MADEFOR



MADE FOR MADE FOR

WEEK ONE: John 15

WEEK TWO: Galatians 5

WEEK THREE: Ephesians 5

WEEK FOUR: Colossians 3

WEEK FIVE: Philippians 2:1-4; 3:7-10; 3:12-21

WEEK SIX: Ephesians 3:14-20

"We overestimate what we can accomplish in a year or two, but we underestimate what God can do in a decade or two or three!" —Mark Batterson

"It would seem that Our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased."

— C.S. Lewis, The Weight of Glory, and Other Addresses

The idea of Made For More is that God has more for us in most areas of our lives than we can imagine. We tend to stop short. Settle for less. Talk ourselves out of what God has shown us is best for us. What might a life, totally committed to following Jesus in every area of life look like? That's what we are trying to discover in the following pages. Enjoy.

WEEK ONE

JOHN 15

¹ "I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. ² He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. ³ You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. ⁴ Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

⁵ "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶ If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. ⁷ If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸ This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

⁹ "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. ¹⁰ If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love. ¹¹ I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. ¹² My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. ¹³ Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. ¹⁴ You are my friends if you do what I command.

¹⁵ I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. ¹⁶ You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. ¹⁷ This is my command: Love each other.

¹⁸ "If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. ¹⁹ If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you. ²⁰ Remember what I told you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also. ²¹ They will treat you this way because of my name, for they do not know the one who sent me. ²² If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not be guilty of sin; but now they have no excuse for their sin. ²³ Whoever hates me hates my Father as well. ²⁴ If I had not done among them the works no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin. As it is, they have seen, and yet they have hated both me and my Father. ²⁵ But this is to fulfill what is written in their Law: 'They hated me without reason.'

²⁶"When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father—the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father—he will testify about me. ²⁷ And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning.

When babies are in the womb they are connected to their mothers with an umbilical cord. The umbilical cord is totally vital for the development and survival of the baby. Everything the baby needs, and everything that the mother provides has to be transmitted through the umbilical cord. Without it, there is no life for the baby.

The relationship isn't mutual, it's dependent. The baby is 100% dependent on the mother for absolutely everything. Mood, food, growth, safety, comfort. Everything.

Our relationship with God is a similar kind of relationship. We are totally reliant on God for absolutely everything. Every breath we take is because He has orchestrated it. Every ability we have, He has given us. We love because He is love. We can know and be known because He knew us first. He has known us since before the beginning of time.

There are multiple places in Scripture that show who God is to us. John 15 is Jesus talking on the night He is betrayed. This is after the Last Supper and Jesus is alone with His disciples. The word He has for them is powerful and simple: **Stay connected to me.**

The way to flourishing is for you to stay connected with God. This is not an occasisional connection, like an airplane connecting to a jet bridge when it's time to let passengers off. Flourishing comes from permanent, constant connection with God.

This passage tells us quite vividly what it looks like when we aren't connected. We die, and it doesn't take long. If you are a gardener, you have weeded your garden before, and you know it doesn't take long for the weeds you pull to be wilted and dead. There is no coming back from that. That's true for the weeds, and quite frankly, it's true for us.

So what does being connected to God look and feel like? The word to best describe it is flourishing. Flourishing in all facets of life.

The word "flourish" means growing or developing in a healthy or vigorous way, especially as the result of a particularly favorable environment. What Jesus offers us is the perfect environment. This doesn't mean that He's going to change every circumstance in our lives so that everything is perfect all the time, but He does send the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, to dwell in us.

We have the Holy Spirit living in us as followers of Jesus. This allows us to be constantly connected to Jesus. We are never apart from His love, grace, and mercy. That is a pretty wonderful environment in which to grow!

Flourishing can look different for all of us. We aren't all exactly the same. By design, God has created and gifted us differently so we can make up the entire body of Christ. The goal of flourishing isn't to turn into someone else. It's to become the absolute best version of ourselves by living fully into what Jesus has given us to do, and by receiving all that He wants to give us, leaning on the Holy Spirit for guidance.

