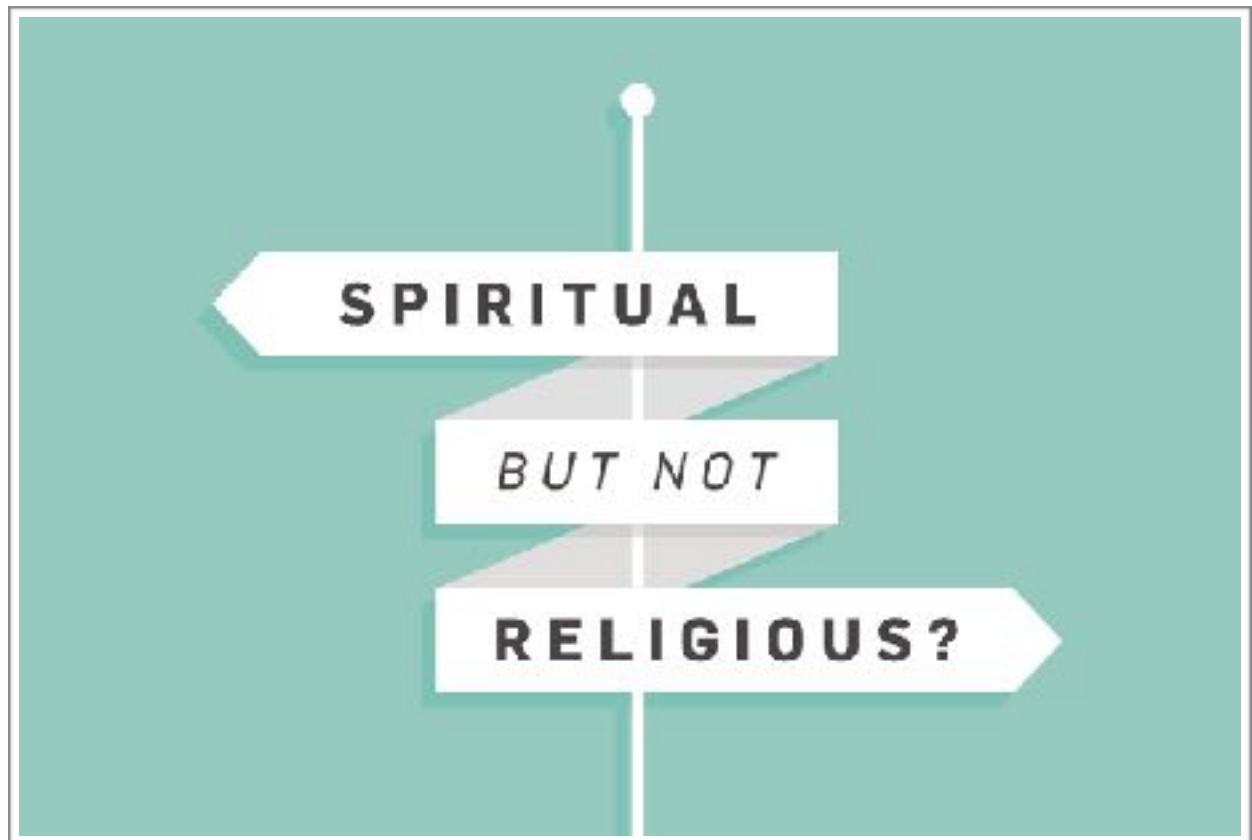


# Series Based Bible Study



Vineyard Columbus

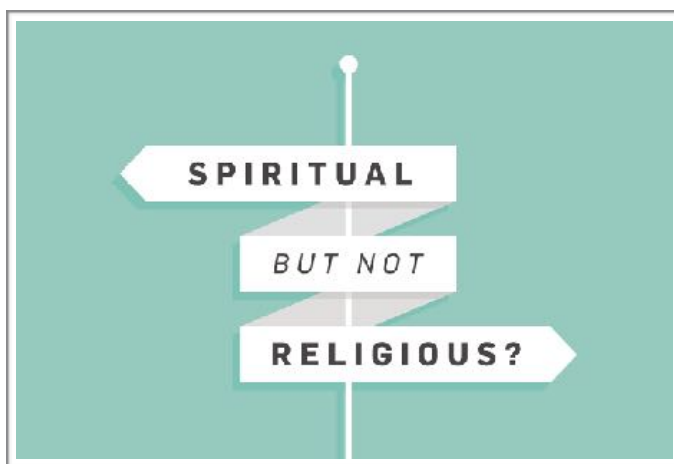
January 2017

# Spiritual But Not Religious?

## *A Vineyard Columbus Small Group Study Series*

### Series Description

More and more people are trying to do the spiritual life on their own without support and without a guide for the journey. But is spirituality just between you and God? Or is it essential to be part of a community that challenges our self-centeredness and offers us a “we” and not just an “I”? In this series, we will talk about the relevance of the church as we pursue healthy spirituality.



This guide offers six weeks for your small group to work through. At Vineyard Columbus, we encourage your group to use this study as one component of your time together. We truly believe that disciples of Jesus will mature best when they engage in corporate worship, prayer ministry, practicing the prophetic, studying the Bible, serving our neighbors, community, church, and fellowshiping together. This study only covers one of those aspects, the Bible. Suggestions and ideas will be posited to aid the leader regarding the other areas. We pray this will be helpful to your group as you explore “Spiritual But Not Religious?”

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### **How to use this Study Series**

Leaders are encouraged to briefly look over all studies before you teach or hand them out to alternative teachers within the group. ***There is a summary of Ministry Ideas from the entire series in the back. The ministry ideas are meant to build upon each other whenever possible and some ideas will take longer planning than others. Reading the full arch of Ministry Ideas before you start the series as a small group may provide a much richer and fuller experience.***

Having all studies provided at the start of a sermon series will give leaders the opportunity to give studies to potential teachers or co-leaders weeks ahead of time. Our prayer is that many more disciples of Jesus will feel comfortable sharing and leading others in discussion during small group. If you have any questions, please email us at: [smallgroups@vineyardcolumbus.org](mailto:smallgroups@vineyardcolumbus.org)

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# **Week 1**



# Healthy Religion

Acts 2:44-46

**Tips:** These questions are meant to get the group thinking and spark discussion, so don't rush through them or attempt to get a solid answer for each one. Don't be afraid to wait for a while to see who speaks, and remember, there are no wrong opinions.

