

Encounter

Track Staff Manual

INTERVARSITY
CHAPTER FOCUS WEEK

GROWING
DISCIPLES
IN
LIKE
& WITH **CHRIST**

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Track Overview

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this track is to help students encounter Jesus and gain a fresh understanding of who He is and what it means to follow Him. As we share about the story of God and our world, we will give students a variety of opportunities to connect with and hear from Jesus including Scripture study, spiritual disciplines such listening prayer, testimonies, art, and more. We will also work to paint a picture of life as a follower of Jesus and give a compelling invitation to surrender fully to His lordship. No matter where students are at coming in, our hope is that this track helps them come to know Jesus and experience His love, grace, and truth on a much deeper level and take steps forward in their own spiritual journey. (From a skeptic to a seeker, from a seeker to a follower, from a follower to a fully-surrendered disciple who is actively involved in His mission)

Overview of track

In this track we will:

- 1) Give space for students to share about their spiritual journeys so far
- 2) Provide reasons (that appeal to both the head and the heart) for why it is worth it to seek after an encounter with Jesus
- 3) Learn about and practice different disciplines in which one can encounter Jesus
- 4) Look at the story of Scripture (using the Big Story gospel outline) and discuss the impact of that story for both seekers and believers
- 5) Help students get a clearer picture of life as a follower of Jesus
- 6) Invite students to respond to what they've experienced in the track (become a Christian, give Jesus complete lordship over your life, join a Christian community, step into the mission, etc.)

Track Description for students

Are you searching for God? New to the faith? Feeling dry?

In Encounter, you can learn about Jesus and His story in creative and engaging ways. You'll also explore what impact He can have on your own life. Whether you are a skeptic who is investigating Christianity, a new believer who longs to know Jesus more, or someone who is simply searching for truth, this track offers a variety of opportunities to encounter Jesus in a real and meaningful way. If you are searching for something more in life, come join us to see what Jesus might have for you.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this track (including post-course work), students will be able to...

- 1. Explain the concept of encountering Jesus and understand compelling reasons for seeking an encounter with Jesus**
- 2. Outline the overarching story found in Scripture (Creation, Fall, Redemption, Commission, Consummation) and its implications for life today**
- 3. Describe a Biblical understanding of life as a follower of Jesus that includes key elements including (but not limited to):**
 - a) Depending on the Holy Spirit
 - b) Being involved in Christian community
 - c) Spending time with Jesus regularly
 - d) Sharing your faith and seeking justice
- 4. Practice different spiritual disciplines that help them connect with Jesus including (But not limited to):**
 - a) Scripture study (Communal and individual)
 - b) Lectio Divina
 - c) Imaginative Contemplation
 - d) Listening Prayer
 - e) Forgiveness
- 5. Take a concrete step forward in their spiritual journey and discern next steps for after CFW**
 - a) Skeptic to seeker (Potential next steps are read gospel of John, join a GIG)
 - b) Seeker to follower (Potential next steps are join a Christian community, commit to doing a daily QT)
 - c) Follower to fully-surrendered disciple who is actively involved in Jesus' mission (Potential next steps are intentionally reaching out to non-Christian friends, commit to invest in younger believers)

Evaluation questions for students

Track evaluation questions immediately following track

1. How have you encountered Jesus through this track?
2. How has this track influenced your understanding of the story of Scripture?
3. How has this track influenced your understanding of what it means to follow Jesus?
4. What are the practical disciplines you've tried that can help you continue to connect with Jesus?
5. What did you find most helpful in this track?
6. What are your next steps after CFW?

Track evaluation questions sent out in late August

1. Since CFW, how have you continued to seek Jesus?
2. What spiritual disciplines have been most helpful for you?
3. How has your experience in Encounter affected your life since CFW?
4. How have you done in following through with the commitments you made at CFW?

Track evaluation questions sent out around November

1. Since CFW, how have you continued to seek Jesus?
2. What spiritual disciplines have been most helpful for you?
3. How has your experience in Encounter affected your life since CFW?
4. How have you done in following through with the commitments you made at CFW?

Evaluations questions for Staff

Track PD questions

1. What elements of the track seemed to be most helpful for students? Why?
2. What elements seemed to be less helpful for students? Why?
3. Do you have any suggestions for adjustments to the content or structure of the track?

Track staff questions

1. What elements of the track seemed to be most helpful for students? Why?
2. What elements seemed to be less helpful for students? Why?
3. Do you have any suggestions for adjustments to the content or structure of the track?

Campus staff questions to be sent out around November

1. What impact do you think Encounter had on your students who took the track?

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2. Have you noticed a change in their understanding of the gospel and/or what it means to follow Jesus?
3. Have you noticed an impact on their spiritual life? Specifically, have you noticed any change in what spiritual disciplines they incorporate in their life?
4. Would you recruit students to this track in the future? Why or why not?

Session Overview & Kolb Objectives

Goals for the Session One (Sunday Afternoon):

1. To build trust, get to know each other, and learn where students are at in their spiritual journeys

Kolb Objectives Session One:

Learning Activity	Kolb Learning Cycle Phase(s) Initiated	Track Outcomes Pursued
Welcome		---build trust
Ice Breaker		---build trust
Small Group Intros		---build trust
Sharing Questions	Active Experimentation	1. Explain the concept of encountering Jesus and understand compelling reasons for seeking that
Sharing Stories	Active Experimentation Concrete Experience	---identify where people are coming from

Outline Session One

Time	Topic	Teacher
2 hrs 15 min Start: 4:00 PM End: 6:15 PM	Overall: Who am I?	
10 min Start: 4:00 PM End: 4:10 PM	Welcome	
25 min Start: 4:10 PM End: 4:35 PM	Ice Breaker	
25 min Start: 4:35 PM End: 5:00 PM	Small Group Introductions	
15 min Start: 5:00 PM End: 5:15 PM	Break	

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15 min Start: 5:15 PM End: 5:30 PM	Sharing Questions	
40 min Start: 5:30 PM End: 6:10 PM	Sharing Stories	
5 min Start: 6:10 PM End: 6:15 PM	Wrap Up	

Goals for the Session Two (Sunday Evening):

1. To help students see the value an encounter with God and provide motivation for seeking that encounter
2. To provide multiple compelling images of what a relationship with God offers

Kolb Objectives Session Two:

Learning Activity	Kolb Learning Cycle Phase(s) Initiated	Track Outcomes Pursued
Ice Breaker		---build trust
Being a Seeker (Intro and Video)		1. Explain the concept of encountering Jesus and understand compelling reasons for seeking that
Images of Relationship with God Talk	Reflective Observation Abstract Conceptualization	1. Explain the concept of encountering Jesus and understand compelling reasons for seeking that
Response Time	Active Experimentation Concrete Experience	4. Practice Spiritual disciplines that help them connect with Jesus
Small Group Debrief		1. Explain the concept of encountering Jesus and understand compelling reasons for seeking that 4. Practice Spiritual disciplines that help them connect with Jesus

Outline Session Two

Time	Topic	Teacher
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1 hr 30 min Start: 7:45 PM End: 9:15 PM	Overall: What does God have for me here?	
10 min Start: 7:50 PM End: 8:00 PM	Ice Breaker	
15 min Start: 8:00 PM End: 8:15 PM	Being a Seeker (Intro and Video)	
20 min Start: 8:15 PM End: 8:35 PM	Images of Relationship with God Talk	
10 min Start: 8:35 PM End: 8:45 PM	Response time	
15 min Start: 8:45 PM End: 9:00 PM	Small Group Discussion	
5 min Start: 9:00 PM End: 9:05 PM	Wrap Up	

Goals for the Session Three (Monday Morning):

1. To share and discuss compelling reasons for seeking an encounter with Jesus that appeal to both the head and the heart.
2. To introduce the idea that Jesus wants to reveal himself to us and chooses to do so in ways that are intentional and meaningful.
3. To cast vision for and prepare students for the variety of disciplines we will try throughout the week to connect with Jesus
4. To help students identify their own barriers to encountering Jesus.

Kolb Objectives Session Three:

Learning Activity	Kolb Learning Cycle Phase(s) Initiated	Track Outcomes Pursued
Apologetics Discussion	Reflective Observation Abstract Conceptualization	1. Understand compelling reasons for seeking an encounter with Jesus
Testimonies	Reflective Observation	1. Understand compelling reasons for seeking an encounter with Jesus
Bible Study on Luke 5	Active Experimentation Reflective Observation	1. Explain the concept of encountering Jesus and understand compelling reasons

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	Abstract Conceptualization	for seeking that
Encountering God Talk	Abstract Conceptualization	1. Explain the concept of encountering Jesus and understand compelling reasons for seeking that
Quiet Time Activity	Active Experimentation Concrete Experience	4. Practice Spiritual disciplines that help them connect with Jesus

Outline Session Three

Time	Topic	Teacher
3 hrs 15 min Start: 9:00 AM End: 12:15 PM	Overall: Why pursue an encounter with Jesus?	
10 min Start: 9:00 AM End: 9:10 AM	Welcome, Ice Breaker	
45 min Start: 9:10 AM End: 9:55 AM	Apologetics Discussion	
15 min Start: 9:55 AM End: 10:10 AM	Break	
20 min Start: 10:10 AM End: 10:30 AM	Testimonies	
10 min Start: 10:30 AM End: 10:40 AM	Personal reflection and debrief of morning so far	
50 min Start: 10:40 AM End: 11:30 AM	Luke 5 Bible Study	
10 min Start: 11:30 AM End: 11:40 AM	Encountering God Talk	
30 min Start: 11:40 AM End: 12:10 PM	Quiet Time	
5 min Start: 12:10 PM End: 12:15 PM	Morning Wrap up	

Goals for the Session 4 (Monday Afternoon):

1. To help students gain a solid understanding of creation and the fall, and what we learn about God and our world through those pieces of the bigger story.

2. To help students see how the fall has affected our world and our own lives.
3. To cast vision for pursuing an encounter with Jesus that can undo the damage of the fall.

Kolb Objectives Session 4:

Learning Activity	Kolb Learning Cycle Phase(s) Initiated	Track Outcomes Pursued
Pictures of Brokenness Exercise	-Concrete Experience -Reflective Observation	2. Outline overarching story of Scripture and its implications
Collaborative scripture activity about creation	-Abstract Conceptualization -Active Experimentation	2. Outline overarching story of Scripture and its implications
Bible Study- Genesis 3	-Abstract Conceptualization	2. Outline overarching story of Scripture and its implications 4. Practice spiritual disciplines that help connect with Jesus
Testimony experiencing brokenness	-Reflective Observation	2. Outline overarching story of Scripture and its implications
Small group discussion	-Active experimentation -Reflective Observation	1. Understand compelling reasons for seeking an encounter with Jesus 2. Outline overarching story of Scripture and its implications
Talk- Jesus and Samaritan Woman	-Reflective Observation -Abstract Conceptualization	1. Understand compelling reasons for seeking an encounter with Jesus 2. Outline overarching story of Scripture and its implications

Outline Session 4

Time	Topic	Teacher
135 minutes Start: 4:00 PM End: 6:15 PM	The beginning of the story of God and Us/Creation and Fall	
10 min Start: 4:00 PM End: 4:10 PM	Pictures of Brokenness around the room	
30 min	Collaborative Scripture Activity on Creation and	

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Start: 4:10 PM End: 4:40 PM	character of God	
15 minutes Start: 4:40 PM End: 4:55 PM	Break	
45 minutes Start: 4:55 PM End: 5:40 PM	Bible Study Genesis 3	
5 minutes Start: 5:40 PM End: 5:45 PM	Testimony on experiencing brokenness	
20 minutes Start: 5:45 PM End: 6:05 PM	Small Group discussion	
10 minutes Start: 6:05 PM End: 6:15 PM	Staff Talk on Samaritan Woman	

Goals for Session 5 (Tuesday Morning):

1. To teach students about who Jesus was, focusing on his character and mission.
2. To give students an opportunity to encounter Jesus through prayer.

Kolb Objectives Session 5:

Learning Activity	Kolb Learning Cycle Phase(s) Initiated	Track Outcomes Pursued
Character of Jesus stations	-Concrete Experience -Reflective Observation -Active Experimentation	2. Outline overarching story of Scripture and its implications 4. Practice spiritual disciplines that help connect with Jesus
Whole Group Debrief	-Abstract Conceptualization	2. Outline overarching story of Scripture and its implications
John 3 Bible Study	-Abstract Conceptualization -Reflective Observation	2. Outline overarching story of Scripture and its implications 4. Practice spiritual disciplines that help connect with Jesus
Testimony- Encountering Jesus	-Reflective Observation	1. Explain the concept of encountering Jesus and understand compelling reasons for seeking that 3. Describe a Biblical understanding of life as a follower

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		of Jesus
Encountering Jesus through Prayer	-Active Experimentation -Concrete Experience	1. Explain the concept of encountering Jesus and understand compelling reasons for seeking that 4. Practice spiritual disciplines that help connect with Jesus
Small Group Discussion	-Reflective Observation	1. Explain the concept of encountering Jesus and understand compelling reasons for seeking that
Staff Wrap up	-Abstract Conceptualization	2. Outline overarching story of Scripture and its implications

Outline Session 5:

Time	Topic	Teacher
195 minutes Start: 9:00 AM End: 12:15 PM	Introducing Jesus/Look at Jesus character, identity and purpose	
25 min Start: 9:00 AM End: 9:25 AM	Stations with aspects of Jesus' character	
15 min Start: 9:25 AM End: 9:40 AM	Whole group debrief about Jesus' character	
15 minutes Start: 9:40 AM End: 9:55 AM	Break	
65 minutes Start: 9:55 AM End: 10:55 AM	John 3 Bible Study	
15 minutes Start: 11:05 AM End: 11:25 AM	Break	
10 minutes Start: 11:25 AM End: 11:30 AM	Testimony- Encountering Jesus	
30 minutes Start: 11:30 AM End: 11:55 AM	Encountering Jesus through Prayer	
15 minutes Start: 11:55 AM End: 12:10 PM	Small Group Discussion	
5 minutes Start: 12:10 PM End: 12:15 PM	Staff Wrap-Up	

Goals for the Session Six (Wednesday Morning):

1. To teach on the subject of sin and help students grasp that it is not just a systemic issue (something “out there”) but also a personal issue (something “in here”) that is part of all of our stories. We are all guilty of sin and justice has to be paid somehow.
2. To give students both a historical and theological understanding of the crucifixion of Jesus.
3. To help students connect the story of the cross to their own story and provide space for confession of sins.
4. To give students both a historical and theological understanding of the resurrection of Jesus and what impact it has on our lives.
5. To use the cross to explain the theological concepts of grace and forgiveness.
6. To move students towards a point of decision by challenging them to imagine the impact on our world if this story is true and we lived in a way that reflected that belief.

Kolb Objectives Session Six:

Learning Activity	Kolb Learning Cycle Phase(s) Initiated	Track Outcomes Pursued
The Problem of Sin Talk	Reflective Observation Abstract Conceptualization	2. Outline overarching story of Scripture and its implications
Quiet Time on Crucifixion	Active Experimentation Reflective Observation	2. Outline overarching story of Scripture and its implications 4. Practice spiritual disciplines that help connect with Jesus
Isaiah 53 Bible Study	Active Experimentation Reflective Observation Abstract Conceptualization	2. Outline overarching story of Scripture and its implications 4. Practice spiritual disciplines that help connect with Jesus
Cross Reflection and Active Response	Abstract Conceptualization Concrete Experience	2. Outline overarching story of Scripture and its implications
The Resurrection Talk	Reflective Observation Abstract Conceptualization	2. Outline overarching story of Scripture and its implications
Imagination Exercise	Abstract Conceptualization	2. Outline overarching story of Scripture and its implications
Small Group Discussion	Abstract Conceptualization	2. Outline overarching story of Scripture and its implications

Outline Session Six

Time	Topic	Teacher
3 hrs 15 min Start: _____ End: _____	Overall: Why did Jesus die on the cross?	
20 min Start: 9:05 AM End: 9:25 AM	The Problem of Sin Talk	
35 min Start: 9:25 AM End: 10:00 AM	Quiet Time on the Crucifixion	
45 min Start: 10:00 AM End: 10:45 AM	Bible Study on Isaiah 53	
15 min Start: 10:45 AM End: 11:00 AM	Personal Reflection on the Cross and Active Response	
15 min Start: 11:00 AM End: 11:15 AM	Break	
30 min??? Start: 11:15 AM End: 11:45 AM	The Resurrection Talk	
15 min Start: 11:45 AM End: 12:00 PM	SG Discussion	
15 min Start: 12:00 PM End: 12:15 PM	Imagination Exercise	

Goals for the Session Seven (Wednesday Afternoon):

1. To give a basic overview of what it means to be a Christian based on Scripture
2. To provide space for questions that have not yet been addressed.
3. To explain the concept of lordship and give a compelling invitation to surrender to the lordship of Jesus.
4. To provide space to encounter Jesus through listening prayer and seriously consider what Jesus might be calling them to consider.
5. To prepare students for the call to faith/commitment which will take place in the evening worship session.

