

# Journey... The Good Life Studies in the Gospel of John

What truly constitutes a “good life”? Is it the American dream? As Millennials and Gen Zers come of age amidst economic recessions, a global pandemic, skyrocketing mortgage rates, dwindling job security, postponed marriage and family plans, and insurmountable student debt, this question takes on renewed urgency. Many are beginning to even question higher education, given the difficulty of securing a job following graduation, let alone long-term employment. For recent graduates, a good life can seem like a distant, unattainable dream.

Yet the author of the three epistles of John, writing from first century Asia Minor, faced an even bleaker economic and political climate. As a Jewish convert to Christianity, he belonged to a conquered people, lacking the rights of Roman citizenship. His family, fishermen by trade, were naturally poor, and Roman taxation made wealth accumulation nearly impossible. Education was limited to those deemed worthy enough to study the Torah under a designated Rabbi. The rest had to learn a trade of their fathers – hence why John and his brother James were fishing when Jesus called them. Life was simple, centered around farming, fishing, family and faith. This was the only “good life” John knew until he encountered Jesus.

Still, questions dogged him about how an animal substitute could ever atone for his sin. Imagine then his curiosity when John the Baptist pointed to Jesus as “The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29).

Who was this man that the baptist singled out? John and his friend Andrew had to know, so they followed Him until Jesus noticed and asked what they wanted. There were so many things they could have asked, but the simple request was, “Rabbi, where are you staying?” Jesus’ open-hearted invitation was the beginning of a life journey into what John could only describe as the real “good life.” Here is how he would later describe it as he came to new life in and through Jesus.

*“From the very first day, we were there, taking it all in—we heard it with our own ears, saw it with our own eyes, verified it with our own hands. The Word of Life appeared right before our eyes; we saw it happen! And now we’re telling you in most sober prose that what we witnessed was, incredibly, this: The infinite Life of God himself took shape before us.” (1 John 1:1, 2) MSG*

This was a life John had never known possible – never even imagined. Jesus talked of more than economic security, political freedom or religious liberty. The good life according to Jesus was about experiencing God and a new world order. It has been said that in the first century Greeks and Romans were seeking wisdom. Jews were seeking righteousness, while Christians had found salvation in the life and mission of Jesus.

What then does the good life entail? Is it completing one’s education, landing the perfect job, finding true love, owning a dream home, having two kids and a dog, retiring early, and traveling the world? While this all sounds pretty good, they are not accessible to all, and those who do attain them may find them fleeting and unfulfilling.

Virtue was the essence of a good life according to Socrates. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. believed that the good life included racial equality, while Gandhi pointed to inner peace, and Mother Teresa to compassion. For Nelson Mandela, forgiveness was a key component. Yet, all of these ideals ultimately point back to Jesus, who opened wide the doors of God’s kingdom and invited all to experience heaven now.

What does that kingdom look like? What insights does John offer us in his intimate letters to the small house churches he pastored across Turkey? Jesus once invited John to “come and see” – now it is our turn to embark on a journey toward the good life he found in Jesus.

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Breaking Down *Journey*

*Journey* was created for larger weekly on or off campus meetings in a teaching format and small group discussion. The beginning story or illustration introduces the topic of study.



- **Journey Together** helps ease participants into the topic through ice-breaker related questions.



- **Road Map** is the main passage for discussion followed by questions that help draw out the topic. If you are leading *Journey*, feel free to depart from these as needed and come up with your own questions, while staying on track with the main direction of the study laid out in the leader’s guide.



- **My Story** has been prepared as a continuation of the larger group meetings for smaller groups that meet during the week to check in with one another and reflect on how God is using *Journey* in their daily life. We recommend these groups be flexible in terms of location and meeting time. Also, the amount of questions are limited in the My Story section, allowing for more personal interactions and life application.



- **Back Story** is a helpful guide for those leading out in the *Journey* Series and is only included in the leader’s book.

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Getting the  
most out of  
*Journey*

Here's what you're going to need for *The Good Life*:

- Good soil – an open and receptive heart
- Working the soil – Determination and diligence
- Hunger and thirst – Desire to follow God as He leads
- We also strongly advise reading the entire book of Luke since *Journey* only zeros in on selected episodes. Use this study guide for your group reading/discussion. The important thing is to really lean into Luke's testimony. In fact, set it aside if it's getting in the way of hearing Luke's story. Remember, Jesus is the real study, not *Journey*!

Best Practices: The five S's of hearing and discerning God's voice

- **Seek:** Pray for God to open up the passage for you. Is there a promise for you to claim, a sin to confess, a word for you to follow, an insight to share?
- **Soak:** Read the passage each day and write down any observations, thoughts, questions, connections or anything God speaks to you about the passage.
- **Seal:** Seal God's word to you deep within your heart by taking some time to meditate on the most important truth to you this week. Ask God to open the deeper recesses of your heart to teach you what you need most for your life this week.
- **Script:** Journal or write if even a few lines, noting the ways that God spoke to you from the passage, your meditation, or our group time together. This will help you keep better track of God's voice and the way He is speaking through scripture.
- **Share:** Share with someone what you are learning from your time with God in *Journey*. As you share what you are learning, it will help drive God's word home to you even more and you will notice how God will use what He has revealed to you to bless others.

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*Journey*  
Covenant

I want to follow Jesus in the noble purpose He has for me. I want to participate in *Journey* to enhance my own relationship with God this year. I will commit to doing the weekly assignments and small group meetings.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

My best times of availability are

Morning: \_\_\_\_\_

Evening: \_\_\_\_\_

Email address \_\_\_\_\_

Cell Phone \_\_\_\_\_

# Life

Scientists recently discovered a new life form on planet earth. They belong to a category called "supergroup," which is like a big branch on the tree of life. The new group is called Provora and it contains many different types of tiny organisms that eat other microbes. When scientists looked at their DNA, they found that these organisms are genetically different from anything else we know about.

For John, coming to know Jesus was like discovering a new life form - like no one he had ever met or known before. He describes the DNA of Jesus as a different kind of life - eternal life. Is Jesus a new human species and the key to "the" good life? In today's study we will take a look at John's surprising testimony of the new life form of Jesus.



1. When was the last time you had an experience so great that you couldn't wait to tell others about it?
2. Who is the most famous person you have ever met and what was it like?



