

# The Road Home

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## Week 4 | Not a Membership but Community

### ■ BOTTOM LINE

The heart of Jesus is to serve others in complete humility.

### ■ GOAL OF THE GROUP

For this series, we know that many people do not have a problem with God as much as they do organized religion. Many people view their relationship with God as being "religious." The act of baptism isn't a requirement for a relationship with God, but an outward expression of the commitment to follow Jesus.

### ■ SCRIPTURE

Romans 6:4, 2 Corinthians 5:17, Romans 6:3-11

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## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. **Share:** Think about something, perhaps a passion or milestone, in your life that you celebrated with an outward expression or symbol. Share with the group.
2. We call baptism an outward expression of an inward reality. What else do you see in our culture that are "outward expressions of inward realities"? Why do we celebrate with outward expressions or symbols?
3. Maybe you were baptized as a baby or a teen, or just recently. What significance (if any) did it have on you? Reflect back on the decision you made or that someone made for you.
4. **Read Romans 6:4 and 2 Corinthians 5:17 and Discuss:** Paul, the writer of these 2 letters (Romans and 2 Corinthians), made a decision to follow Jesus with his whole life. In his leadership and engagement with other people who made the decision he encourages them over and over to experience the "newness" of life found in Jesus.
  - a. What is similar about these two scriptures? What is the impact of following Christ?
  - b. How have you experienced the NEW that is found in Christ in your own life?
  - c. How has it impacted the relationships around you? Have you found yourself sharing your experiences with others?
  - d. What makes "sharing your story" with others difficult?
5. **Read Romans 6:3-11 and Discuss:** *"That's what baptism into the life of Jesus means. When we are lowered into the water, it is like the burial of Jesus; when we are raised up out of the water, it is like the resurrection of Jesus. Each of us is raised into a light-filled world by our Father so that we can see where we're going in our new grace-sovereign country."* (Romans 6:3-11 from the Message version of the Bible)
  - a. When you read about baptism this way, how does it reshape the way you think about your baptism story?
  - b. If you do not have a baptism story, how does this inspire you or encourage you to considering baptism as a next step?

2 Corinthians 5:17 - Therefore, if anyone is in Christ,  
**he is a new creation.** The old has passed away;  
behold, **the new has come.**



## TRY THIS

Share the story of your relationship with Jesus and the transformation you have experienced through Jesus with someone in your life this week. Ask this person about their story and their experiences. If you don't know who to share your story with, pray and ask God to reveal the person. Share your experience with your group next week.

# The Road Home

## Week 3 | Not to Power Over but to Serve Under

### BOTTOM LINE

The most powerful thing a leader can do is serve.

### GOAL OF THE GROUP

For this series, we know that many people do not have a problem with God as much as they do organized religion. Many people view the relationship with God being "religious." We hope this week we help people shift their view on church being a building but a movement of people who experience the power of community.

### SCRIPTURE

Luke 22:24-27, Philippians 2:5-8

In Luke, Jesus' disciples argue about who would be the greatest among them. Jesus however tells them that the greatest among the people should take the lowest rank and the leader should be like a servant.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. **Share:** What is the best customer service experience you ever received? Why was it so memorable? What was your worst experience and why?
2. Imagine you are a person who worked hard with limited help your entire life. You started at the bottom and worked up the ladder. Is it wrong to think highly of yourself? How do you navigate the role of being the leader of people while serving the people you lead?
3. **Read and Discuss Luke 22:24-27:**
  - a. What is difficult about taking the type of posture described here?
  - b. Who is a role model for you? How are they a servant leader instead of a power seeking leader?
4. Imagery plays a huge part in the Bible. Below are 5 different images connected to Jesus, a servant leader. Jesus' mission was to give away power – to empower others for the sake of God's work in the world. Jesus was born in a manger, traveled by donkey, use a towel and basin to wash His disciples' feet and use the breaking of bread and wine to represent the ending His of life.
  - a. **Manger** – A humbling dwelling place where Jesus was born. The image depicts the very nature of "God-with-Us," who chose to live as powerless and vulnerable among human beings.
  - b. **Lamb** – Gentle and inoffensive presence of a lamb. The symbol of the lamb is used in relationship with God's mission to describe the expected character of those who are sent.
  - c. **Donkey** – Having two meanings, the donkey represents a humble animal that depicts humility, simplicity and lowliness. The donkey also evokes the very human traits of stubbornness and narrow-mindedness.
  - d. **Towel & Basin** – Before the shared a meal (the Last Supper) Jesus took a towel and put it around his waist, the common attire of a slave doing the menial duty of washing the guests' feet. He poured water into the basin and proceeded to clean the disciples' feet.
  - e. **Bread & Wine** – The breaking of the bread bears witness to the rending pain of Jesus during his passion. The participation of the cup revisits the shedding of his blood throughout his passion and crucifixion.
  - f. **Discuss:** Do you see the powerlessness of the images listed? Is the way Jesus lived his life challenging you a leader? Why or why not?
5. **Read and Discuss Philippians 2:5-8:**
  - a. How does knowing what Jesus finds important change the way you see yourself?
  - b. How can you shift your posture this week towards serving others rather than seeking affirmation or power?