Kolb Objectives Session Seven:

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Learning Activity	Kolb Learning Cycle Phase(s) Initiated	Track Outcomes Pursued
Spoken Word Video	Reflective Observation	2. Outline overarching story of Scripture and its implications
“What does it mean to be a Christian?” Talk	Reflective Observation Abstract Conceptualization	3. Describe a Biblical understanding of life as a follower of Jesus
Testimony	Concrete Experience Reflective Observation	1. Explain the concept of encountering Jesus and understand compelling reasons for seeking that 3. Describe a Biblical understanding of life as a follower of Jesus
Q and A Session		Potentially all of them
Cost of Following Jesus Talk	Reflective Observation Abstract Conceptualization	1. Explain the concept of encountering Jesus and understand compelling reasons for seeking that 3. Describe a Biblical understanding of life as a follower of Jesus
Listening Prayer	Active Experimentation	4. Practice spiritual disciplines that help connect with Jesus
Small Group Debrief	Abstract Conceptualization Active Experimentation	5. Take a concrete step forward in their spiritual journey and discern next steps for after CFW

Outline Session Seven

Use the chart below. You can add or remove rows as needed. Use the CFW schedule to insert actual start and end times.

Time	Topic	Teacher
2 hrs 15 min Start: 4:05 PM End: 6:15 PM	Overall: What does it mean to follow Jesus?	
5 min Start: 4:05 PM End: 4:10 PM	Spoken Word Video	
30 min Start: 4:10 PM End: 4:40 PM	“What does it mean to be a Christian?” Talk	

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5 min Start: 4:40 PM End: 4:45 PM	Testimony	
30 min Start: 4:45 PM End: 5:15 PM	Q and A Session	
15 min Start: 5:15 PM End: 5:30 PM	Break	
20 min Start: 5:30 PM End: 5:50 PM	Cost of Following Jesus Talk	
10 min Start: 5:50 PM End: 6:00 PM	Listening Prayer	
15 min Start: 6:00 PM End: 6:15 PM	Small Group Debrief of Listening Prayer	

Goals for the Session Eight (Thursday Morning):

1. To teach students about the identity and purpose of the Holy Spirit
2. To help students learn how the Holy Spirit can communicate with us.
3. To give space to hear from the Holy Spirit through Scripture.
4. To help students learn about forgiveness, a specific result of new life in Christ
5. To teach the need and purpose for Christian community.

Kolb Objectives Session Eight:

Learning Activity	Kolb Learning Cycle Phase(s) Initiated	Track Outcomes Pursued
Reflection/ Quiet Time on John 14 and 16—Holy Spirit	-Reflective Observation	3. Describe a Biblical understanding of life as a follower of Jesus 4. Practice different spiritual disciplines that help connect with Jesus
Interactive Talk- How Holy Spirit communicates with us the will of God	-Abstract Conceptualization	3. Describe a Biblical understanding of life as a follower of Jesus
Lectio Divina John 15 – Vine and Branches	-Active Experimentation -Concrete Experience	4. Practice different spiritual disciplines that help connect with Jesus
Bible Study- Matt. 18,	-Abstract Conceptualization	3. Describe a Biblical

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Unmerciful Servant		understanding of life as a follower of Jesus 4. Practice different spiritual disciplines that help connect with Jesus
Discussion on Forgiveness	-Abstract Conceptualization	3. Describe a Biblical understanding of life as a follower of Jesus
Practice forgiveness through prayer	-Active Experimentation -Concrete Experience	3. Describe a Biblical understanding of life as a follower of Jesus 4. Practice different spiritual disciplines that help connect with Jesus
1 Cor. 12, human picture, Unity in the Body of Christ	-Abstract Conceptualization	3. Describe a Biblical understanding of life as a follower of Jesus
Discussion around Christian community and past experiences	-Reflective Observation -Abstract Conceptualization	3. Describe a Biblical understanding of life as a follower of Jesus
Q and A on Holy Spirit, Forgiveness and Christian Community	-Abstract Conceptualization -Reflective Observation	Potentially all

Outline Session Eight:

Time	Topic	Teacher
195 minutes Start: 9:00 AM End: 12:15 PM	The Christian Life	
25 min Start: 9:00 AM End: 9:25 AM	Reflection/ Quiet Time on John 14 and 16—Holy Spirit	
20 min Start: 9:25 AM End: 9:45 AM	Interactive Talk- How Holy Spirit communicates with us the will of God	
15 minutes Start: 9:45 AM End: 10:05 AM	Lectio Divina John 15 – Vine and Branches	
15 minutes Start: 10:05 AM End: 10:20 AM	Break	
20 minutes Start: 10:20 AM	Bible Study- Matt. 18, Unmerciful Servant	

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End: 10:40 AM		
20 minutes Start: 10:40 AM End: 11:00 AM	Discussion on Forgiveness	
10 minutes Start: 11:00 AM End: 11:10 AM	Practice forgiveness through prayer	
10 minutes Start: 11:10 AM End: 11:20 AM	Break	
10 minutes Start: 11:20 AM End: 11:30 AM	1 Cor. 12, human picture, Unity in the Body of Christ	
30 minutes Start: 11:30 AM End: 12:00 PM	Discussion around Christian community and past experiences	
15 minutes Start: 12:00 PM End: 12:15 PM	Q and A on Holy Spirit, Forgiveness and Christian Community	

Goals for Session Nine (Thursday Afternoon):

1. To review and debrief track content
2. To help students discern how they have encountered God during the week
3. To equip and bless students for the journey ahead

Kolb Objectives Session Nine:

Learning Activity	Kolb Learning Cycle Phase(s) Initiated	Track Outcomes Pursued
What did you find?	Converging (think and do)	Defining goals met
Debriefing the track	Abstract Conceptualization and Reflective Observation (sharing and listening)	Review: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • why consider Jesus • stories of encountering Jesus • Holy Spirit and forgiveness • What it means to be a Christian
Where am I now?	Concrete Experience Reflective Observation	Creative expression of spiritual journeys this week Sharing and listening

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	Converging (think and do)	Summarizing spiritual movement
What's next?	Assimilating (think and watch)	Next steps
Wrap up	Converging (think and do)	Track Evaluations/ Response / Commitment Forms

Outline Session Nine:

Time	Topic	Teacher
135 minutes Start: 4:00 PM End: 6:15 PM	Track Wrap-Up	
5 minutes Start: 4:00 PM End: 4:05 PM	Welcome	
55 minutes Start: 4:05 PM End: 5:00 PM	Review and debrief the track:	
10 minutes Start: 5:00 PM End: 5:10 PM	Break	
50 minutes Start: 5:10 PM End: 6:00 PM	Where am I now? What are my next steps?	
15 minutes Start: 6:00 PM End: 6:15 PM	Wrap-up (evaluations/response cards and group photo)	

Preparation Details:

1 month prior

1. Track PD: Email your staff team to introduce yourself and cast vision for the track. Make sure all track staff know where to access necessary documents: <http://collegiateministries.intervarsity.org/library/chapter-focus-week/tracks/encounter>

2. Track PD: Find out preferences from track staff for teaching sessions and then assign sessions to each staff.

2 weeks prior

1. Track staff: Prepare your sessions and determine what materials you will need for each one. Due to the nature of the CFW schedule, it is best to finish all of your prep work BEFORE arriving for the week.
2. Track PD: Contact OPD, Expositor, and/or WD to ask about participating in the Q and A panel on Thursday afternoon.

1 week prior

1. Track PD: Email chapter staff of students in the track to see who is a non-Christian, a new Christian, a mature Christian taking it with a friend, etc.
2. Track PD: Form track small groups (Ideally 4-5 students in each group, but use your best judgment)
3. Track PD: Send welcome email to track registrants
4. Track staff: Make sure you have necessary videos, testimonies, materials, etc. figured out for your assigned sessions

1 day prior

1. Track PD: Inform team of time and location of Track Staff meeting on Saturday

Session Details

Staff Note:

- Green text is the deans suggested script for this session.
- Black Text is note for your reference
- Orange Text is information that is included on the PowerPoint

Staff Note 2

- Text that is included on the student handouts will not be included in the staff manual as a general rule so as to make sure the content is as up-to-date as possible and to save paper.

Session One Details: Sunday Afternoon

Supplies needed:

Post-it notes, Easel Pad paper, art supplies (paper, colored pencils, scissors, colored paper, clay, etc.)

1. Welcome (4:00 – 4:10 PM)

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Welcome to Encounter! This track is designed to help people encounter Jesus and gain a clearer, fresh picture of who He is and what it means to follow him. We will be doing this through a variety of ways. Some of you might have chosen this track because you are exploring Christianity and want to learn more. Some of you might have chosen this track because you are already a Christian but you have a desire to encounter Jesus on a deeper level. You are all on a journey and our hope is that this track helps you move forward in your journey, no matter where you are at right now.

Introduce staff - more than just name & campus/IVCF role, but not taking a lot of time - identify specific potential connection points - areas of strength, experience, passion (include "if you want to talk more about _____, he/she would be a great person to have lunch with this week.")

Give brief overview of week and what to expect

2. Ice Breaker (4:10 – 4:35 PM)

Getting acquainted: Have students go around room and share their name and a way we can remember it ("Hi, I'm Alice, like Alice in wonderland.")

Post-It Note Exercise: Give everyone a post-it note. Ask them how they are feeling coming into this week, and then have them write a feeling/thought/hope on the post it note to answer the question. When they finish have them post it on the wall.

Once everyone is finished, summarize what was posted on the wall.

Affirm students for taking the risk of spending a week in an unfamiliar place with people they may not know very well, acknowledge that it takes courage to directly confront the biggest issues of life, that many people go through their entire lives trying to avoid these deep questions. Assure them that we are not there to try to force anything down their throat, but that we are there to walk beside them in their spiritual journeys.

3. Small Groups (4:35 – 5:00 PM)

Divide students into small groups, have them share the following:

- Name, school, year, major
- What brought you here to this track?
- Debrief ROS. (How was that experience for you? What did you do? Etc)

4. Break (5:00 – 5:15 PM)

5. Sharing Your Questions (5:15 – 5:30 PM)

Remember the "Wizard of Oz" movie and the "pay no attention to the man behind the curtain" scene? Many of us are afraid that if we look too closely, God will be revealed as a phony, like the supposedly great and powerful Wizard of Oz who was actually just a man hiding behind a curtain. We invite you to take your questions and your longings and your pain to God this week, even if you aren't sure about Him. If He actually is real -- and I/we have come to believe that He is -- then He is not afraid that you'll look too closely, even if you want to ask some really tough questions.

Have two large pieces of paper on the wall. One paper will be titled "What are the questions you hope to explore this week?" with blank space underneath. Students can write out their questions on this sheet. The other paper should be titled "What do you hope to find through this track?" and should be divided into

quadrants underneath: 1) Answers to my questions, 2) A real encounter with Jesus, 3) Better understanding of God's story, 4) Fun and new friends

Explain papers, then give space to respond. At end of time, synthesize responses and cast vision for the week as a chance to look at these questions and pursue these things.

6. Sharing Your Story (5:30 – 6:10 PM)

In order to go on this journey together, it will be helpful to know what each other's journeys have been like so far. So we are going to spend the rest of our time tonight sharing our stories with each other. In order to do that, we are going to first give you some time to reflect on your life journey so far and express it using the art supplies available. You can draw a picture, you can create a timeline of significant events that shaped you, you can write a poem...whatever you feel like can help you share your story!

And about 20 minutes, you will come back together with your small groups to share your stories with each other!

(20 min personal time, 20 minutes sharing in SG)

7. Closing (6:10 – 6:15 PM)

As we spend time together this week, we will be sharing more stories...you will hear more from us as staff and others about our journeys and experiences with God. And don't be afraid to ask other people here about their stories too! Your friends from your campus, people you eat meals with...ask them what their spiritual journey has been like. Everyone has a story to share, and it can be very helpful to hear about them as you move forward in your own journey.

Announcements

Pray

Session Two Details: Sunday Evening

Supplies needed:

Easel pad paper, tape, art supplies

1. Review/Re-engage (7:50 – 8:00 PM)

Welcome everyone back, ask how everyone is doing so far (thumbs up, sideways, down).

Review names again - pair up to reintroduce selves and share interesting random facts, then each person reintroduces his partner to the group, giving the person's name and saying something interesting about them (*"This is Tony and he loves running barefoot."*)

2. Being a Seeker (8:00 – 8:15 PM)

The search for meaning is not unique to us...it transcends both place and time. The Bible teaches that this longing is normal because we were made for a relationship with our creator. Augustine of Hippo, who lived from 354-530 AD put it this way: "Our hearts are restless, until they can find rest in you." We're all seeking different things, but the Christian worldview says that ultimately what we each are seeking is God. That search might present itself in different ways (looking for love, looking for meaning and purpose, wanting things to be different in ourselves and in the world). In the last session we focused on how each of us is entering the week, and our hopes and reasons for being here. In this session we're going to look at a

different perspective - what does God desire to give you this week? We want to propose that God wants to help you encounter him, to help you know him on a PERSONAL level. In this video we are going to watch now, you will hear from some people about what it was like for them to seek God and come to know Him on a personal level.

Show Explore God video (about knowing God personally)

3. Illustrations of a Relationship with God (8:15 – 8:45 PM)

As you can see, each of the people from the video focused on different aspects of their spiritual journey and their relationship with Jesus. Similarly, the Bible describes a relationship with God using many different images. And that can be helpful because different images might be compelling to you based on where you are at in your own journey. So we are going to look at some of those images now, as laid out in the book Picturing the Gospel.

Three large pages are posted around the room. Each page has a heading and three subheadings.

A. First Paper (Heading: New Life)

- i. LIFE: BORN FROM ABOVE - Do you wish you could just start over? One image for the relationship with God is that He gives us a new birth / spiritual birth, and a whole new identity as a child of God. He puts His spirit within us and He says that we become a new creation.
- ii. ADOPTION - BEING CHOSEN IN LOVE - Do you feel like you never fit in? That you don't really belong anywhere? The Bible says that every single human being has been made in the image of God and therefore we each reflect something of God, but when we are adopted by God, He becomes not only our Creator, but also our Father. We finally have a place where we deeply belong, and we have an eternal home and family with God as our Father forever.
- iii. KINGDOM - A GOOD WORLD ORDER - Can you imagine a world in which everything functioned as if Jesus were in charge? When we receive this new life, we receive a new citizenship in God's Kingdom and even here and now, we start to experience a taste of life under His rule and reign, life as it was designed to be, and we get to be part of extending that to broken places in our world

B. Second Paper (Heading: Mercy and Restoration):

- i. JUSTIFICATION - BEING RIGHT WITH GOD - You may have chosen this track because deep down you sense that things aren't right between you and God, that you have screwed up and you don't know how to turn that around. Despite our distance from God and everything we may have done, despite all of our indifference to Him and to others, we actually can be made right with Him.
- ii. FORGIVENESS - PICKING UP THE BILL - You may have chosen this track because you struggle with experiencing God's forgiveness or because you recognize that you don't know how to forgive other people. As you'll see this week, God's forgiveness is not a cheap forgiveness that is based on denying pain, pretending that everything is okay, and trying to just move on. God's forgiveness acknowledges the reality of wrong, of how we've been hurt and how we hurt others, and doesn't minimize any of that. Maybe you're looking for forgiveness for yourself and for the freedom that comes from truly forgiving others.
- iii. ATONEMENT - TAKING AWAY OUR SHAME - People deal with shame and the fear of shame in a lot of different ways. Sometimes shame leads to depression or even suicide. Sometimes the fear of shame leads to a desperation to achieve. One way of describing a relationship with God is that because He has already paid for all our sin and shame, we can open up even our deepest secrets and bring them into the light of His love and live without being under a cloud of shame or fear.

