



SMALL GROUP-ORIENTED

**THIS IS US.**



# **This Is Us**

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ISBN 978-1-7923-5575-2

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Cover and graphics designed by Missy Robbs, First Baptist Church O'Fallon, IL

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# Getting the Most Out of this Study!

## **This Is Us ...** *First Baptist Church O'Fallon, IL*

When the *This Is Us* church-wide study is over, our prayer is that you will look back and realize significant spiritual growth because of studying God's Word during *This Is Us*.

Here are a few suggestions to get the most out of this study:

### **LIFE Group Meetings**

Make meeting with your LIFE Group in-person or online a high priority each of the six weeks for encouragement, Bible study, prayer, and fellowship. We not only learn from our LIFE Group teachers, but we learn from each other! If you are not in a LIFE Group, why not? Please stop by the Connection Point in the atrium this Sunday and let us help you find a LIFE Group to connect with.

### **Read and study each week's lesson BEFORE it is taught in LIFE Group**

You will get so much more out of *This Is Us* if you have read through that week's lesson and thought about the discussion questions. We have included an aid in the lesson material – a little dot. ● The dots break each week's lesson into five equal parts that can be easily read in 10-15 minutes. Each day, Monday through Friday, read from one dot to the next, and by the end of the week, you will have read the whole lesson. And if you have read the lesson, you will be better prepared to contribute to your LIFE Group discussion! Your LIFE Group teacher will be **THRILLED** if you read your lesson each week, dot-to-dot-to-dot!

### **Quiet Time**

A quiet time is an important part of a Christian's everyday life. It is a time set aside for just you and God to meet, talk (pray), and read/study God's Word. Are you having a regular quiet time? If not, now is a great time to start! You can use the "Growing Deeper" section of each week's *This Is Us* lesson to guide your quiet time. If your schedule is so full that you feel you cannot carve out 15-20 minutes daily to meet with your heavenly Father, then pray about revising your schedule to weed out the "busyness." God LOVES spending time with you!

### **Attend Worship**

Pastor Doug's sermons will focus on each week's *This Is Us* vision or value statement. So, the LIFE Group lessons will support the sermons, and the sermons will support the LIFE Group lessons!



## **This Is Us**

**We exist to ...**

Glorify God and Do His Will (Feb 7)

**Who we are as a church ... we are:**

God-Centered (Feb 14)

Bible-Based (Feb 21)

Purpose-Guided (Feb 28)

Outward-Focused (Mar 7)

**Small-Group Oriented (Mar 14)**

Written by Skip Leininger, Associate Pastor, First Baptist Church O'Fallon, IL

**Goals for the Lesson:** First, my hope for you as you study the passages in this lesson is that you will allow the Holy Spirit to reveal that you are:

- Created for connection.
- Strengthened through Godly relationships.
- Encouraged to participate in church as a team sport.
- Viewed as a Christian by your LOVE.

Second, my prayer is that this lesson will encourage you to grow in grace, truth, and love that is fostered in a biblical community. I hope you will see the value in developing relationships with your brothers and sisters in Christ, which mutually build "His Church," and that you would be actively involved in a LIFE Group; this will encourage you to study the Bible, helping you to mature in Christ. May you be equipped to serve the Lord with others and prepared to go and share the Good News in Jesus with a lost and perishing world.

**About This Week's Lesson:** A popular television series, "This Is Us," begins with the birth of triplets. One of the babies dies at birth, and when an abandoned newborn arrives at the hospital, the abandoned baby is immediately adopted as the couple's new triplet.

As we begin our new life in Christ, adopted as children of God, He does not abandon us to fend for ourselves. Ezekiel 16:1-6 paints a beautiful picture of this truth. He desires to be actively involved in our maturation through Biblical truth, the Holy Spirit, and our relationships with other Christians.

