

## Module A | *Our New Identity*

*How do we know, love and worship Jesus in the context of our spiritual formation?*

### Month 1 | *Identity in Christ*

Material Overview:

#### *Week 1: Bible Study*

Material Focus: Who is God? Who am I?

Scripture Passages: Ephesians 2:1-10

#### *Week 2: Family Meal*

Family meal, discussion and prayer

Get to know one another

#### *Week 3: Equipping*

Material Focus: How to hear from God in His Word

Learn the SOAP method of reading the Bible.

#### *Week 4: In Action*

Share SOAP Journals and what God is teaching you.

How will your group encourage one another to read the Bible?

**Before You Study**

- Read *Ephesians 2:1-10*.
- Spend some time thinking about the importance of what was true of you before you knew Christ (v.1-3), what He has done for you (v.4-7), and what is true of you when you believe in Jesus (v.8-10).

**Who is God? Who am I?**

The two most important questions in life are “Who is God?” and “Who am I?”. The way you answer these two questions will fundamentally shape the way you live your life.

Who is God? There is no one like God. The Bible affirms this truth when God tells us His name is “I AM WHO I AM”, meaning He always was, always is, and always will be (Exodus 3:14). God is one and eternally exists as three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God is the creator and sustainer of everything. The Bible teaches us the attributes of God are knowledge, wisdom, truthfulness, faithfulness, love, goodness, grace, mercy, patience, holiness, jealousy, wrath, righteousness, justice, and power. He is so much more wonderful and beautiful than we'll ever be able to understand. We could spend all of eternity exploring the nature of God and we would never completely mine the depths of knowing Him. By this we must conclude that God is to be worshiped simply for who He is!

This is who God is and how we answer the question “Who is God?” directly impacts how we answer the question “Who am I?” and it will shape the way we live our lives.

Who am I? Understanding our faith in Jesus Christ gives us the answer to this question. Knowing who Jesus is, what He has done for us, and who we are in Him is the most practical and essential truth there is for us to know and walk in as believers.

We can easily focus on the “do” of following Jesus without first remembering the “be” of following Jesus. We tend to spend our time and energy focusing on the actions of our faith—going to church, reading the Bible, praying, and serving others. These are not bad things, but first we need to remember the Gospel and who we are in Christ.

In Christ we are saved, secure, significant, and satisfied through Him alone. This week focuses on the truth that our walk with God flows from us first knowing who we are in Christ. Our union with Christ—the truth that He is in us and we are in Him—flows directly into our daily communion with Christ.

### *We are Saved by Jesus*

We are saved by faith alone through grace alone in Christ alone. When we put our faith in His work on our behalf, we are made right with God. We are brought from death to life and from darkness to light when we trust in Jesus as Savior and Lord (Ephesians 2).

### *We are Secure in Jesus*

Once we have trusted in Jesus as Savior and Lord, nothing can change that! He does not lose His hold on us. It is not our work or performance that maintains and sustains our relationship with Him, but rather His work on our behalf that keeps us eternally secure in Him (John 10:28-30; 1 John 5:9-13).

### *We are Significant in Jesus*

We don't have to look to our performance or what others think of us to seek to find our identity, worth, and value because these things are found in Christ alone. In Christ there will never be a time when we are not experiencing the immeasurable riches of His grace and His grace is now what defines us and motivates us (Ephesians 2:7-10).

### *We are Satisfied in Jesus*

We don't have to look to the things of this world for purpose, joy, and peace because we find our purpose, joy, and peace in and through Jesus (Romans 12:2).

In short, knowing who we are in Christ both motivates us and empowers us to live out the Christian life.

## ***What does the Bible say?***

1. Read Ephesians 1:3-14. From this text, make a list of things that God has done for us in Christ. What stood out to you the most from this list?

2. Read Romans 8:1-17. What's true of us in Christ?

3. Read 2 Peter 1:3-9. What are the qualities that are listed in this text? What does it say is true of us when these qualities are increasing? What about when they are lacking?

## ***How do I apply what I learned?***

Scripture gives warnings that we can live ineffective and fruitless lives if we have forgotten who we are in Christ. However, multiple influences in our lives promote the idea that we decide what our identity is. The main contributors to this incorrect approach are Self, the World, and Others.

*Self*—looking for identity in who I think I am or what I do

We define ourselves by how we perceive ourselves. If we are honest, this can change day-by-day and even moment-by-moment. With this approach, we will either exalt ourselves or beat ourselves up based on our accomplishments. If we look to Self, we will define ourselves by our performance and achievements.

*The World*—looking for identity in what I have

Physical things can, and do, entice us. We can very easily define ourselves by our stuff—what we have or how much we have. We can allow our social status to drive us. We can live with the mindset that “if I just had this then I would be happy.” We covet, we are greedy, and we want more money and possessions.

*Others*—looking for identity in what others think of me or what I assume others think of me

We define ourselves and look for identity by how we think others view us. We fear man and what others think of us—we long for the acceptance, approval, respect, and recognition of others. This means that our significance, or lack of significance, can hinge on what others think of us or what we assume others think of us rather than what the Lord thinks of us.

When we look to these false identities to determine our identity, worth, and value, it is no surprise that we will struggle and that life will be difficult. These false identities are never enough; they keep us longing for more. Instead of looking to these false identities, there are two truths that we must seek to dwell on and remind ourselves of regularly:

1. Our identity does not come from who we think we are, what we do, what we have, or what others think of us; it comes from the person and work of Jesus Christ.
2. Our identity does not come from us thinking about ourselves more or less, but rather from us thinking rightly about what God says is true of us in Christ.

Living out of our identity in Christ is essential to the Christian life. We can intellectually understand this truth, but can functionally neglect or forget about this truth as we daily live our lives. So how do you practically live out of your identity in Christ? Here are three things that you can seek to practice daily:

### *Remember Who Jesus Is and What He Has Done for You*

Daily seek to remind yourself of who Jesus is, what He has done for you, and what is true of you now in Him. Regularly spend time reading the Bible and remind yourself of what is true of you in Christ.

### *Repent of False Identities*

Acknowledge where you are looking to find your identity, value, and purpose apart from Jesus Christ. Confess to the Lord how you look for your identity in yourself, the world, or others.

### *Walk with God and His People*

God has given us His Spirit, His Word, and His people to empower us and to help us be conformed into the image of Jesus. Daily seek to ask the Spirit for His guidance and for genuine fellowship with other believers.