## **Background:**

In the book of Acts we get to see a glimpse into the lives of the very first group of Christian believers – the ways they act, speak, live, and believe. As followers of Christ today, we would do well to look long and hard into this book, for here are people who witnessed Jesus in the flesh, his death and resurrection, and are living in the immediate aftermath. We must also remember that these are Jewish Christians, in very close proximity to and not far removed from their history and religion. We can receive fresh insight into what good, faithful, and healthy spirituality is like.

44 All the believers were together and had everything in common. 45 They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. 46 Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts.

**Starter Questions:**

Have you ever been part of a group, a school, a company, or a team, but didn't fully consider yourself invested or it didn't matter much to you? What was that like?

-Went to Ohio State, but don't care about the Buckeyes; Work for a company, but never spend time with my coworkers; Member of the YMCA or other nonprofit but am not really involved; Played sports in high school or college, but just because it was fun or cool.

Do you like traditions? Why or why not? Do you have any of your own?

-Family Christmas party; Vacations; Seasonal events; Dinners or game nights

What does being a friend mean to you? What about being a neighbor?

-Always there when you need them; Share common interests; Can have fun together; Can be yourself around them; You live next door; You share your things or help out when needed; You smile and wave when you see them outside; You try to avoid eye contact at all costs

Sometimes being a part of something larger than ourselves is frustrating, because it's not just about us. It's also sometimes awkward or weird, because there are traditions and things that connect us to times long ago, but feel odd today. And what's more is that we do these things with people – who are always interesting.

Let's take a look at the very first people to follow and believe in Christ and his gospel, and how they did life together side-by-side.

Can we pray together before we dive in?

**Opening Prayer:** Focus on slowing down, thanking God for your group, asking God to be present with you, to break down walls of previous experiences and false ideas of what it means to follow God, and to breathe hope and life into your community.

**Scripture:** Have two or three volunteers read through the Bible passage out loud. It may help to have it read twice!

**Discussion Questions:**

- Let me ask you, does this sound like church to you, or the church you have experienced? How do you describe church?

-Sitting in rows listening to someone speak;  
meeting once a week on Sunday mornings  
with people you don't really know; Always  
being asked to volunteer and serve when  
you have so many other commitments

In some ways, we have to realize time and context when we look at the scripture, for the day and age we live in, the jobs we work, and the multiple ways we are connected to one another (other than location) are very different than what we see in the text. However, some things are eternal and meant to be the glue of who we are as followers of Christ.

Let's look at each verse and pull out what the Lord may have for us in our present context.

**Read verse 44:** Ask a member of your group to read this verse aloud.

In some sense, we see through this verse, and certainly throughout the beginning and entirety of the Book of Acts, a small window into the glory of what it could be for God's people to live more closely to their intended and fullest selves.

- What must it have meant for them to be "together and have everything in common?"

-They were probably literally with each other every day, and had the same habits and traits. They may have needed to in order to feel safe from the much larger and somewhat hostile non-believing world around them, and to encourage one another in their new faith.

These early Christians were not a majority. In fact, they were a severe minority, surrounded by a much larger and much longer-standing religion of Judaism, wherein most of the members of the Jewish faith were not bought into the Messiah Jesus. However, even so, God was “adding to their number daily,” as Acts 2:47 states. All the more important it was that they were together building one another up.

At that time, it was unheard of, much less a common practice, for a person to state that they were a believer yet not a part of a believing community. One simply did not think it possible or wise to not be in community. “God’s people” throughout history were a literal group of people who shared common blood and ancestry. Now, with the arrival of God in the flesh, Jesus set in motion the new reality of God’s people being all who are thirsty and in need of redemption, not simply a set nation. Jews, Gentiles, and anyone in between have access to the Creator and Savior.

That being said, believers today attempting to live out this Acts-style faith/religion face different circumstances.

- What is it like, or could it be like, for us today to be “together and have everything in common” when it comes to following Jesus?

-Coming from all different walks of life with varying degrees of understanding of faith; We may not necessarily be in close

proximity to one another, making it difficult or at least different in terms of being “together”; Maybe “together” means simply connected through phone, social media, etc. People can recognize who we are and what we believe by how we speak and act.

This can have its challenges. I don’t know about you, but it’s not always easy for me to be okay with people who are really different than me. I think God works in our hearts the more and more we grow closer to Him and we become more and more loving, accepting, and even celebrate those who are different than us but are “together and have everything in common” with us in faith.

- Do you have trouble being with people who are different than you, from a different culture or place than you, older or younger than you?

-Leader, if your group is uncomfortable sharing this, you model the way by sharing your hesitations or fears in this area, and make it safe for them to do the same.

- Has anyone been recognized as a member of something (Vineyard, a company, a fraternity/sorority, etc.) because of the way you acted or looked? What was that like? How can that first impression be a good thing?

-Being recognized as a part of Vineyard, or even more importantly as a loving and caring Christian, can break down walls and open up opportunities with people; Good (and bad) reputations can go a long way and stick with you.

Even if the first impression isn't a good one, or isn't recognized, as members of this universal community of faith in this day and age, we have the opportunity to live in such a way that we are "together and have everything in common" with one another.

**Read verse 45:** Ask a member of your group to read this verse aloud.

This seems like a somewhat socialistic society, but in reality it's much more than that.

- What do you think is happening here when we read that they "sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need?"

-The old ways of defining status and reputation were out the window now that Jesus had arrived. They were taking seriously the exhortation Jesus gave – "A new command I give you: love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." (John 13:34-36)

The early Church, the first Christians, did not just share a common set of beliefs, but lived and acted out their faith in unity.