Our culture highly values individual accomplishment. There is a particular pride in saying, “I did it my way!” “Nobody tells me what to do!” Or “I am an island!” Or, as poet William Ernest Henly writes in his poem *Invictus*, “I am the master of my fate: I am the captain of my soul.”

Humans are born with a sinful nature that defaults to “Me.” Honestly, our natural inclinations are to pursue our happiness and well-being above all else. Even Eve’s original reasons for partaking of the forbidden fruit were based in self-gratification.

**Are we better off unbridled on our own, or when we are connected in a community with others?**

**Is it possible for healthy relationships to foster a “better you”?**

***DISCLAIMER BY THE WRITER:*** *I know some cringe at the mere sight of the words “small group,” “relationships,” or “other people.” Trust me, I am one of you. I break out in a cold sweat when my wife Joni says, “We have a party at...” My introverted nature makes me nervous whenever the elevator door closes. Class reunions: The inner child in me says - No way!*

*Some of you have been wounded by people who should have been trustworthy. A few of you have had relationships that led down a destructive path. For some, the loss of a loved one or friend caused you to shut the door to avoid future relationships and pain.*

*Please give “us” a chance. The relationships we are going to discuss going forward are healthy and God-honoring, being built within the biblical Christian community. **I am a better person today because of you!***

**Opening Prayer:** Dear Lord, thank You for our church family and LIFE Groups. Guide me through this study of Your word to appreciate relationships that will strengthen my faith, encourage my walk, expand my capacity to love, and enlarge my world through others as I share Christ with them. Amen.

**Created for Connection**

**Background Passages:** Genesis 2

**Focal Scripture Passages:** Genesis 2:7, Genesis 2:15-24

Genesis 2:7

*<sup>7</sup> Then the Lord God formed the man out of the dust from the ground and breathed the breath of life into his nostrils, and the man became a living being*

Genesis 2:15-24

*<sup>15</sup> The Lord God took the man and placed him in the garden of Eden to work it and watch over it. <sup>16</sup> And the Lord God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree of the garden, <sup>17</sup> but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for on the day you eat from it, you will certainly die."*

**In the creation account, to whom does mankind first relate?**

When God made man, unlike any other living thing He made, He got down in the dirt and formed a human body from the clay (Genesis 2:7). Then He breathed His own life into the man's nostrils, and "man became a living soul." He called the man "Adam." The man had a life that differed from all the plant and animal life. He alone had been created in God's image (Genesis 1:27), which means that he possessed an eternal spirit, such as God has. He was designed to be like God, to fellowship with God, reason like God, and enjoy God forever.

God created man to work, so He placed Adam in a garden designed specifically for him (Genesis 2:8). In these perfect surroundings, God walked and talked with the man, enjoying the creation He had made and Adam's pleasure in it (Genesis 2:19–20; 3:8). During the creation of the world, God's design for mankind was to be in a relationship. He designed us to relate with Him first. We owe our essence and form to His creative hand.

Read Genesis 2:15-24.

*<sup>18</sup> Then the Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper corresponding to him." <sup>19</sup> The Lord God formed out of the ground every wild animal and every bird of the sky, and brought each to the man to see what he would call it. And whatever the man called a living creature, that was its name. <sup>20</sup> The man gave names to all the livestock, to the birds of the sky, and to every wild animal; but for the man no helper was found corresponding to him. <sup>21</sup> So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to come over the man, and he slept. God took one of his ribs and closed the flesh at that place. <sup>22</sup> Then the Lord God made the rib he had taken from the man into a woman and brought her to the man. <sup>23</sup> And the man said:*

*This one, at last, is bone of my bone  
and flesh of my flesh;  
this one will be called "woman,"  
for she was taken from man.*

*<sup>24</sup> This is why a man leaves his father and mother and bonds with his wife, and they become one flesh. <sup>25</sup> Both the man and his wife were naked, yet felt no shame.*

**What is unique about how Adam's search for a helper ends?**

The Creator established that "aloneness" was not good. Genesis chapter 2 establishes the first principles for marriage. I also believe a fundamental principle for us is, "It is not good for the man to be alone," whether you are single or married. The final piece of God's creation of man was a woman. Human relationships completed God's creation.