*Spend time discussing these questions:*

1. Where do you typically find yourself looking to find your identity, worth, and value?
2. How do you see yourself running to each of these false identities?
3. Which one do you see yourself running to most often and why?
4. How does Christ offer us a better identity than these false identities? What can you do to point yourself to this truth?

## ***Praying Truth***

### ***Take time to pray with your City Group***

**Praise.** Praise God that He has given you a new identity in Christ.

**Admit.** Confess where you seek to find your identity apart from Him.

**Request.** Ask that the Spirit of God would continually reveal any false identities in your heart and would empower you to rest in your identity in Him.

**Thank.** Thank God that you are saved, secure, significant, and satisfied in Christ. Thank Him that your identity and purpose are found in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

### ***Helpful Resources***

- Who is God? The Bible Project <https://bibleproject.com/explore/god/>
- Resource Page on Identity in Christ from Desiring God: [www.desiringgod.org/topics/identity-in-christ](http://www.desiringgod.org/topics/identity-in-christ)
- List: The Identity of a Believer in Union With Jesus Christ from Appendix B on Page 252-253 of the ***Steps Participants Guide from the Village Church***
- Article: ***“How are Union With Christ Defines Us”*** by Luma Sims from Gospel Centered Discipleship
- Article: ***“The Believer’s Position in Christ”*** by Iain Gordon from Cru

## Week 2 | The Family Meal

### Experiencing the Family

The Gospel brings us into God's family. As believers, we are more than a Bible study or a support group, we are a family! Families share life as they gather around tables and enjoy meals together. That's why this week your City Group will be sharing a meal together.

Meals were at the very core of Jesus' ministry as he often ate with His disciples, sinners and unbelievers, and many other friends along the way (Matthew. 9:9-17, 26:20-30; Luke 10:38-42). The early church did more than just gather at the temple for preaching, they met in homes to eat with one another, encourage one another, and point one another back to Jesus.

"They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts." (Acts 2:46)

### Why are Tables so important?

**Meals remind us of God's Provision.** God is gracious to provide us with food, but ultimately we want to remember that Jesus is God's ultimate provision. He is the bread of life who saves sinners (John 6:35).

**Meals remind us of our Humanity.** You may be strong or weak, young or old, rich or poor, but eating together reminds us that we are all humans who get hungry and need food.

**Meals create space for Community.** God has not left us alone. He gives us a community to belong to. The dinner table is a space to share stories, joys, pains, and hopes with other believers. (Romans 12:15).

## Coaching for Family Meals

1. Communicate with the group at least one week in advance that you are doing a Family Meal.
2. Pick a main dish or theme (i.e. taco night) and invite group members to bring a side to share.
3. The host should prepare by making sure there is enough seating for everyone.
4. Remind the group why family meals are important and introduce the Connection Questions for the night.
5. And remember to have fun! Laughter and fun help build deep friendships.

## Connecting Around the Table

1. Share a meal together. As you eat, walk through these questions together!
2. What do you do for work and what do you like about it?
3. What's something from last week's Bible study, "Identity in Christ", that stuck out to you? Why?

## Week 3 | Equipping The SOAP Method

*Spending time with God.* The Gospel unites us with Jesus Christ. God is now our Heavenly Father and we are His children. Spending time with God through reading the Bible and prayer is an important part of this relationship. These disciplines will open our eyes to His goodness and love for us.

Reading the Bible can sometimes be challenging. “Where should I start?” “How much should I read?” How often should I read?” There are many methods out there to help organize your Bible reading. One approach we encourage is the SOAP method. SOAP stands for Scripture, Observation, Application, and Prayer. It’s a way to hear from God through His Word and grow as a disciple of Jesus.

As a City Group, read through “How to SOAP” and the “Example of SOAP”.

### How to SOAP

When you have your daily time with God, use SOAP to help you think through what you are reading.

### Scripture

Pick a book of the Bible and read 1-2 chapters a day. Each day, write out the Bible verse that stood out the most to you.

### Observation

What is God saying in this verse? What truth did you learn? Write down your observations, thoughts, or questions.

### Application

How can you apply what you learned? What truths do you need to believe? Write down a practical way you can apply this truth

### Prayer

Respond to God in prayer. Write down a short prayer thanking God for this truth and ask Him to help you apply it in your life.

## Example of SOAP

### Scripture. John 15

John 15:5 - “I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.”

### Observation.

We don't naturally abide in Jesus so He commands us to abide. Following this command is not burdensome, but actually for our benefit. If we're not connected to Jesus, we can't do anything. Jesus is the true vine and if we abide in Him we will bear fruit. The fruit we bear brings glory to God.

### Application.

What are ways I can abide in Jesus? Jesus says I will abide in Him if I keep His commandments, but am I actually doing that? Abiding in Jesus allows me to experience the joy that Jesus has for me. I can continue to abide in Him through regularly reading the Bible and prayer.

### Prayer.

Jesus, thank You for saving me! Please always remind me of how amazing Your Gospel is. I confess that most of the time I would rather do my own thing than abide in You. Teach me more about what it means to abide in You and I pray that abiding in You would result in great fruit for Your glory!

## How are we practicing this?

Reading and engaging with God's Word should be a regular part of our lives. The reason learning the SOAP Method is the first equipping tool is to give you what you need to start a regular habit of spending time with God in His Word.

Using a Bible reading plan helps you know what to read so you're not sitting with your Bible open wondering what to read. No matter what Bible reading you choose, the key is consistency. Don't feel guilty if you miss a day. Just pick up where you left off and keep hearing from God's Word. Here are a few Bible reading plan suggestions:

1. Read one of the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John)
2. Read one of Paul's shorter letters (Galatians, Ephesians, Philip-pians, or Colossians)
3. Use the Robert Murray M'Cheyne Bible Reading Plan. You will read four chapters per day to read through the Old Testament once and the Psalms and New Testament twice over the course of one year (see appendix).
4. Use the 260-Day Bible Reading Plan. You will read one chapter per day to read through the New Testament of the course of 260 days (see appendix).

### *Spend some time...*

1. Talking about how you think the SOAP method will help you spend time with God.
2. SOAPing through John 1:1-18 as a City Group.
3. Giving people a chance to decide what they will SOAP through for next week.

## Week 4 | In Action

### *Sharing SOAP Journals*

Why should we share what God is teaching us?