Overcoming external ridicule and pressure is not easy.

- Have you experienced external ridicule and pressure to stop being a certain way, or to conform to everyone else, or were you bullied when you were younger? What was that like? Was there something or someone that helped you push through?

-Gave you a lot of anxiety and fear; Took all of your energy to stand up to them; Easier to just give in and give up; You were all the more defiant and confident; A friend, family member, teacher, or group of people helped you overcome

We need one another. It's as simple as that.

Rich Nathan, our Senior Pastor, has given this metaphor about being a Christian and whether or not you need community:

*You live in New York, and want to sail to England. You can either choose to jump into a single kayak and take off rowing, or you can board a passenger cruise ship with lots of other people. It's possible you can make it to England in the single kayak, but excruciatingly difficult and much more scary. Your chances not only of survival but of arriving healthy and whole are much more positive on board a ship. This is what it's like when we*

*become a Christian. We can make it to the end of life being a faithful, single believer all alone, but it's much easier, more fulfilling, and your chances of being healthy and whole are better when you jump aboard the ship of Christian community.*

**Read verse 46:** Ask a member of your group to read this verse aloud.

Each detail of the early Church's description that we've read has huge importance, but this may show us the clearest form of what we today may seem as "religious."

- What does this mean?

-They did not separate religion from their spiritual fervor for Christ. They were living in such a way that those who were stuck in the darkness would see the light of Jesus in the new way the Christians were living out the fulfillment of their shared Jewish ancestry.

They still met in the temple for prayers! The new Holy Spirit-filled acts – praying, speaking in tongues, prophesying, healing, the teachings of the apostles, breaking of bread – were all supplemental to their devotion to God as before, not in place of it.

The beliefs and customs of believers before us are like guardrails to keep us from becoming self-

centered and falling off the path of following Jesus.

For us, we can take this to mean that the “old school” ways of doing church services on the weekends and all that those entail, are not anti-Holy-Spirit-filled, but a compliment.

Lastly, what we are doing right now has been done since Jesus walked the earth. Christians meet together in the homes of other believers, to break bread, to share their hearts, and to enjoy each other’s company.

- What is so significant about coming into someone else’s house and eating a meal with them?

-You feel accepted, welcome; You can relax and be yourself; Your friendship grows because you aren’t having a business meeting but simply sharing the moment in their most personal space.

- What was the overall emotional state of the believers when they met together and ate in their homes?

-Joy! They had glad and sincere hearts.

If there is not joy in the life of believers meeting together we may reasonably doubt whether or not the Holy Spirit has sunk in. More than simply eating and drinking, Paul says in Romans 14 that the Kingdom of God is righteousness, peace, and joy! Coming together is our response to God’s

Spirit pouring those things into us as gifts. This is healthy religion.

Eating together, praying together, attending service together, sharing life in all its forms are all indicators of healthy Christian community, built not on the absence of ritual or religion, but as compliments to it.

### **Ministry Time Application:**

Based on the people and overall feel of your group, select which option you feel fits best.

#### **Option 1:**

If possible, provide writing utensils for each member in your group. Ask them to take a moment (2-3 minutes total) to write down both why they are thankful for Christian community and why it's difficult for them. Then, depending on the size of your group, either share aloud as a whole or break into smaller groups to share and pray for one another regarding these things.

#### **Option 2:**

Spend time “waiting on God.” This is a practice that we share as believers, but especially as members of the Vineyard. Sit quietly and invite the Holy Spirit to calm your hearts and soul, and to speak personal words to each member in the group. Since Jesus is alive and well, we believe his Spirit still moves in power today. He could speak

in a sentence or phrase, or bring a memory to mind, or a random picture. No matter what the Spirit does or does not bring, slow down, rest, and be open to God. Take 2-3 minutes total, and at the end give the voluntary opportunity for everyone to share aloud his or her experience. As the leader, begin an open-forum style prayer for the group, allowing others to jump in and pray as well. Ask another leader or group member to close the prayer after a few minutes.

## **Week 2**



# Membership/Community

Galatians 6:1-6

## Tips:

There are more questions than your group will be able to get through so feel free to pick and choose which ones you would like to use.

Remember to pause between questions. Waiting for people will help you identify quite personalities in your group.

## Background:

Paul's letter to the Galatians was sent to confront false teachers who were trying to convince the Christians of Galatia to follow Jewish law. The purpose of the letter was to underscore our freedom in Christ. This week we are talking about community, and the passage we are studying reminds us why the community of the church is so important for Christians.

## Starter Questions:

Think about a time when you needed the support of others. Who was there for you when you needed them?

Have you ever lent a helping hand to someone who was in desperate need? How did it feel to be able to help?

1 Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted. 2 Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. 3 If anyone thinks they are something when they are not, they deceive themselves. 4 Each one should test their own actions. Then they can take pride in themselves alone, without comparing themselves to someone else, 5 for each one should carry their own load. 6 Nevertheless, the one who receives instruction in the word should share all good things with their instructor.

**Opening Prayer:** Pray for God to speak to each person, to give each person more courage and depth, and to open your hearts to receive whatever he has for you.

**Scripture:** Have two or three volunteers read through the Bible passage out loud. It may help to have it read twice!

### Discussion Questions

- What does Paul advise we do when someone is caught in a sin?
  - Restore the person gently.
- Who is supposed to confront the person?
  - Those who live by the Spirit, brothers and sisters in Christ.
- Have you ever had to confront someone in their sin? How did it go? Alternatively: Have you ever been confronted in your sin?
  - Allow time for sharing.
- How do you think we could be tempted when confronting someone else's sin?
  - We could become convinced that their sin isn't "that big a deal." This could lead us to decide to do the same thing if we're tempted later. We might find them in a questionable place and have to go after them. We could also become tempted to be prideful about how much better we are that we don't sin like they have.