## I John 1:1-4

1. What surprises you about John's encounter with Jesus?
2. What do you think John meant by "That which was from the beginning"?
3. According to his testimony, who does John believe Jesus to be?
4. What is so important about mentioning the three senses of hearing, seeing and touching the Word of Life? How do these physical connections with Jesus help support John's testimony?
5. What is John's motivation in sharing his encounter with Jesus?
6. What difference would hearing, seeing and touching Jesus mean for you? How would such intimacy with Him impact your testimony?
7. What more would you like to ask John about what it was like to encounter the Word of Life?

"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly."

John 10:10



1. How has God been using Journey in your life this week on campus?
2. What impresses you most about John and his testimony about Jesus?
3. What are you praying to learn about Jesus from John?



## Back Story

John's personal account of Jesus' life is distinctive among the disciples and other narratives, as it is written from a deeply intimate encounter. From the very beginning, John leaned into Jesus, taking the cue from John the Baptist to learn more about the One referred to as "the Lamb of God."

As John and his good friend Andrew began to follow Jesus, He turned around and asked them what they wanted. The two inquisitors asked, "Rabbi, where are you staying?" Jesus replied, "Come and see!" The rest of John's gospel account of Jesus records what he saw and experienced in Jesus, while the house church epistles provide perspective on how the followers of Jesus were to model His life.

John does not apologize for his opinion of who Jesus was. In fact, at the very end of his personal account of Jesus' life, he wrote, *"Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name"* (John 20:30, 31).

In his concluding statement in the very last chapter, John emphasized that his testimony was true and that Jesus did many other things as well. So many that if he were to record them all there would not be enough books to contain them.

This means that John was selective in his details of Jesus' life. In fact, the gospel of John is well organized around the seven signs that made clear who Jesus was.

1. Turning water to wine at Cana wedding (John 2)
2. Healing an official's son - Cana (John 4)
3. Healing a man at the Pool of Bethesda (John 5)
4. Feeding the five thousand, Passover (John 6)
5. Replacing water and light, Tabernacles (John 8)
6. Healing a man born blind (John 9)
7. Raising Lazarus from the dead (John 11)

Of course, the greatest sign was Jesus' own death and resurrection, making it absolutely clear in John's mind that Jesus was not only sent from God, but was the very nature of God in human form.

"A certain ruler once asked Jesus 'Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?' So Jesus said to him, 'Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God.'" (Luke 18:18-30)

Jesus was known as a good teacher, but the question is whether He was God. This was John's personal conviction. According to John, Jesus was the Word of Life and the only uniquely good human being to ever walk the face of the planet. If that is true, Jesus is the one and only way to the truly good life that God intends for all of us.

# God's Love

Other than my family, Carolyn, my wife, was the first person I told "I love you." We were walking back to our dorms from a Saturday evening program in college. It was a warm spring night and had just begun to sprinkle. We kissed for the first time and I couldn't help myself. The words came tumbling out, "I love you." I meant it even though I was a bit naive about really knowing what it meant. She, on the other hand, though feeling it too, was much more sensible and restrained, replying with, "I like you too!" It took her a week to check her heart before she could respond with her own, "I love you."

For John, the good life in a word was love. He had never experienced love the way he felt loved by Jesus. God in Christ had not come to condemn, but to demonstrate divine love by seeing, hearing, touching, healing and sacrificing Himself for others. John heard, saw and felt the love of God. What can he teach us about the extravagant love of God and the good life He longs for all to experience?



1. When was the first time and first person you told I love you? How did that go?
2. Who has taught you most about love and loving others?



I John 2:1-11; 4:13-21

1. What do these verses tell you about the love God has for us?
2. When has perfect love cast out fear in your life?
3. What is the new command that God is giving us? How is it both new and old at the same time?
4. How does keeping God's command demonstrate our love for God?
5. How can we tell if we are walking in the light or stumbling in the darkness still?
6. What is the connection between God's love for us and our love for one another?
7. What are you learning about true love and "the" good life?

"As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you. Now remain in my love."

John 15:9



1. How has God been using Journey in your life this week on campus?
2. What is God saying to you about His love for you?
3. How can you help others experience abundant life in Christ?



## Back Story

John was deeply transformed by Jesus, particularly by his experience of divine love. He felt a genuine sense of love from Jesus that he had never experienced before. This love was so profound that John referred to himself as “the disciple that Jesus loved” (John 13:23). While some may wonder if this meant that he believed himself to be the most favored disciple, it is better understood as John’s personal experience of encountering Jesus. He wasn’t claiming to be the only one who felt loved by Jesus. Peter, James and the other disciples likely also felt loved in a similar way, but for John it was truly a defining experience.

To be loved is a wonderful thing. It reminds me of the story of the Velveteen Rabbit and how being loved by a little boy enabled him to become real. Love gives us the confidence to be who we are, to come out of the shadows and to live authentic lives. As John put it to his house churches, “Perfect love casts out all fear” (1 John 4:18).

John goes on to say something really profound about love and Jesus. In 1 John 4:9, 10 he reminds his readers that love is more than passionate words. Love is a verb, a demonstration.

*“This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.”*

In fact, John believed that Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross was the ultimate expression of love and the very definition of what love is (1 John 3:16). Paul, another New Testament writer, also emphasized the importance of love, calling it the foundation of a good life. In one of his most famous passages, Paul wrote that even if he had great spiritual gifts and accomplishments, without love, he would be nothing (1 Corinthians 13:1-3, 10). Love, faith and hope are important, but love is the greatest thing of all.

In conclusion, “the” good life is characterized by love. Divine love is the foundation of God’s kingdom, the atmosphere of heaven and has the power to transform us and make us loving people.

# Love for One Another

Tim was a faithful member of our college group. He often led out in our Friday evening fellowship meetings and would sometimes bring a friend. At that time, I was serving as the director of a campus house and ministry center that had space for a select group of student leaders. Tim lived in the large dorms behind our center. When the spring semester was almost over, we were looking for new house leaders and I approached Tim about becoming a leader and moving into the campus house. He told me he had thought about it, but felt he couldn't leave his friends in the dorm. That's when he told me that after Bible study he would often make his way down to the strip and look for his dorm friends to help them back to their rooms after a night of partying. Besides, who would be there to listen and pray with his friends when they needed someone to talk to?