Last week you learned how to spend time with God using the SOAP Method of reading the Bible. God says this about His Word:

### *2 Timothy 3:16–17*

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

The Bible is not a mystical book to be used as a lucky charm. The Bible is God’s Word to us and has the power to transform us more into the image of Christ. Reading the Bible allows us to hear directly from God. It reminds us of who we are in Christ, it confronts us with our sin and calls us to repentance, and most importantly it always points us to Jesus and the Gospel. We should approach Scripture with an eager expectation that God will transform us.

Not only does Scripture transform and edify us personally, but when we share what God is teaching us with others, we sharpen one another and help each other grow with Jesus (*Proverbs 27:17*). It’s for this reason that your City Group should make it a regular habit of sharing what God is teaching you on a regular basis.

“The Transformative Power of Scripture” - Gregg R. Allison (50 Core Truths of the Christian Faith)

## *Let's Practice!*

Use the following questions to help your group process and reflect on your time SOAPing in God's Word.

1. What was a highlight from reading the Bible this week?
2. Share something from your SOAP Journal that God taught you this week. How will you apply what you learned?
3. What are ways your City Group can encourage one another to regularly read the Bible.

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*How do we know, love and worship Jesus in the context of our spiritual formation?*

### Month 2 | *Identity in the Family of God*

Material Overview:

#### *Week 1: Bible Study*

Material Focus: The Church and the Family of God

Scripture Passages: Romans 8:12-17

#### *Week 2: Family Meal*

Family meal, discussion and prayer

Knowing each other like family

#### *Week 3: Equipping*

Material Focus: How to Share Your Testimony

#### *Week 4: In Action*

Share testimonies and celebrate how Jesus has saved others

### The Church: The Family of God

#### Before You Study

- Read Romans 8:12-17
- Consider the characteristics you see in the family God.

### What is the Church?

The focus this month is on the believer's identity within the family of God, or the Church. As we learned, one of the most important questions people can ask is, "Who am I?". Once answered, this question naturally leads us to ask the question, "Where do I belong?". One of the beautiful truths about the Gospel is that in Jesus we belong to God's family. In our sin, we ran away from home and rejected God our Father, but Jesus is the good older brother who had an intervention on our behalf and brought us back into the family of God. It is crucial to understand that God did not merely save you and me from our sins, but He brought us into the family of God. Why is that so crucial? Because understanding adoption into God's family helps us to see how much God loves us. God's love for us is so intense that He did not merely want to make us sinless, but He wanted to bring us as close to Him as possible - as close as a parent is with their child. In other words, in the Kingdom of God you are not simply a citizen, but you are royalty. Your identity comes with a new last name and you belong in God's family!

Another way of thinking about God's family is to think about the Church. The Church is made up of people who belong to God's family. This is why the apostle Paul often refers to other Christians as "brothers" and "sisters." These are not cute nicknames or mere sentiment for Paul. He really does view other believers as spiritual brothers and sisters in the Church. In 1 Timothy 3:15, Paul also calls the Church the "household" of God. It is not an understatement to say that we cannot truly experience our identity in God's family without the Church.

So what implications can we conclude about identity in the family of God?

### **We belong to God.**

We are not spiritual orphans, but rather God is our Father. Spiritual orphans live as though it is them against the world. A child of God knows that God their Father has overcome the world already. Spiritual orphans run away from God with their sin, because they think He is a mildly disappointed dad. A child of God runs to God with their sin, because they know that God's presence is always open because of what Jesus has done (John 14:18).

### **We belong to one another.**

If the Church is primarily the family of God, that means we belong to one another. We are called to treat each other as brothers and sisters and compete to show each other honor (Romans 12:10). There are no only-child's in God's family.

### **We belong in the Church.**

The word Church literally means an "assembly of people". The biblical writers actually borrowed the term from Greek culture, so a "church" could technically refer to any group of people gathering together for a united purpose. Thus, the Christian church is a gathered group of people united around the fact that Jesus has made us all a family with God as our father (Hebrews 12:33-24).

### **We belong in God's family.**

It has always been God's plan to create a family for Himself. In Genesis 15, God told Abraham that he was going to have descendants that are more numerous than the stars. Fast forward all the way to Galatians 3:29, and we see that those who are in Christ Jesus are now spiritual descendants of Abraham and heirs who get all that was promised to Abraham. An heir implies that you are now a family member in God's family.

## ***What does the Bible say?***

1. Read Ephesians 2:11-22. What is your identity apart from Christ in this passage?

What is your identity in Christ in this passage.

2. Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-27. According to this passage, how does your identity change the way you treat other people in the Church?

3. Read Hebrews 10:19-25. What are the three commands in these verses (hint: they all begin with “let us”). What are the reasons given for why we do those commands (hint: they all begin with “since”).

4. Read Romans 12:9-13. What are all the specific commands in these verses? What are some practical examples you’ve seen where each command is lived out in the Church?

## ***How do I apply what I learned?***

If you belong to the family of God and are a part of the Church, it is imperative to ask, “What does that look like?”

*Spend Time Together* - For starters, it will look like spending a lot of time together. Can you imagine a dad who says he loves his kids, but never spends time with them? Or a son that says he loves his mom, but never calls her? Or a family that says they love each other, but never shares a family meal? In God’s family, we don’t simply say we love each other, but we actually show it by spending time with one another. Acts 2:46 says, “And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts.” The early church met together almost every day! Basically, if it was time to eat - the church met together. If we desire to feel like the family of God there is simply no substitute for spending time together.

*Stories* - The best way to celebrate your identity in the family of God is to share how you became a part of the family of God. Every family has stories that they share; like the time they took a crazy vacation or how dad proposed to mom. Similarly, as Christians we can share our family story by sharing how Jesus changed our lives. Revelation 12:11 indicates that we will actually conquer the devil by sharing our testimony of how Christ’s blood saves us from our sins.

*Serve One Another* - Additionally, we serve the family of God so that together it can flourish. Can you imagine a family where every member refused to do laundry or clean the bathroom or do the dishes? Eventually your house would smell terrible! In a similar way, each of us has a job to do - not so that we can show off our gifts and talents - but so that as the family of God we can thrive together. If we don't play our role and serve the Church, then the entire family of God suffers. In 1 Peter 4:10 it tells us that we should actually use our gifts to serve each other.