C. Third Paper (Heading: Deliverance):

- i. SALVATION - THE MIGHTY HAND OF GOD - Have you ever been in a situation where you couldn't rescue yourself? One way that the Bible describes salvation is God doing for us what we can't do for ourselves, namely, making it possible for us to have a free and clear relationship with Him.
- ii. RANSOM AND REDEMPTION - LOVE PAYS - Another way the Bible describes what God does in our lives is that He pays the cost to bring us home to Himself. He knows we can't possibly pay the price for our sin, and through Jesus' sacrificial death on the cross, He takes that debt or penalty on Himself and pays it for us.
- iii. FREEDOM - FREE TO REALLY LIVE - Harriet Tubman, the famous "conductor" who guided people to freedom through the Underground Railroad (note for internationals: when slavery was legal in southern states, the UR was a network of people who helped slaves escape and make their way to northern states or Canada where they could be free) is quoted as saying, "I freed thousands of slaves, and could have freed thousands more, if only they had known they were slaves." The Bible describes humans as living in spiritual slavery, but many times we aren't aware of it. It's not until we've experienced spiritual freedom for a while that we can look back and see the difference

So as you can see, a relationship with God offers more to us than you might first imagine. The question is, what do you long for? Which of these images is most compelling to you? On your tables there are pieces of paper. What we want you to do now is think about all of these images and decide which one is most compelling to you right now. Then, take a piece of paper and write out a prayer to God about this specific image...it can be asking him to help you understand it more, or asking him to grant this benefit to you...whatever you feel led to pray. Prayer is just talking to God, so you don't need to be fancy or use any formula...just write out what's on your mind, what you want to say to God. Even if you've never prayed for sure or you aren't sure what you believe, this is a good chance to take a risk and TRY connecting with God...who knows what will happen as a result! And again, feel free to be as creative or as straightforward as you'd like...you can just write out a prayer, you can turn it into a poem, you can use art...whatever you feel comfortable with. Once you are finished, fold your prayer and tape it up on the wall next to whichever image you selected.

4. Small Group Discussion (8:45 – 9:00 PM)

In small groups, have students share which of the images resonated with them and why. Give space at the end for anyone who feels comfortable to pray out loud, asking God to reveal himself this week. (If no one feels comfortable, the group leader can just pray a simple blessing.

5. Wrap-up (9:00 – 9:05 PM)

Announcements, we'll be back together in here tomorrow morning at 9 AM.
Pray a simple prayer of blessing over the week

Session Three Details: Monday Morning

Supplies needed:

No special supplies needed

1. Welcome (9:00 – 9:10 AM)

Good morning everyone! We are going to start off with a quick icebreaker, so find a partner. In your pairs, answer this question: when it comes to making decisions and how you interact with others, are you more of a thinker or a feeler? (A Thinker is someone who might base actions on logic and a clear analysis of a situation and makes decisions with their head, whereas a feeler is someone who might base actions on emotion and a concern for others involved and makes decision with their heart.) Share with your partner which you think you are and why!

(Bring everyone back together) As we've already mentioned, we want to give you all an opportunity to encounter Jesus for yourself this week. Some of you can't wait...but some of you might not be sure if encountering Jesus is worth all the effort, for a variety of reasons. Maybe you aren't convinced that God is even real. Maybe you don't see how Jesus is different than any other religious figure. Or maybe you just doubt you can actually hear from Him in a meaningful way. This morning, we want to take some time to look at WHY we think it's worth it to search for and connect with Jesus (whether you are a seeker who is exploring faith, or someone who's already a Christian). We want to put forward that there are actually some compelling reasons to check out Jesus that deal both with the head and the heart...reasons that are compelling to both thinkers AND feelers (and everyone in between), so we are going to look at those together.

2. Apologetics (9:10 – 9:55 AM)

To many people, religion (especially Christianity) can seem like something that is based entirely on emotions or some kind of blind faith in something you can't see. Some people even say things like "I believe in reason or science, so I can't see how Christianity could be true." But, there is actually a whole field of study called apologetics, which is essentially the defense of faith based on reasonable arguments and evidence. And these arguments make the case that there are rational, logical reasons to believe in Jesus...so its not just based on a happy feeling you get when you go to church or something like that. There are many educated people in the fields of Science and history and psychology and anthropology who are also Christian...they are men and women who have looked at the evidence and these arguments for faith, and have come to the educated conclusion that Jesus is real, and that the Christian faith is reasonable. We don't have time to talk about ALL of these different arguments for belief in God and the potential evidence from science and history, but we are going to take some time now to look at a FEW of the more popular arguments.

So what we need you to do now is to break into two groups. One group will be looking at the question "Why consider religion at all?" (which might be helpful for you if you come from an atheist or naturalist background) and the other group will look at the question "Why consider Jesus over any other religious figure?" (which might be helpful for anyone from an agnostic or other faith background). So you can choose which group you think would be more helpful for you personally.

-Have everyone choose between two groups, with a staff in charge of each. The apologetic articles are in the student handouts. There are four articles for the "Why consider religion?" group (Teleological, Cosmological, Mental, and Moral) and three articles for the "Why consider Jesus?" group (Prophetic, Christological, and Embarrassing.) In the groups, assign an article to each person (more than one person will probably get the same article.)

-Give 15 minutes for everyone to read their article on their own and summarize its main points to share with the bigger group. (They could also come up with a few questions from it.)

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-Once everyone is ready, have each person share a summary of their article and any thoughts they had about it. After everyone has shared, you can use the following questions for discussion if needed:

1. What questions did you have as you read your own articles, or as you heard others share?
2. Which argument did you find the most compelling? Why?
3. Which argument did you find the least compelling? Why?
4. Have you ever considered that belief in God might be rational before? Why or why not?
5. What kinds of evidence have you seen that makes you want to pursue an encounter with Jesus (or at least figure out what you believe)? What issues/questions hold you back from pursuing an encounter?

Summary:

We are going to take a break now, but I just want to say a quick word before we do. As we talk about these arguments, and the role that logic and reason play in to a belief in God, we acknowledge that belief in God still requires an element of faith, and that no one will be convinced to believe just by seeing some good arguments. If the God that Christians believe in is real, and if what the Bible says about Him is true, then He is actually impossible to fully comprehend through reason and logic alone, because He is so much bigger than anything our finite minds can grasp. He is a God who has always existed, who is the epitome of love and truth, and we read about miracles in the Bible, and the ways that God has worked supernaturally, so we can't understand Him completely through only natural reason and logic, because He is bigger than that. These arguments are just meant to show that faith isn't COMPLETELY irrational or foolish...it is possible to be both a logical, thinker-type of person AND a follower of Jesus. And if these discussions are leading to more questions in your mind, I encourage you to write them down and put them on the paper we have on the wall over there because later this week we will be having a Q and A session where we can hopefully address some of those things. Now, we are going to take a 15 minute break, so let's plan on coming back together at

15 minute break (9:55 – 10:10 AM)

3. Video Testimonies (10:10 – 10:30 AM)

So as we said earlier, we believe that there are compelling reasons to consider Jesus that appeal to both the head AND the heart. Apologetics generally appeal more to the head, which was hopefully helpful for some of you. And now, for those of you who are more concerned about the experiential side of faith and want an emotionally compelling reason to pursue an encounter with Jesus, we are going to watch some short videos of people sharing their stories. These are all people who have encountered Jesus and seen their lives change as a result.

Play video testimonies

4. Personal Reflection Time (10:30 – 10:40 AM)

Hopefully these videos help you get a picture of how Jesus can engage both our heads AND our hearts in real and tangible ways. Before we move on, we want to give you some personal time for reflection on the morning so far. Take out the handout from your folder for this session, and take the next ten minutes or so to look at these questions and reflect on what you've taken in so far.

5. Luke 5 Bible Study (10:40 – 11:30 AM)

We believe that one of the primary ways we can encounter God is through Scripture. The Bible is often referred to as the Word of God because we believe it contains God's words to humanity; it is his primary means of revealing himself and his character to us. So it's a book made up of many smaller books and a variety of literary genres, from poetry to narrative, to prophecy, written over the course of thousands of years. And all throughout Scripture, we see the story of God and the story of our world woven into the different elements, so as we read and study the Bible, God is able to reveal himself to us in the process. Here is a short video that explains this a little bit more...

Show the Video on Bible Study from Urbana 15

We are going to study a story now about a time when some fishermen had a unique encounter with Jesus that changed their lives. Its from the book of Luke, which is a book in the New Testament that focuses in on the life of Jesus and gives us a better understanding of who He was and what He was like. So pull out the passage that says "Luke 5:1-11" and take the next 8 minutes or so to read it on your own. And as you read it, I want you to make note of what you see and observe in the passage...repeated words, contrasts, images that stand out, etc. Also, write down any questions that you have as you read. As we study the passage right now, we want to be like detectives who enter a crime scene and first look at all the evidence and clues BEFORE forming a conclusion about what happened. So read over the passage and find all the clues that might help us understand what this passage is all about.

Personal Study (10 min)

Observations (15 min)

What did you notice in the passage? (10 min)

(Write out observations)

- boat (6x)
- shore (3x)
- lake/water (3x)
- Contrasts:
 - Caught nothing vs. caught so many fish (v.5-6)
 - A little way from shore vs. deep water (v.3-4)
 - catching fish vs. catching people (v.6,10)
- There caught SO MANY FISH!
 - nets were breaking
 - filled BOTH boats and they began to sink
 - these experienced fishermen were amazed at the catch
- Simon Peter was very obedient
- There seemed to be a progression of asks from Jesus
 1. Put out from shore and let me preach from your boat, even though you are probably tired and ready to go home
 2. Put out in deep water and let down nets, even though that didn't make sense
 3. Leave everything and follow me to "catch people"
- Simon Peter becomes afraid of Jesus but Jesus tells him not to be afraid
- This was a huge catch but they decided to LEAVE it

Questions (10 min)

What questions did you have as you read the passage? (Write out questions)

-Why did Jesus get in the boat?

-***Why did Simon obey so willingly?

-How did fishing work back then? What did it look like?

-***Why did they catch so many fish? Why did Jesus choose THIS sign/miracle specifically?

-***Why did Simon Peter tell Jesus to go away?

-What did Jesus mean by “You will be catching people”?

-***Why did they leave everything to follow Jesus?

Interpretation (20 min)

(Use your best judgment to either split people into groups and assign questions to discuss, or discuss key questions as a whole group. Key questions are starred above.)

What do you think was the main point Luke was trying to make through this story?

Summary and Application (5 min):

In this passage we see how Jesus was intentional to reveal himself and his authority to Simon Peter and the other fishermen in a way that they would understand as fishermen. It was personally meaningful to them. But, he also required Simon Peter to take a small step of faith in the process...he had to be willing to take Jesus out in the boat even though he was exhausted after working all night and not catching anything. And then he had to be willing to follow Jesus' seemingly foolish advice to put out in the deep water and let down the nets. It didn't make sense, but those small steps of obedience led to Jesus being able to reveal himself in a way that blew their minds! And Simon Peter knew instantly that Jesus was holy, and had way more power and authority than he first realized. Afterwards, they were willing to leave everything and follow Jesus, but only because they had encountered Him in such a profound and amazing way!

Jesus might not necessarily do something as crazy to reveal himself to each of us, but he does long to show us who He is in a way that is personally meaningful and impacting. But just like with Simon Peter, he often invites us to take some small steps of faith first...steps that might require some risk, or some sacrifice, or even that might not make much sense at first. But they can lead us to an encounter with Jesus that is unlike anything we've experienced before. So this leaves us with the question: what small step of faith might Jesus be inviting you to this week, in order that you might be able to encounter Him in a real way?

Take a few minutes to reflect and journal about that question.

6. Encountering God (11:30 – 11:40 AM)

Now for some of you, when you hear people talk about encountering Jesus, that might seem pretty abstract or hard to imagine. Because the reality is that Jesus is not physically walking around the earth right now like he was in the gospels. It's not like you can encounter Jesus by (literally) finding him at the mall and sitting down for coffee or something! So what does encountering Jesus even mean for us?

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Encountering God can look different for different people. Sometimes it's an experience of hearing God speak to you, maybe through a Bible study or through a sermon or maybe even through an audible voice. Sometimes it's an experience where you feel God's presence and have a sense of unexplainable peace or joy or conviction, or feel His love for you in a tangible way. It can be something big and miraculous or it can be something small and quiet. In his book *Hearing God*, Dallas Willard puts it this way: "We need to understand that God's communications come to us in many forms. What we know about guidance and the divine-human encounter from the Bible and the lives of those who have gone before us shows us that. We should expect nothing else, for **this variety is appropriate to the complexity of human personality and cultural history**. And God in redeeming humanity is willing to reach out in whatever ways are suitable to its fallen and weakened condition."

Whatever it looks like, when you have an encounter with Jesus, you are able to see Him more fully and feel His presence in your life. And ultimately, it's an experience that changes you. Whenever people had encounters with Jesus in the gospels, they came away different than before...He healed them, or taught them, or challenged them. So when Jesus chooses to reveal himself to you and speak into your life, it will CHANGE you.

We are all on spiritual journeys, searching for meaning and contentment. Sometimes, even if we aren't looking for Him, God kind of interrupts our life to give us glimpses of who he is. We experience something that makes us curious or want to know more. And sometimes, we just decide to search for God on our own, maybe out of curiosity, maybe out of desperation. Either way, we thankfully don't have to sit around waiting for God to finally decide to reveal himself to us. Because the Bible says that God does not hide himself from us...he wants to reveal himself, and does so to anyone who seeks after Him. So we can be intentional to seek an encounter with God, to try different means of hearing from Him and experiencing His presence. And when we do intentionally and humbly seek an encounter with God, we can be confident that He will respond to us and meet us in that process!

This week we will try a variety of activities that can help you have an encounter with Jesus. Sometimes God speaks to us through Scripture, sometimes it's through prayer, sometimes it's through conversation with other people, sometimes it's through nature or art or worship music. There are many things you can do to give God space to speak into your life, so we want to give you a chance to experiment with that this week! The key is going into things with an open heart and a willingness to listen for God. (And being willing to throw out any preconceived notions you have about what it might look like!) Sometimes we can encounter God in seemingly miraculous ways like a dream where Jesus comes and speaks to you directly, or you have some kind of near-death experience and God brings healing. And those are incredible stories! But many times, we encounter God by hearing what the Bible refers to as the "still, small voice" when we are sitting and waiting. It may not be grandiose, or dramatic, but it still has the ability to change you in the same way! So we can't tell you exactly what it will look like to encounter God, because it can look differently for different people.

(Tell a short story of how someone encountered God like below)

[I have a friend named Sharon from China who came here to CFW a few years ago. She was not a Christian, but she wanted to explore and see if God was real. After looking at Scripture and hearing stories and seeing the joy Christians had, she found Jesus to be incredibly compelling, but she felt like she wasn't ready to become a Christian because she still hadn't FELT something from Jesus himself. She longed to encounter Him in a way that others had before she could give her life to Him. So we prayed that somehow, someday, God would help her see Him and hear His voice. And that night, after the worship service, she came running up to us and told us that she had the strangest experience while we were singing one of the songs. "I don't really

know how to describe it," she said, "but I could see Jesus, and I heard him inviting me to come to Him and trust Him! It was like I could feel His love for the first time! It was amazing!" That encounter was something Sharon needed from God...she needed to feel His love and hear His voice, and as she took a small step of faith to pray and seek Jesus, he was faithful to meet her in the process. And eventually she was able to joyfully decide to become a Christian as a result.

(Maybe include some examples of other people encountering God, from history...like Augustine)

Following Jesus and surrendering every part of your life to Him is not a small task. It is a serious decision, and Jesus doesn't want anyone to make that decision blindly. He longs to reveal Himself to us, to help us truly see and experience His love and grace and power, so that we can make that decision with confidence and joy because we have encountered Him and know who He really is. So this week, as we try different activities and you explore what it means to follow Jesus, I encourage you to be open to what He might do during your time here.

So now, we are going to give you a chance to do just that and seek after God. We just looked at Scripture together, but we also want to give you a chance to look at it on your own, without distractions. In your packet you will find a paper that says "Monday Quiet Time"...take that out. For the next 30 minutes, go find a comfortable spot without many distractions, and follow this guide for how to spend your time. (There is a section at the top that explains what you will be doing and instructions you can follow, along with some reflection questions at the end.) At 12:10, we will meet back in here to close our time together this morning. You might be tempted to zone out, or check your phone, or do other things, but we want to invite you to use this space to truly seek God, and see what happens! Let's pray.

7. Quiet Time (11:40 AM – 12:10 PM)

8. Closing (12:10 PM)

We are coming to the end of our morning session together. But before we go to lunch, I just want to give you a challenge. You all came to CFW for different reasons, and you all may have chosen this track for different reasons. But whatever led you here, we believe that God ultimately has a reason for you to be here in this track this week. Wherever you are at on your spiritual journey, this week can be a place for you to encounter Jesus in a fresh, meaningful way. So don't be afraid to try new things! Ask questions! Share your experiences as we go! Jesus wants to reveal himself to you, to show you more and more of his goodness and truth. You'll never know how God might show up when you give him space to speak into your life!