- How do we fulfill the law of Christ?
  - By carrying one another's burdens.
- What does it mean to carry one another's burdens?
  - Help people through hard times, help ease the burden someone might be dealing with that they can't handle on their own. Care for each other when we're overwhelmed.
- Do you compare yourself to other people? Is this something you struggle with?
  - Allow for a few moments of discussion.

Read Luke 18:9-14.

- Have you ever found yourself behaving like the Pharisee in this story? How did God humble you?
  - Allow for a few moments of discussion.
- How can we keep our pride in check when approaching others about their sin?
  - Remind ourselves that we are sinners, too, that we could fall to temptations, that we may have fallen to similar temptations in the past. Remind ourselves that we are not confronting sin because we are superior, instead, that we all need Jesus and we want to restore our friend/family member to fellowship with Christ.

- What are some ways we can examine our own behavior or actions without comparing ourselves to others?

-Remind ourselves that we are only seeing a small portion of other people's lives, and we don't always know what's going on behind the scenes. Remind ourselves that we cannot control what others do, but we do have control over our own actions.

- In verse 2, Paul mentions heavy burdens, specifically difficult struggles where we ought to come together and support our brothers and sisters. Verse 5, however, says everyone should carry their own load. What do you think it means to carry your own load?

-Be responsible/accountable for your own actions. Don't blame others for your choices, and don't carry the weight of other people's bad decisions.

- What are some ways you can share good things with those who teach you in the Bible?

-Talk to them after church or at small group, send an email or a thank you card.

Bonus: Homework assignment - Send a POSITIVE email to a pastor or leader sharing how their ministry has had an impact on you or a member of your family.

**Tips:**

When people partner up in pairs to pray, it will build trust and intimacy over time. This is a great way to have your group improve overall discussion. The more people you end up trusting in your group, the more open your discussion time will be.

**Ministry Time Application:**

Based on the people and overall feel of your group, select which option you feel fits best.

James 5:16a says “Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed.”

**Option 1:**

Have a time of confession—in pairs or groups of three (men with men/women with women), allow time for each person to confess a sin they are struggling with, maybe something that was stirred up during the discussion time. Pray for each person.

**Option 2:**

Pray for your group’s leadership/hosts. Gather around your leaders as a group and pray for them to be refreshed, or if they have specific requests, pray for those.

## **Week 3**



# Maturity

1 Corinthians 2 & 3:1-4

**Tip:** There are more questions than your group will be able to get through, so feel free to pick and choose which ones you would like to use.

## Background:

1 Corinthians is the first of the two canonized letters from Paul to the church in Corinth. The book is primarily Paul's response to many of the issues and bad behaviors of the church. Because the church was made up of a number of Gentiles, previously pagan worshipers, many in the church struggled to fully convert to Christian beliefs, values, and behavior. While some of the behaviors and beliefs in the Corinthian church are clearly incompatible with Christianity through our modern eyes, today's Church continues to share in some of the struggles Paul addresses in this letter. One of these is the matter of spiritual maturity, and we will be looking at that together in the study that follows.

Bible Verses: 1 Corinthians 2

1 And so it was with me, brothers and sisters. When I came to you, I did not come with eloquence or human wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. 2 For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. 3 I came to you in weakness with great fear and trembling. 4 My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, 5 so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on God's power. 6 We do, however, speak a message of wisdom among the mature, but not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. 7 No, we declare God's wisdom, a mystery that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began. 8 None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

**Starter Questions:**

When you were younger, what was your dream job?  
What did you want to be when you "grew up?"

Can you share with the group a time when you, as a child, got into a quarrel with a friend or sibling over something that, at the time, meant a great deal, but now is seems silly or childish?

**Opening Prayer:** Thank God for the people who came and for all of the blessings He has provided for us.

**Scripture:** Have two or three volunteers read through the Bible passage out loud. It may help to have it read twice!

**Discussion and Questions:**

Needless to say, the things that we aspire to and mean so much to us as children often change drastically as we age and mature. Hopefully, as we age, we mature in the ways we spend our time and our money, on the dreams we pursue, and we become more thoughtful. Likewise, we want to be people who have a faith that is maturing. Paul writes about this type of mature faith in 1 Corinthians chapters 2 and 3.

- Why is it that Paul came the Corinthians proclaiming the testimony of God not with eloquence or human wisdom, but in weakness and with great fear and trembling?

-So that their faith may not rest on Paul's wisdom, but on God's power—revealed in the demonstrations of the Spirit's power.

“What no eye has seen,  
what no ear has heard,  
and what no human mind  
has conceived”–

the things God has  
prepared for those who  
love him–  
10 these are the things  
God has revealed to us by  
his Spirit. The Spirit  
searches all things, even  
the deep things of God. 11  
For who knows a person’s  
thoughts except their own  
spirit within them? In the  
same way no one knows  
the thoughts of God  
except the Spirit of God.  
12 What we have received  
is not the spirit of the  
world, but the Spirit who is  
from God, so that we may  
understand what God has  
freely given us. 13 This is  
what we speak, not in  
words taught us by human  
wisdom but in words  
taught by the Spirit,  
explaining spiritual  
realities with Spirit-taught  
words. 14 The person  
without the Spirit does not  
accept the things that  
come from the Spirit of  
God but considers them  
foolishness, and cannot  
understand them because  
they are discerned only  
through the Spirit.

- How is it that Paul was able to establish a church in Corinth without relying on his eloquence or cleverness?

-In this case, demonstration of the power of the Spirit was sufficient to build a church. While God can and does use our gifts and skills, the work of God is not primarily dependent on our strengths, but on His own.

- Does it bring you any relief to hear that eloquence and persuasion are not prerequisites for sharing your faith with others?

-Discuss with your group the benefit of the power of God to do His work through us, whatever our gifts.

- In vv. 6-7 Paul begins to speak about an unconventional type of wisdom spoken among the mature. What does Paul say about this type of wisdom?

-It is not the wisdom of “this age” or the rulers of this age. It is God’s wisdom. It was “hidden” but known and destined by God.