*Share Hurts and Struggles* - Finally, we must be open and honest about our suffering and sin struggles. Again, can you imagine a parent ignoring a broken bone in their child or a three year old not asking for a band-aid when they have a cut? Avoiding these wounds could be disastrous. In a similar way, God's family - the Church - should not ignore the hurts of others nor should we be silent about our own sin and suffering. Galatians 6:1-2 tells us that we should help restore our brothers and sisters who are caught in sin and bear their burdens. In 1 Peter 3:15 it says that we should always be ready "to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you." Typically Christian circles view this verse as advocating apologetics, which is not wrong, but the context of these verses seem to suggest that we should share why we have hope in Jesus when life is full of suffering. Our stories of how we cling to Jesus in the midst of suffering or temptation are powerful reminders of our identity given to us in Christ.

As we can see, there is no short-cut to experiencing your identity in the family of God. We cannot experience what it means to be in God's family without spending time together, sharing our stories, serving one another, and sharing our hurts and struggles. Tim Keller is famous for saying, "Everyone says they want community and friendship. But mention accountability or commitment and they run the other way." It's not surprising that this is true because people think they either don't have time for the Church or they are afraid to be vulnerable in the Church. But the reality is we can't experience our identity without the Church. We must realize that through Christ we will never be kicked out of God's family. However, we must recognize it will take work to assume that identity and live out our role in God's family. When we do that, we actually reveal the Gospel itself.

“Community is more than just the result of preaching the gospel; it is itself a declaration of the gospel. It is the demonstration of the good news of freedom in Christ through the evident display of our transformed character and our life together. It is itself part of the good news, for the good news is this: this is what Christ has won for you on the cross - a new life together with the people of God. Once you were alienated from others, but now you have been brought near.”

- Tim Keller

### ***Spend time discussing these questions:***

1. What is the greatest thing you learned in this study?
2. Why is it hard to know our identity in Christ apart from the Church?
3. How does viewing the Church as the “family of God” change the way you see church?
4. How does your identity in God’s family change the way you see difficult or challenging people within the Church? How does it change = the way you see the pastors or “spiritual giants?”

### ***Praying Truth***

**Take time to pray with your City Group.**

**Praise.** Praise God that He has given you a new identity in God’s family and His Church.

**Admit.** Confess where you seek to live out your identity apart from the Church.

**Request.** Ask that the Spirit of God would show you ways you can bless the family of God and the Church using the identity you have in Christ.

**Thank.** Thank God that one day you will receive new bodies and know the family of God without sin.

## Week 2 | The Family Meal

### Experiencing the Family

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### Why are Tables so important?

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Meals remind us of our Humanity. You may be strong or weak, young or old, rich or poor, but eating together reminds us that we are all humans who get hungry and need food.

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## Coaching for Family Meals

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- Pick a main dish or theme (i.e. taco night) and invite group members to bring a side to share.
- The host should prepare by making sure there is enough seating for everyone.
- Remind the group why family meals are important and introduce the Connection Questions for the night.
- And remember to have fun! Laughter and fun help build deep friendships.

## Connecting Around the Table

Share a meal together. As you eat, walk through these questions together!

1. Where are you from and what is like growing up?
2. What are your natural gifts and how can you use them in your City Group?

## Week 3 | *Equipping*

### How to Share Your Testimony

#### How to Share Your Story.

Each of us has a story to tell how Jesus came into our lives, saved us from our sin, and called us to Himself. Sharing our story is important because it helps us move from strangers to family. All of our stories are different, but there is one enemy; Satan and the effects of sin, and one hero; Jesus. When we hear other stories we see just how much we have in common in the saving work of Jesus Christ!

Use the 3 sections and questions below to help you write out your story.

#### Before I Accepted Christ (or surrendered and committed to Him)

What was my life like that will relate most to the non-Christian?  
 What did my life revolve around the most? Where did I find my security and happiness? (The non-Christian is relying on something external to give him happiness)  
 How did those areas begin to let me down?

#### How I Received Christ (or surrendered and committed to Him)

When was the first time I heard the gospel?  
 What were my initial reactions?  
 When did my attitude begin to turn around? Why?  
 What were the final struggles that went through my mind just before I accepted Christ?  
 Why did I go ahead, turn from my sins, and surrender my life to Christ?

#### After I Accepted Christ (or surrendered and committed to Him)

Specific changes and examples of the changes Christ has made.  
 Why am I motivated differently?

#### *Helpful Hints*

Write the way you speak; make the testimony yours.  
 Practice this over and over until it becomes natural.  
 Keep it short – 2-3 minutes (200-300 words). At that length, it's easily something you can put into a conversation without it becoming a monologue

## How are we practicing this?

The story of how Jesus saved you is the most significant story and moment in your life. Being open and honest when sharing testimonies will create true community within your group. That's why sharing personal testimonies should be a regular part of your City Group. You will create a schedule so that every person has a chance to share their story. Consider having one person share on the Bible study week or the Family Meal week.

## Spend some time discussing...

1. Why is knowing the story of how God saved you important?
2. Why is sharing your testimony a good way to share the Gospel?
3. Have you ever thought about sharing your testimony with others?

For next week, use the *"How to Share Your Story"* equipping tool to write out your testimony of how Jesus saved you. If you've never carefully considered how God has worked in your life, set aside specific time to reflect and pray that God will show you more of what He has done. Type out your story (200-300 words) and practice sharing it to get comfortable.

1. Next week several people will be encouraged to share their testimonies with the group.
2. Select 3-4 people to share their testimony next week.
3. Schedule when the other people in your group will share their testimony.

## Week 4 | *In Action*

### Sharing Personal Testimonies

#### *Why should we share our testimonies?*

A Christian testimony is focused on Jesus who interrupted our selfish rebellion. He is the Light that helped us to see the error of our ways. A testimony is not a Christian testimony unless it includes the message of the Gospel that salvation is through grace by faith in Jesus Christ.

Last week you learned how to share your testimony. The story of how Jesus saved you is wholly unique. Whether you were outright rebellious or found your identity in your achievements, Jesus has written a wonderful story of redemption in your life. When you share your story with others it testifies to God's grace and love and it's a personal story of how the Gospel changes lives.

#### *It Glorifies God*

Your testimony shows that God is greater than any other story or experience. It's all about God and the good news of salvation. Sharing your testimony is sharing the Gospel because you're sharing the story of God's hope and provision through Jesus.

Testimonies are more than just a story about a changed life. Yes, your life did change for the better, but a person can get a changed life from a personal trainer and dietician. Even an unbeliever can have a story about a time when they arrived at a destination despite obstacles.