Through his selflessness and compassion, Tim exemplified the love that Jesus taught His disciples - to love others as God had loved them. In his actions, Tim embodied the teachings of John, who emphasized the importance of loving others in the same way that God loves us. There is much we can learn from John's teachings about loving others.



1. Who was your best friend in high school? What did you learn from them about being a good friend?
2. What would you like to say to that friend now?



## John 3:11-15

1. How does John define love in these verses?
2. What does John mean by passing from death to life and how can we tell if we have done that?
3. How is failing to love others similar to being a murderer like Cain?
4. What is the connection between God's love for us and the love we are to have for one another? How can we learn from God how to love ourselves?
5. What are the results when we truly love others? What is the best example of love in action?
6. How will you choose to practice the love of Christ this week? With your family? A roommate or friend? In your campus fellowship? In politics? With social issues? A difficult person? With someone in need?
7. How is learning to love others living "the" good life?

"Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against anyone among your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord."

Leviticus 19:18



1. How has God been using Journey in your life this week on campus?
2. What is God saying to you about loving others?
3. Who is God prompting you to share His love with this week?





## Back Story

Jesus mentioned love only thirteen times in the gospels, with the majority of references found in the gospel of John. John himself repeatedly referred to love as the fruit of our life in Christ. Love for God was deemed supreme and the primary commandment, as recorded in the Hebrew Shema: "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength" (Deuteronomy 6:4-5). Remarkably, every time Jesus referenced the Shema, He followed it with what He called the second and great commandment: love for our neighbor.

When the Pharisees tested Jesus with a question about the greatest commandment in the law, Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the law and the prophets hang on these two commandments'" (Matthew 22:34-40).

Of the four types of love mentioned in the Bible: Storge (empathy), Philia (friendship), Eros (romantic) and Agape (divine or unconditional), Agape is the word used to describe how God loves us and how He intends for us to love one another. Love is the trademark of the Christian and how all will know that we are followers of Jesus. John seems to have understood and incorporated this from Jesus in a very profound way, especially as he puts so much emphasis on it in each of his epistles. Love for God or one another appears 46 times across his three epistles.

It has been noted that the success and growth of the early church was not just due to their message, but how they lived the message. The early followers of Jesus were known for their great compassion to the poor, the elderly, the sick and the disenfranchised. Fourth century Roman Emperor Julian lamented that the Christians were so compassionate and charitable that it put the Roman welfare system to shame. Christians cared for believers and non-believers alike.

What would it look like if all who claim to believe in Jesus demonstrated the compassion of the early church? Love is the strongest force in the universe. What would the unconditional love of Christ that John talks about look like on campus? What if love was our mission strategy? How many skeptics on campus would be led to rethink the mission and message of Jesus if they experienced Jesus' message in surprising ways of love and compassion? This is what Jesus called us to and what John kept reminding us of. Experiencing God's love and giving it away is the essence of "the" good life. To know and experience love is to really live!

# Forgiveness

I worked tirelessly to maintain a B average in seminary, as it was a prerequisite for graduation. However, despite my efforts, I found myself falling behind. I was juggling many responsibilities, including too many credit hours, working part-time, and volunteering at a local church. Nevertheless, none of these circumstances could justify my decision to plagiarize a paper as my own. This act was grounds for immediate dismissal from the seminary.

Regrettably, I managed to evade detection, but my conscience began to trouble me. How could I aspire to a career in ministry while simultaneously engaging in deceitful behavior? Although my professor did not discover my transgression, I knew that God did, and my spirit was in turmoil. Eventually, I realized that the only way to inner peace was to confess my wrongdoing to my professor. It was the only way to have a clear conscience.

What is the connection between confession, forgiveness and leading a good life? Is “the” good life even possible after messing up so badly? John can offer some insights on living in the light of God’s forgiving grace.



1. When was the last time you were asked to forgive someone?
2. When has someone forgiven you?



## I John 1:5-10

1. If living the good life is living in the illuminating light of God, how do you feel about having your life exposed?
2. Walking in the light of God’s holy presence while owning up to our own sin seems contradictory. How can both of these be true at the same time?
3. What do you find so difficult about confessing sin to God or others? What keeps you from owning up to your mistakes?
4. How do you feel about Jesus’ promise to forgive and cleanse us from all unrighteousness? What does that feel like?
5. John is talking about living our life with a clear conscience. How does forgiveness help define the good life?
6. John describes being with God yet not being afraid. When did you learn to be in God’s presence and not be afraid?

“Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death.”

2 Corinthians 7:10



1. How has God been using *Journey* in your life this week on campus?
2. What is God saying to you about walking in the light?
3. Where do you need forgiveness right now?



## Back Story

Walking with God is a beautiful description of the good life. What I find most compelling about John's description here about living with a clear conscience is its authenticity. He will not compromise God's holiness (God is light) yet is completely honest about human weakness (when we claim to be without sin we deceive ourselves). So, there are two truths - God is holy and we are not. How are we to reconcile these with each other?

We can try to hide our sin like Adam and Eve did in the garden by covering ourselves in denial. We can compensate by working hard to prove a right standing with God. Or we can do what John advises here. We can walk in the light of God's holiness and allow His illuminating presence to shed light on our sin, acknowledge it and confess it, so God can wipe it clean. Since God is faithful to forgive our sins, we can be honest about them and allow Him to take care of it. As Martin Luther once said, "Sin boldly," not meaning to sin with abandon. Don't attempt a cover up. Be honest about your wrongs and submit them to God since He is faithful and just to forgive.

Acknowledging our sin first to ourselves, confessing it to God, repenting of it and asking for Him to forgive is how we walk in the light. But what about living the good life of forgiveness among others? How do we walk in the light of healthy relationships with people who hurt us and those we hurt? The steps are similar.

- *Acknowledge* – our sin
- *Accept* – full responsibility for our wrongs
- *Confess* – how we have hurt others and ourselves
- *Repent* – of our transgression
- *Ask* – for forgiveness
- *Atone* – do our best to make amends
- *Correct* – seek help in changing our behavior

It may take time for the wronged person to forgive, but following these steps will go a long way in helping them realize our sincerity.