If we have been followers of Jesus for a while, we can begin to forget how extraordinary our claims are. Paul articulates this chapter 1 verse 18 “For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.”

15 The person with the Spirit makes judgments about all things, but such a person is not subject to merely human judgments, 16 for,

“Who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?”

But we have the mind of Christ.

1 Corinthians 3:1-4

1 Brothers and sisters, I could not address you as people who live by the Spirit but as people who are still worldly—mere infants in Christ. 2 I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready. 3 You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere humans? 4 For when one says, “I follow Paul,” and another, “I follow Apollos,” are you not mere human beings?

- What does Paul mean when he claims the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing? Why would the cross be foolishness?

-The expectations of a ruling and saving King were never that the King would be a lowly and humble person, executed on a cross. When we think of power and authority, our minds do not first go to the people whom we have executed as criminals. Our claims are extraordinary, and we should not forget how extraordinary they sound to the ears of people who do not know Jesus.

One of many struggles the Corinthian church as they converted from their pagan faiths to Christianity was dealing with their concept of wisdom. The Corinthians put great stock in being “men of knowledge”, and many believed that their new found faith in God gave instilled in them a different kind of wisdom (GK: sophia), and this special wisdom set them above others in the church.

- What are some ways we, as modern Christians, can view ourselves as “better” or “more spiritual” Christians?

-It can be tempting to pride ourselves on how we know the Bible better than others, or how devoted we are to the discipline of prayer over others. Or, we can perceive that our understanding of the character of God or the truths of Scripture make us superior to others. Or, we can make celebrities out of “super

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Christians”, marveling at their gifts and failing to give God the glory for His work through them.

- According to Paul in vv. 10-15, how do we receive spiritual wisdom?
  - It is given and taught to us by the Holy Spirit.
- What is the evidence that a person is with the Spirit?
  - v. 16. They have the mind of Christ. Mature and Spirit-filled people are people who think like Christ.
- The Corinthian church believes that they are mature because of their special wisdom (sophia). What does Paul have to say about their maturity?
  - That they are spiritual infants, ‘worldly’ in their wisdom.
- What is the evidence of their immaturity?
  - They are “worldly”, that is, they are caught up in the concerns and expectations of the culture surrounding them and deaf to the wisdom of the Spirit. They are jealous and they are quarreling. They are concerned with the teaching of one person over another.
- Using the example of the Corinthian church here, what then are some characteristics of a mature Christian??
  - They are concerned with the wisdom of the Spirit. They are not jealous, but are rather celebrate and encourage others. They do not bicker, but rather they seek peace and

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resolution. They are not concerned with the acclaim of following a particular teacher or teaching, but rather acknowledge Jesus as their leader.

- How can our community, our small group, our fellow Christians help us to become more mature Christians?

-The Church is where we can begin to work these things out together. We can practice celebrating others instead of being jealous of them. We can choose to seek peace and resolutions with each other instead of being quarrelsome. And we can devote ourselves to be led by Jesus.

## Ministry Time Application

### Option 1:

Invite the Holy Spirit to speak to your group about places in their lives where God would have them grow in maturity. If they are prone to jealousy, ask for contentment and comfort in knowing that they are a beloved child of God. If they are quarrelsome, invite the Spirit to soften their hearts and increase their patience and tame their tongue.

### Option 2:

One aspect of spiritual maturity that Paul exemplifies in this text is that when we believe in God's power, we can rely on His help to do His work. Invite the Holy Spirit to work through the lives of your small group. That the

group would not entirely depend on the eloquence of their words, or the skill of their craft, but rather that they would submit themselves to be used by God, however He sees fit. Invite the Holy Spirit to reveal any places where there is pride, or where we may be reluctant to go where God is calling, and help us to rely more on God's power.

## **Week 4**



# Meeting God

1 John 4:1-13

**Tip:** The starter questions are meant to get the group thinking and spark discussion, so don't rush through them or attempt to get a solid answer for each one. Don't be afraid to wait for a while to see who speaks, and remember, there are no wrong opinions.

## Background:

Over the course of this series we have been asking the question, “Is spirituality just between me and God?” It is easy to justify that being a Christian means having a personal relationship with Jesus, so all we need is us and Him — but God calls us to much more than that. In this week's study, we will learn why meeting with God means we cannot only follow Him in solitude.

## Starter Questions:

Have you ever heard a message — either yourself or from another person — and questioned if it were truly from God? What did you do in that situation?

Do you think it is possible to love God without loving other people? Why or why not?

**Bible Verses: 1 John 4:1-13**

1 Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. 2 This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, 3 but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world. 4 You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world. 5 They are from the world and therefore speak from the viewpoint of the world, and the world listens to them. 6 We are from God, and whoever knows God listens to us; but whoever is not from God does not listen to us. This is how we recognize the Spirit of truth and the spirit of falsehood.

**Opening Prayer:** Pray that everyone would hear this passage with fresh ears and that each person would hear something that will move them forward in their walk with Christ.

**Scripture:** Have two or three volunteers read through the Bible passage out loud. It may help to have it read twice!

**Discussion Questions:**

- Our world is filled with voices claiming to speak for God — but, unfortunately, not all of them are. What does John tell us to do when we encounter a spirit that claims to be speaking on behalf of God?
  - Do not believe it until you have tested to see if it is from God.
- What test does John say a spirit must pass in order to be recognized as a spirit from God?
  - It will acknowledge the personhood of Jesus.
- At the time this letter was written, some were having a hard time believing that Jesus could be both human and divine. Greek Platonic teachings taught that the spirit was all important and the body a prison from which to escape, and that Jesus was actually a spirit who only appeared to have a body. Today, many find it easier to believe that Jesus was human, but harder that he was also God. Have you ever had a hard time understanding this both/and reality of Jesus, that he is both fully man and fully God?

7 Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. 8 Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. 9 This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. 10 This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. 11 Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. 12 No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us. 13 This is how we know that we live in him and he in us: He has given us of his Spirit.

- According to v. 3, where does the voice of the false spirit come from?