#### *It Is A Unique Story Of God's Grace*

There is a specific time when you first realized your need for a Savior. At some point, you realized that life wasn't working out so well when you were running it on your own and you needed help. Your testimony may have been extreme and radical, or it might have been a calm profession of true belief. Testimonies depict God's love and mercy because all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

### *It Creates True Community Through Transparency*

The more we're honest about mistakes we've made in the past, the more other people can relate to us. There's a natural tendency to want to look as perfect as possible on the outside so we hold past mistakes deep within us. Holding back only keeps people at arm's length. Sharing brings them closer into intimate and real conversations.

### *It removes fear and reminds us of hope*

In speaking about what God has done in your life, you are also remembering all of God's goodness. When you recount what He has done through the person and work of Jesus Christ, it gives you even more faith and hope for present circumstances and living.

### *It is an evangelism tool*

The facts of the Bible and the message of the Gospel are true, however, but unbelievers and skeptics will try to argue these facts. They can come up with ideas that sound plausible, but they can't argue with someone's story of an experience they had in their life. This is especially true when a testimony recounts your trust in God even when you were in the midst of a trial, or as Charles Spurgeon puts it, singing in the night.

*"Try and sing in the night, Christian, for that is one of the best arguments in the entire world in favor of your religion...I tell you, we may preach fifty thousand sermons to prove the gospel, but we will not prove it half as well as you will by singing in the night." ~ Charles Spurgeon.*

<https://www.crosswalk.com/faith/spiritual-life/10-reasons-to-share-your-testimony.html>

### ***Let's Practice!***

Tonight several people in your City Group will share their testimonies. This is a chance for your group to praise God together as you hear stories of His salvation. It's also a time to get to know one another on a deeper level and grow as a spiritual family.

Being saved by Jesus is the most significant story of a person's life. When someone finishes sharing their testimony, it's appropriate to thank them for sharing and follow up questions. Consider the following:

- How did you come to know what God is like through Jesus?
- What does Jesus mean to you now?
- How has Jesus's death on the cross for your sins changed how you look at yourself?

When you are done sharing testimonies, spend time in prayer thanking God for what He has done and that you got to witness the saving work of Jesus in the lives of the group members that shared their stories.

Sharing personal testimonies should be a regular part of your City Group. Create a schedule so that every person has a chance to share how Jesus saved them. Consider having one person share on the Bible study week or the Family Meal week.

## Module A | *Our New Identity*

*How do we know, love and worship Jesus in the context of our spiritual formation?*

### Month 3 | *Identity as a Witness*

Material Overview:

#### *Week 1: Bible Study*

Material Focus: God as a Missionary God

Scripture Passages: 2 Corinthians 5:16-21

#### *Week 2: Family Meal*

Family meal, discussion and prayer

Being a representative of Jesus

#### *Week 3: Equipping*

Material Focus: How to Share the Gospel

Learn the “One-Verse Bridge Illustration”

#### *Week 4: In Action*

Practice sharing the Gospel by role playing

Pray for unbelievers and ask God to give you chances to share the Gospel

## Week 1 | Bible Study

God as a Missionary God

### Before You Study

- Read 2 Corinthians 5:16-21
- Spend time considering what it means to be an ambassador.

### Who did God send?

As we have been learning, when we place our faith in Jesus, we get a whole new identity. At the deepest level, who we are gets completely redefined in light of who Jesus is and what He has done for us. This month, we'll be focusing on the believer's identity as a Witness of Christ. Another way we can think about this is that we are God's sent missionaries everywhere we live, work, and play.

To really understand our identity as God's missionaries, we have to start with God's identity as a missionary Himself. The theological term is *Missio Dei*, which literally translates to missionary God. Our God is a missionary living out His divine mission in the world. We see this clearly in the Trinity. God the Father, created the world which fell into sin. And how does the Father go about His redemptive mission to save the world? He sends the Son. This means that Jesus is the first sent missionary.

#### *John 3:17*

For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

#### *1 John 4:14*

And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world.

#### *John 5:30*

I can do nothing on my own. As I hear, I judge, and my judgment is just, because I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me.

Jesus was sent by the Father - on mission to save sinners, by grace,

for His glory. Additionally, what does the Son do? He sends the Holy Spirit:

*John 16:7*

Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you.

Our God is a Missionary God, we are made in His image, and we get the joy of joining Him in His mission. This means that as soon as you believe in Jesus you are also a missionary. A part of our identity in Christ is being a witness to God's grace and the Gospel.

***What does the Bible say?***

*Read 2 Corinthians 5:16-21*

1. What does it mean to regard someone “according to the flesh”?
2. How does this passage connect our mission to God's mission?
3. What ministry does this passage say Christ has given us? What does that mean?
4. What new identity does this passage say Christ has given us? What does that mean?
5. Why do you think it's important to understand our new identity as “ambassadors” and “witnesses” before we try to live out a new set of missionary activities?

## *How do I apply what I learned?*

### *Pray*

If the mission is God's mission, and He is the Ultimate Missionary, our missionary efforts should start with humble dependence on Him to go before us. A helpful axiom we've often referred to at Citylight is to "pray for doors, check doors, respect doors." So, in the morning, pray, "God would you give me opportunities to talk about Jesus today? Would you open doors with coworkers, neighbors, or friends?". Then throughout the day, you check doors. You bring up Jesus, ask someone if you can pray for them. Mention something your City Group is doing. And you'll know in about 15 seconds if that is an open door to talk more or a closed door. If the door is closed, respect the door. Don't kick it in! But if it's an open door, walk through it. Invite them to church or share your story or invite them to your City Group.

### *Bless*

Do you know what the literal definition of the Gospel is? Good news. So, if we're going to share the Gospel, we should first be the kind of people that are good news to the people around us. That means, be a great neighbor! When you move into your neighborhood, is it good news for you neighbors? When you take good care of your lawn, when you serve your neighbors in tangible ways, when you show hospitality and friendship, that's good news to your neighbor! When you go out to eat, are you good news to the waiter? Do encourage them, treat them kindly, and tip them well? That's good news to them! Do you give good gifts and speak words of life and encouragement to the people around you? That's good -news to them and paves the way for the ultimate good news of Jesus!

### *Share*

Being a good neighbor isn't enough to bring someone from death to life - you actually need to share the Gospel. The best place to start is your own story. When God gives you open doors, share how you came to know Jesus. Share how you learned that He was your substitute in life and death and gave you forgiveness and eternal life by placing your faith in Him.

### *Praying Truth*

Take time to pray with your City Group.

*Praise.* Praise God that He is a Missionary God! When you were dead in your sins, He came to the rescue. He didn't send down a self-help manual for you to help yourself. He came to rescue you!