Its time for lunch...we will be back in here at 4 PM!

Session Four Details: Monday Afternoon

Supplies needed:

Pictures of brokenness, tape

1. Pictures of Brokenness Exercise (4:00 – 4:10 PM)

Room Set up: Place pictures showing brokenness in the world around the room on walls or tables

- A. As students arrive, invite them to spend time quietly looking at the different pictures around the room and observe to themselves.
- B. After five minutes, bring students back together

- C. Have them share in the large group about the following questions:
 - What stood out to you as you looked at the pictures?
 - How did the pictures make you feel?
- D. **Wrap up discussion:** As you can see, there are plenty of bad things in our world. Our world is pretty messed up. We call this brokenness, because our world is broken, or damaged. We saw pictures of war, sickness, racism, violence, hunger, oppression, poverty, death, etc. and none of us think that these are good things! We all ache for a better world. What does this mean? Just like hunger points to the existence of food, our ache for a better world seems to point to the possibility that a better world did exist or that it will one day.

2. Collaborative Scripture Activity on Creation (4:10 – 4:40 PM)

One of the primary ways we can encounter God is through looking at His story in Scripture. The Bible is made up of many different stories and a variety of forms of literature, but they all fit together to tell a bigger picture about God and about us. This afternoon, we are going to look at the beginning of that story.

Divide students into 5 groups and give them each a passage listed to below. Instruct them to look up the passages and discuss what the passages teach about the characteristics of God, humans, and the relationships between them. They will summarize and present the main points they found to the whole group.

- A. Passages:
 - i. Psalm 8 – God as Creator
 - God is creator
 - We are to take care of creation
 - ii. Psalm 145:1-13 – God is good and loving
 - God is good
 - God is great and mighty
 - God is righteous
 - God is loving and compassionate
 - iii. Psalm 145:13-21
 - God is trustworthy
 - God cares for those in need
 - God gives us fulfillment and satisfaction
 - God is near to those who call on him
 - iv. Psalm 139:1-18
 - God knows us
 - God knows our thought and actions
 - We cannot hide from God
 - God is with us
 - God created us
 - v. Genesis 1:26-31
 - God created humans in his image
 - God created male and female
 - God gave humans authority over creation
 - Humans were meant to live in right relationship with God
- B. Have each group read their passage out loud and share what they found.

- C. **Summary:** From this activity we learned a lot about God as the Bible describes him. We see him as just, loving, compassionate, creator, trustworthy and much more. We also saw that we were designed to be in a loving relationship with God and with each other and we were tasked to take care of the earth and everything in it. However, as we realized earlier when we looked at the pictures around the room, our world does not usually operate in this way. We see damaged human relationships and a world that appears to be without hope. What happened to get us to this point? How could God let this happen? After our break we're going to explore what the Bible has to say about this!

3. Break (4:40 – 4:55 PM)

4. Genesis 3 Bible Study (4:55 – 5:40 PM)

Intro and context: We are going to look at a story from the book of Genesis. Genesis is the first book of the Bible that was written thousands of years ago. As we read Genesis it is important to note, that it was not written as a scientific account. It is also not a historical documentation of everything that happened. This doesn't mean that these events didn't happen but it means that we shouldn't read this story as we would a textbook or newspaper article.

We are not even the original audience, the book of Genesis was originally written for the Hebrew people thousands of years ago in a culture that is drastically different than our own that did not put as much emphasis on details as we do today. It was written in a way that the original audience would know and understand but in a way that can be hard for us to interpret today.

With all of this in mind, it can be easy to wonder if we can learn anything from this story. However, I think the story still has much value if we keep this context in mind and focus on the main points. Let's try not to emphasize or get hung up on details but instead we want to focus on the main points that the author is trying to communicate.

In summary, here is a list of some of the things to remember as you study this story:

1. This not a scientific or historical account of everything that happened
2. We are not the original audience
3. Focus on the main points the author wants to communicate

Before we start, let me give some context for what has happened in the first two chapters of Genesis. We see God creates the universe and everything in it. The focus of the story is around the creation of humans and the Bible says God created humans "in his image." God gives humans authority over everything that he has created and asks us to take care of it. We see a beautiful relationship between God and humans, a beautiful relationship that humans had with each other, and a beautiful relationship humans had with the earth. God declared humans and his creation as good. God placed the first humans in the Garden of Eden and provided for them with food and nourishment. They were only given one rule and that was not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God gives a punishment of death to anyone who chooses to eat from the tree.

Read through the passage out loud

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As we discussed earlier go ahead and read through the story again to yourself and mark any observations you can make about the text focus especially on the different characters and their actions and motivations. Also mark down any questions you may have.

Personal Study (7 min)

Observations (8 min)

Ask for observations; write them down on flip chart poster.

Questions (8 min)

What questions did you have as you read the passage? (Write out questions)

-What was the serpent trying to do by telling the woman that she would not die and that she would be like God if she ate the fruit from the tree?

-Why would God command them not to eat from the tree?

-What happened as a result of eating the fruit from the tree?

-Why did the man and the woman hide from God?

-How do they respond to God when he asks them if they ate from the tree?

-Are the excuses they made legitimate?

-How does God punish them?

-Why does God ask "Where are you?" Doesn't he already know where they are? Why would God clothe them?

-What do we learn about God and humans from this story?

-What is the main point the author is trying to communicate?

Interpretation (15 min)

(Use your best judgment to either split people into groups and assign questions to discuss, or discuss key questions as a whole group.)

-What was the serpent trying to do by telling the woman that she would not die and that she would be like God if she ate the fruit from the tree? –He was trying to get the woman to doubt God and disobey him. He enticed her with the power of being "like God" basically meaning if you eat the fruit you will be God's equal.

Why would God command them not to eat from the tree? –We don't really know for sure. It might have been that he knew humans could not handle the knowledge of good and evil in the way he can, because he is perfect and humans aren't. God had provided everything they needed in ch. 1 and 2 but when they didn't trust him things got worse. They still did bad things after gaining knowledge of good and evil.

What happened as a result of eating the fruit from the tree? What does it mean that their “eyes were opened?” – Their “eyes were opened” which means they saw things differently. At this point they realized their nakedness which means more than just a lack of clothing. It also is an emotional and relational nakedness where you are completely open, vulnerable with someone. After eating the fruit they were ashamed and afraid to be open and vulnerable with God and each other as they had been before. Their good relationship was damaged.

Why did the man and the woman hide from God? –It says they were afraid because they were naked. They probably realized they had disobeyed God. They had a trusting relationship with God but now they had broken that trust and damaged the relationship.

How do they respond to God when he asks them if they ate from the tree? –They make excuses and play the blame game. The man blames the woman and God for putting the woman there. The woman blames the serpent for deceiving her. They do not take responsibility for their own actions.

Are the excuses they made legitimate? –No. The serpent did lie but God had already told them the truth. They decided to trust the serpent over God.

How does God punish them? –The serpent becomes the enemy of the woman’s offspring (most interpret offspring to refer to Jesus). Jesus crushed Satan’s head by defeating him. The woman will have pain in childbirth and the man will rule over the woman. (Relationship between men and women damaged). The man will have to work the ground painfully for food. (relationship with the earth damaged). They will return to dust (death- which was original punishment if they ate the fruit.).

Why does God ask “Where are you?” Doesn’t he already know where they are? Why would God clothe them? –Because he still loves and cares for them even after they have disobeyed and damaged their relationship with Him. He is willing to pursue them and come to them. He did not abandon them. Also removing them from the garden was more of a kindness. If humans continued to eat from the tree of life they would live in a cursed state of suffering and pain forever.

What do we learn about God and humans from this story? –We as humans rebel against God and as a result brokenness has entered the world. God cares about humans enough to not destroy them for their disobedience. He also cares for them by clothing them and seeking them out when they were hiding.

What is the main point the author is trying to communicate? –See main points section below.

Main Points: We rejected God’s leadership and became our own god

1. Damaged our relationship with God leaving us in a state of death
2. Damaged our relationship with each other
3. Damaged our relationship with the world

We and the world have been damaged by evil

Summary:

(As you give summary, draw the first two words of the Big Story Gospel Diagram on poster on the wall)

What did we learn from this story? We learned that according to the Bible, God created the world and it was good. We were in a beautiful and loving relationship with God with each other and with the world. God provided for humans by giving them everything they needed in the garden but humans still decided not to trust God and disobeyed him. As a result, we see our good and beautiful relationship with God was

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damaged, our relationship with each other was damaged and relationship to the world was damaged. We and the world have been damaged by evil. All of the brokenness that we see in the world today, all of the bad things we saw in those pictures at the beginning is not what God intended. However, because we disobeyed God our world became damaged. Thankfully the story does not stop here! God still cares for us! Throughout the rest of the week we will learn about the hope that God brings in the midst of a messed up world and how he has a plan to fix and restore the world.

Personal Reflection (5 Min):

Take out the sheet in your folder titled Monday Afternoon Reflection Questions. Take a few minutes to read the questions and journal or think about your responses.

1. Where have you experienced brokenness in the world?
2. Where have you experienced brokenness in your own life?
3. How have you responded to these situations?
4. What might God have to say about these situations?

5. Testimony about Experiencing Brokenness (5:40 – 5:45 PM)

Have a track staff, a mature Christian student who is taking the track with a seeking friend, or use a video to share this testimony. The idea is to set up the problem of brokenness WITHOUT resolving it yet.

1. Experiencing brokenness in self and the world
2. Longing for something more
3. Leaving it unresolved

6. SG Discussion (5:45-6:05 PM)

Have students go into their small groups and discuss the following questions

1. Think about your friends and people on your campus. What is the main desire you see those people trying to pursue? What do you think they want most in life right now?
2. In what ways do you see them trying to pursue those desires? How are they trying to fulfill deeper longings?
3. How about you? What do you long for? What do you most deeply desire right now in life?
4. Why is that important to you?
5. How have you tried to fulfill that desire? How is that going for you right now?
6. Have you ever considered how God could help fulfill your desires? Why or why not?

7. Wrap up Talk on Jesus and the Samaritan Woman (6:05 - 6:15 PM)

Today we talked about many of the bad things we experience in this world, the brokenness each of us experiences every day. We not only acknowledged it but we also went a step deeper and began to explore the origin of evil by looking at Genesis 3. We saw the first humans rebel against God just like how we all have rebelled against God in our own way. When this happened it damaged our relationship with him we could no longer be in a perfect, intimate relationship with God naked and unashamed. It also damaged relationships between humans and between humans and the world which brings us back to today, where we see a world that is messed up! A world that can feel so dark and so broken, that we may begin to think it is without hope. Is our world hopeless?

Let me share a story with you. In the Bible, there is a story about Jesus traveling through the region of Samaria. Jesus stops to take a rest by a well, while his followers head into town to buy food. At the well he meets a woman who is a Samaritan and asks her for a drink from the well. She replies: "You are a Jew and I

am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?" She is taken aback that he even spoke to her because at this time Jews (like Jesus) did not associate with Samaritans. The Jews believed the Samaritans not to be true worshippers of God because they had allowed other religions and cultures to influence them. This caused great animosity between the two people groups. However, Jesus doesn't seem to care much about that as he decides to talk to her anyway. He is willing to cross deep cultural and religious barriers in order to offer this woman what he calls "living water."

At first the woman doesn't understand what Jesus is talking about but as he explains more he says that whoever drinks the "living water" he offers will never be thirsty again. The woman then asks Jesus for this water to which he replies go get your husband and come back. She tells Jesus she has no husband and Jesus reveals that he knew this and that she had actually had 5 husbands and the man she is currently with is not her husband. You see, Jesus knew this woman before he even met her. He knew the place in her life where she had experienced the most brokenness and deep pain. She looked for fulfillment in life and she hoped to find that through her relationships with the men in her life. However, none of those relationships were able to satisfy her, to give her the fulfillment, purpose and meaning she longed to have. Jesus, however, offers her the fulfillment that the others could not.

Jesus was not stopped by the barriers separating him from the Samaritan woman. He was willing to cross barriers of culture, religion, gender, and social barriers to interact with this woman. He pursued her because he had a gift for her that would change her life. He knew that he could provide satisfaction and fulfillment to this woman's life and he was willing to do whatever he needed to, to offer her that gift. After this conversation between Jesus and the Samaritan woman, she runs back into town and tells everyone about Jesus because she has finally found the one thing that can give her the purpose, meaning, and fulfillment in life and that is Jesus.

Jesus wants to offer each of us the same "living water" this week! He knows each one of you already, like he knew the woman. He knows what barriers you may have to keep you from him. He knows your deepest area of pain, of suffering, of brokenness and he is willing to cross all of those barriers to reach us with his love. Jesus has something in store for each of us this week that can completely transform our lives! He is bringing us hope in the midst of a seriously messed up world! All we need to do is watch and listen for what he has to say to us this week. So let's do that, let's be open to Jesus this week and hear what he has for us.

Note for tomorrow: Make sure you have bread for tomorrow morning's session. You can 1) ask the camp kitchen for a loaf 2) buy a loaf at a local store or 3) bring a loaf or bread from home

Session Five Details: Tuesday Morning

Supplies needed:

Character of Jesus stations (Bread, Candles and lighters, Shepherds staff, Vine poster, Story Project

1. Character of Jesus Stations (9:00 – 9:25 AM)

Before the track starts, set up the stations around the room that focus on different aspects of Jesus and his character. Each station should have a sign and accompanying object or picture (see below).

This morning we are going to spend some time individually exploring what the Bible teaches about Jesus. There are interactive stations set up around the room. Feel free to take some time and visit the different stations. Each station has a sign, so find the corresponding handout for that station in your track folder, then

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follow the instructions. You can take your time to explore whichever stations you like, and if you don't have enough time to engage with all of them, that is ok.

A. Stations

- i. Bread of Life (with bread to eat) – John 6:35,48
 1. Have a loaf of bread available for students to eat
 2. Handouts with instructions and reflection questions
- ii. Light of the World (light a candle) – John 8:12, 9:5
 1. Have candles available for students to light
(During the time, have a staff assigned to watch the candles. Once a student lights a candle and moves on to the next station, extinguish the candle so other students can light it.)
 2. Handouts with instructions and reflection questions
- iii. Good Shepherd (with rod/staff) – John 10:11
 1. Have shepherd staff set up to be seen
 2. Handouts with instructions and reflection questions
- iv. True vine poster – John 15:1
 1. Have poster set up for students to observe
 2. Handouts with instructions and reflection questions
- v. Story Project
 1. Lay out the Story Project poster on a table for students to view
 2. Handouts with instructions and reflection questions

2. Whole Group Debrief (9:25 – 9:40 AM)

Now head back to your tables and we'll take the next few minutes to discuss what we learned.

1. How was the experience for you? What stood out to you?
2. What did you learn about Jesus and his character?
3. What surprised you? What was different than what you expected?

3. Break (9:40 – 9:55 AM)

4. John 3 Bible Study (9:55 – 11:05 AM)

Today we're going to study a story from the Bible that comes from the book of John. The book of John is one of the four books that are accounts of Jesus and his life and ministry. The author was a man named John who was one of Jesus' 12 disciples. He was actually an eyewitness to many of the events described in this book. This story is about a man named Nicodemus who is a religious leader of the day also called a Pharisee who came to see Jesus. As a Pharisee he would have cared deeply about religious law and making sure others followed the rules as well.

Read passage out loud then have them read to themselves and make observations.

Personal Study (8 min)

Observations (8 min)

Ask for observations; write out on flip chart poster.

Questions (10 min)

What questions did you have as you read the passage? (Write out questions)

Potential questions...

-Jesus' first response in v. 3 seems to be unnatural to the conversation. Why would Jesus respond in this way?

-What does Jesus mean by being "born again"?

-What does it mean to be born "of water and Spirit" (v. 5)?

-Why would Nicodemus need to be born again? Isn't he already a good person and a religious leader?

-What is the deal with the snake in the wilderness (v. 13-15)?

-According to v. 16-17 who is Jesus and what is his purpose?

-What does John mean by "eternal life?"

-What exactly must one do to receive eternal life?

Interpretation (20 min)

(Use your best judgment to either split people into groups and assign questions to discuss, or discuss key questions as a whole group.)

Jesus' first response in v. 3 seems to be unnatural to the conversation. Why would Jesus respond in this way? –Answers may vary but it seems that Jesus is pointing to something that is important for Nicodemus to understand. Nic's response (in verse 4) shows that this is something that he does not yet understand.