**Why should we not rely exclusively on marriage to complete us?**

**Why is it vital for a single person to cultivate Godly relationships?**

**Life Application:**

**If you are married, what steps can you take to show you value your spouse?**

**If you are single, what are some safeguards you can employ to honor God while ensuring you are involved in healthy Christian relationships?**

**The Great Disconnect: The Impact of Sin on Relationships**

**Background Passages:** Genesis 3

**Focal Scripture Passages:** Genesis 3:1-13

Read Genesis 3:1-13.

After the serpent tempted Eve to eat the fruit of the tree that God had commanded them not to eat,

*“... she took some of its fruit and ate it; she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.*

*<sup>7</sup> Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.*

*<sup>8</sup> Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. <sup>9</sup> So the Lord God called out to the man and said to him, “Where are you?”*

*<sup>10</sup> And he said, “I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked, so I hid.”*

*<sup>11</sup> Then he asked, “Who told you that you were naked? Did you eat from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?”*

*<sup>12</sup> The man replied, “The woman you gave to be with me – she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate.”*

*<sup>13</sup> So the Lord God asked the woman, “What have you done?” And the woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate” (Genesis 3:6b-13).*

**In Genesis chapter 3, what relationships does Satan try to disrupt?**

**After Adam and Eve sinned, what was Adam’s immediate response when he heard God calling out to him? What does his reaction tell us about sin’s impact on Adam’s relationship with God?**

Genesis 3 introduces us to the created being who played a pivotal role in the fall of man: the serpent. Satan came to Eve as a serpent and suggested that God’s reason for the prohibition on fruit from one specific tree was not for her benefit, instead God was deliberately keeping good from her (Genesis 3:1–4). So, she ate it and gave some to Adam (Genesis 3:5). Adam also ate it, and at that moment, everything changed. Sin had now entered into God’s perfect world (Romans 5:12). Humankind had fallen.<sup>1</sup>

Adam’s sin caused the fall of man. Sin is any human behavior, word, or thought that is contrary to God’s holy standard of perfection. Because of Adam’s sin, God



placed a curse upon the world, the people, the animals, the plants, and the very ground itself (Genesis 3:14–19). Their sin brought God’s divine judgment upon them, and the only just punishment for such high treason is death, eternal separation from God (Romans 6:23, Revelation 20:15).<sup>2</sup>

To resolve this problem, God then put into play a system by which human beings could find an ultimate pardon for sin. In Genesis 3:21, God killed an animal and made garments for the man and woman to cover their nakedness that now brought them shame (Genesis 3:21). In doing so, God painted a picture of what He would do thousands of years later when the Perfect Lamb, Jesus Christ, was slain to take away our sin (John 1:29; Revelation 13:8).<sup>3</sup> The Bible says, “*For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord*” (Romans 6:23). See the inside of this study’s front cover to learn more about God’s gift of eternal life!

### **Life Application:**

**In what ways are you guilty of hiding from God, like Adam and Eve tried to do?**

**What things can you do to grow in your relationship with God?**

## **Relationships Can Encourage and Support Us**

**Background Passages:** Ecclesiastes 4:7-12

**Focal Scripture Passage:** Ecclesiastes 4:9-12,

<sup>9</sup> *Two are better than one because they have a good reward for their efforts.*

<sup>10</sup> *For if either falls, his companion can lift him up; but pity the one who falls without another to lift him up.* <sup>11</sup> *Also, if two lie down together, they can keep warm; but how can one person alone keep warm?* <sup>12</sup> *And if someone overpowers one person, two can resist him. A cord of three strands is not easily broken.*

I appreciate this passage of scripture. It reminds me of the many times I needed help but was too stubborn and proud to ask for it.