*Admit.* Admit some of the lesser missions of this world that have been more of a priority to you than the mission of God.

*Request.* Ask for God to help you see people the way He sees people and to increase your love missional zeal for the people in your life. Ask Him to give you open doors for Gospel conversations and the courage and words to walk through them.

*Thank.* Thank Jesus that He has invited you into His mission. Praise Him that you have a purpose bigger than yourself to live your life for!

## Week 2 | *The Family Meal*

### Experiencing the Family

The Gospel brings us into God's family. As believers, we are more than a Bible study or a support group, we are a family! Families share life as they gather around tables and enjoy meals together. That's why this week your City Group will be sharing a meal together.

Meals were at the very core of Jesus' ministry as he often ate with His disciples, sinners and unbelievers, and many other friends along the way (Matthew. 9:9-17, 26:20-30; Luke 10:38-42). The early church did more than just gather at the temple for preaching, they met in homes to eat with one another, encourage one another, and point one another back to Jesus.

"They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts." (Acts 2:46)

### Why are Tables so important?

**Meals remind us of God's Provision.** God is gracious to provide us with food, but ultimately we want to remember that Jesus is God's ultimate provision. He is the bread of life who saves sinners (John 6:35).

**Meals remind us of our Humanity.** You may be strong or weak, young or old, rich or poor, but eating together reminds us that we are all humans who get hungry and need food.

**Meals create space for Community.** God has not left us alone. He gives us a community to belong to. The dinner table is a space to share stories, joys, pains, and hopes with other believers (Romans 12:15).

## *Coaching for Family Meals*

1. Communicate with the group at least one week in advance that you are doing a Family Meal.
2. Pick a main dish or theme (i.e. taco night) and invite group members to bring a side to share.
3. The host should prepare by making sure there is enough seating for everyone.
4. Remind the group why family meals are important and introduce the Connection Questions for the night.
5. And remember to have fun! Laughter and fun help build deep friendships.

## *Connecting Around the Table*

Share a meal together. As you eat, walk through these questions together!

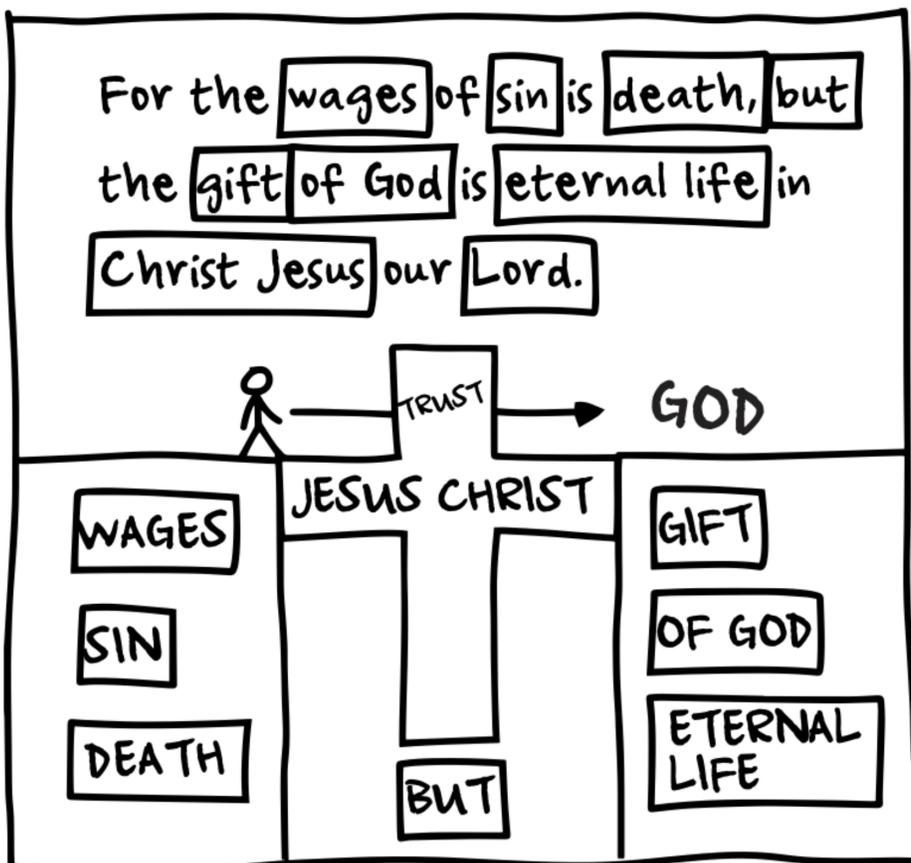
1. What are some of your favorite hobbies or passions?
2. What are your thoughts about being a representative of Jesus?

## How to Share the Gospel

**The One-Verse Bridge Illustration.** Many times we feel that to be effective in evangelism we have to create complex illustrations and memorize a seminary-worthy number of verses. But the gospel is most powerful when shared with love, clarity, and (sometimes most importantly) simplicity.

One-Verse Evangelism is a simple, interactive way to share Christ's love conversationally and visually. It is based on asking questions and sharing truth simply. It's easy to learn because it uses just one verse. One-Verse Evangelism can be shared in just 10 or 15 minutes, but can have impact for a lifetime.

Here's a brief look at how it works. Let's say God is leading you to share the gospel with your neighbor, Jeff. Write out Romans 6:23 on a piece of paper or a napkin: "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (NIV). All you need is contained in this single passage. Ask Jeff if he would like to see a simple diagram based on this verse that will explain God's relationship with mankind (us).



### *Wages*

Circle the word “wages” and ask, “How would you feel if your boss refused to pay you the wages that were due to you?” The answer, of course, is that he would want justice—in this case, the wages he had worked for. Deep down, we all know that it is only right that we get what we deserve. Similarly, we earn “wages” from God for how we have lived our lives.

### *Sin*

Draw a circle around “sin,” asking your neighbor Jeff what he thinks when he hears this word. You might explain that sin is more an attitude than an action. It can be either actively fighting God or as simple as excluding Him from our lives. You can ask, “Has God ever seemed far away?” If he says “Yes,” you can explain that that’s one of the things sin does—it makes God seem far away. Now draw two opposing cliffs with a gap in between.

### *Death*

Circle this word and ask what thoughts come to mind. Explain that death in the Bible always means some kind of separation—in its most basic sense, separation from life. Because God is the author of life, a spiritual death simply means separation from Him.

### *BUT*

While circling this word, mention that it is important because it means that a sharp contrast in ideas is coming. What we have just looked at is the bad news; what comes next is the good news.