"Do small things with GREAT LOVE."  
–Mother Teresa of Calcutta



## TRY THIS

Choose one sphere of influence (work, family, friends, neighbors, church) where you can do some small thing with great love this week! Come back next week ready to share about how it affected you and your sphere of influence.

# The Road Home

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## Week 2 | Not a Building but a Family

### ■ BOTTOM LINE

Jesus didn't define the church as a building but as a movement.

### ■ GOAL OF THE GROUP

For this series, we know that many people do not have a problem with God as much as they do organized religion. Many people view the relationship with God being "religious." We hope this week we help people shift their view on church being a building but a movement of people who experience the power of community.

### ■ SCRIPTURE

1 Corinthians 12:12-31 – Paul wrote to the Corinth people to encourage and correct their views about themselves, God, culture and even the purpose of the gathering of people together as a church community.

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## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Share:** When you hear the word "church" what are some of the images or thoughts that come to mind?
    - If you have a great view of the church now (hopefully), how did that shift if you experience before was negative?
  - Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-31 and Discuss:**
    - How does Paul use the metaphor that the body is made of many parts just like the church is?
    - What are some of the benefits of having many people who have different skills, talents, and experiences part of the community?
    - How has the "many parts of the community" been a benefit in your life? How has this concept allowed you to benefit and encourage others? (In the past we have even said "your pain can become a platform", how does that impact the people in the movement of the church?)
    - If we are "designed to work in harmony, depend on one another, and help each other," how would that impact the way we live our lives?
    - How would the church as a movement that celebrated each other's differences impact those who are watching the church and wondering what "following Jesus" has for them? How could the church operating as one body change people's perception of the church, its people and Jesus?
  - Reflect on this quote from the Washington Post on loneliness - *Loneliness in "epidemic proportions" is producing a "loneliness literature" of sociological and medical findings about the effect of loneliness on individuals' brains and bodies, and on communities. Sasse (R-Neb.) says "there is a growing consensus" that loneliness — not obesity, cancer or heart disease — is the nation's "number one health crisis." "Persistent loneliness" reduces average longevity more than twice as much as does heavy drinking and more than three times as much as obesity, which often is a consequence of loneliness. Research demonstrates that loneliness is as physically dangerous as smoking 15 cigarettes a day and contributes to cognitive decline, including more rapid advance of Alzheimer's disease. Sasse says, "We're literally dying of despair," of the failure "to fill the hole millions of Americans feel in their lives."*
    - What if the church was DESIGNED to be the answer as a movement of people?
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"In essential beliefs we have **unity**, in non-essential beliefs we have liberty, and in all beliefs we have **charity.**" – John Wesley



## TRY THIS

- Celebrate one person's gift that you have benefited from within the Church.**
- Choose one act of using your gift for another person in the Church.**

# The Road Home

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## Week 1 | Rejecting Religion

### ■ BOTTOM LINE

Jesus didn't come to start a RELIGION OF RULES but to establish a RELATIONSHIP OF LOVE.

### ■ GOAL OF THE GROUP

For this series, we know that many people do not have a problem with God as much as they do organized religion. Many people view the relationship with God being "religious." We hope that we move away from the "doing" of religious activities for activities sake but learn what it means to pursue a relationship and how that could change of our view of God, faith, and relationships with others! And maybe, others would take notice!

### ■ SCRIPTURE

Romans 3:20, Galatians 3:19, 21-27, Romans 5:10, Ephesians 2:8-9

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## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. **Share:** When did you do something out of obligation and how did it feel? Did you parents make you get dressed up for a party? Did you have a family tradition that you reluctantly participated in?
2. Is there a defining moment in your life where you faced difficult or heartbreak times and asked the question "why"? If so, how did that situation shape you and your relationship with God?
3. **Read & Discuss:** The writer, the Apostle Paul, built his life on following rules. He kept the rules, enforced the rules and used the rules to keep other people "in line." Once he had started a relationship with Jesus he understood that Jesus didn't come to start a RELIGION of RULES but to establish a RELATIONSHIP of LOVE! And because of that he lets everyone else know! Read all 3 of these scriptures: Romans 3:20. Galatians 3:19, 21-27 and Romans 5:10 and discuss:
  - a. What do you notice about the themes around the LAW (or rules) vs. RELATIONSHIP (grace)?
  - b. Why do you think Paul was pointing to the freedom found in Jesus instead of rules?
    - i. How can you relate to this? Has there ever been a time when you found rules to be suffocating?
  - c. Why do you think Jesus wants a relationship with more than rules?
  - d. How would a relationship with Jesus lead to more freedom in our life and more peace in our hearts?
4. Discuss this statement: **The moment Jesus died on the cross the focus went from CONDITIONAL RULES to an UNCONDITIONAL FRIENDSHIP**
  - a. Read Ephesians 2:8-9 - *For it is by **grace** you have been saved, through **faith**—and this is **not from yourselves**, it is the gift of God— **9 not by works**, so that no one can boast.*
  - b. How is this message of good news healthy for us to leave out? How does this change our relationship with God?

The moment Jesus died on the cross the focus went from **CONDITIONAL RULES** to an **UNCONDITIONAL FRIENDSHIP**



## TRY THIS

1. **Pray for each other this week. Write down the prayer requests and put them in a bowl and have everyone pray for one other person in the group.**
2. **Choose 1 step to take towards Trusting God in the midst of a difficult situation today!**