I spent the Fall of 2020 remodeling a screened porch, attempting to transform it into a beautiful four seasons sunroom. Unfortunately, I lacked both the needed skills and tools, not to mention the challenge of nailing 4'x 8' plywood sheets six feet in the air by myself! What made it worse was all this frustration and agony was so unnecessary. I had many friends with tools and advice who were more than willing to help! Friends like Pete, Sarah, Randy, Chris, Abby, Terry, Josh, Jason, Joni, and two Steves, that I finally humbled myself to reach out to. I could not have completed this sunroom project without them.

I'm grateful for friends who challenge me to do great and often difficult things. Take, for example, my friend Mark. Mark is a Godly counselor and friend who is willing to walk with me through difficult times, while providing me with wise perspectives, encouraging me, and helping me grow spiritually.

A self-centered life lived without relationships is wasted and barren. Often, we hear of successful, influential, and wealthy people who die unhappy, broken, and alone.

If ever there was a book that speaks to life's difficulties and futility, it's Ecclesiastes, written by the richest and wisest man who ever lived.

**Read Ecclesiastes 4:7-12. List some of the benefits of having others in your life.**

We are better together!

- Relational life brings value, variety, and strength. It can be a cure for loneliness and unfulfilled living.
- Our lives are experientially richer because of friendships.
- There is a synergy in healthy relationships that God uses to multiply our efforts.
- Accountability in relationships can keep us on track and help us avoid unnecessary pitfalls and sin in our lives.
- Participation with others expands the possibilities of what can be accomplished for God's Kingdom.

Although COVID-19 has reminded us of the hazards of togetherness and encouraged social distancing, the pandemic has brought about some benefits. Like many, Joni and I spent the initial weeks sheltered at home, only going out for grocery pickups. To pass the time, I planted a garden, built new vegetable container beds, trimmed trees, planted flowers, and reconditioned the yard.

While doing all this, I noticed families walking together (amusingly sometimes six feet apart and masked), something I had seldom seen before. As I worked in the

yard, people I had never met waved and said, “Hello,” then talked to me from a distance.

It was exciting to meet and talk with new people. It was like they were so glad to see other humans that they were desperate to connect with anyone they could find. I found my introverted self striking up conversations “over the fence” in my backyard with complete strangers. We were created for relationships, therefore if we are to become complete, we need to have and enjoy healthy relationships.

### **Life Application:**

**What relationships in your life have been a Godly influence for you this past year, and why?**

**Identify someone in your life you could befriend and encourage.**



### **Be a Team Player**

Occasionally someone will tell me they are a Christian, but they refuse to attend a church because they don’t believe in organized religion. Whenever this comes up, I tell them two things.

- 1) The church is Jesus’ idea, not man’s. He told Peter in Matthew 16:18, “...I will build my Church...” Jesus is both the architect and the church’s cornerstone.
- 2) A Christian without a church family is like a ballplayer without a team! That’s absurd. By definition, a team has many individual members who gather in a group to work together in defined roles. Besides, it’s lonely and hard to practice on a one-person team. Try throwing a softball in the air with one hand while holding the bat in the other hand, then hit the ball before it lands on the ground. Then run out to catch the ball. How fun would that be?

**Christianity is a team sport.** Let’s practice the fundamentals of the game together! Hebrews 10 gives us a good game plan that will always produce wins.

**Background Passage:** Hebrews 10:19-25

**Focal Scripture Passages: Hebrews 10: 24-25**

<sup>24</sup> *And let us consider one another in order to provoke love and good works,*  
<sup>25</sup> *not neglecting to gather together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging each other, and all the more as you see the day approaching.*

Now go back and read Hebrews 10:19-25. It is a passage about the church.

**List several nouns and pronouns found in the passage. Do you notice all the plurals? What does that communicate about God’s plan for the local church?**

The verbs in this passage give us a clue as to Jesus’ plan for His church. Look at Hebrews 10:24-25 and fill in the blanks.