### *Gift*

Draw a circle around this word. Ask, “If wages are what a person earns, then what is a gift?” Remind Jeff that though every gift is free for the person receiving it, someone still has to purchase it.

### *of God*

Circle this and explain that the gift you are talking about is free. It is from God Himself. It’s so special that no one else can give it. Ask, “How do you feel when someone gives you a special gift?”

### *Eternal Life*

Circle these two words next, and then ask, “How would you define

these words?” Contrast one side of the cliff, death, with the other side, eternal life. Ask, “What is the opposite of separation from God?”

### *Christ Jesus*

Write these words so they create a bridge between the two cliffs. Help your friend to consider that just as every gift has a unique giver, only Jesus Christ can give the gift of eternal life.

### *Trust*

Write this word over the bridge you just drew. Explain that a true friend is a friend you can trust, and tell Jeff that Jesus is offering to be a true friend to him. All Jeff has to do is admit that he is responsible for his sin—either of fighting against God or excluding Him from his life. Trusting Jesus means believing that He has power to forgive us for rejecting God and that He will wash us clean from all that we have done wrong in life. At this point, you can ask him if he wants to start a relationship with God that will last forever. If he says “Yes,” invite him to pray a short prayer in his own words, asking Jesus to forgive him and make him new.

Close by reminding him that this simple illustration shows what God is like: Someone who really cares about people—especially him. Invite him to read all about it in the Bible—the Gospel of John is a great place to start.

The prayer to receive Jesus can go something like this:

“Dear Jesus, I know that I am a sinner and that I need You to forgive me. I know that You died a painful death so that my sins could be washed clean. Thank you. I want to make You the Lord of my life, and I will trust and follow You. Everything I have is Yours now. In Your name, Lord. Amen.”

There is nothing magical about these words. It’s not the words themselves that make things right between you and God—it’s whether or not your heart really means it. We know this because in 1 Samuel 16:7, the Bible says, “The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.”

The best part of this whole process is that it doesn't matter how badly we've messed up, Jesus is powerful enough to save anyone from their sins—even the worst of us. Romans 10:13 says, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." That's fantastic news—no matter how badly we've messed up, we can place our complete trust in Jesus, and He will wipe all of our sins off the face of the earth. Jesus is the bridge to life.

### *How are we practicing this?*

The Gospel is the message that the whole world needs to hear. As believers, we have that message and God has commissioned us to go and share the good news of Jesus. But knowing exactly how to share the Gospel can be challenging. That's why this month is all about learning how to share the Gospel and praying for those people that you are sharing the Gospel with. Your group will make it a regular habit to review how to share the Gospel and pray for your mission field.

- Practice sharing the Gospel through role play.
- Pray continually for the unbelievers you are trying to reach.
- Remind yourself daily how the Gospel impacts your everyday life.

### *Spend some time...*

1. Looking over the "One-Verse Bridge Illustration" again.
2. Discussing the importance of knowing how to share the Gospel.
3. Discussing what excites you and/or makes you nervous about sharing the Gospel.

## Week 4 | *In Action*

### Practice Sharing the Gospel

#### Why should we practice sharing the Gospel?

The saying “practice makes perfect” certainly rings true when it comes to sharing the Gospel. The Bible says this about sharing the Gospel:

“... always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect” - 1 Peter 3:15

God wants us to be prepared because we never know when an opportunity will present itself to share the Gospel. We want to be confident, comfortable, and ready to share the Gospel at all times. Having confidence in sharing the Gospel allows you to focus more on the person you’re sharing with and less on worrying about how to share.

### *Let’s Practice!*

Tonight you will break into pairs and practice sharing the Gospel with one another. Each person will take a turn sharing the Gospel using the “One-Verse Bridge Illustration” that you learned last week. Allow for 30 minutes to make sure everyone has a chance to practice sharing and then discuss the following questions as a large group.

- What went well when you and your group practiced sharing the Gospel?
- What didn’t go well when you and your group practiced sharing the Gospel?
- How can you become more comfortable sharing the Gospel?
- Who is someone that you can share the Gospel with?

End your time by praying for unbelievers in your life and ask God to give you an opportunity to share the Gospel with them.

## Module A | *Our New Identity*

*How do we know, love and worship Jesus in the context of our spiritual formation?*

### Month 4 | **Living in Our New Identity**

Material Overview:

#### **Week 1: Bible Study**

Material Focus: Our New Identity Changes Us

Scripture Passages: John 10:27-30; Galatians 5:19-26; Hebrews 10:19-25; 2 Timothy 2:2

#### **Week 2: Family Meal**

Family meal, discussion and prayer  
Brainstorm City Group Mission Statement

#### **Week 3: Equipping**

Material Focus: How to Write a Mission Statement  
Group will write a City Group Mission Statement

#### **Week 4: Celebration & Review**

Celebration Checkpoint

# Week 1 | *Bible Study*

## Our New Identity Changes Us

MOD A · MON 4

### Before You Study

- Read John 10:27-30; Galatians 5:19-26; Hebrews 10:19-25; 2 Timothy 2:2
- Consider some of the implications of your new identity in Christ.

## *How does our new identity change us?*

In Colossians, we're called to put off the old self and put on the new self (Colossians 3:1-17). This means not submitting to the desires of our sinful flesh, but rather in everything we do submitting to the Holy Spirit who is at work inside of us. The past three months we have walked through how our new identity in Christ has implications for our spiritual formation, community, and mission.

Below are three things we have been given through the Gospel that should produce change in our lives:

*We are given a new home.* Just as God, through Jesus, has made His home in us, we now find rest and refuge in Jesus. He has saved us, keeps us secure, counts us significant and satisfies us. This means that we now run toward the eternal joy of our King rather than the temporary joys of this world.

*We are given a new family.* When God saved us, we were adopted into the family of God, the Church. This family is made up of a multitude of people who are commanded to love one another, hold fast to the confession of our hope, and to stir up one another to love and good works.

*We are given a new mission.* We heard and responded to the Gospel because of men and women who were faithful to live as missionaries sent to proclaim the good news. And now God sends us out to continue this work. We are ambassadors who carry the message of Gospel so that others may hear and believe.

## *What does the Bible say?*

- *Read John 10:27-30.* How secure does Jesus say you are in His hand? How does this give confidence to His sheep?
- *Read Galatians 5:22-24.* How does the fruit of the Spirit differ from the fruit of the flesh?
- *Read 2 Timothy 2:2.* What does Paul tell Timothy to do here? Why?