Nelson Mandela, the deceased president of South Africa, was held in prison for over 27 years for his fight to end apartheid. Reflecting on his prison release he once said, "As I walked out the door toward the gate that would lead to my freedom, I knew if I didn't leave my bitterness and hatred behind, I'd still be in prison."

The good life is not never having to say "I'm sorry." It is the life of forgiving, being forgiven and walking in the light of a changed life!

# Identity

"Sommersby" is a movie starring Richard Gere and Jodie Foster that tells the story of John "Jack" Sommersby, a farmer who left his family to fight in the Civil War and was presumed dead after six years. Laurel, his apparent widow, is content in his absence because Jack was an unpleasant and abusive husband. One day, Jack seemingly returns with a change of heart. He is now kind and loving. He claims that the change occurred during his time in prison, where he was loaned a copy of Homer's Iliad.

Some begin to suspect that Jack is an imposter. Turns out the man's real name is Horace Townsend, an English teacher and con artist from Virginia, as well as a deserter from the confederate army. In another twist, the real Jack Sommersby is dead but now presumed alive as Horace the imposter, but wanted for murder. Proving Horace's true identity could spare his life. However, shame of his past life as a swindler and coward keeps him from admitting his true identity and he ends up going to the gallows as an imposter rather than owning up to the shame of his past life.

We've all had times when we wished for a new identity. John explains in today's passage how Jesus has provided a way for us to bury our old self and rise to become children of God.



1. What do you know about your family tree?
2. If you could swap your identity, who would you want to be?



I John 2:28, 29; 3:1-10

1. What does it mean to be a "child of God"? What hope do children of God have?
2. What tell-tale attitudes and actions characterize a person who is born of God?
3. What do verses 3:1-3 tell us about God? How does this affect our self-image?
4. What does John mean that someone born of God does not sin? How can we reconcile this with John's unequivocal comment in chapter one that claiming to be without sin makes God out to be a liar?
5. How will one day "seeing Jesus as He is" help purify us for His coming?
6. How have you experienced God's lavish love this week?
7. How is becoming "children of God" living "the" good life?

"If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come."

2 Corinthians 5:17



1. How has God been using *Journey* in your life this week on campus?
2. What is God saying to you about your new identity as a child of God?
3. What if we viewed everyone on campus as a potential child of God?



## Back Story

Well, I did it! I researched my ancestry. I had 23andMe analyze my DNA. They reported that I am 99.9% European. Big surprise! People want to know who they are. Technology Review reports that over 26 million people have taken at-home DNA tests just like I did. People are even testing their dogs to learn the purity of their breed. And whatever we can't learn from our past we try to uncover through personality tests, of which there are many.

I'm glad I submitted my DNA, but I care more about where I'm headed than whatever is in my past. The truth is no DNA test can detect the transformational change of new birth in Jesus Christ. The gospel of John explains our new God shaped identity,

*"To all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God."*

I want to know more about who I am becoming than what I can learn from taking some tests or how I have been influenced by my past.

Being born of God or reborn as a child of God was one of the amazing unbelievable outcomes of John's relationship and new self-understanding. It was not enough just to see, hear and touch the incarnate God. Jesus made it possible for him and everyone to become a child of God along with Him. This is what defined John's joy - fellowship with God, but even more, inviting others into this same joy-filled life. This was where his own new life in God became "the" good life!

"God's dream for each of us is so vastly greater than the largest dream we have for ourselves. But what is his dream for us? I believe he has given us clues to what that dream is. And the longings and yearnings buried within each of us often provide those clues. It is like being on a cosmic treasure hunt. Follow one clue and it will lead you to another until you find the treasure Himself. For to find God and His ultimate will for us is to find ourselves. This is the discovery for which all of creation stands on tip toe - to see God's sons and daughters coming into their own" (*The Passionate People*, p. 14).

I'm discovering that no matter how much I search out my past or learn about myself through personality tests, the way I most come face to face with myself is through the death, resurrection, ascension and soon coming of Jesus. Here I get a sense of my utter moral failure, along with my eternal worth. Only in Christ can we uncover a new God-shaped identity. In Christ we have a wonderful, unimaginable future, regardless of what tests from the past or the present reveal. Praise God!

# Community

Bill started out in another Christian fellowship on campus when we met. I was a guest speaker for one of their events and struck up a conversation afterward with him about some things I had covered in my talk. He had his own opinions and didn't mind voicing them. He had some other idiosyncrasies that caused him to stand out from the rest of the group. But he also had some unique gifts as a musician and worship leader, as well as a keen interest in the Bible. There was a charm about him that drew us closer together.

When I asked if he would come and lead worship for our college fellowship he was eager to share his talents. Turned out that Bill was not fitting in that well with the other group and as he continued to lead worship for us, he became even more involved and offered to lead one of our Bible studies. Bill and I formed a discipleship relationship that lasted throughout his college years, into his marriage and young adult life, and has continued over the last thirty-five years. Bill found community and friendship in our campus fellowship, one of the most important elements of "the" good life on campus.



1. What did your friend group look like in high school? How would you compare it with your college group?
2. What do you look for in a supportive community of friends?



## 1 John 4:7-12

1. What does the love of God have to do with community?
2. What does the way we treat others reveal about our relationship with God?
3. What do we learn from God about how we are to treat one another?
4. What has your community taught you about His love for you?
5. Why does John say that it is a contradiction to say that we love God whom we haven't seen if we are unable to love our Christian brothers and sisters who we see all the time?
6. How can your fellowship better reflect the love God has for everyone in the group?
7. How does loving one another help complete God's love in us?
8. How does your group practice hospitality and make outsiders feel welcome?

"Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited."

Romans 12:16



1. How has God been using *Journey* in your life this week on campus?
2. What is God teaching you about being a faithful, supportive member of your fellowship?
3. Who needs your encouragement most this week?



## Back Story

The Holy Trinity, consisting of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, serves as the core of the first family unit. God places a high value on community, as evident from the creation account where He recognized Adam's need for companionship and created Eve as a helpmate to benefit them both. From this first marriage, the human family emerged, and every person on the planet can trace their roots back to this first family.

Unfortunately, humanity's departure from God led to a breakdown of community, with Adam and Eve turning on each other and Cain murdering Abel, marking the first human death. This demonstrates how hate leads to death and the breakdown of community. In his letter to the church, John suggests that God's unconditional love is the remedy for healing broken relationships. When we experience God's love, we can, in turn, love others.