Now we can, and often do, ignore the Holy Spirit. What that gives us is an incomplete version of ourselves. It's like a tree that doesn't produce it's fruit.

Ignoring the Holy Spirit produces a lot of churn but no butter. We are active but disconnected. When we act in intentional disconnection from the Spirit of God, there is no fruit. We aren't moving forward, and we aren't flourishing.

Flourishing isn't a requirement of following Jesus. We get to choose it. It's possible to believe Jesus is who He says He is, get our "get out of hell free card" and sit on the sidelines waiting to

die. It's possible. Sounds terrible, but it's possible.

Jesus gives us the opportunity to be connected to Him. To have Him with us all the time, guiding us, directing us, encouraging us, and challenging us. Doesn't that sound like a life you want to live? It's time to get off the bench. Stand up, get connected to the Holy Spirit, and get in the game. It's time to flourish.

QUESTIONS

What does it look like in your life to remain connected to Jesus like a branch to the vine?

Where do you see evidence of "fruit" in your life? Where do you sense God might want to prune for greater fruitfulness?

How does remembering your complete dependence on God change the way you view success, relationships, or struggles?

In what area of your life do you need to "get off the bench" and fully engage with the Spirit so you can flourish?

WEEK 1

GALATIANS 5:1;13-25

¹ "It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.

¹³ You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love. ¹⁴ For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself." ¹⁵ If you bite and devour each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.

¹⁶ So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. ¹⁷ For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want. ¹⁸ But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

¹⁹ The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; ²⁰ idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions ²¹ and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. ²⁴ Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵ Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit."

Have you ever heard of a hobble for a horse? A hobble takes one leg of a horse and either ties it to another leg or ties one leg up under the belly of the horse. It keeps the horse from being able to move quickly anywhere. It's a way to keep a horse under control if you are in a place without any fences.

A hobbled horse outside of a fenced area isn't very free, in fact, it can't really go anywhere.

The largest single-fenced ranch in the world, at more than 535,000 acres, is the Waggoner Ranch in Texas. A horse within the boundaries of the Waggoner Ranch has a lot more freedom than the hobbled horse outside the fencing.

We often believe freedom means being without boundaries, but in actuality, some boundaries produce more freedom.

Have you ever been on a mountain road in the Rockies? Picture that road for a moment in your mind. Does your road going through a mountain pass in the Rockies have guardrails? How does your driving change if there are not guardrails? The road without guardrails feels narrower and the drive feels more dangerous. In this case, we feel safe to drive more freely because of boundaries that were set up.

So are boundaries bad? No, they are priceless.

As followers of Jesus, we get the freedom that comes from surrendering control of our lives to Jesus. It seems like an oxymoron that surrender brings about freedom, but that is totally what happens.

What does living in the freedom of Christ look like? That's what the rest of Galatians 5 looks at. We are challenged to put away the things of the flesh, stop doing those things. The things we are asked to stop doing in this passage are things that steal our joy anyway.

¹⁹ "The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; ²⁰ idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions ²¹ and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like."

These are the things we settle for. They don't bring the joy we thought they might. We don't feel good about our choices. Any satisfaction we do feel doesn't last as long as we would hope. It points to the fleeting reality of a life lived outside the grace and mercy of Jesus. Rejecting Jesus means choosing finite when infinite is available to us.

What Jesus offers us through the fruit of the Spirit is a completely fulfilling life. A life worth living.

The author of the Chronicles of Narnia, C.S. Lewis, has a great quote that informs us in this conversation.

"It would seem that Our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased."

— C.S. Lewis, The Weight of Glory, and Other Addresses

We stop short of the desires Jesus wants for us. Living into the fruit of the Spirit is a much richer life. A life filled with love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control is simply a better life.

The fruit of the Spirit don't happen to us, we choose it. We choose love. We choose to have joy or not. We choose peace. We choose to exhibit patience. Kindness is always a choice. We choose

goodness. Faithfulness is a consistent decision we make. We choose gentleness. Just by the phrase we realize self-control is a choice.