- \_\_\_\_\_ one another
- \_\_\_\_\_ love and good \_\_\_\_\_
- not \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ together, as some do
- but \_\_\_\_\_ each \_\_\_\_\_

The writer of Hebrews concludes verse 25 with this warning: “*as you see the day approaching.*” What is “the day”? This refers to the last days of the age before Jesus returns to earth on a white horse with the armies of heaven. The Bible says these dark days will be filled with wickedness, stress, and temptation.

Jesus warns, “Because lawlessness will multiply, the **love** of many will **grow cold**” (Matthew 24:12).

Paul calls on us to help each other, making the best use of our time because “*the days are evil*” (Eph. 5:16). Paul also warns Timothy, “*But know this: Hard times will come in the last days. For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, proud, demeaning, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, irreconcilable, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, without love for what is good, traitors, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, holding to the form of godliness but denying its power. Avoid these people*” (2 Timothy 3:1-5).

Could we be in the “*last days*”? As brothers and sisters in Christ, we cannot and should not stand alone. We must stand together in the victory of Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit. The truth is, the Devil is doing his best to keep as many people spiritually lost and in the dark as he can. Knowing he can’t win, he is determined to take as many to hell with him as possible.

A favorite quote of Notre Dame football coach Knute Rockne was, ***“When the going gets tough, the tough get going.”*** As Christ-followers, we need to “get going” together, especially when the “going gets tough!”

Hebrews 10 prompts us to gather and work together as a team of Christian brothers and sisters to encourage each other, resist evil, and rescue as many as possible who are willing to respond in faith to the Gospel message.

So let’s ***“get going”*** **TOGETHER!**

### **Life Application:**

**How has your LIFE Group encouraged you? (If you are not in a LIFE Group, why not? Please stop by the Connection Point in the atrium this Sunday and let us help you find a LIFE Group to connect with.)**

**In what ways do you need to step up your game, *“to provoke love and good works”* (Hebrews 10:24)?**



### **Love Is the badge for Christ’s followers.**

In his commentary on John, A.W. Pink writes, “Love is the badge of Christian discipleship. It is not knowledge, nor orthodoxy, nor fleshly activities, but (supremely) love which identifies a follower of the Lord Jesus.”

**Background Passages:** John 13:34-35, John 15:9-17

**Focal Scripture Passage:** John 13:34-35,

<sup>34</sup>“I give you a new command: Love one another. Just as I have loved you, you are also to love one another. <sup>35</sup>By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”



Jesus, knowing the cross was ahead of Him, prepared His disciples for the events that were about to unfold. Considering His departure, they were given a new command, “Love one another, as I have loved you.”

*Agape* is the beautiful Greek word used for love. Agape is an authentic, unconditional, forgiving love of choice.

Jesus challenged His most trusted friends to live out the Gospel message by patiently loving each other. He knew the trials they would have to face in the difficult days ahead could only be faced with cooperation and love. Although Satan would attempt to divide them; Jesus’ love that He had lived out in front of them would serve to unite and inspire them for the rest of their lives.

**Remembering that loving others is one of the Ten Commandments, why do you think Jesus said in John 13:34, “*I give you a new command: Love one another*”?**

Love is always demonstrated within the context of a relationship.

Relationships are the laboratory where love is tested and refined. Your family, marriage, workplace, neighbors, friends, and LIFE Group will all test your ability to love.

To love others best, we must love God most.

Our right relationship with God will fuel and direct our love for others. I don’t know if you’ve noticed, but some people can be difficult to love unconditionally! God knows this as well, which is why He realizes we cannot love others as Jesus commanded without God’s help. God is the giver of mercy and grace, and He expects no less from us. He teaches us to love.

**Who are some of the most challenging people for you to love? How could God help you to learn how you can show His love to others, including them?**

The Christian life means you are part of a new family. We are to love and serve each other.