John's model of house churches serves as an excellent model of Christian fellowship. Loving one another is the best way we can manifest God's love in our day-to-day relationships. Christian community provides a space to practice giving and receiving God's love. Starbucks may serve as a popular meeting place, but community is more than a place to meet and get a warm cup of coffee. It involves a real connection with God and learning from the perfect model of the Trinity's mutual support and function.

One of the best places to experience Christian community on campus is through college fellowships like Adventist Christian Fellowship (ACF). These organizations bring people together from diverse backgrounds, localities, personalities and persuasions to study scripture, pray, share meals, volunteer and support each other in the Christian faith. Healthy, supportive Christian community is a taste of Heaven itself and one of the best examples of "the" good life on campus.

# Imitation

Julia, a Taiwanese exchange student, was interested in spiritual things, but definitely not a follower of Jesus. A friend invited her to dinner and fellowship, hosted by our student advisor. It was her first time attending any kind of Christian gathering and she was curious. After dinner we read a Psalm together and shared thoughts from our reading. She later mentioned to the friend who had invited her that she could understand why people would be willing to volunteer to help others from the spiritual atmosphere in the room.

She began reading the Psalms on her own and remembered how others in our group commented about God speaking to them from scripture. However, as she read, nothing seemed to happen. Finally, one morning she was reading again and something seemed to resonate with her from what she read. She paused for a moment and thought, "So, that's what they meant by God speaking to them," and she was moved by hearing from God. She decided then to watch her new Christian friends and to imitate their spiritual habits.

Imitation is an important dynamic of discipleship. What can John teach us about imitating faithful believers and "the" good life?



1. What role models have you had in your life?
2. What character traits in your life do you hope others will imitate?



### 3 John

1. What character traits do you see in Gaius that are worthy of our imitation?
2. What was so important about showing hospitality to traveling teachers?
3. How can you tell that others were learning from Gaius?
4. What character sketch would you draw for Gaius, Diotrephes and Demetrius?
5. Have you ever been attacked by malicious gossip? How were you affected by it?
6. Jesus once said, "By their fruit you will know them." What can we learn from the fruit of Demetrius' life?
7. What does our imitation of quality friends or professors have to do with living "the" good life on campus? What qualities do you look for in your friends?

"Join together in following my example, brothers and sisters, and just as you have us as a model, keep your eyes on those who live as we do."

Philippians 3:17



1. How has God been using *Journey* in your life this week on campus?
2. What kind of impact are your friends making on your life?
3. What is God saying to you about being an influence of good for others?





## Back Story

Role models are important, especially on campus. Students can be far from home and looking to professors, TA's, graduate assistants and even roommates. John talks here about imitating good versus evil and contrasts the lives we ought to imitate with those we should not. Gaius and Demetrius are the kind of followers of Jesus that inspire qualities of compassion and hospitality. Diotrefes loves being first, is a gossip and inhospitable to those trying to advance God's kingdom.

2nd and 3rd John address the different sides of the problem of hosting traveling teachers and prophets. In 2nd John, the issue is how to deal with false teachers in comparison with 3rd John, which addresses caring for the honorable ones. Gaius and Demetrius are examples to imitate. In fact, Gaius is apparently a dear friend of John, someone he loves in the truth.

It has been suggested that followers of Jesus need three critical relationships for spiritual growth and stability. We all need a Paul or mentor to follow, a Barnabus or soul friend to share our joys and struggles with and a Timothy or mentee that we can encourage and support in their walk with God.

Is this what John meant by imitation? Discipleship is the process of imitation where we look to someone to guide us in the way of serving Christ. John was familiar with this in his own discipleship under rabbi Jesus. The list of positive character traits that John mentions here found in Gaius and Demetrius are faithfulness to the truth, walking in the truth, love for brothers (and sisters) in the faith, compassion, hospitality and being well spoken of by others.

These are the kind of things we should look for in our friends. People who are loyal, hospitable, faithful, loved and appreciated by others. Often, they are people that God brings into our lives that serve as a living model of faithfulness to the truth.

I never expected to attend college. No one in my family had completed a four-year college degree. As a result, my study habits were not great. As I reflect on my undergraduate experience, there were two people that had a huge impact on my life. One was a professor and the other was a student who became my roommate. The professor made such an impact on me that I took as many classes from him as I could. The student was stable, consistent, friendly and became a great friend. I began to imitate the professor in academics and my friend in balancing campus life.

John reminds us how important role models can be in our success on campus. Imitating others who inspire us and provide character traits that point us to God is another example of "the" good life on campus. To live a good life, we will need to imitate those who reflect "the" good life of Jesus. By our example, we can also point someone to "the" good life we have found for ourselves and exemplified in others.

# Confidence

Deciding on a topic for my Doctor of Ministry dissertation wasn't difficult. I knew that I wanted to write about discipleship and spiritual formation of college students. Knowing my topic also made the research and literature review relatively easy. However, testing my research and analyzing the data was another story. Pressure was building and I didn't feel confident on how to analyze the effectiveness of my project. I was unsure of the pre- and post-test and I was having difficulty matching student subjects with the final analysis. I had no real way to determine the value of my research. Time was running out and I decided to postpone my project completion and graduation.

That's when my student core team rescued me. I shared with them my dilemma and plan to request more time. They each encouraged me, told me of their own challenges and renewed my confidence for finishing on time. In the end, I requested a new second reader who helped tremendously and decided on personal interviews instead of a pre- and post-test. The interviews reignited my passion for my work and helped jumpstart the last couple of chapters. I had been suffering from a lack of confidence. Confidence is something John mentions a few times as an element of "the" good life in serving Christ. Let's see what he has to say.



1. When have you ever lacked confidence?
2. When was the last time someone helped you regain your confidence? How did they help?



## I John 5:13-20

1. How confident does John say we can be about our spiritual life?
2. Where do you lack confidence about your relationship with God?
3. How confident can we be that God hears us?
4. How can you help someone regain assurance in their spiritual life after a moral failure?
5. What is sin that leads to death? How can you tell the difference between sin that leads to death and sin that doesn't?
6. What are you most confident about?
7. What does confidence have to do with "the" good life?