-The spirit of the antichrist.

- The term “antichrist” can conjure up some fearful feelings. Earlier in this letter John tells us that “even now many antichrists have come (2:18).” In this context he is not talking about the one great antichrist who will come at the end of days (which can be read more about in the book of Revelation, also written by John), but of false teachers who are against Jesus and trying to lure Christians away from him by telling them what they want to hear, rather than Jesus’ truth. However, John reassures us that we do not need to be afraid of these evil spirits.

According to v. 4, why is that so?

-A. We are from God; B. We have overcome them; C. The spirit in us is greater than the one that is in the world.

- As Christians who have accepted Jesus, the Holy Spirit dwells in us (1 Corinthians 3:16), and we have access to a true spirit that is much stronger than the false ones. How does it make you feel to know that because of Jesus, you already have the power to overcome false spirits?

- From what viewpoint do the false spirits speak? And who listens to them?

- From the viewpoint of the world, and the world listens.

- Why do you think listening to false teachings/spirits continues to be a problem?

- As mentioned above, they tell us what we want to hear, not the truth.
- What command is given in v. 7?
  - To love one another.
- Where does this love come from?
  - God.
- There is a hymn written in the late 1960s that claims, "They'll Know We Are Christians By Our Love." Do you think that Christians (and the church at large) are doing a good job of loving others in a way that non-believers see our love of Christ through it? Why or why not? In what ways could we be doing better?
- What does v. 8 say about those who do not love?
  - That they must not know God, because God is love.
- Verse 7 uses the phrase "love comes from God," but in v. 8 we read that "God is love." Why do you think this distinction is important?
  - The assertion that "God is love" shows us that love is who God is. We must beware of watering down "God is Love" into "God is loving," or even "God of all beings is the most loving." Love is not a mere attribute of God; like light, it is his very nature.
- How did God demonstrate his love for us?
  - v. 9: "He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him."

Notes

- How does John define love in v. 10?
  - God's sacrifice of sending his son to atone for our sins.) According to this definition, love is not our feelings toward another person, but a sacrificial action for others. With this in mind, how then should we put v. 11 into practice? (By loving others in a sacrificial and not self-pleasing manner.
- Reread verses 12-13 aloud. What happens when we love others?
  - God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.
- How will we know this has happened?
  - We will have God's spirit.

Because God is invisible, his dwelling in us can be shown only by his essential characteristic being exhibited in us — by our showing similar self-sacrificing love. As the aforementioned song says, love is “evidence of Christ in us.” Our love towards God is perfected and brought to maturity by the practice of love towards others in him.

Let us, then, revisit the question from the introduction: “Is spirituality just between me and God?” In short, no. Mature spirituality comes from practicing God's self-sacrificing love, and that requires us to be in community with others. With this maturity comes the evidence of God's spirit, which allows us to discern between truth and falsehood and gain a clearer understanding of God.

Notes

## Ministry Time Application

### Option 1:

What does “God is love” mean to us, and how are we to love as God does? During prayer time this evening, open up the scripture to 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 and read aloud. Read the passage aloud a second time, replacing the words “love” and “it” with God. Let this reality of how God loves sink in. Then, ask each group member to sit quietly and reread the passage to themselves, this time replacing “love” and “it” with their own name. Are these things true? As none of us are perfect, we can surely become better in at least one of these areas. Spend some time individually in prayer asking God to help us love others more like he does.

### Option 2:

At the beginning of today’s passage, John wrote about discerning between spirits and overcoming the spirit of the antichrists that are at work in today’s world. This concept of a world filled with good and bad spirits can be overwhelming, but should not worry us, because the Holy Spirit dwells in us and is greater than the spirits of the world. For prayer time tonight, break into pairs or groups of three and pray for a greater indwelling of the Holy Spirit, that you might better be able to test and know what spirits are from God.

## **Week 5**



# Ministry

John 15:9-17

Tip: You don't have to make sure every one of these gets answered. Your role is to be a discussion facilitator, not a professor; the idea isn't simply to give the group information, but to allow everyone to learn from the scripture and from each other. It's okay to spend more time on some questions than on others depending on how the group is responding.

## Background and Context:

The series we're currently walking through as a church is called "Spiritual But Not Religious." More and more people are trying to do the spiritual life on their own without support and without a guide for the journey. But is spirituality just between you and God? Or is it essential to be part of a community that challenges our self-centeredness and offers us a "we" and not just an "I"? In this series, we will talk about the relevance of the church as we pursue healthy spirituality. This week, we'll be looking at the words of Jesus in the book of John as he talks about the nature of love for one another.

9 "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. 10 If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love. 11 I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. 12 My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. 13 Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. 14 You are my friends if you do what I command. 15 I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. 16 You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. 17 This is my command: Love each other.

### Starter Questions:

What would you consider proof that someone loved you?

Does being loved change your attitude and behavior toward others?

What is the best way to demonstrate love for someone?

**Opening Prayer:** Thank God for the people in attendance and ask him to bless the teaching and your time together.

**Scripture:** Have two or three volunteers read through the Bible passage out loud. It may help to have it read twice!

### Discussion Questions:

- What does Jesus say about the nature of his love for his disciples?  
-Verse 9: As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you.
- What do you think it means to remain in Jesus's love?
- How does Jesus say we can remain in his love?

-Verse 10: If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love. pleading with the Hittites, the people of the region, to have mercy on him and to sell him some land.

- How do you think obeying Jesus's commands is related to remaining in his love?
  - It would be a mistake to think that not obeying his commands would mean that Jesus didn't love us anymore; in scripture, Jesus is constantly demonstrating his love for sinners. Rather, this could demonstrate how our behavior could make us more receptive to his love: if we obey his commands, we will be more aware of his love for us, and better able to love others.
- What command does Jesus give us in this passage?
  - Verse 12: My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Jesus repeats this in verse 17: This is my command: Love each other.
- Do you think it's possible to remain in Jesus's love without loving other people?
  - Again, we should never think Jesus doesn't love us, but a true understanding of his love for us should motivate us to keep his commands and love others.
- Jesus says he loves us as the Father loves him, and that we should love others as he loves us. What do you think that says about the way we are loved, and should love?
  - Think about the nature of God's love for Jesus, and the nature of Jesus's love for us.