What does Jesus mean by "born again"? –Answers may vary. Jesus is referring to a spiritual rebirth as we see in v. 5. A rebirth entails completely starting over or transforming to a new way of life.

What does it mean to be born "of water and Spirit" (v. 5)? –In the old testament cleansing by water and new spiritual life are already connected with each other (see Ez. 36:25-28). Jesus is bringing new spiritual life. The metaphor in verse 8 talks of the wind being something we cannot control or initiate. We can see its effects but ultimately it does not come from our own power. Just like spiritual rebirth comes from God and his power rather than our own.

Why would Nicodemus need to be born again? Isn't he already a good person and a religious leader? –What we know from the Pharisees is that they were very good at following the rules and being obedient. However, even the best, most obedient, rule follower in the world is not perfect and it does not mean that their heart is pure. Nicodemus still needed God to transform him spiritually through rebirth.

What is the deal with the snake in the wilderness (v. 13-15)? –See Numbers 21:4-9. Anyone who looked on the bronze snake was given life. This paralleled with Jesus' own death and whoever believes in him will be given spiritual life.

According to v. 16-17 who is Jesus and what is his purpose? –Jesus is God’s only Son. Whoever believes in Jesus will have “eternal life”. Jesus came to the world so that it would be saved from the hopelessness we saw yesterday when brokenness entered our world.

What does John mean by “eternal life?” —John is referring to the new spiritual life referred to by Jesus in the story. It is not just an afterlife in heaven, it is a spiritual rebirth that begins in this life.

What does the story say is necessary to receive eternal life? –The story says whoever believes in Jesus has eternal life. What does it mean to believe in Jesus? To believe in Jesus is to believe in his purpose and identity we see in v. 16-17. Belief also involves trust when we believe in something wholeheartedly we put our trust in that above all else.

What is the main point of this story?

Main points:

Jesus came to save the world

Jesus offers eternal life with him

Summary (5 min)

What did we learn from this story? We learned much about Jesus’ identity and purpose. We learned his identity as the Son of God and we learned his purpose as coming to the world to save it. We saw yesterday that the world is pretty messed up. This is a result of our own brokenness and rebellion against God. Everything seemed awful and hopeless but God loved us so much that he did not want to leave the world in this broken state. He decided to bring hope in the midst of a broken world by sending Jesus to earth. He sent Jesus to bring healing and restoration to our broken world. He sent Jesus to give us new life to mend our damaged relationship with God. A spiritual rebirth, a transformation, through a relationship with him. How does Jesus save us and the world in this way? In the next few sessions we’ll start to unpack this in more detail. For now, take some time to look over these reflection questions and take time to journal. (As you explain this, draw the third world on the Big Story poster)

Personal Reflection/Application (10 min)

Have students use reflection questions in packet.

Break (11:05 – 11:25 AM)

Testimony about Encountering Jesus (11:25 -11:30 AM)

Have a track staff, a mature Christian student who is taking the track with a seeking friend, or use a video to share this testimony. If you are low on numbers, you can have the person who is giving the testimony from Monday afternoon continue their story and explain how they encountered Jesus and what that meant for them. (Jesus is real, He wants to know us, he wants to heal us, He wants to send us out)

Encountering Jesus through Prayer (11:30 – 11:55 AM)

Now we are actually going to have an opportunity to encounter Jesus through prayer. This type of prayer is known as imaginative contemplation and is a way of allowing God to speak to us through scripture and our imagination. I will play an audio clip that will walk you through the exercise. It will last about 15 minutes. At the conclusion of the exercise we would like you to remain quiet. This is to give you some more time to spend with Jesus. During this time of quiet we would like you to have an actual conversation with Jesus

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through journaling. It may seem weird or silly but just write out what comes to your heart and mind. Make it a dialog between you and God. We will put some questions on the screen to guide you during the activity at the conclusion of the audio clip. Just to clarify we will first listen to the audio clip and then we will give you time to journal. You will want to take a minute to spread out and find a comfortable spot around the room.

Imaginative Contemplation (Ignatian Prayer)

Play audio from <http://pray-as-you-go.org/imaginative-contemplation/>

Mark 10:46-52 – Jesus heals Bartimaeus (Lasts about 15 minutes)

Activity: After playing audio, have students journal conversation with Jesus. Put these questions on Powerpoint slide:

- Which character are you in the story?
- What do you want from Jesus?
- Where do you desire healing?
- What do you want to say to Jesus now?

Small Group Discussion (11:55 AM – 12:10 PM)

Head back into your small groups and discuss the following questions around your table.

- How was the experience?
 - What was your interaction with Jesus like?
 - What did you hear from Jesus?
 - What is your prayer to Jesus?
 - How did Jesus respond?
- Pray for one another if you have time

Staff Wrap-Up (12:10 – 12:15 PM)

Hopefully today gave you a fresh look at the identity of Jesus. We learned about what Jesus said about himself and some of the stories of Jesus through the exercise at the beginning of the session. To name a couple, we saw Jesus as the “bread of life” someone who can wholly and completely fulfill and satisfy us. We saw Jesus as the true vine that if we remain in him he will be with us. Then we did a Bible study on story of Jesus and Nicodemus. We saw Jesus’ identity and purpose as the Son of God who came to save the world from our state of brokenness and our damaged relationship with God. Finally, we learned that Jesus is real and is still with us here today. That we can actually encounter and interact with him through prayer and the Bible. As you leave this session, I want you to keep thinking through the conversation you had with Jesus. Don’t let it fade away. Talk to your friends and tell them about the encounter you had and how you have been impacted by Jesus in track this week so far. Tomorrow morning we’ll be exploring Jesus’ death and resurrection.

Session Six Details: Wednesday Morning

Supplies needed:

Wooden cross, notecards, tape, large strip of butcher paper to put on wall (or multiple pieces of easel pad paper)

1. Talk on the Problem of Sin (9:05 – 9:25 AM)

So far this week we’ve discussed how God created the world to be good, where everyone lived in right relationship to each other and to God. But because we decided our way might be better than God’s, we disobeyed Him, which led to sin entering our world. His good creation became damaged and broken, which meant that our relationships with each other, our relationship with God, and our relationship with creation

itself all became broken. The world was not as it was supposed to be, but thankfully God did not give up on us. Instead, we saw yesterday how he sent Jesus, God in the flesh, to dwell among us and show us a different way of living. He came to make things right in our broken world.

This is all a part of the story of God that we see in Scripture. But it's important to remember that this is also OUR story. You might be tempted to look at this story objectively, at a distance, but we actually all fit into this story...we play a role. Because in reality, sin is not just a problem that is "out there" in our world. It is a problem that is equally internal as well...we have all been touched by sin, and have all sinned ourselves. We have personally contributed to the brokenness in the world.

Jesus once told a story about a man who had two sons. The younger son came to his father one day and said, "Give me my share of your estate...I want my inheritance now." To Jesus' audience, that request would have been appalling. Essentially, he was telling his father that he wished he were dead and that he'd rather have his money than a relationship with him. But for some reason, the father gave him what he asked for. And pretty soon the younger son packed everything up and traveled to a far country where he lived it up and did whatever he felt like. Picture some of those teen celebrities who go crazy with all of their money, spending it all on drugs and alcohol and all sorts of entertainment...it was probably something like that. The son recklessly spent his money like there was no tomorrow, and just when he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in the country, and he suddenly found himself broke and in desperate need. With no other options, he ended up having to work a humiliating job feeding pigs, and was facing such hard times that he even considered eating the food he was supposed to feed to the pigs. It was a drastically less glamorous life than what he had been living not that long ago. (This would be a good place to share your own testimony, specifically how you ran from God and lived life on your own terms, and where it led you.)

As the younger son sat there with the pigs, knowing how much he was struggling to make ends meet and even just find enough food to eat, he thought about life back home with his father. He thought, "How many of my father's hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger! I wanted to do things my own way, but life with him was much better than I ever realized." He recognized how foolish and selfish his disobedience was because his own plans are what led him to such a hopeless situation. So he eventually decided to return home and confess his sin to his father, hoping that he would at least be willing to hire him as a servant. He probably feared how his father would respond after all the terrible things he had done, and assumed that the reunion wouldn't go well. But, whatever happened couldn't be worse than his current situation. As he neared his home, though, something unexpected happened.

When the father saw him walking down the road towards his house, he didn't scoff. He didn't say, "Well its about time...I always knew he'd come crawling back." He wasn't angry, or upset, or condescending. Instead, the father got up and RAN to meet his son and embrace him. Jesus said he felt compassion towards him and welcomed him with open arms. As they embraced, the son confessed his sin and felt great shame for what he had done, but the father held him tighter and called for the servants to bring his newly-returned son the best robe, and a pair of shoes, and a ring for his hand. And He ended up throwing a huge party, bringing out all the best food and drink, because, as he put it, "My son was dead, but now he's alive. He was lost, but now he is found!" Despite all the ways his son had sinned against him, because of his deep love for him he was overjoyed that he had finally returned.

Meanwhile, the older son, who had faithfully served the father all this time, came back from working in the field and heard the music and saw the big party. And when he saw his younger brother celebrating with everyone else, he blew a gasket. He realized it was all in his honor, even though he had abandoned them and squandered his father's wealth. So the older son refused to go into the party, even when his father came out

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and begged him to come welcome his brother back. He said, "Look, I've served you all these years, and never disobeyed you, yet you never threw me a party like this! But when this son of yours came back, who, mind you, threw away your fortune on prostitutes and gambling, YOU threw a feast for him!" The father responded by saying, "Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. It was fitting to celebrate your brother's return because he was lost, but now is found!" He wanted his son to see that his love for them was not determined by how hard they worked or what they did. He was always willing to honor both of them and give them the best because of his incredible love for them, because he was their father.

The younger son spit in his father's face at the beginning of the story and threw away all his money on reckless living because ultimately he doubted that life with his father was better than the alternative. He was guilty because he didn't trust him. But the older son doubted his father's goodness too, because he felt like he had to work to earn his father's love and affection, and that he had done enough to deserve more than what he got. And he ended up disobeying his father, just like the younger son did in the beginning. Jesus told this story about this generous father to teach about God's incredible grace and love. But we also can learn something from the way both of the sons interacted with the father. The older son might have seemed like he was better than the younger son, because he stayed and served him. But his view of his father was warped just like his brother's was. He doubted his father and that led to disobedience, too, just in different ways. Jesus told this story to a group of religious leaders who all thought they were good with God because they were Jewish and followed a bunch of rules. But he wanted to show them that their view of God was messed up just like the pagan nations around them, and that they couldn't earn anything from God...they needed His grace as much as anyone else.

In order to have a genuine encounter with God, you first have to have an accurate understanding of who YOU are. And part of your identity (and my identity) is rooted in this truth: we ALL are guilty of rebelling against God and following our own plans because of a flawed understanding of who He is. No matter how much we might try to live an upstanding, good life, there comes a point where we doubt His goodness and His way of living, so we try and do things our own way. And that means we are guilty of sin. We fail to see God as truly good, or truly as one who has authority over our lives. We fail to trust in His love and His provision, so we act out and take things into our own hands. Our disobedience might play out in different ways, of course...but ultimately all of us are guilty of acting selfishly and doing things that harm others because we doubt that God's way of doing things can be better.

Sin is not just brokenness in the world. It is an act of all out rebellion against God. It is spitting in his face and acting as if you knew better than he did. And that's a serious offense. If you commit a crime against someone who is a criminal, it might not seem that bad to the world, because maybe that person deserved it. And if you commit a crime against someone who is innocent, that seems much worse. But imagine committing a crime against someone who was not only innocent of any wrongdoing, but also joyfully raised you and loved you and provided for all your needs. That would seem outrageous, to turn your back on someone who was so good to you. But that's essentially what the Bible says we as humans do to God when we sin. He lovingly created us, taking time to design each of us and give us personalities and unique stories and gifts. And He lovingly provides for our needs, and reveals his goodness to us in a variety of ways. He doesn't do things to harm us or cause us pain, and always works to help us grow and to lead us towards a new life. But we respond by disobeying and doing whatever we think is best. That's kind of mind blowing if you think about it.

In the book of Romans, the Bible says that the wages of sin is death...the punishment for sin is physical death and separation from God. But, like the father in the story, God is full of compassion and grace towards us,

even in light of all that we have done. He is willing to welcome us back into his arms if we turn from our sinful way of living and choose to trust in Him completely.

But there is still a problem, because even though God is perfectly loving and full of compassion, he is also perfectly just and holy. If God just ignored our sins and let us have a relationship with Him automatically, He wouldn't be perfectly JUST anymore, because justice means that the deserved punishment or reward is given out. Think about it this way...if someone murdered your family, and the judge, because of a strong sense of compassion, decided to let the criminal go without any punishment, how would you feel? Would you say that was a good judge? That he was just? No, of course not! Punishment must be paid in order for there to be justice. And God knew that. He loved the world, and wanted to fix the separation and brokenness, but in order to do that He had to take care of the problem of our sin. So that brings us to Jesus, and the story of the cross. I'm sure that most of you have noticed that the cross is the main symbol for Christianity...there is a reason for that! The message of the cross is central to the story of God and of us, because according to the Bible when Jesus died on the cross, it changed everything! So we are going to look more at this part of the story.

We are going to head into our quiet time for the next thirty minutes, and in this space you are going to be able to read the story of Jesus' death on the cross and engage with what happened at the end of his life. There is a guide in your folder with some reflection questions, so take a look at that, and then we'll come back together in here at 10:00 AM.

2. Quiet Time (9:25 – 10:00 AM)

3. Isaiah 53 Bible Study (10:00 – 10:45 AM)

(This is a modified manuscript study)

When you read about Jesus' death, it seems like such a tragedy. He was mocked, flogged, beaten, and humiliated. If he is who he truly said he was, that should beg the question...why? Why experience such a painful and humiliating death? To help us answer that question, we are going to look at a passage from the book of Isaiah from the Old Testament.

The Prophet Isaiah was called by God to go and speak to the people of Israel on His behalf, so the book of Isaiah is a collection of those messages. Some of those messages were calls to turn away from their idolatry, some were promises of grace and renewal, some described the future of Israel. The passage we are going to look at now has traditionally been viewed as a messianic prophecy, meaning that it described the Messiah who was going to come and save Israel and make things right.

Take the next few minutes to read the passage and make observation. As you observe, take note of what you observe about the servant that is described.

Personal Study (7 min)

Observations

What did you observe about the servant described in the passage?

- he was rejected and despised
- he endured great pain and suffering
- he was pierced, crushed, wounded (v.5)
- he was punished for our sin (10x)

- he seemed to be a sacrifice for sin (v.5)
- he did not fight back or open his mouth in retaliation (v.7)
- he was arrested unjustly (v.8)
- not many people protested his arrest and death (v.8)
- grave was with the wicked (v.9)
- innocent of wrongdoing (v.9)
- It was the Lord's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, as an offering for sin (v.10)
- He received satisfaction and reward at the end (v.11,12)

Other observations from the passage? It says we have ALL gone astray, but the Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all

(Other helpful questions to draw out observations: Why did this servant have to endure this punishment? Why would it be God's will? Why would he be satisfied at the end?)

What comparisons or connections did you notice to Jesus and the story of his arrest and death?

What do you think the main point of this passage is? What was it trying to teach about the Messiah? The Messiah was going to be rejected by those he came to save and would face great suffering. But his suffering would have a purpose...he would be pierced for OUR transgressions and crushed for OUR sins, and the punishment HE would face would bring peace and healing.

Summary

It is probably pretty easy to pick up that the servant Isaiah described is actually referring to Jesus. Just like the servant, he was rejected, and afflicted, and poured out his life unto death. But we see here that Jesus died for a reason...though He was completely innocent, He bore the weight of OUR sin and took the punishment WE deserved. When Jesus was beaten, and mocked, and nailed to the cross, he was taking the penalty for our rebellion against God. He suffered and died on the cross because of the ways we disobey God, for the ways we act selfishly, for the ways we harm others and ourselves. We put Jesus on the cross...our sin, our rebellion.

There is a hymn called "How Deep the Father's Love for Us" that describes this beautifully:
Behold the man upon a cross, my sin upon His shoulders;
Ashamed, I hear my mocking voice call out among the scoffers.
It was my sin that held Him there until it was accomplished;
His dying breath has brought me life - I know that it is finished.