What kind of life do you want to have?

We are made for more, and Jesus wants more for us than we want for ourselves. He wants us to live in the freedom and fullness of the Spirit.

QUESTIONS

Where have you confused freedom with the absence of boundaries? How does this passage reframe freedom for you?

Which "acts of the flesh" do you most often settle for, and how have they left you feeling empty or unsatisfied?

Which fruit of the Spirit do you most want God to cultivate in you right now? Why?

How might choosing to walk in the Spirit daily help you experience the "more" God has made you for?

WEEKTHREE

EPHESIANS 5:8-33

⁸ For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light ⁹ (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) ¹⁰ and find out what pleases the Lord. ¹¹ Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. ¹² It is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. ¹³ But everything exposed by the light becomes visible—and everything that is illuminated becomes a light. ¹⁴ This is why it is said:

"Wake up, sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you."

¹⁵ Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, ¹⁶ making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. ¹⁷ Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is. ¹⁸ Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit, ¹⁹ speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, ²⁰ always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

²¹ Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

²² Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. ²³ For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. ²⁴ Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.

²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her ²⁶ to make her holy, cleansing her

by the washing with water through the word, ²⁷ and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. ²⁸ In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. ²⁹ After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church— ³⁰ for we are members of his body. ³¹ "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." ³² This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. ³³ However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

In his book, *Strength to Love*, Martin Luther King Jr. says, "Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that."

Did you know darkness is only defined by describing the light that is or isn't present? Darkness defined is the total, or near total, absence of light. That means darkness only exists where light doesn't. Darkness cannot overwhelm light, but light can, and always does, overwhelm darkness.

There are very few places on the planet that are really dark. The Antarctic polar ice caves are considered the "darkest place on earth." This is especially true during the winter when the sun never crosses the horizon. Almost zero natural light is able to penetrate the ice to reach the caves.

There are dark places you can visit much more easily than that. However, they are dark in a different way. Places known as "Dark Sky Sanctuaries" are places where there is the least ground light pollution so that more light from the heavens is viewable.

These places are breathtaking and the reality of light overwhelming darkness is all the more real when you are present there.

This is no surprise as God created light. God is, in fact, light. In the book of Revelation, we learn that when Jesus comes back to rule on the earth, we won't need the sun in the sky because the glory of God will illuminate the city.

Light always wins.

We can see light, and by light we see all things. God designed our eyes so that they work by interacting with the light around them. Our eyes receive light into the lens and cornea and focus that light onto the retina so that can be translated to our brains as an

image. If light doesn't reflect off of an object it can't be seen.

The next time you think of it, find a dark place in your backyard or somewhere close by and just look up. Let your eyes adjust and watch as more and more stars explode in the sky. Light traveling billions of miles for you to be in awe of God.



This passage of Scripture has so much going on in it, it's hard to believe it's all in one place. Let's look at verse 21.

²¹ Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Submit. Oh boy, here we go. No one likes this idea. Submitting means admitting defeat. Submitting means losing. Submitting means not getting our way. Submitting means having to follow someone else. None of those things sound like much fun.

The key to this verse isn't at the beginning. It is at the end. "Out of reverence for Christ." Is Jesus who He says He is? Then submit to one another. Is the Gospel true and real? Then submit to one another. Did Jesus rise from the grave on the third day? Then submit to one another. This idea is so counter to culture that we have trouble even imagining doing it. Not because we

don't believe in Jesus but because the request is so foreign to what we hear every day.

Paul asks all of us to submit to one another. Then he gives a couple examples. Wives submit to your husbands. Husbands love your wives.

Marriage advice from a dude who isn't married. That probably gives us pause. But Paul makes some good sense here. Paul isn't asking wives to submit to their husbands because their husbands are so great, but because of who Jesus is. All that we do is because of who Jesus is.

We can always find a reason not to submit to another human, because humans are flawed, make mistakes, and can have the habit of overstepping their power. But Jesus...Jesus is perfect. Because it is Jesus who requests that I submit, then I will submit. No strings attached.