- What example of love does Jesus give in this passage?

-Verse 13: Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.

- What do you think it means to lay down our lives for our friends?
- Do you think we're all called to lay down our lives for our friends?
- To Jesus, what's the difference between servants and friends?

-Verse 14: You are my friends if you do what I command. 15. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.

- What do you think it means to be a friend of Jesus?
- What does Jesus say he chose us to do?

-Verse 16: You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last.

- Given all that Jesus says about his love and commands in this passage, what do you think it means to go and bear fruit as a friend of his and a member of the church?
- How do you think you can best pass on the love that was given to you by Jesus, and to him by God?

### **Ministry Time Application**

Please thoughtfully choose one of the two options below based on what would be most effective and helpful for your group. The second option requires writing utensils and paper.

#### **Option 1:**

**Step 1:** Explain that we believe at the Vineyard that God speaks to us through the Holy Spirit, and that the group will be sitting in silence for three minutes to wait on the Lord. Have someone set a timer for three minutes, and start the timer after you open in brief prayer asking the Holy Spirit to come. Example: “Holy Spirit, come now and fill the hearts and minds of people in this room with the truth you want to speak to us.”

**Step 2:** Wait for three minutes. If you want, you can softly play worship music in the background.

**Step 3:** Ask if anyone feels they have a word or image from the Lord to share. Stress that this is a safe place to share, that sometimes we receive words or pictures that seem to mean nothing to us but are intended for others in the group. Have the group break up into groups of two or three, guys with guys and girls with girls, and have everyone pray about each other’s needs. If someone in the group feels that a word or image from someone else applies to them specifically, have those people pray together.

## Option 2:

Step 1: Pass out writing materials to the group. Explain that the group will sit in silence for three minutes, and you'd like everyone to write down four things: 1) A way in which they feel especially loved by God, 2) A way in which God's love has seemed distant, 3) A way in which they've loved others well, and 4) A way they could do a better job of loving others. Have someone set a timer for three minutes, and start the timer after you open in brief prayer asking the Holy Spirit to come.

Step 2: Wait for three minutes. If you want, you can softly play worship music in the background.

Step 3: Explain that the group will sit in silence for another three minutes, and this time you'd like everyone to pray to God and wait on his Spirit regarding the items written on the cards.

Step 4: Wait for three minutes. If you want, you can softly play worship music in the background.

Step 5: Ask if anyone would like to share what they've written on their cards, or what God has spoken to them during this ministry time. This is strictly voluntary, and an opportunity for the group to lift each other up both in weakness and blessing. Open this up for discussion only if you feel your group would be comfortable with it.

Step 6: Have the group break up into groups of two or three, guys with guys and girls with girls, and have everyone pray specifically about the items on each other's lists.

## **Week 6**



# Mission

Romans 12:9-21

Tip: These questions are meant to get the group thinking and spark discussion, so don't rush through them or attempt to get a solid answer for each one. Don't be afraid to wait for a while to see who speaks, and remember, there are no wrong opinions.

## Background and Context:

Paul's primary purpose in writing Romans was to teach the gospel of grace to believers who had not received apostolic instruction. The letter also introduced him to the Roman Church where he was personally unknown, but hoped to visit soon. The Roman Church was doctrinally sound, but, like many churches, it was in need of the doctrinal and practical instruction this letter provides.

The overarching theme of Romans is the righteousness that comes from God: that God justifies by grace alone through faith in Christ alone. Chapters 1–11 present the theological truths of that doctrine, while chaps. 12–16

9 Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. 10 Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. 11 Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. 12 Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. 13 Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. 15 Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. 16 Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.

17 Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. 18 If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. 19 Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. 20 On the contrary:

"If your enemy is hungry, feed him;

if he is thirsty, give him something to drink.

In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head."

21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

detail its practical outworking in the lives of individual believers and the life of the whole church.

In this study, verses 12:9-21, Paul appeals to the Romans to work out their Christian faith in practical ways, both in the church and in the world. We will take a closer look at the mission of believers to share the message of God's love by both word and deed.

### **Starter Questions:**

I am going to say a word, I want you to shout out the first word or words that come to you to you. (Love)  
Discuss what is love.

Listen to these lyrics from a 1978 song called the Greatest Love of All:

*"The greatest love of all  
Is easy to achieve  
Learning to love yourself  
It is the greatest love of all"*

What are your thoughts reactions?

### **Opening Prayer:**

Lord God I praise you for you love me, you have kept me as your own to do your work.

Lord I ask you to show me kindness when I have not loved as you shown me to love.

I place all that you have given me into your loving hands to serve your kingdom purposes. May the words of my

mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight Lord.

### **Scripture:**

Ask participants to close their eyes

Read the verses out loud

Have someone read the verses for the second reading

Have participants note what strikes them during the reading

### **Discussion Questions:**

This week we are going to talk about mission, specifically the Mission of God to transform the whole world. The grand nature of this mission often seems overwhelming to a normal person who lives day to day, week to week, in one community. We might even think, “If I am not traveling around the globe or have global influence, then I must focus on things other than God’s grand Mission to transform the planet.”

THIS IS NOT TRUE! The world changes when we consistently live the way Jesus commands.

Paul’s letter to the Romans clues us in on what mission-focused lives look like. It starts in a place you might not think. It starts with what is happening on the inside of us as individuals.

Could someone read again verse 9?

- What is insincere love?

-It is outward, formal, customary, but most of all it is hypocritical, and not love at all. If we love Christ, as we think we do, we will love his church and his

people, our love will be demonstrative  
recognizable.