Isaiah says that it was the Lord's will for Jesus to die on the cross like he did. Although God the Father deeply loved Jesus and they had a perfect relationship, He knew that the only way to deal with the sins of the world was to make an atoning sacrifice, a perfect offering for sin. And the only perfect man who has ever lived was Jesus. So out of His great love for us, God gave His beloved son as a sacrifice for our sin. And Jesus willingly embraced the suffering and death because He knew it was a part of His father's plan to justify sinners and bring peace and healing to our world.

The crucifixion is a horrendous story of suffering. But it is also a beautiful story of love. Jesus endured incredible agony and humiliation, even though he was completely innocent and had the power to stop it at any time. He died on the cross and faced that suffering for OUR sake, because of His incredible love for us.

He knew it was the only way to pay for the sins of the world and bring reconciliation with God. Imagine going through such suffering for rebellious, selfish people like us...and for the very people who arrested him and executed him. That is amazing love. Jesus knew His death was necessary and meaningful. He foretold it to His disciples and embraced it when the time came. But it was a dark day nonetheless, when we crucified the Light of the World.

We are going to move into a time of reflection now. There is a reflection guide in your folders with some questions to look at, and then after you've had some time to think about those, we want to invite you to respond actively to this story of the cross. If you feel comfortable doing so, we want to invite you to recognize and confess the ways you've sinned and disobeyed God. How have you acted selfishly? How have you harmed others? How have you rebelled against God? You can take one of the notecards at your table and write out your confession on it. Then, as a symbol of how Jesus' death on the cross was punishment for OUR sins, take your notecard and bring it up to the cross and tape it on. No matter where you are at on your spiritual journey, this is an opportunity to acknowledge the ways we are guilty of sin and wronging others, so I invite you to take a risk and respond after you've had time to reflect.

Play reflective music, give space for personal reflection.

4. Personal Reflection (10:45 – 11:00 AM)

5. Break (11:00 – 11:20 AM)

6. Talk on the Resurrection, Grace, and Forgiveness (11:20 – 11:40 AM)

Start by playing the Death to Death Video

Jesus' death on the cross was an incredibly difficult blow for His disciples and other followers. They had put their faith in Him as the Messiah and left everything behind to follow Him, only to watch Him die at the hands of the Roman authorities. It seemed tragic, to say the least, but thankfully that was not the end of the story!

Let me read what happened next, according to chapter 20 of the book of John:

“Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. **2** So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don’t know where they have put him!”

3 So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. **4** Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. **5** He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in. **6** Then Simon Peter came along behind him and went straight into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, **7** as well as the cloth that had been wrapped around Jesus’ head. The cloth was still lying in its place, separate from the linen. **8** Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed. **9** (They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.) **10** Then the disciples went back to where they were staying.

11 Now Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb **12** and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus’ body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot.

13 They asked her, “Woman, why are you crying?”

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"They have taken my Lord away," she said, "and I don't know where they have put him." **14** At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus.

15 He asked her, "Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?"

Thinking he was the gardener, she said, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him."

16 Jesus said to her, "Mary."

She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means "Teacher").

17 Jesus said, "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'"

18 Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: "I have seen the Lord!" And she told them that he had said these things to her.

19 On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" **20** After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. And the disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.

21 Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." **22** And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit.

So according to Scripture, on the third day after Jesus had been crucified and buried, he rose again from the dead. He came back to life! And he appeared to His disciples many times over the next forty days, preparing them for what was next. They were incredibly overjoyed...just when they had thought that all hope was lost, Jesus returned and opened their eyes to His true purpose. He helped them fully understand WHY he had to die on the cross, and how His death functioned as an acceptable sacrifice to pay for the sins of the world.

When Jesus died on the cross, He took our sins upon himself, almost like He was taking ownership of them, and paid the punishment for them. The Bible explains that it was as if we each had a record of debt that stood against us, demanding payment for our disobedience. When Jesus died on the cross, it was like He paid off our debt, so that we no longer have a record against us. He died to pay for all of these things up here, for me, for you, for all of us (reference the cross with confession notecards). He paid the price to set us free and give us NEW life. And because the punishment for sin has been paid, when we put our faith in Jesus, we are now clean in God's eyes. When Jesus died, all of our sins (reference cross) were taken care of...they were washed away. (At this point, pull off each of the notecards and either throw them in the fireplace or in the trash depending on what room the track is in.) If we put our faith in Jesus, these things are no longer held against us because of what He did. We get a clean slate, a new life. So God is able to welcome us back and offer forgiveness for all that we have done.

We haven't done anything to deserve all of this. It's not like we were ever going to be able to take care of our debt ourselves. Instead, Jesus chose to die for us and pay for our sins when we were completely hopeless and stuck. And he offers us forgiveness and salvation as a free gift. This is what we call grace...unmerited forgiveness and blessing from God. We don't deserve it, and we never could. But God still offers it to us freely, no matter how rebellious and wicked of lives we have lived. (illustration of grace?)

We usually refer to Jesus' coming back to life as "the resurrection." Now sometimes, when people talk about Jesus death and resurrection, they treat the cross as the focal point of the story, to the extent that the resurrection almost becomes something extra, like icing on the cake or something that is just an added benefit. But according to Scripture, the resurrection is not some extra piece to the story...it is as essential as the cross, and here's why.

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To start, if the resurrection actually happened, it proved that Jesus truly was who He claimed to be. The fact that He died on the cross does not prove in itself He is God. Instead, Jesus proved His deity by fulfilling the prophecies of His death and by His return from the grave. It was the pinnacle of His miracles, unlike anything else before or after. The Bible declares that “by being raised from the dead Jesus was proved to be the mighty Son of God, with the holy nature of God Himself.” (Romans 1:4)

Also, the resurrection helps verify that the Bible is trustworthy and inspired by God. It might be easy to look at the Bible as a book of myths and legends, but there is good reason to believe it was actually inspired by God. If Jesus rose from the dead, then we have seen this validates His claim to be God. And if He is God, He speaks with absolute certainty and final authority. Therefore, if Jesus rose from the dead, what He said about the Bible must be true. Surely you are going to accept the testimony of one who rose from the dead over the testimony of a skeptical scholar who will one day die himself. What did Jesus say about the Bible? He said that it was inspired by God and is trustworthy. So if the resurrection is true, it helps us see that the Bible itself can be trusted.

The resurrection is also essential because it demonstrated Jesus' victory over sin and death. By rising from the dead, Jesus proved that He had authority and power to break the bonds of sin and death...they had no power over Him anymore. And it assures us that we also can be free from the penalty of sin and find forgiveness through Jesus. Through Him, we are able to overcome and experience the same victory. In light of the darkness and tragedy of the cross, the resurrection is the ultimate source of hope! So for Christians, it is essential to believe in the reality of the resurrection...that Jesus really died and really came back to life.

Now obviously, this is something that can be difficult to believe. We don't see people come back from the dead, so the story might sound made up, like something Christians just believe blindly. But there is more reason to believe in the resurrection than just because the Bible says it happened. To start, there is evidence that suggests that the tomb Jesus was buried in was in fact found empty and that authorities could not find His body. There are extra-Biblical resources (meaning historical resources besides the Bible) that discuss how this man named Jesus was executed and buried, but also how his followers claimed that He rose from the dead and that Jewish authorities claimed His body was stolen. And that is important because the Jewish leaders were opposed to Christianity, which means they would have no motivation to lie about the tomb being empty...it did not help them out to do so. These things are not ONLY referenced in the Bible, like you would expect if it were a legend. There is legitimate, historical evidence to suggest that Jesus' tomb was found to be empty. Now, that doesn't prove that He came back from the dead, of course...but bear with me.

If the tomb was actually empty, a possible explanation was that his disciples stole His body so that they could pull off an elaborate hoax. But it doesn't make very much sense for the disciples to have done this and lied about the resurrection. For starters, they claimed that women were the first ones to find the empty tomb. This matters because in first century Jewish culture, the testimony of women was considered worthless. If the disciples were making this whole story up, they would've been smart enough to say that MEN found the tomb empty in order for the story to have more credibility. Also, the disciples didn't have much motivation to make up this story...it didn't get them power or wealth or fame. Instead, it led to persecution and hardship. And people might endure suffering and even die for a belief that is factually untrue (if they don't know that their belief is false), but they will not normally die for something they KNOW to be false. The disciples faced imprisonment, abuse, and even death for proclaiming that Jesus rose from the dead. If it was all untrue, surely they would've come clean before letting themselves be executed...people don't give their lives for what they know to be a lie!

And the disciples boldly risked persecution by proclaiming not just that Jesus was alive but also that they had

seen him and interacted with him. If it didn't make sense for them to have been lying, an alternative explanation is that they simply hallucinated that they had seen Jesus. That they just THOUGHT they saw him. But, again, that is hard to find credible. If only one person saw Jesus? Yeah, they could be hallucinating. A handful? Again, maybe. But hundreds of people claimed they saw Jesus alive from the dead...is it really believable that that many people hallucinated at the same time and saw the exact same thing? That's not how hallucinations work! Plus, the hallucination theory doesn't explain the empty tomb. So if the disciples weren't lying, and didn't hallucinate, the only other option is that they ACTUALLY saw Jesus alive from the dead.

This event was the beginning of a new way of life that started in Jerusalem and has spread across the world over the last 2,000 years. Billions of people throughout history and from every continent have not only chosen to follow Jesus' teachings, but they have also claimed to encounter Him as a *living* savior. If it was all made up, surely someone at some point in the beginning could have done something to disprove it all and it Christianity would not have continued to grow as it has. It is undeniable that this man named Jesus, no matter what you may think of him, made an incredibly lasting mark on our world. And the history of the Christian church all started with this one event...the resurrection of Jesus.

7. Imagination Time (11:40 – 11:55 AM)

This leaves us with the question of what does this all mean for you personally. If Jesus Christ truly was who He said He was...the light of the World, the bread of life, the Son of God...and He died on the cross to pay for your sins, and rose again from the dead, defeating the power of sin and death and ushering in His new kingdom, what impact would that have on your life? How does that change things? Well, we want to take some time to imagine what it might mean. We are going to take the next fifteen minutes or so to imagine what it could or should mean for your life if this is all true. What would it mean for your family? What would it mean for your campus? For our world?

This is time for you to think and reflect on your own, and we want you to express your thoughts on this giant sheet of butcher paper on the wall. You can write your thoughts, you can draw something, you can put words...whatever you want that describes what it all COULD mean. And for those of you who aren't Christians, this isn't necessarily declaring that you believe it...this is just imagining what you think it WOULD mean for you if it WERE true. You can write or draw directly on the paper, or use the paper at your tables to write on and then place them on the wall. God can meet us in His word, He can meet us in nature, He can meet us in prayer, and He can meet us in our own imagination and creativity. So this is a space to put on paper what you've been thinking about in response to this morning.

8. Small Group Discussion (11:55 AM – 12:15 PM)

Questions for use in SG time:

1. What has stood out to you this morning in all that we've discussed?
2. What was your reaction as you read the story of Jesus' crucifixion and as we studied Isaiah 53 together?
3. What is your reaction to the idea that Jesus died to pay for your sins on the cross?
4. What did you do during the imagination time? How does that communicate how you think life would be impacted if Jesus really did die on the cross and rise again? What does this all mean for you?
5. What do you still have questions about?

Session Seven Details: Wednesday Afternoon

Supplies needed:

No special supplies needed

1. Spoken Word Video (4:05 – 4:10 PM)

2. Talk on What Does it Mean to Be A Christian? (4:10 – 4:30 PM)

This afternoon we are going to be looking at the question, “What does it mean to be a Christian?” You are all at different points in your spiritual journey, but whether you are strongly considering choosing to follow Jesus, or you still aren’t sure, or you already made that decision and need a reminder, this is an important question to think about. What are you getting yourself into if you decide to become a Christian? What might your life look like? To start, we want to hear what YOU think the answer to that question is. Take a post it note, and write your answer to this question...what do you think it means to be a Christian? What are Christians supposed to be like? What should their life look like? Once you finish, post it up on the wall.

Time to write and post answers

Once everyone has a chance, read off some of the post-its out loud with the group, note any common or repeated ideas. Try to summarize what people answered.

These are YOUR thoughts on this question. If we went out to a busy street and just started asking random people the same question, we would probably get an even broader range of answers, maybe even from among Christians themselves. So rather than discuss some different opinions, it might be best to start by looking at what the Bible has to say about this question. These are only a few passages from Scripture that explain what it means to be a Christian, but they hit on some key points.

Put each Scripture up on Powerpoint and have people share what they think the passage teaches about what it means to be a Christian. Pull out main points before moving on to the next Scripture

A. Romans 10:9 and Acts 2:37-38

- A Christian is someone who has confessed / declared that Jesus is Lord and truly believes that he was who he said he was and that God raised him from the dead
- A Christian is someone who has repented (turned away from their own way of living)
- A Christian is someone who has been baptized (might need to explain here that the importance of baptism has to do with publically celebrating the decision to follow Jesus and the new life, not that the act of baptism is what saves you or makes you a Christian)
- So, according to these verses, to be a Christian means you truly believe that Jesus is the Messiah who died to pay for your sins and restore the world AND that you have turned away from your own way of living.

B. Ephesians 2:4-10

- A Christian is someone who has been saved by God
- saved by faith, not by works....it is a gift of God
- A Christian was created for good works, but those works are a result of being saved, not a cause
- So, according to these verses, to be a Christian is to be someone who has been saved by Jesus, not because they were good enough or did good things

C. 2 Corinthians 5:17-20

- A Christian has experienced some kind of transformation in their life (new creation)

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- A Christian is a Christian because of God's work, not their own (God, through Christ reconciled us to himself)
- A Christian is an ambassador for Christ (elaborate...living as Jesus lived to represent Him in this world to others)
- A Christian has been entrusted with the "ministry of reconciliation" between the world and God
- So, according to these verses, being a Christian means we have been reconciled to God and made into new Creations. But we also have been given the responsibility to be ambassadors for Christ and help others be reconciled to God

D. 1 Peter 2:4-5, 9-10

- If you are a Christian you are like a living stone that is being built together with others to be a "spiritual house" or dwelling place for God
- A Christian is now a part of a new community that is called to "proclaim the excellences of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light"
- A Christian is a part of "God's people"
- So, according to this Scripture, A Christian is called to live as a part of a new community that works to proclaim the excellencies of God to the world

E. Images from Sunday Evening

- Refer to posters on the wall and briefly touch on the different images that explain what Christ has done for us, what that means for Christians

These are just some things the Bible explains about being a Christian. But do you know what the Bible DOESN'T say about being a Christian? It doesn't say that being a Christian means that you must vote Republican. Or Democrat. It doesn't say that being a Christian means you no longer can do fun things, or that you must now judge other people. And it doesn't say that it's all about going to Church on Sunday mornings and practicing a certain set of new rituals.

There are many misperceptions about what it means to be a Christian. Many people think that being a Christian is about being a good enough person. But in these verses we just looked at, we see that you are not saved by being good enough or doing good things...you are saved by putting your faith in Jesus. You are saved because of God's grace and what HE has already done for you. So you don't have to get your life together and be a better person before choosing to follow Jesus. You don't have to constantly do good things for other people in order to for God to love you. Instead, following Jesus is about recognizing and confessing your sin, choosing to trust that Jesus died for that sin and that He offers you new life, and choosing to turn away from your sin to live according to the way Jesus wants.

Many people also think that being a Christian is just about going to church on Sundays and trying not to do bad things, but these verses tell us its so much more! To become a Christian is to become a new creation and be given new life. So there should be a change in who you are and how you live your life, more than just what happens on Sunday mornings! We are called to represent Jesus here on earth as His ambassadors and proclaim who He is. And we have been given a mission to carry out and are called to care about the things that Jesus cares about. We will talk more about what that means tomorrow, but the important thing to note for now is that Christians are given new responsibilities to carry out for Jesus that require effort and intentionality, and sometimes even sacrifice.

Ultimately, the term Christian means “little Christ”. So if you boil it all down, to be a Christian simply means to be someone who follows the way of Jesus and lives as He teaches, to the best of his or her abilities. It’s not always easy to do that, and it’s actually impossible to live that way on our own. But Jesus promises to continue to teach us and help us and transform us, so that we can slowly become more like Him and know the life He offers.

3. Testimony (4:30 – 4:35 PM)

For this testimony, have someone share about what his or her journey has been like since choosing to follow Jesus. This can be a track staff, a Christian student who is taking the track with a seeking friend, or another available staff like the worship director, OPD, expositor, etc. (Again, if you are low on numbers, you can have the same person who shared on Tuesday about encountering Jesus continue their story here)

4. Q and A (4:35 – 5:15 PM)

This is free space to invite students to ask questions they haven’t been able to ask yet. (It may be wise to create some kind of box/basket at the beginning of the week where students can put in questions as they go as well. If you only have two track staff, you might try inviting other available staff to be on the panel such as the worship director, OPD, expositor, etc. If you end up using a panel, have one staff function as the moderator. If you don’t take the whole time, feel free to let people out early for a longer break.