Husbands love your wife as Jesus loved the church. How did Jesus love the church? He gave up His life for the church and Jesus asks men to do the same for their wives.

This passage has been weaponized over the years to try to manipulate or further a narrative that God is sexist. God is perfect and He has a perfect plan, when we read it in full. We don't want to just Google something we've heard and use that out of context. We need to understand the totality of the context surrounding the story we are giving or receiving.

Submit to one another out of reverence to Christ, is not a controversial statement.

QUESTIONS

Where do you see darkness trying to creep into your life, and how can God's light push it back?

What does "making the most of every opportunity" look like in your current season of life?

How do you respond to Paul's challenge to "submit to one another out of reverence for Christ"? Where do you resist this?

How might living in the light and practicing mutual submission help you discover the "more" God wants for your relationships?

WEEK

COLOSSIANS 3:9-17

⁹ Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices ¹⁰ and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. ¹¹ Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all.

¹² Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. ¹³ Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. ¹⁴ And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

¹⁵ Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. ¹⁶ Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. ¹⁷ And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Whether you are into fashion or not, we can all agree that what we wear matters. What someone is wearing has impact on how we view them.

Let's do a little exercise. Close your eyes and with your eyes closed, picture in your mind a surgeon. Got it?

What is the surgeon wearing? Most of you probably said the surgeon was wearing scrubs. Maybe a surgical mask and gloves. Or if you pictured a surgeon in a consult, maybe a shirt and tie.

Now, close your eyes again. Picture the same surgeon, but this time picture the surgeon wearing a pair of striped overalls like you would see on an old farmer.

That doesn't compute does it? Your eyes probably shot open at that moment because those things are so disjointed. There is nothing wrong with overalls necessarily, but only certain people wear them for work.

Most of us would have a lot of questions if we showed up for a surgery and the surgeon who came to speak with us before they prepped for surgery was wearing overalls.

Our minds have a predetermined look for different roles we interact with in our lives so that we have developed a norm for what a bus driver wears, a teacher, a nurse, a pastor, a coach, a business woman, a barber and on and on and on.

We know what we believe they should look like. When anything falls outside of that, it's shocking.

Jesus challenges us to "take off our old self." Paul, in this example, equates the transformation we experience because of our encounter with Jesus with the changing of our clothes. We take off the old and put on the new.

This is really an idea about how the world experiences us. Have you ever risked enough to ask someone you trust about what it is like to be on the other side of you? It can be alarming, like hearing your own voice on a video or voicemail. "I didn't know I sounded like that..."

What Jesus is asking us to do is surrender. Many of us believe that surrender is not an option. We would never consider giving up. Regardless of the circumstances we will fight, to the death if necessary.

Jesus is asking us to surrender our will and to lay down our lives. He asks us to pick up His will and the life He has called us to lead. Therein lies a challenge for us. What is meant by that? We get a great explanation in this passage.

¹² "Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. ¹³ Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. ¹⁴ And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity."

We are God's chosen people. God chose you, He acted first in your relationship. He picked you before the beginning of time to be part of the family of God. The family has a uniform. It looks like compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience.

Compassion: concern for the sufferings or misfortunes of others
Kindness: the quality of being friendly, generous and considerate
Humility: the feeling or attitude that you have no special
importance that makes you better than others
Gentleness: being kind, tender, or mild-mannered
Patience: the capacity to accept or tolerate delay, trouble, or
suffering without getting angry or upset

This sounds a lot like Jesus. His entire ministry was based on concern for the sufferings and misfortunes of others. He was friendly, generous, and considerate with everyone He encountered, save the religious leaders of the day. Jesus was so humble that He willingly left the glory of heaven to come to earth as a child. Jesus was gentle with those who no one else even looked at, and His patience with His disciples, specifically, was beyond remarkable. Thankfully, He is equally patient with us.

This is who Jesus is, and our calling as followers of Jesus is to become like Him. To do so, this is our list of "clothes to wear."