## *How do I apply what I learned?*

Spend some time discussing these questions:

- What are the most important things you've learned the last three months and how have you put them into practice in your life?
- Where have you seen the fruit of the Spirit lived out in your City Group?
- How can your group continue to practice these things?

## *Praying Truth*

**Praise.** Praise God that He sent Jesus to save us by grace through faith in His life, death, and resurrection.

**Admit.** Confess times when you have forgotten your new identity and have tried to live for yourself.

**Request.** Ask God that the Holy Spirit would daily remind you that you are saved, secure, significant, and satisfied in Jesus.

**Thank.** Thank Jesus for what He has done to spiritually grow you in your life and in your City Group.

## Week 2 | *The Family Meal*

### *Experiencing the Family*

The Gospel brings us into God's family. As believers, we are more than a Bible study or a support group, we are a family! Families share life as they gather around tables and enjoy meals together. That's why this week your City Group will be sharing a meal together.

Meals were at the very core of Jesus' ministry as he often ate with His disciples, sinners and unbelievers, and many other friends along the way (Matthew. 9:9-17, 26:20-30; Luke 10:38-42). The early church did more than just gather at the temple for preaching, they met in homes to eat with one another, encourage one another, and point one another back to Jesus.

"They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts." (Acts 2:46)

### *Why are Tables so important?*

Meals remind us of God's Provision. God is gracious to provide us with food, but ultimately we want to remember that Jesus is God's ultimate provision. He is the bread of life who saves sinners (John 6:35).

Meals remind us of our Humanity. You may be strong or weak, young or old, rich or poor, but eating together reminds us that we are all humans who get hungry and need food.

Meals create space for Community. God has not left us alone. He gives us a community to belong to. The dinner table is a space to share stories, joys, pains, and hopes with other believers (Romans 12:15).

## *Coaching for Family Meals*

Communicate with the group at least one week in advance that you are doing a Family Meal.

Pick a main dish or theme (i.e. taco night) and invite group members to bring a side to share.

The host should prepare by making sure there is enough seating for everyone.

Remind the group why family meals are important and introduce the Connection Questions for the night.

And remember to have fun! Laughter and fun help build deep friendships.

## *Connecting Around the Table*

Share a meal together. As you eat, walk through these questions together!

These questions will help you begin to brainstorm a City Group mission statement. Next week you will learn how to write a good mission statement and write one for your City Group.

- What are you passionate about?

- What opportunities has God given you to love and serve others?

Imagine your City Group 1 year from now. What kind of impact would you like to see in a neighborhood or network of relationships?

## Week 3 | *Equipping*

### How to Write a Mission Statement

#### **Missional Communities.**

City Groups are Missional Communities. A Missional Community is a community of Christ followers on mission with God in obedience to the Holy Spirit that demonstrates tangibly and declares creatively the Gospel of Jesus Christ to a specific neighborhood or network of people.

As you can imagine, it takes time and effort by everyone in the group to see all of these things happen. A clear mission statement will remind the group of your purpose and help unite you around a shared mission.

#### ***Creating Your Mission Statement.***

A mission statement is a short statement of why a group or an organization exists. It neatly summarizes the overall goal, the primary audience, the service provided, and the specific geographical region.

Below are examples of neighborhood and network mission statements:

**Neighborhood** - “Our mission is to reach the Blackstone neighborhood with the Gospel by regularly visiting local restaurants to make new friends for the purpose of sharing Jesus with them.”

**Network** - “Our mission is to reach recent graduates by building relationships at our places of work so that through sharing the Gospel, disciples of Jesus are made.”

For City Groups, your mission statement will summarize who you are living on mission to, what you are asking God to do, where your mission will take place, and how you will regularly engage in your mission.

## Why is it important to have a mission statement?

**It guides the City Group.** A mission statement communicates the defined mission field (neighborhood or network) of a City Group, which helps the group commit to living on mission.

**It helps support direction.** Your mission statement helps you focus on your City Group's purpose and helps you make decisions that will achieve your mission goals.

**It inspires new ideas.** When your City Group works together and discusses your group's mission statement, it can inspire new ideas about how to live on mission.

**It informs you how to pray.** Your mission statement helps your City Group know how to pray specifically for the people you are loving and serving.

## Write your City Group Mission Statement

To begin writing your mission statement, take a moment to pray with your group. Where would God lead your group and to who would He have you serve? Then, discuss the following questions:

- Who are people that God has placed in your life that don't know Jesus?
- What are practical ways that you can develop better relationships with these people?
- What are practical ways that you can love and serve these people?
- Imagine your City Group one year from now. What kind of impact would you like to see in the neighborhood or network of relationships that you've chosen?

## FAQ

What if our group doesn't have the same network, neighborhood, or passion to serve? Or what if we can't decide on our mission statement tonight?

Prayer is needed for this situation. God brought your group together for His specific purpose and it will take prayer to know exactly what that is. Begin to regularly pray personally and corporately. Pray throughout your week and at the beginning of each City Group gathering. Ask God to reveal the mission He has for you. Common themes will begin to emerge and then step into those opportunities.

## Week 4 | *Celebration Checkpoint*

### Assessing Growth

Congratulations, you've made it through Module B!

As you look back on these past four months, take a moment to reflect. Each module is not independent of the other modules, but rather works with them in order for you to experience greater depths of learning and discipleship.

As you reflect on your past four months with your City Group, discuss these questions:

1. What has God been teaching you and your group?
2. How has your group grown in your understanding of your identity in Christ?
3. How can your group continue to encourage another to grow spiritually?

### Don't forget the Gospel

If the most important Core Value at Citylight is the Gospel, why don't we dedicate a module to that? Actually, the Gospel is necessarily interwoven throughout each module. While spiritual formation, community, and mission are the focuses of each module, the Gospel is the foundation on which they sit. The Gospel is the cause, while spiritual formation, community, and mission are the effects it should have on one's life.

As you continue reflecting, ask yourself how Jesus' life, death, and resurrection has impacted your learning and discipleship:

1. How does your new identity in Christ give you a greater understanding of the Gospel?
2. How does the Gospel empower you to live in light of your new identity in Christ?

## ***Pray and Celebrate!***

- Reflect and celebrate over the last 4 months how God has changed you and your City Group through your study of Scripture, community with one another, and equipping for mission.
- Pray and thank God for His love that He has shown us through Jesus Christ. Ask God to continue to transform your life and use your City Group as a missional community for His glory!