Rick Warren notes that the mark of spiritual maturity is when a believer “takes off the bib and puts on an apron.”<sup>4</sup> Immature children wear bibs and expect others

to meet their needs, often while throwing a tantrum. Those who don aprons have learned the joy that comes from serving others. Which attire are you wearing?

Grace and love in the Christian community build unity.

FBCO values LIFE Groups. God calls us to gather and encourage each other. You need others as much as they need you. Jesus built His Church with imperfect people like you and me. God has chosen us to carry out the vital work of leading people to Christ and discipling them.

Jesus intended to foster new believers to full maturity within a loving Christian community called the Church – a family where every nation, tribe, and tongue can praise God together. We demonstrate the forgiveness we have in Christ when we love others as He loves us.

***I am better because of you!***

**Ending Prayer:** Heavenly Father, help me value the relationships I have and look for new ways to expand my world as I grow in Christ's love. Guide our pastor and church leaders as they strive to follow Your vision for our church family. Help me to get involved in my LIFE Group as we study the Bible. May we take the light of the Gospel to a lost world in need of a Savior. Amen.

**Growing Deeper - Daily Devotionals:** During "This Is Us," we suggest you participate in a simple Bible reading plan by committing to reading just two chapters per day, five days per week. Doing this will enable you to read the entire New Testament in just six months. If you already have your own Bible reading plan, you are encouraged to continue with it; but if not, we ask you to read at least these two chapters of the New Testament each day, five days per week. Continue reading through the New Testament after "This Is Us" ends! You can use the "This Is Us" New Testament Reading Plan in the back of this Bible study book.

There will also be a brief devotional thought for each day based on a verse/verses pertaining to the subject you just studied in your LIFE group.

Here is what we ask you to do for each day, five days each week, during "This Is Us":

1. Either read the two chapters of the daily scripture reading or continue whatever Bible reading plan you are currently using.
2. Read the devotional verse or verses.

3. Read the devotional thoughts.

4. Afterwards, spend some time in prayer by using the lesson and devotional prayer guides, while adding other subjects you wish to pray about, family, friends, needs, concerns, etc.

**Ask yourself, “Did I discover any Bible facts or verses I want to remember from this week’s study?” If so, highlight or underline them in your Bible!**

**Alert: If you have read this lesson and realize you do not know Jesus, I would like to plead with you to talk with your LIFE Group teacher. They will be delighted to help you in this area.**



**MY DAILY WALK – David & Jonathan**  
**MONDAY (March 15)**

**Scripture Reading:** Romans 2-3

**Devotional Passage:** 1 Samuel 18:1-5, 19:1-7, 20:1-42, 23:15-18

1 Samuel 23:16-18a,

*“Then Saul’s son Jonathan came to David in Horesh and encouraged him in his faith in God,<sup>17</sup> saying, “Don’t be afraid, for my father Saul will never lay a hand on you. You yourself will be king over Israel, and I’ll be your second-in-command. Even my father Saul knows it is true.”<sup>18</sup> Then the two of them made a covenant in the LORD’s presence.”*

**Devotional Thought:**

These passages tell of an unlikely friendship. Jonathan, King Saul’s son is potentially in line for the throne. David, a shepherd boy turned warrior, is the crowd favorite and God’s choice for the next King. A deep and Godly friendship forms between these two men after David defeats Goliath. God’s hand is on David because of the integrity of his heart, and his dedication to follow the Lord.

Rather than begrudge David’s rise to the throne, Jonathan embraces it! He advises, guards, equips, counsels, and delivers David from his father’s jealousy and mad rage on multiple occasions. He tells David, “You will be King.” David composed “The Song of the Bow” to honor Jonathan after he was slain in battle.

Godly friends make us better. We draw strength, encouragement, and find direction when we surround ourselves with Spirit-filled believers. Rather than being consumed by a spirit of jealousy like King Saul, when we are in the company of Godly friends and people, we can celebrate the talents of another person when we see God at work in their lives.