Just this is enough. There is a lot there. But the passage continues to talk about how we are to forgive. Forgiveness is a tough one. So many of us have unique stories of hurt and betrayal that it's impossible to have a one size fits all description of how to forgive.

Paul gives us a blueprint here that is close. 'Forgive as the Lord forgave you (v. 13)." Some of us feel really forgiven, because we had a long list of wrongs in how we lived our lives in the past. Some of us less so. Surely there is a limit? Surely there is a line that can't be crossed in Jesus eyes?

"Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing..." (Luke 23:34). Jesus, while hanging on the cross, asks God to forgive those who nailed Him there.

Does that feel like it's over anyone's personal line of how far they'd be willing to go to forgive?

This part of the passage wraps up by asking us to put on love as our garment above all the others. Love God and love your neighbor as yourself. It's not just a pithy saying, Jesus means it. This is how He wants us to live all of the time.

QUESTIONS

What parts of your "old self" are hardest to take off?

Which of the "clothes" listed—compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, love—do you most want to put on in this season?

How does remembering that God chose you before the beginning of time change the way you live and relate to others?

What would it look like for people around you to tangibly experience Jesus through the "new self" you put on each day?

WEEK R

PHILIPPIANS 2:1-21

¹ Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, ² then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. ³ Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, ⁴ not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

- ⁵ In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:
- ⁶ Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;
- ⁷ rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.
- ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death even death on a cross!
- ⁹ Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name,
- ¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
- ¹¹ and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

- ¹² Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, ¹³ for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.
- ¹⁴ Do everything without grumbling or arguing, ¹⁵ so that you may become blameless and pure, "children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation." Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky ¹⁶ as you hold firmly to the word of life. And then I will be able to boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labor in vain. ¹⁷ But even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you. ¹⁸ So you too should be glad and rejoice with me.
- ¹⁹ I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, that I also may be cheered when I receive news about you. ²⁰ I have no one else like him, who will show genuine concern for your welfare. ²¹ For everyone looks out for their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ.

In 2016, a film named *Hacksaw Ridge* was released that dramatized the amazing story of PFC Desmond Doss, a medic who participated in one of the most brutal battles on Okinawa. The division Doss was attached to was attempting to take the Maeda Escarpment, a large cliff in the southern part of Okinawa Island in the city of Urasoe.

The 400 foot cliff, nicknamed Hacksaw Ridge by the GI's was an imposing problem for the Army. After finally reaching the top of the cliff the 77th Infantry Division was quickly repelled back down the ridge while sustaining substantial casualties. The division was ordered off the cliff, but Doss refused to go. During the next several hours, Doss single-handedly rescued 75 wounded men from the ridge under enemy fire and lowered them all the way to the bottom where they could receive treatment.

Over the next three weeks, Doss continued to put himself in harm's way to serve and save others including crawling more than 300 yards to an aid station after being wounded while treating wounded soldiers, because he wanted the litter bearers to take a soldier who was more critical.

This story is an all-around radical display of putting others first. Doss lived out this passage in a unique way as he leaned on his faith while serving in WWII.

This is obviously not everyone's story, nor does it need to be. Do each of us have the opportunity to consistently put others first? Absolutely. And you probably won't have to risk your life quite like Private Doss did.

Jesus gives us a beautiful example, and we are called to follow in His steps.

"To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps." 1 Peter 2:21

In your sphere of influence, who is someone you can serve? Who is someone you are walking with in everyday life?

One of the things we like to talk about is how everyone is on a journey with Jesus. We get to go on this journey with others - some who are also working their way toward Jesus and some who are currently moving away. The key is to make sure we continue walking with others.

Jesus gave us an example of how to disciple others by calling 12 disciples to himself and walking with them for more than 3 years. Over time, Jesus invested in personal relationships with those He was walking with.

Paul followed suit by taking care to find young people to invest in. Timothy, mentioned in verse 19, is one of Paul's star pupils; but not his only one.

The example Paul is giving to the people of Philippi is one of selfless service and becoming a disciple who makes disciples. That example isn't just for them, but for us as well.

QUESTIONS

Who in your sphere of influence can you serve in practical, sacrificial ways this week?