5. Break (5:15 – 5:30 PM)

6. Talk on the Cost and Joys of Following Jesus (5:30 – 5:50 PM)

Often times when we talk about following Jesus, we talk about choosing to follow Jesus as Lord and Savior. And most people have no problem with making Jesus their Savior...they love that He was willing to die for them and save them from death and separation from God. They cling to His grace and mercy and gladly receive the gift of forgiveness that He offers. But when it comes to making Jesus their Lord, things get a little more complicated. Because to make Jesus your Lord means you are giving Him complete authority in your life. It’s a title that you give to someone who is in control, to your ruler. And we don’t usually like to submit to others as our rulers! (Especially if you are from a place like the US where we value independence so highly!) If you make Jesus your Lord, that means that He gets to call the shots instead of you. You are choosing to let Him have control of your life, and that is hard! Even for people who already have chosen to follow Jesus, giving Him lordship in your life can be challenging.

Jesus once told a story that went like this: A man was walking in an old field one day when he noticed something shiny on the ground. So he bent down to take a closer look, and he realized that it was an incredibly valuable treasure that was buried in the dirt. And he thought, “Oh my gosh...this treasure could change my life! I have to have this! I NEED this!” He knew that the only way he could legally claim the treasure was if he bought the field that he found it in. So that’s what he decided to do. But in order to be able to afford the field, he had to sell EVERYTHING he owned...his house, his livestock, his clothes, his possessions...all of it. It was risky and His family thought he was crazy, but he went through with it. He sold EVERYTHING so that He could buy the field and get that hidden treasure. It seemed like he made a huge sacrifice, but in the end, the treasure was worth far more than all that he had to begin with, so he came out on top. I think that in some ways, this story illustrates what its like to become a Christian, and here’s why:

Choosing to become a Christian and truly follow Jesus is probably the costliest decision you will ever make. You need to know that. Its not just a matter of mentally believing in some set of truths about Jesus...its choosing to surrender YOUR LIFE to Him, to give Him control, and that is completely against our nature as

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humans. As we already said, we don't like submitting to other people! Jesus said that if anyone wants to follow Him, they must be willing to die to themselves...they must be willing to give up everything for Him. So to become a Christian means you are choosing to surrender to Jesus as the new Lord of your life. It means choosing to live with open hands, that you hold everything you care about loosely and that you are always willing to give up something if Jesus calls you to for the sake of the gospel. And that's hard! We don't want to sugarcoat it for you.

But the reason Jesus demands this is because He has something for us that is far better than anything we could imagine. If we are grasping onto our reputation or success or our family or our dreams too tightly, we won't have room in our lives for the infinitely better things He wants to give us. So if following Jesus is the costliest decision you could ever make, it is also, at the same time, the most rewarding decision you could ever make. And that's what the story of the hidden treasure is all about! It was a huge sacrifice for the man to sell everything he had to buy the field, but since he was getting the treasure too, it was MORE than worth it in the end! So Jesus doesn't require us to be willing to surrender everything because He's mean and just wants us to be sad and poor and unhappy...He wants to show us how to find TRUE joy and peace and fulfillment through Him.

Now that doesn't mean that following Jesus is always wonderful and easy. Because being a Christian doesn't mean that you will never get sick, or face difficulties, or always be rich and comfortable. In fact, Jesus says that it is actually pretty difficult...we live in a broken world that is opposed to God, so it isn't easy to go against the flow and follow Jesus here. BUT Jesus promises that no matter how difficult it might be, He ALWAYS makes it more than worth it.

And that's something I've seen play out in my own life...This would be a good place to share how you personally have had to embrace the cost of following Jesus, or share a story about someone else.

A lot of times when we talk about becoming a Christian, we talk about how God saves us...how He saves us from our sin, and from death, and from the punishment of being separated from Him for all of eternity. And this is true. But it's important to remember that God does not just save people FROM bad things...He also saves us TO something very good. When we make a decision to follow Jesus, we get to be a part of His kingdom, the Kingdom of God. And the Bible takes it a step further and says that we are adopted into His family. So we get to enjoy a new, personal relationship with the God who created us and loves us and has a purpose for us, and we also get to enjoy new, meaningful relationships with other people who are also a part of His family. Through Jesus, you get to know what real hope is...what real peace is. Jesus ultimately promises that life in His kingdom, even when it is hard, is a life of fulfillment and joy.

As we've already touched on, when Jesus left His disciples, he gave them a mission. He told them to travel around the world, tell people the good news of who He was and what He did, and invite them to be a part of His Kingdom. And all followers of Jesus have that same mission. Now, the Kingdom of God is kind of an abstract concept that can be difficult to understand, because we are not necessarily talking about a literal place, at least not yet. But it just means any part of life or of our world that is under the authority of God...its where the brokenness is being pushed back and where God's desires and intentions are being lived out. When Jesus came 2,000 years ago, the Kingdom of God broke into our world, and it is something that is still a reality now...in a way, we can see and experience and be a part of it. And when He comes back, He is going to usher in the fullness of His kingdom. So until then, Christians are called to be agents of His kingdom because wherever the kingdom of God is, that place is transformed. It's kind of the idea of bringing a light into darkness. Imagine if we turned all the lights off in this room and it was pitch black in here...if I had a tiny candle and lit it, no matter how dark it may have seemed before, the darkness would be driven out by the light, no matter how small the source is. So Christians are called to bring the light of God's

kingdom wherever we are at. We should love people the way Jesus did, and speak truth the way He did, and fight for justice the way He did. We can never be perfect like He was, but Jesus promises us that He will help us and give us everything we need in order to live for Him. To be a Christian is to enjoy all the wonderful things God offers us while we carry out the mission He has given us. And it is a mission to change the world! We get to enter in to God's story and play a part in it, and I think that is amazing. (as you explain this part, draw the fourth world on the Big Story poster)

There is a good chance that for some of you, as you have explored on your own, and as you hear us talk about Jesus and the life he offers, something stirs within your heart. That maybe there is something within you that just says, "I want that life! I want that peace!" I would suggest that maybe that is God's way of trying to get your attention. If you are not yet a follower of Jesus, maybe God is inviting you to follow Him. And if you have already made that decision to follow Jesus, but you still sense something missing, maybe God is inviting you to truly make Him Lord of your life and surrender control to him. Maybe He is calling you to a deeper relationship...a life where you spend time with Him regularly and share about Him with others. Tonight in the worship service, there is going to be a call to faith where the speaker will make an invitation to anyone who wants to follow Jesus for the first time or anyone who wants to make Jesus Lord of their life. And we want you to consider what it might look like for you to respond to that invitation tonight.

In the story of the hidden treasure, the man takes such a huge risk because he has SEEN and TOUCHED the treasure firsthand. He isn't just blindly taking a risk. And in the same way, I believe God does things to help us see Him and experience His love before inviting us to give our lives to Him. Sometimes its something huge like a dream, or an audible voice, and sometimes its something small, like a stirring in your heart. Either way, we just have to be open to how He might be trying to reveal himself to us. As you are thinking about how you might respond tonight to an invitation to follow Jesus, we want to take some time where you can ask God how HE wants you to respond, and give Him some space to speak into your life and reveal Himself to you.

So we are going to try something now called listening prayer. Prayer in general is just talking to God...if you haven't prayed much yourself, I'm sure you've seen other people pray. Listening prayer is where instead of talking, we listen, and we try and give God some space to speak to us through our minds and our imagination. Because, if God created us and our minds and our imaginations, in all their complexities, then it seems reasonable that He could speak to us through them. This might feel really new to you, or even kind of strange, but its nothing crazy, I promise you...all we ask is that you give it a chance. What I want you to do is, if you feel comfortable, to close your eyes now, and take some deep breaths...try and get in a comfortable position.

7. Listening Prayer Exercise (5:50 – 6:00 PM)

We're going to take just a minute in silence, and then I'm going to lead us through an exercise using our imagination, with the hope that maybe, God might show you something through that. Maybe He gives you an image, maybe He speaks to you in some way, maybe you feel His presence...we'll see. Maybe you don't really experience anything at all...sometimes this isn't that helpful for people, and that's ok, because our minds all work differently, and different people encounter God in different ways. But sometimes, listening prayer IS helpful, and it can provide a way to encounter God like you never have before. So we are going to give it a shot. So take the next minute or so in silence to just breathe deeply and empty your mind of distractions, and then I will pray and lead us through the exercise.

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I want you to imagine that you are sitting in a room by yourself...not this room, but someplace else. Where are you? What do you see? What is the room like? How do you feel as you sit there in that room?

As you are sitting there, you notice a door in front of you and you hear a knock. Then the door opens and you see Jesus. What does Jesus look like? What is he wearing? What kind of expression does He have on his face?

Jesus comes into the room, and as He comes in, His eyes meet your eyes, and He walks over to you and greets you. What does He do? How does He greet you? How do you feel as He greets you?

After He greets you, you look into His eyes and see that they are full of love. And He bends down next to you and whispers something in your ear...something that he's wanted to say to you for a long time. What does He say?

Amen. Ok...you can open your eyes now. That's really it! It's not necessarily something special, just trying to create space to hear from God. I'm sure that experience was different for all of you, and that is ok. You are going to get a chance to talk about it more in your small groups. All I will say is this...you might be tempted to write off what you experienced or felt, like maybe it was all in your imagination...but try not to! The Bible talks about how sometimes we hear God's voice in a quiet whisper, so if you have felt like God has done something to speak to you or get your attention in any way, either tonight or throughout your whole spiritual journey, maybe those seemingly small things are God's way of inviting you to take that step of faith and choose to follow Him.

So I would encourage you to seriously consider that choice. Because no matter how difficult it might seem to follow Jesus, no matter what kind of sacrifice it requires, it will ALWAYS be more than worth it. It may feel risky but the life and the joy and the satisfaction he offers is far better than anything we could find for ourselves, so it seems like it's worth the risk. I realize that it is scary making a decision like this when you don't know 100% for sure what will happen, but I promise you that it is the best decision you could ever make. And I believe that with every fiber of my being. So I want to challenge you all to think about this and ask God how you should respond to what you've experienced this week. Some of you may not feel like you know enough or that you aren't good enough to become a Christian, but the beauty of the gospel is that we are never good enough, but God accepts us and loves us just as we are. And He teaches us and helps us to grow as Christians. And if you aren't sure what you believe yet, that is fine! This is not the last chance you will ever have to make this decision, so don't feel pressured! But for those of you who have been exploring and have seen God at work in your life and have experienced His love, tonight could be a great opportunity for you to take that step of faith and give your life to Him. All I ask is that you are open to God and what He is doing.

We are going to finish our time together in small groups. We've covered a lot of ground today and talked about a lot of stuff, so we want to give you an opportunity to process what you've been learning and how you've been feeling.

8. Small Group Discussion (6:00 – 6:15 PM)

Questions for discussion:

- A. What was the listening prayer experience like for you? Did you hear or see anything, and if so what was it?

- B. What have you learned this week, about God or about yourself?
- C. What is still confusing or troubling to you?
- D. What do you think about Jesus? About Christianity?
- E. What would you say holds you back from making a decision to follow Jesus? Or from giving Jesus complete lordship in your life if you already are a Christian?
- F. What do you feel like God might be trying to invite you to do?

Pray to close your time together at 6:15.

Session Eight Details: Thursday Morning

Supplies needed:

Bed sheet

1. Quiet Time on the Holy Spirit: John 14 and 16 (9:00 – 9:25 AM)

As you come in we're going to start this morning by doing a quiet time. There is a handout in your folder with that will guide you through this time. Please plan to come back in here by 9:20 AM.

Quiet Time

Whole Group Debrief: Take 5 minutes to have people share thoughts from the quiet time.

Wrap up: In these passages, we learned that Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to us for many reasons. The Spirit helps us to follow God better both in what we say and through our actions, he brings glory to God, he reminds us and provides understanding of the teachings of Jesus, and he is the communicator between us and God. This can all be summed up by saying that the Holy Spirit is God's presence dwelling within us when we choose to put our trust in Jesus Christ. In the quotes we looked at this morning, Jesus was talking to his disciples about how he would be leaving soon but that the Holy Spirit would come so that his presence can still be with us. The Holy Spirit is the way we can hear and learn from God, which is what we're going to be talking about next.

2. Discussion on How the Holy Spirit communicates with us (9:25 – 9:45 AM)

Intro: We've already begun to see this week how God can speak to us through the Holy Spirit. (Staff could highlight some of the experiences students have had encountering God that week). However, it can still be confusing to understand how God speaks to us and how we can truly hear his voice.

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(This is meant to be an interactive talk for students to brainstorm ways they can hear from God. Here is a list (taken from the Prayer Ministry Manual) of the ones that should be touched on and some contain a description. Staff are encouraged to make a list on the easel paper and should feel free to add their own stories/testimony as they see fit.)

What are ways you know or think God can speak to people? Maybe you learned them this week?

- i. Through Scripture
 1. The best way to know the character of God is through the Bible because it was given to us by Him. As you read through scripture the Holy Spirit may highlight a word or an idea as a direct message for you.
 2. He can even bring a verse or passage to your mind when we pray to Him seeking direction.
 - ii. In Silence
 1. The Lord said, "Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by." Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake came a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper. When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave. – 1 Kings 19:11-13
 2. See Dallas Willard's book Hearing God.
 - iii. Through People
 - iv. A feeling or Sense
 1. God typically responds to our requests in different forms: No, Slow, Grow, Go (taken from Bill Hybels).
 2. A lot of what God is saying is very reasonable.
 - v. Asking God questions and listening for answers
 - vi. Quiet Times of Reflection
 1. Could experience God out in nature
 2. Getting away from busyness of life creates space for God to speak to us.
 - vii. Pictures, Audible Voice, Dreams, Prophecy, Tongues and interpretation
 1. Jacob (Gen. 28:17)
 2. Joseph (Gen 37:5-11)
 3. Samuel (1 Sam 3:1-15)
 4. Isaiah (Is. 6)
 5. Peter (Acts 10:10- 16)
 6. Paul (Acts 16:9)
 7. John (Rev. 1:10-22:5)
 - viii. Circumstances
 - ix. Reason—what seems reasonable
 - x. During times of personal or corporate worship
 - xi. Focused listening
 1. We should be listening to God at all times but there are our personal prayer times when we should focus on God alone.
 2. There are different patterns in order to quiet ourselves to listen.
- b. Staff should provide the following cautions for students after the brainstorming session.
- i. Ask yourself the following questions:

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1. Does what I am hearing contradict scripture? All leadings from God are consistent with the Bible because it is His Word.
 2. Does the voice gently lead or is it commanding and harsh? God's voice gently guides and encourages, giving you hope.
 - a. God leads, Satan drives
 - b. God convicts, Satan condemns and brings guilt
 - c. God woos, Satan tugs hard
 - d. God does not use fear to motivate
 3. Is it consistent with God's Word?
 4. Do circumstances point in this direction?
 5. Do mature Christian friends or counselors confirm it?
- ii. Don't get caught in needing a "special word" from God about everything. God is the God of the ordinary as well as the miraculous.
 - iii. If you are praying for someone and sense something from God, preface your sense with: "It's my sense that..." "I wonder if God..." or make a question from what you are hearing
 - iv. Be very careful when you say, God wants... God is saying... Having access through Jesus to God is a very powerful thing so with it we must exercise great caution. As your hearing the voice of God increases so should your discernment.
 - v. Church Pastor and Christian author Bill Hybels gives us 4 "Cautions for leadings" that you may sense from the Spirit
 1. If a leading requires you to make a major, life-changing decision in a very short period of time, question it.
 2. If a leading requires you to go deeply in debt or place someone else in a position of awkwardness, compromise or danger, question it.
 3. If a leading requires you to shatter family relationships or important friendships, question it.
 4. If a leading creates unrest in the spirits of mature Christian friends or counselors as you share it with them, question it.
- c. To wrap up the discussion, highlight a few ways to hear from God.
 - i. Learn what it takes for you to quiet yourself down (mind, body, spirit) in order to hear God's voice. Then be silent before God daily. Start with 2 minutes and progress.
 - ii. Journaling
 - iii. Listening prayer with a friend or group
 - iv. Meditate on Scripture and ask God to highlight something (Lectio Divina)
 - v. Ask other Christians how they hear from God.
 - d. This is opportunity for staff to share their own personal experience from hearing with God if that did not already come up in the discussion.