"What then shall we say, in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us?"

Romans 8:31



1. How has God been using *Journey* in your life this week on campus?
2. How has this week's lesson renewed your confidence?
3. How can you help someone else regain their confidence?



## Back Story

Confidence, or the lack of it, is often the difference between success or failure. The story is told of a tired bird resting on a branch in the midst of a wind storm. The tree swayed with such intensity that it seemed the branch would snap in half. But the bird wasn't worried because it knew two important things. First, even without the branch, it was able to fly and would be safe by the power of its own two wings. Second, it knew there were many other branches it could fly to.

This raises the question - what do we know? Like the bird in the storm, if we know how to fly or have other options, we can maintain our confidence even when life is blowing us around. But again, confidence is only as strong as what we are certain of and can depend on.

There are a couple of things we know from I John. The first is that, compared with God, all are sinners and unable to atone for our sin through the merits of a perfect life or gallant human effort. We are simply in a bad place with God since He is righteous and we are not. There is nothing we can do to improve our situation (Romans 3:19, 20).

The second thing John emphasizes is that God has taken care of everything by sending Jesus as our sin offering, carrying our sinful self down with Him in death, gaining victory over sin and death through His perfect life and raising us with Him through His resurrection from the dead.

These two things we can be certain of - our sin and God's grace. So again, our confidence will only be as strong as what we can be sure of. If our hope is in being able to fly or to find another branch we will always lack confidence because we lack wings and have no other branches to migrate to. But if our confidence is in God, then we have nothing to fear since God has provided all we need for atonement.

Another question is how relevant assurance of salvation is on campus since the confidence we are most needing is academic success. What does confidence in God have to do with completing a college degree? Peace and confidence with God is a kind of baseline. If we are certain of God's love, forgiveness and complete salvation we are free to work on other areas in our life where we aren't as confident. We are free to fail if we are confident of eternal life. Confidence with God builds confidence in other areas of our lives. This is one of the sub-themes of all three epistles of John.

One thing that we might still wonder about is John's counsel to not pray for the sin that leads to death. What is the sin that leads to death and how is it different from "regular" sin? The three things that John keeps coming back to that we must never do is deny Jesus as Savior and Lord, not keep God's commands and fail to love one another. This is most likely what John means by sin that leads to death. This was the disinformation of the false teachers and what John warned about.

These are not accidental sins. They represent a stubborn, rebellious heart. It should also be emphasized that John doesn't say not to pray for people who are refusing God. He just says that's not what he is referring to. He promises confidence that God will hear us when it comes to restoring another brother or sister who has fallen off the path. There may come a point when not even prayer will turn someone back to God, but only God knows when that is, so we better keep praying!

# Overcomers

Tim's struggle with pornography had taken over his life. He was not alone in this struggle, as 77% of Christian men between the age of 18-30 reportedly view porn sites monthly, according to Proven Men, a porn addiction help site. However, Tim felt isolated and despised the effect porn was having on him. He longed for forgiveness and the strength to overcome.

Let's acknowledge that as humans, we may experience powerful sexual urges. Tim's main challenge was accepting God's forgiveness and overcoming feelings of shame and disgust. He believed that his behavior had made him unworthy of God's love and assistance.

To begin the journey towards victory, we must realize that God understands our weaknesses and brokenness. When I asked Tim to imagine where God would be if He were in the room with us, he replied that He would be outside. I reminded him that according to the gospels, God would not only be in the room but would wrap His arms around him. At the thought of such love, Tim broke down in tears. It was the first step toward being an overcomer. John talks about overcoming sin. Let's see what being an overcomer has to do with living "the" good life!



1. What bad habit have you ever overcome?
2. When did you come to believe that Jesus is God's Son?



1 John 2:15-17; 5:1-12

1. What does John mean by "the world"? How are you confronted by the world on campus?
2. How important is it to overcome the world and what does faith have to do with it?
3. Does overcoming the world mean ceasing from sin? How are we to understand 1 John 3:6 that living in Jesus is to stop sinning?
4. What three witnesses does John list for Jesus? In what way did Jesus come by water and blood?
5. What testimony does John say we will have in our hearts if we have come to believe in Jesus? How important is this testimony?
6. How does John say we can know that we have eternal life?
7. What aspects of "the world" are you struggling to overcome in your life?
8. How is victory over sin a component of "the" good life?

"In this world you will have trouble, but be of good cheer. I have overcome the world."

John 16:33



1. How has God been using *Journey* in your life this week on campus?
2. What are you learning about being an overcomer?
3. How can you help someone else overcome?



## Back Story

The word "sin" has become politically incorrect, much like you may hear "passed away" instead of "died" or "ill advised" instead of "a bad idea." However, the concept of sin is still relevant in the Bible, particularly in 1st and 3rd John. Sin is defined as a transgression of the law, and it has fallen out of favor as society moved away from the law of God and the Bible.

Despite this, society still has an ethical code we all understand and live by. Our legal system is based on it. We all know it's wrong to kill, hurt or even lie to another person even while we are doing it. Where does this moral compass come from? Is it just social conditioning - a necessary evolutionary step for surviving together on the planet? Whether we refer to it as sin or moral failure as John declares, breaking the common moral code leads to death - death of relationships, death of the human spirit and a shrinking of our lives.

However, according to John, sin is not just about committing sinful acts; it is something we are. The problem lies in our sinful condition, not just the sinful acts we commit. The gospel of sin management, which focuses on trying to overcome specific sins rather than addressing the larger problem of our sinful condition, is not sufficient. We need to break the power of sin itself, which is rebellion against all that is good.

Jesus Christ is the model of human goodness and the answer to the sin problem. He is the standard of law keeping which has been redefined as loving God and loving one another - something that John comes back to again and again. It is an old commandment, yet new in Him. Love is the very spirit of the law and has been incarnated in the person of Jesus Christ.

Of course, the opposite issue in overcoming sin is ceasing to sin altogether. Is John saying that to live in Christ - truly live - is to achieve sinless perfection? Many have understood 1 John 3:6 this way, "*Whoever abides in Him does not sin*" (NKJV), but that would be a misrepresentation. The Greek tense is the continuation of sin - "keeps on sinning." The good news is that Christ has come to break the power of sin in our lives and to make us overcomers, but John is a realist. He knows that "*If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us*" (1 John 1:8).