**What God-fearing friends can you thank God for? Do you have friends who will go forth into battle with you? Is there a need to cultivate deeper friendships where you can be completely honest about your fears and struggles?**

**Prayer Guide:** Today, thank God for the friends He does and will use in your life.

**MY DAILY WALK - Moses & Aaron**  
**TUESDAY (March 16)**

**Scripture Reading:** Romans 4-5

**Devotional Passage:** Exodus 17:10-13,

*<sup>10</sup> Joshua did as Moses had told him, and fought against Amalek, while Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. <sup>11</sup> While Moses held up his hand, Israel prevailed, but whenever he put his hand down, Amalek prevailed. <sup>12</sup> When Moses's hands grew heavy, they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat down on it. Then Aaron and Hur supported his hands, one on one side and one on the other so that his hands remained steady until the sun went down. <sup>13</sup> So Joshua defeated Amalek and his army with the sword.*

**Devotional Thought:**

When Moses told God he couldn't deliver His people because he got tongue-tied, God suggested big brother Aaron be his mouthpiece. God brought this dynamic duo together as one of the most effective family ministries in history. The phrase "Moses and Aaron" occurs 139 times in the Old Testament.

Aaron understood, and was well connected with the Jewish people. Moses had firsthand experience with Egyptian culture and politics, including Pharaoh from having grown up royalty in Pharaoh's household. God called both brothers to complement each other and free the Jewish people from Egyptian slavery and occupy the Promised Land. Moses, a strong leader, was given a direct line to God's vision. Aaron was the people person, and spokesperson.

Under God's direction, the pair unified the Jewish people, secured Egypt and Pharaoh's reluctant permission (after ten plagues on the land) for freedom, and guided this mixed multitude for 40 years on the way to Canaan. They watched God destroy the Egyptian army in the Red Sea and feed all the people with angel's food (Psalm 78:25), while wearing clothing and shoes that never wore out (Deuteronomy 29:5). Together, Moses and Aaron witnessed countless miracles and victories along the way to the Promised Land.

**Who has He placed in your life to accomplish a goal larger than you could ever achieve alone?**

**Prayer Guide:** Ask God to stretch you this year into accomplishing something extraordinary as part of a team. Also, be sure to thank Him for your family.



## MY DAILY WALK – Naomi & Ruth

### WEDNESDAY (March 17)

**Scripture Reading:** Romans 6-7

**Devotional Passage:** Ruth 1:16-18,

<sup>16</sup> *But Ruth replied:*

*Don't plead with me to abandon you or to return and not follow you.*

*For wherever you go, I will go, and wherever you live, I will live;*

*your people will be my people, and your God will be my God.*

<sup>17</sup> *Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried.*

*May the Lord punish me, and do so severely,*

*if anything but death separates you and me.*

<sup>18</sup> *When Naomi saw that Ruth was determined to go with her, she stopped talking to her.*

#### **Devotional Thought:** A Loyal Love

After the death of her husband and two sons, Naomi decided to return from Moab to her homeland, alone and empty-handed. She tells her childless daughters-in-law to go back to their families because there is nothing she can offer them except sorrow. Ruth stays and recites verses 16-17 (above) to Naomi. This passage has been quoted at countless weddings by couples who were called to the mission field.

Despite being a foreigner of a despised race by the people of Israel, Ruth saw something about her Jewish mother-in-law's faith in God that she wanted for herself. Naomi's character must have made quite an impressive imprint on Ruth's mind and heart; wisdom, and devoted love worth following. If we fast forward, they return to Israel and find a family in Bethlehem; eventually discovering a wealthy, single kinsman. **Spoiler alert:** The girl gets the guy, wedding bells, a baby, and lives happily ever after!