3. Lectio Divina John 15 (9:45 – 10:05 AM)

Now we're going to take some time to practice hearing from God through meditating on scripture. This is a spiritual discipline known as Lectio Divina. Go ahead and read through the passage to familiarize yourself with it and start to ask God to cause a word or a phrase to stand out. Then I'll have you continue to do this as I read through the passage twice out loud.

A. Give them some time on their own and then have them close their eyes and just listen as you read the passage out loud. Do this twice.

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- B. Tell them to ask themselves the following questions
 - i. How does this word or phrase connect with my life?
 - ii. What are you (God) inviting me to through this word or phrase?
- C. When they are ready have them write out a prayer on the handout in response.
- D. Have them pray for each other to close out the time

After process, take five minutes to explain the concept of having a daily quiet time (it can look pretty similar to this, it is an opportunity to spend time with God and hear from Him regularly, point them towards helpful resources, etc)

4. Break (10:05 – 10:20 AM)

5. Matthew 18:21-35 Bible Study (10:20 – 10:40 AM)

- A. Have someone read through the passage out loud and then give them personal time to read over it.
- B. Give students the following questions to discuss at their tables.
 - iii. What stood out to you about this story? Anything shock or surprise you?
 - iv. How do you think the servant felt when the King cancelled his debt (v. 27)?
 - v. Why would the servant not cancel his fellow servant's debt (v.28-30)? Is he wrong?
 - vi. How does the master react when he finds out what the servant has done (v. 32 - 34)? Why does he react this way?
 - vii. What do we learn about God's view of forgiveness in this story?
 - viii. Why is hard for us to forgive others?
 - ix. Is there someone in your own life that you have had a hard time forgiving?

6. Discussion on Forgiveness (10:40 – 11:00 AM)

Why Forgive?

- a. Staff should ask students why they think it is important to forgive.
- b. Matthew 18-- *As we saw from our study on Matthew 18, Jesus believes it is important for us to forgive others because God has already forgiven us! We have seen this week how no one is able to live up to the standard that God has set for us and we all are in need of forgiveness. When we do this we more fully experience the forgiveness of God and we follow in Christ's footsteps.*
- c. *Our own health-- Forgiveness is also something that is just good for our health as it reduces stress, resentment, anger, bitterness. All of which can have a negative effect on our body in mind if it is not dealt with properly.*
- d. *Reverse lies- Finally forgiveness can help us to reverse lies we believe about ourselves, others and God. Lies we may not even know we believe.*

What is forgiveness? What is it not?

- a. Staff should ask students what they believe forgiveness is.
 - Some responses to highlight
 - 1. Forgiveness is not—excusing others behavior or ignoring when you've been hurt
 - 2. Forgiveness is not—a quick cure to make everything (pain, anger, etc.) instantly go away
 - 3. Forgiveness is-- Desiring good and extending blessing towards someone who has hurt you
 - 4. Forgiveness is—a process that takes time. It is a change of heart that God we can achieve with God's help!

5. Forgiveness is—an act of Mercy and Grace – we don't deserve it but it is still extended to us by God.
6. Forgiveness is—something that stands in the truth that what happened was unfair, hurtful, offensive, etc. It is still and always will be unfair. At the same time, the one who forgives willfully tries to abandon resentment and to think of the other person as fully human in spite of what he or she did.
7. Forgiveness is—"allowing room for error or weakness" and "to cease to feel resentment". Dr. Robert Enright's approach from the 8 keys to Forgiveness highlights a clear distinction between forgiving and condoning or forgetting whatever injury has been done. He asserts, and I agree, that those are not at all the same thing. Forgiveness recognizes human frailty, that everyone can (and does) hurt others. But that in no way condones or excuses the hurting. And it does not free the perpetrator of responsibility for his or her actions or any owed reparation.

How do we forgive others? The process.

- a. Staff should ask students what they think it looks like to forgive others.
- b. Forgiveness is a process and what that can take time. Dr. Robert Enright lays out a 4 step process for us to forgive someone.
 1. Recognize the evil done against us
 2. Count the cost
 3. Ask God for help to desire good for the person
 4. Forgive and bless them

How does the Holy Spirit help us to forgive?

- a. Corrie ten Boom - Corrie ten Boom was imprisoned in a concentration camp after she and her family sheltered Jews in Holland during WWII. Both her sister and brother died in the camps. As she relates in the final pages of her book, "The Hiding Place" one of her greatest life challenges occurred after she had just completed a talk in Munich about love and forgiveness. She had no idea that the SS officer who had abused her years before in the Ravensbruck concentration camp was in the audience that night. He greeted her outside with a hand extended to her. He asked for forgiveness. Now it was time for her to show that she practiced the forgiveness that she preached. Yet, she had no forgiveness within her to give. After saying a short prayer, she, by her own report, felt a kind of electrical current pass from her shoulder, down her arm, and into her hand, which she extended in forgiveness to the SS officer. She felt a love in her heart for this man and the love almost overwhelmed her. She offered him forgiveness.
- b. Sometimes we don't have the power to fully forgive others for the wrong they've done to us on our own but God gives us the Holy Spirit. With the Spirit's help we have the power to do things we normally could not do on our own.
- c. Let's take some time to practice forgiveness.

7. Practicing Forgiveness Through Prayer (11:00 – 11:10 AM)

- e. Walk them through the following exercise giving time for them to pray with God in-between statements or instructions.
- f. We're going to spend some time in prayer, asking God for direction and help to forgive those that may have hurt us.
- g. PRAY for Holy Spirit to guide and direct our time together and to speak to us on Father's behalf

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- h. ASK "Lord, is there someone that I need to forgive?"
- i. LISTEN - what do you see (images), hear, feel... usually the first person that comes to mind
- j. CLARIFY - "What do I need to forgive this person for?"
- k. PRAY "Lord, give me the capacity to forgive this person for _____."
- l. FORGIVE "In Jesus name I forgive _____, for _____."
- m. RELEASE "In Jesus name I release them from anything I feel they owe me, making up what they have done, experiencing the same pain, shame, etc, and _____"
- n. BLESS "In Jesus name I bless them with _____ (ask the Lord to give them the opposite of what they gave you and to experience him.)"
- o. RECEIVE "Lord, now that I have given to you my bitterness and unforgiveness, what do you give me in return?" Wait for a word, sense, image from the Lord. Once you have a sense receive it and ask for confirmation if you have any doubts.
- p. SHARE - find someone in the room to share what happened with you

7. Break (11:10 – 11:20 AM)

8. Looking at Scripture to see a picture of Community (11:20 – 11:30 AM)

Have students read through 1 Corinthians 12:12-31 on their own in table groups. Then have them with their table groups create a charades style snapshot of what is happening in the passage. In other words, they should stand behind a curtain and arrange themselves into a snapshot picture of what is going on in the passage and stay frozen for the other groups to see.

- i. Example: verse 17, "If the whole body were an eye..." students lie on the ground in the shape of an eye and stay frozen after the curtain is pulled back.
- ii. After being frozen for several seconds they can help explain their snapshot to the group.

9. Discussion on Christian Community (11:30 AM – 12:00 PM)

Ask the following questions for discussion in Large Group.

- a. Have you ever been a part of a team or work group where not everyone did their part? Or a group where not everyone agreed on what needed to be done? What was that like? What was frustrating about it?
- b. What characteristics do we learn about the body of Christ from this passage?
- c. What does the passage say about the weaker parts of the body?
 - 1. They are indispensable and play an important role. All followers of Jesus have an integral part to play in Christian community.
- d. What unites the metaphorical body in this passage?
 - 2. Christ unites all followers of him with a common purpose and mission.
- e. How does the passage say parts of the body should respond to each other?
 - 3. Suffer together, rejoice when one is honored. We are to support one another out of love and do life together.
- f. What would it look like for a Christian community to live this way? Why is it important for us to be a part of this community?

Staff wraps up large group discussion. This is a good place for staff to share their own testimony or story regarding Christian community.

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Wrap Up- As followers of Jesus, we are all a part of the same body. It is important for all of us to be a part of the body so that we stay united with Christ and other followers of Him. The body of Christ functions when all parts are present and are seeking to follow Christ. We all have a role and a part to play in his mission no matter how small it may seem. We also find support through our brothers and sisters in Christ. We build each other up but in order to do this well we need to be humble and willing to ask others for help.

Transition to short table group discussion and give them the following questions.

- What has your experience been like with Christians and/or the church been like?
- How might you get more involved in a Christian community?
- Who is a good person to help you grow in your relationship with God?

10. Q and A on Holy Spirit, Forgiveness and Christian Community (12:00 PM – 12:15 PM)

Session Nine: Bringing it all Together

Supplies needed:

Art supplies, track commitment cards

1. Welcome (4:00 – 4:05 PM)

Have fun together as you regroup (students should be very comfortable and relaxed with each other at this point).

2. Reviewing and Debriefing Track (4:05 – 5:00 PM)

5 minutes: Did you find what you were looking for?

Hang up the large paper with the quadrants from the first session: *“What do you hope to find through this track?”*

- 1) Answers to my questions
- 2) A real encounter with Jesus
- 3) Better understanding of God’s story
- 4) Fun and new friends

Using sticky dots, mark whether you found these things – green dot –YES, DEFINITELY; blue dot – TAKING STEPS / MOVING IN THAT DIRECTION

Leader summarizes responses.

50 minutes: Debriefing the Track (Keep the Four Worlds diagram out for reference.)

This week we looked at the story of God and how we encounter God from many angles. (This time can flow back and forth from SGs to the entire track as leader sees fit.)

- 10 minutes: We looked at the question of why we should even consider Jesus. In your small groups, discuss what you are taking away from that session. If you want to continue to explore these questions, here are some suggested resources (see appendix).
- 15 minutes: We heard different people’s stories of encountering God, both current stories (testimonies) and examples from the Bible (Bartemaeus, Nicodemus, fishermen, Samaritan woman, prodigal son). Which of those stories most resonated with you? (small group discussion)
- 15 minutes: What are you taking away from the sessions on the Holy Spirit and on forgiveness? Were there things that surprised you? Are there things that confuse you about forgiveness or about the Holy Spirit? What are your next steps? Who can you talk with about these things? (small group discussion)
- 10 minutes: We talked about what it means to be a Christian (and what it does not mean). What are you taking away from that conversation? Who can you connect with to take your next steps in this? (small group discussion)

3. Break (5:00 – 5:10 PM)

4. What's Next? (5:10 – 6:00 PM)

15 minutes: Where are you as an individual? How have you encountered God this week? (creative response)

Create your response using art supplies, or write a poem or note.

15 minutes: Where are you as an individual? How have you encountered God this week? (sharing your response)

Share your creative response with your small group, then a few can share with the entire track.

5 minutes: Summarizing how we have encountered God as a community

Summarize your spiritual journey this week by putting a dot on a chart with four options:
I moved from:

- *skeptic to seeker*
- *seeker to follower*
- *follower to fully-surrendered disciple*
- *not sure / other*

Leader summarizes.

15 minutes: Next Steps

Leader explains potential steps, then give students space to choose a next step and share with their SG.

- Skeptic to seeker (Potential next steps are read gospel of John, join a GIG)
- Seeker to follower (Potential next steps are join a Christian community, commit to having a daily QT, point them towards launch.intervarsity.org)
- Follower to fully-surrendered disciple who is actively involved in Jesus' mission (Potential next steps are intentionally reaching out to non-Christian friends, commit to invest in younger believers)
- Not sure / other – talk with someone and keep asking the big questions! “God, if you are real, please reveal yourself to me.”

5. Wrap-up (6:00 – 6:15 PM)

10 minutes: Track Commitment Forms:

5 minutes: leader or track director - prayer of blessing; group photo!

Appendix

Track Box Materials

1. Stuff that can be replaced from overstock bins
 - a. 1 Easel Pad Paper
 - b. 2 Rolls Masking Tape
 - c. 2 Pkgs of Post it Notes
 - d. 1 Pkg of 100 of 3x5 note cards
 - e. Art Supplies
 - i. 1 Ream of paper
 - ii. 3 Bags of Colored Pencils (30 pencils per bag)
 - iii. 3 Pairs of Scissors
 - iv. 1 Pkg of construction paper (variety of colors)
 - v. 3 pkg of modeling clay
 - f. Commitment Cards for the number of students in your track
2. Stuff that is specific to this track
 - a. 3-5 extra copies of student handouts
 - b. 1 Set of Brokenness Pictures (12)
 - c. 1 set of Character of Jesus Station signs
 - d. 3 3x6 candles
 - e. 3 Lighter
 - f. 1 Shepherds Staff
 - g. 1 Story Project Poster (20x30) in a tube
 - h. 1 loaf of bread (ask camp to make/bring from home/buy at store)
 - i. 1 Wooden Cross
 - j. 1 role of white butcher (doesn't fit in box)
 - k. 1 Queen Sheet

Track Room Setup

1. Room Layout

We will need one table for each small group in the track (probably 2-3 tables) and chairs. It would also be helpful to have walls with space to put things up around the room.

2. Room Needs

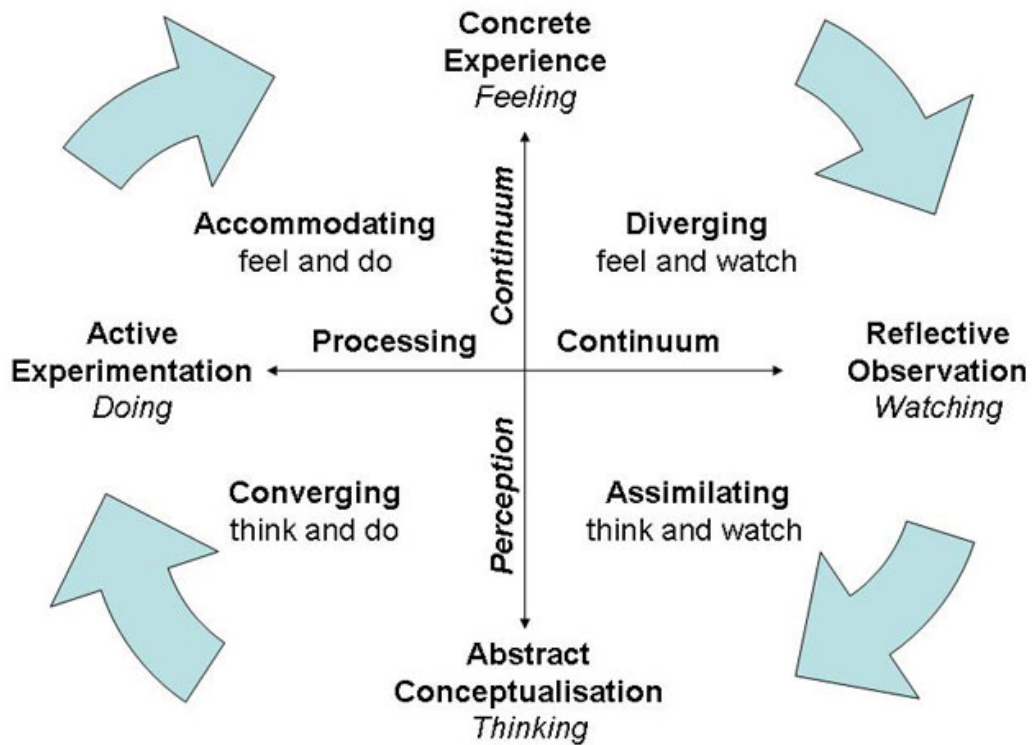
- a. Projector
- b. Speakers to plug into a laptop
- c. Easel Pads
- d. Walls that we can put things on
- e. Tables for small groups

3. Other

4. Notes for camp:

- a. We will be taping things to the wall
- b. We will be lighting candles in one session
- c. If possible, a room with a fireplace would be ideal because we will use it for an illustration in one session.

The Kolb Learning Four Stage Learning Cycle



Recommendations for Further Reading and Study

InterVarsity Books

1. The Story of God, The Story of Us - Sean Gladding
2. Basic Christianity - John Stott
3. Kingdom Come - Allen Wakabayashi
4. The Smell of Sin - Don Everts
5. Jesus with Dirty Feet - Don Everts
6. Know Who You Believe – Paul Little
7. Redeeming Sex – Deb Hirsch

Non-IVP Books

1. The Reason for God – Tim Keller
2. Mere Christianity – CS Lewis
3. Song of A Wanderer by Li Cheng (for Chinese international students specifically)
4. The Case For Christ – Lee Stroebel

Articles/Websites

1. www.exploregod.com
2. www.launch.intervarsity.org