We sin because we are sinners, and the only way to overcome sin is to confess our sinful condition and receive forgiveness through Jesus Christ. This allows us to live and walk in the light of Christ's perfect life and seek the purifying work of God's Spirit. In Christ we are overcomers, who fall, but get back up again, learning and growing to be more like Him in our new standing with God.

*"Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure"* (1 John 3:2, 3).

Overcoming sin is about facing the challenges in our lives, not hiding from them or covering them up. This is a fundamental element of education, as learning involves stepping into the light of knowledge and truth while escaping the darkness of ignorance and falsehood. Overcoming all that holds us back and keeps us from becoming the people God intended us to be is God's glorious purpose for every student on every campus. Welcome to the truly good life in Jesus Christ!

# Truth

My son recently shared an image with me of an eight-month-old baby harnessed to his mother while skydiving. The boy appeared to be well strapped in and enjoying himself with his face pressed back by the wind. Still, there were many negative comments about a mother taking her baby on such a dangerous dive. I was shocked as well and reacted strongly to the image.

But it wasn't real! The entire video was computer generated right down to a CGI baby. And here's the question - how can we tell what is real and what is not? Seeing is no longer believing! What is the basis for truth in a postmodern society? Even more importantly, is there such a thing as absolute Truth? Many no longer think so, but John argues for the truth about Truth as another element of "the" good life. Let's see what he has to say.



1. When have you ever believed a lie? Explain.
2. When was the last time you intentionally deceived someone?



I John 2:18-26; 2 John

1. What does John mean by Antichrist? How can there be many antichrists and how do they compare to "the" Antichrist who is coming?
2. What does John mean to "know the truth"?
3. What is the relationship between having "the anointing of the Holy One" and knowing the Truth?
4. What is the truth that John speaks of in 2 John that is in those who believe and will live in them forever?
5. How are the twin themes of truth and love interconnected in 2 John?
6. How have you experienced God's lavish love this week?
7. What does walking in the Truth look like on campus? What is the relationship of having the Truth alive in us and "the" good life?

"If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

John 8:31, 32



1. How has God been using *Journey* in your life this week on campus?
2. What is God saying to you about the relationship between truth and love?
3. How are you living the Truth on campus?



## Back Story

Fake news is more and more common today and can have serious consequences. Some stories have no basis in fact but when repeated enough times and with enough conviction people begin to believe them.

Some fake stories are relatively harmless, but others can have serious consequences. One example is the 2016 "PizzaGate" incident, where a man falsely believed a pizza restaurant was host to a child sex-trafficking ring and went in shooting. Fortunately, no one was hurt.

Fake news isn't new, though. There's quite a bit of fake news out there regarding the person of Jesus. Even though such "news" has no factual basis, it's believed by an uncomfortably large number of people. (Adapted from "5 'Fake News' Stories People Believe About Early Christianity," [www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/5-fake-news-stories-people-believe-about-early-christianity/](http://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/5-fake-news-stories-people-believe-about-early-christianity/))

Apparently, there was also quite a market for fake news in the first century. The introduction to 2 and 3 John in the Serendipity Bible explains that "Itinerant missionaries were the means by which Christianity spread throughout the Roman Empire. They looked to local churches to aid in their mission by providing hospitality. The problem was that some of the people seeking room and board were false teachers, expounding erroneous doctrines; others were phonies, pretending to be true prophets in order to get free hospitality" (p. 1704).

One false claim about Jesus that circulated in the first century was that He only appeared to come in the flesh. The Docetists taught that Jesus' human form was just a semblance with no physical reality. John was already fighting this fake news about Jesus in his day and he wrote about it here.

But truth as John refers to it in his gospel and in the epistles is more than correct information or a warning against counterfeit religion. Truth is a verb, an act. John's interchangeable word for truth is love. Jesus is the Truth because Jesus is divine unconditional love. Antichrist is a pseudo Christ, a pretender - someone who claims to save but has no saving agency. Antichrists like the false teachers were already at work in John's day, but the real Antichrist would not come until just before Jesus' return, masquerading as the messianic answer to the world's many problems (2 Thessalonians 2).

The Roman governor Pontius Pilate once asked Jesus, "What is truth?" Jesus did not answer because Truth was standing right in front of him. If Pilate couldn't see Truth when it was staring him in the face, a response from Jesus would not have made a difference.

What is Truth? Jesus! Not just the truth, but Truth itself.

John calls us to live the Truth as well as share it. Those who spread fake news about God by living contrary to Him or by spreading lies about Him are doing the work of Antichrist. To love others the way Jesus has loved us is living in the truth and to live in the Truth is "the" good life. This was John's testimony to the Truth as it is in Jesus and can be ours as well!

# Spirit Filled

Jim had a great smile, was contagiously friendly and appeared humble and deeply religious. He was willing to help out with anything that was asked of him. After observing him lead Bible studies and share in our group, he asked if he could serve as our student intern for the year. We were somewhat reluctant since Jim was from a different denomination than our own, but he was more than willing to help, seemed eager to learn and demonstrated strong qualities of leadership. We decided to give him a chance.

Imagine our disappointment when he became involved with not one, but two of our female students at the same time. Jim ended up compromising his leadership position, his relationship with both students and nearly destroying our ministry for that year. We later learned that he was struggling with pornography along with many other personal issues. He was living a lie pretending to be a spiritual leader while at the same time leading others astray. Jim was filled with the wrong spirit. John talks about Holy Spirit leadership as an element of the good life. What can he teach us about being filled with the Spirit?



1. Who comes to mind when you think of a Spirit-filled leader?
2. Do you consider yourself to be filled with the Spirit? Why or why not?



## I John 4:1-6

1. What is John's test to see if a spirit is from God? Is this the only way to test what spirit is influencing someone?
2. Have you ever been around a false prophet or a deceptive teacher? Explain.
3. What deceptive spirits have you experienced on campus? How do you keep from being led astray?
4. What comfort do you draw from knowing that the One who is in you is greater than he who is in the world?
5. How does John suggest we can differentiate between the spirit of truth and the spirit of falsehood?
6. How can you become a Holy Spirit influencer on campus?
7. What does being filled with the Spirit have to do with "the" good life?

"When you send your Spirit, we are created, and you renew the face of the ground."