We should never underestimate the impact of a Godly home. It's vital to live out our faith and demonstrate genuine love at home. Our family knows and sees the real us. I have said my wife "doesn't believe my resume." She knows the truth about me, warts and all. We should ask for the Holy Spirit's help to live out Christ's truth as we reflect His grace and love to family and others.

**What person(s) demonstrated Godly wisdom and love to you?**

**Are you pursuing Jesus daily to walk with Him and take hold of the blessings God has for you?**

**Prayer Guide:** Ask God to develop a more Christ-like you, one authentic to your family and friends.

## **MY DAILY WALK – Jesus, Mary, Martha & Lazarus**

### **THURSDAY (March 18)**

**Scripture Reading:** Romans 8-9

**Devotional Passage:** Luke 10:38-39, John 12:1-3

John 12:1-3,

*<sup>1</sup> Six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany where Lazarus was, the one Jesus had raised from the dead. <sup>2</sup> So they gave a dinner for him there; Martha was serving them, and Lazarus was one of those reclining at the table with him. <sup>3</sup> Then Mary took a pound of perfume, pure and expensive nard, anointed Jesus's feet, and wiped his feet with her hair. So the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.*

#### **Devotional Thought:**

Some homes have a warm and comfortable atmosphere that just makes you want to relax and kick off your shoes. It usually helps if there is good home cooking and a caring host.

That was Martha's house. It was often Jesus' bed and breakfast of choice whenever He was in the area. He found Himself relaxed and energized by the friendship of Martha, Mary, and Lazarus. Jesus said He had nowhere to lay his head, but He felt welcome there. They were like family.

My mother-in-law is a "Martha" kind of hostess. She loves using her home to feed and house everybody, no matter where they come from. Her children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren are always welcome. She especially enjoys entertaining missionaries and preachers. It is no exaggeration to say she has hosted hundreds of guests over the 42 years I have known her.

I am not a very good host, but I would like to get better at it. Fortunately, my wife Joni is a good cook and always has a set of fresh towels available for unannounced guests. She has some Martha in her, too.

**Does your home have an inviting and friendly atmosphere where new faces are welcome?**

**Prayer Guide:** Pray for God to give you opportunities to use your home and other things He has blessed you with so that you might bless others.

**MY DAILY WALK – Paul & Timothy**  
**FRIDAY (March 19)**

**Scripture Reading:** Romans 10-11

**Devotional Passage:** Acts 16:1-3a, 2 Timothy 1:2-5

2 Timothy 1:2-5,

<sup>2</sup> *To Timothy, my dearly loved son.*

*Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.*

<sup>3</sup> *I thank God, whom I serve with a clear conscience as my ancestors did, when I constantly remember you in my prayers night and day. <sup>4</sup> Remembering your tears, I long to see you so that I may be filled with joy. <sup>5</sup> I recall your sincere faith that first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and now, I am convinced, is in you also.*

**Devotional Thought:**

Paul parted ways with Barnabus and shared the Gospel in Lystra; while there he recruited young Timothy to join him on his missionary journeys. They traveled everywhere together. Their friendship and professional relationship were so close that Paul mentions Timothy in the greetings of eight of his letters to various churches. Timothy faithfully served with Paul for more than a decade. After becoming a pastor, Paul wrote 1 & 2 Timothy specifically to advise and encourage Timothy in the ministry.

Years ago, I heard a talk with the title, “The Apostle Paul was in a Small Group!” The speaker discussed the idea that Christians should incorporate at least three types of people in their lives: a Paul, a Barnabus, and a Timothy.

**Who is your Paul**, the friend who is always available to give you Godly counsel, someone courageous enough to be truthful even if it hurts?

**Who is your Barnabus**, an encourager who walks alongside to keep you going?

**Who is your Timothy**, someone you can mentor, helping them grow in faith while encouraging and teaching them?

**Prayer Guide:** Ask God to help you grow deeper in your relationship with people in your LIFE Group. Ask Him to show you direction for a place where you can serve in the church, growing you, and encouraging others.