
- *"I am a Christian because I go to church and I am a good person."*
- *"I have been a good person, so I will be okay."*

### INFANT

- *"I believe in Jesus, but my church is when I'm in the woods or on the lake."*
- *"I don't have to go to church to be a Christian."*
- *"I gave my life to Jesus and I go to church, but I don't need to be close to other people."*
- *"People have hurt me, so it's just me and God."*
- *"I don't have time to be in relationship with another Christian."*
- *"My spouse is my accountability partner. I don't need anyone else."*
- *"I pray and read my Bible. That is good enough for me."*
- *"My ministry is my work. I provide for my family. I don't have time for the Church."*
- *"I didn't know the Bible said that."*

### CHILD

- *"I love my small group; don't add any more people to it."*
- *"Who are all these people coming to my church? Tell them to go somewhere else!"*
- *"I am not coming to church anymore. It has become too big; it has too many people."*
- *"My small group is not taking care of my needs."*
- *"I don't have anyone who is spending enough time with me; no one is discipling me."*
- *"I didn't like the music today. If only they did it like..."*
- *"I am not being fed in my church, so I am going to a church that meets my needs better."*

## MISSING

### YOUNG ADULT

- *“I love my group, but there are others who need a group like this.”*
- *“I think I could lead a group with a little help. I have three friends I have been witnessing to, and this group would be too big for them.”*
- *“Look at how many are at church today—it’s awesome! I had to walk two blocks from the closest parking spot.”*
- *“Randy and Rachel missed group and I called to see if they are okay. Their kids have the flu, so maybe our group can make meals for them. I’ll start.”*
- *“In my devotions, I came across something I have a question about.”*
- *“I noticed that we don’t have an old folks’ visitation team. Do you think I could be involved?”*

### PARENT

- *People talk about what they love. When spiritual parents talk about what God is doing with them, it is not bragging or name-dropping. Humility is evident.*
- *“This guy at work asked me to explain the Bible to him. Pray for me.”*
- *“We get to baptize someone from our small group tonight. When is the next 101 class? I want to get her plugged into ministry somewhere.”*
- *“Our small group is going on a mission trip, and I have given each person a different responsibility.”*
- *“I realize discipleship happens at home, too. Will you hold me accountable to spend time discipling my kids?”*
- *“I have a person in my small group who is passionate about children. Can you have the children’s ministry people call me?”*

**MISSING**