Psalm 104:30



1. How has God been using *Journey* in your life this week on campus?
2. What would it take for you to be filled with the Spirit?
3. How does being Spirit-filled make for a good life on campus?





## Back Story

*Spirit of the Rainforest* reveals God's love for the Yanomamo people. The Yanomamo were both at the same time endangered children of nature, and feared indigenous warmongering cannibals living in the southern jungles of Venezuela along the Amazon river. The Yanomamo people have been studied and written about by anthropologists over the decades with their history recorded in works like *The Gentle Savage*. In *Spirit of the Rainforest*, author Andrew Ritchie records the story of one tribe's faith journey through the voice of Jungleman, the tribal shaman.

Jungleman's account of his own conversion and that of his tribe is no less miraculous than the story of Israel's deliverance in the biblical Exodus. Jungleman and his people lived in a spirit-filled world. He refers to the many spirits that talked to him by name and how he could tell the spirit that lived in others by placing his hand on their chest. He read the spirits with his fingertips. But even more surprising was how the spirits deceived him. Jungleman and his entire tribe had been led to believe that the One we refer to as God was actually the Devil and One to be feared, while the spirit we would consider as Satan was the good and pure spirit.

We live in what many would call a desacralized world, where the spiritual is more of a human aspiration empty of any real spiritual agencies like angels or demons. But for Jungleman and John, the writer of the three epistles, the unseen spiritual world of evil and holy spirits was as real as the physical world of our five senses. Jungleman was certainly a spirit-filled man, but filled or visited by deceiving spirits instead of the Holy Spirit. What is it like to be filled with the Holy Spirit? Jungleman's enlightenment is thrilling and brought me to tears as I read how he came to know and understand God. Receiving the Holy Spirit changed his life from a person who was afraid of God and feared by others to a compassionate man no longer seeking revenge from his enemies.

John writes here about being led by the Holy Spirit and what we can expect from leaders who are filled with the Spirit. He reminds us to test the spirits to see if they are from God. The main test is how a leader represents Jesus. Is Christ their primary focus and desire? Jesus said that when the Spirit of Truth comes that *"He will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you"* (John 16:12, 13).

In his letter to the Romans, Paul actually refers to the Spirit as the Spirit of Jesus and goes on to say that...

*"Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace"* (Romans 8:5, 6).

Being Spirit-filled is being full of Jesus. The Holy Spirit is not as intangible as we might think. The Spirit represents Christ and you can tell a Spirit-filled leader by His passion for Jesus. Being with such people makes us feel like we have been with Jesus. To be filled with the Spirit is "the" good life, the very good life of Christ!

# Generosity

Are you a generous person? A good friend shared a story about his unselfish wife. "My wife loves to give things away - things that I think she should keep or at least charge money for. Take her French macarons, for instance. Such delicious little dessert bites that require such care and effort to make, and she freely dispenses them to friends and family. Then there are her handmade quilts. Some time ago a gentleman was seeking the donation of a finished quilt for an upcoming Rotary Club auction. When she learned about the benefit, she couldn't say no - "I can help," and there went another beautiful quilt! When asked why she does it she just shrugged and said, "It makes me happy."

Does sharing with others make you happy? John says that when we share we are most like God. Generosity is love in action and there are many ways to practice a generous heart on campus. Simple ways like listening to a friend in need or helping someone with a class project. Like the early Christians who gave up their wealth and their lands for the sake of the gospel, the more we give the more we seem to have. Their worldly wealth may have been depleted, but their generosity turned them into spiritual billionaires and provided a taste of the good life.



1. What's the best gift you have ever received?
2. Do you agree with Jesus that it is more blessed to give than receive? Why or why not?



## I John 3:11-24

1. What story does John use to illustrate how selfishness and jealousy can lead to murder?
2. What connection does John make with the world hating the followers of Christ and Cain hating his brother? How is hate the smell of death?
3. How is an act of generosity evidence of God in our lives?
4. Why is it important to show our love in actions instead of just words? What generous acts are expressions of God's love for you?
5. How can we know that we belong to the truth? What is John's prescription for setting our hearts at rest before God?
6. What do you do when your heart condemns you? How does it help to know that God is greater than our hearts?
7. How can you practice a generous heart this week?

"Be generous, and you will be prosperous. Help others, and you will be helped."

Proverbs 11:25 (GNT)



1. How has God been using *Journey* in your life this week on campus?
2. How is this week's passage challenging you to be a more generous person?
3. What is generosity teaching you about "the" good life?



## Back Story

I have been privileged to share life with some very generous people. Journeying with them is like walking in the clouds. Generous people infuse us with new life. This is what comes to mind when I reflect on John's words here about sharing with others. He begins with how Jesus laid down His life for us. Loving others flows out of the love we have already received from the fountain of life in God, in what Paul referred to as the unspeakable gift of His Son.

Jesus' parable of the unforgiving servant is a prime example of the relationship between God's generous spirit toward us and our open hand toward others. "The kingdom of heaven is like a king," Jesus said, "who was settling accounts with his servants and discovered a man who owed him an estimated hundred thousand dollars (20 years as a first century day laborer). The man couldn't pay so the king was going to send him to debtors' prison along with his wife and children. But the man begged for a chance to repay his debt so the king graciously erased it completely. However, instead of returning the favor right after being forgiven, the man threw one of his own debtors in prison for owing him a meager ten dollars. When the king heard how the man had refused to show mercy, he called him a wicked and unforgiving servant. He then reinstated his debt and threw the man in jail until he paid back the last penny" (Matthew 18:21-35).

Generosity is meant to beget generosity. How can we claim to have received such mercy from God and not extend it to others? Generous people are full people - people who have been filled and are running over with the love and grace of God. Our generosity is really God's generosity. Generous people are living "the" good life - a life filled with the undeserving grace of God. They not only enjoy and appreciate God's generous Spirit - they cannot wait to share it with others. This is what John means in chapter one about his joy being complete by sharing the fellowship he had found in God with others.

What kind of witness could we have on campus with nothing more than a generous spirit? Generosity surprises people. Something as small as offering to buy someone's lunch, help them with a class project or taking the time to listen is enough for some to feel they have been touched by God. Generosity is evidence of "the" good life because generosity is the nature of God!