How do you wrestle with selfish ambition or vain conceit, and what might humility look like in those areas?

Paul pressed on toward the goal of knowing Christ fully—what does "pressing on" look like for you right now?

How would valuing others above yourself allow you to experience the "more" Jesus calls you into?

WEEK SIX

EPHESIANS 3:6-21

⁶ This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.

⁷ I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God's grace given me through the working of his power. ⁸ Although I am less than the least of all the Lord's people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the boundless riches of Christ, ⁹ and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things. ¹⁰ His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, ¹¹ according to his eternal purpose that he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord. ¹² In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence. ¹³ I ask you, therefore, not to be discouraged because of my sufferings for you, which are your glory.

¹⁴ For this reason I kneel before the Father, ¹⁵ from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. ¹⁶ I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, ¹⁸ may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, ¹⁹ and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

²⁰ Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, ²¹ to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

Humans are enamored with mysteries. It's the most popular genre of books sold in the US, movies involving interesting mysteries have been popular for decades, and countless TV shows are dedicated to various versions of mystery.

The Bible is chock full of mysteries, so to speak. Do we know when Jesus was born? What year or what time of year was He born? What happened to the Ark of the Covenant? Where are the remnants of Noah's Ark? What happened to the disciples? Where is Moses buried? How did everything go down with satan falling from heaven?

Mystery didn't originate in the minds of authors, but with God. God doesn't feel compelled to reveal everything to us mere humans, nor should He. That's where faith comes in. **Our lives are supposed to be lives of faith, not certainty.**

Paul was tapped by God, from his place of persecuting the church, to become the preacher to the Gentiles. The Gentiles are all the people who aren't part of the Jewish people. The Jewish people thought there was no hope for the Gentiles and they wouldn't have anything to do with them.

When Jesus showed up on the scene, everything changed. When Jesus died and the earthquake happened, (see Matthew 27:50-54) the curtain in the Temple that separated the Holy of Holies from the rest of the Temple was torn totally in two.

The curtain was in place because the Holy of Holies is where God would meet with the High Priest. No one else was ever allowed there, but when the curtain was torn, God became available to all the people. This was at least part of the purpose of Jesus coming to earth. Before this, God was just the God of Israel, but with Jesus showing up and tearing the curtain, God became accessible to all people.

So He needed someone dedicated to sharing the Gospel with

the rest of the world so He tapped Paul. Paul was quite the choice. While he was a Roman citizen, he was also Jewish and a Pharisee. He was trained by the best Rabbi of his time. Not only was he very Jewish, but he was also actively persecuting the followers of the Way. Arresting them and ensuring their demise.

This is who God chose. Why? It's a mystery. But the results have been amazing. Sharing about the love of Christ, started by Paul a couple thousand years ago is still happening today because of the work he started and the grace and mercy of God.

The love of God is another mystery that is hard for the human mind to comprehend, but that doesn't mean that God doesn't desire a relationship with us. This part of the passage makes that clear.

¹⁷ I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, ¹⁸ may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, ¹⁹ and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

Do we have any ability to understand the totality of God's love? Not really. It's more. Can you explain why God would send His one and only Son to die to redeem a rebellious people? The answer is because He loves us, but does that make any sense? Not really. His love is so rich and complex we can't begin to understand.

And God doesn't just save us, He actually has more for us than that. One of the more famous verses in all of Scripture is in this passage.

²⁰ Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, ²¹ to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

He can, and will, do more than we can ask or imagine. More than we can imagine? God wants more for us than we want for ourselves. God isn't a principal trying to catch us doing bad things. He loves us.

He wants more for us. Do we want more for ourselves?

QUESTIONS

When you think about the "width, length, height, and depth" of Christ's love, what aspect feels most real to you? Which feels hardest to grasp?

Where do you need to let God's love move from head knowledge to heart experience?

What is one area of your life where you've been asking too little of God—where He might want to do "immeasurably more"?

How can being rooted in Christ's love give you the courage to live as if you are truly made for more?