God commands not only that we choose good but that we love it, and not only that we choose against evil, but that we hate and abhor it. In some ways, it is often easier for us to either abhor what is evil or to cling to what is good rather than doing both. The Spirit-filled person does both because she or he has opened up their desires to the transforming power of the Spirit. Hate is merely an outpouring of the sinful nature. When we have hate in our hearts, we run contrary to the Spirit's guiding. That which is born of the Spirit loves the things of the Spirit (John 3:3-7; Romans 8:7-8; 1Corinthians 2:14-16). If the pattern of our lives allows for hate, we will inevitably see our love twist and turn to be hypocritical.

- Read Matthew 6.1 and Matthew 15:7-9 Matthew 23:25, 27. What does Jesus say about hypocritical love?
  - Jesus knew that there were religious people who showed love to garner the love of men not God.
- In our contemporary world we are often asked to choose a side of an issue to either love it or hate it. For example: Discuss how the Value life Ministry at Vineyard Columbus demonstrates Godly love in both words and deeds. What evil are they hating and what good are they clinging to?
  - The Value Life Ministry supports women experiencing an unintended pregnancy.

Value Life advocates for women and their unborn child. Women are supported through a one-on-one mentoring ministry called MotherHeart Mentoring. MotherHeart mentors assist women in finding resources and providing them caring, spiritual and emotional support needed to carry their child full term. Value Life continues to provide material and spiritual support for mothers as their children grow. In this way, they are hating the evil of death and clinging to the good of life.

Could someone read again verse 10?

- What is world changing and transformative with a posture that honors others above yourself? What ways could this impact politics, medicine, and education?

- Allow people to answer.

As Christians we work hard at building unity & love in the body of Christ. Loving devotion to one another is ultimate unity. It is a part of the Mission of God for each and every one of us. Everyone who belongs to Jesus Christ belongs is our eternal brother or sister, and we encouraged to be devoted to each other in sincere sibling love.

Love does not dwell on the flaws of others. Love does not crave the praise of men. And love does not act religious to hide sin. Love looks to Christ and overflows

with joy in him to meet the needs of others. There is no room for jealousy or rivalry or an unforgiving spirit or pride or aggressiveness. These things destroy relationships, they do not build them up. When we start honoring others above ourselves, we become more mature in our relationships.

- Why would love and unity amongst the body of Christ be so essential as we live out the Mission of God to transform our world?
  - Allow people to answer. Suggest that love is universal as essential to human flourishing. Unity is universal as essential to human progress. If we cannot demonstrate this practice, how can we hope to promote it to others?
- Many of us have experienced a time when we felt others putting themselves above us in their deeds, speech or dismissiveness attitudes. How did it feel? How did it feel if you have also done this to another person? How is this directly counterproductive to the Mission of God?
  - Allow people to answer. Seeing all people as God's child made in his image, on their journey to the kingdom. Express mature Christian love for all people. The opposite of others is self. When we only consider ourselves, we will neglect their well being, their purpose, their dignity. These are all the things that God restored with the actions of Jesus on the cross and through his resurrection.

- Could anyone share a story of when they were truly in need and God provided through the actions of someone else? Perhaps you were the one who provided for someone else in need and could share that story. What emotions did you experience? What happened or formed in your character?
- Romans 12:11-13 says, “Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with the Lord’s people who are in need. Practice hospitality.” Do these match with what we’ve described?
- Think about the command to practice hospitality. Has this command translated to inviting people to your home for a meal in the last month? Has it inspired you to invite someone to a small group recently? Have you ever thought of a group as being the perfect place to live out this command? How could being hospitable have a global impact?
  - Allow people to answer. Explain the Fully Alive Campaign as an opportunity for people in the group to invite or even HOST a group for the six weeks of Fully Alive.

As disciples of Christ it is very important that we relate to those outside of the Christian family with the same sincere love as well. The surpassing greatness of the love of Jesus in us is shown in that it must be extended to our enemies. Paul echoes the teaching of Jesus, who said “Love your enemies,

do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you” (Luke 6:28; Matthew 5:44).

- Why are verses 14 - 18 behaviors that are key to the Mission to transform the world? How can we do this practically as a group? Maybe someone could read them aloud again.

- Allow people to answer. Perhaps have pen and paper to begin a list.

- Is it easier to rejoice or to mourn with another? Why?

The next set of verses is worth reading again out loud. As I read them, think about God’s mission to transform the entire planet. His mission starts with our own hearts and leads to these things that Paul writes. Ask yourself if you believe this method will work?

“Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: ‘It is mine to avenge; I will repay,’ says the Lord. On the contrary: ‘If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.’ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”  
Rom 12:17-21.

## Ministry Time Application

Please thoughtfully choose one of the two options below based on what would be most effective and helpful for your group.

### Option 1:

In addition to taking time to take prayer requests and waiting on the Lord to speak (see LT2 Naturally Supernatural on [vcsmallgroups.org](http://vcsmallgroups.org)).

Read over verses 12 - 17 again and list some ideas how your group could take action or how individuals could take action to live out the mission to transform the world. It could involve adopting an international refugee family that has just moved to Columbus (email [smallgroups@vineyardcolumbus.org](mailto:smallgroups@vineyardcolumbus.org) for more info) or could involve serving the neighbors near the host's home.

### Option 2:

Break up into smaller groups no more than three. Ask one another if while studying this passage you need to repent of words or deeds that worked against the mission of God. Hold one another accountable, too, as much wise restitution as may be made.



# Ministry Time

## Series: Spiritual But Not Religious?

Read through all of the Ministry Time ideas for each week before you begin teaching through the series. This will help you plan and pray for stronger impact! Blessings!

*Have writing utensils and note cards/paper available for your group.*

Based on the people and overall feel of your group, select which option you feel fits best.

### **Week 1:**

#### Option 1:

If possible, provide writing utensils for each member in your group. Ask them to take a moment (2-3 minutes total) to write down both why they are thankful for Christian community and why it's difficult for them. Then, depending on the size of your group, either share aloud as a whole or break into smaller groups to share and pray for one another regarding these things.

#### Option 2:

Spend time “waiting on God.” This is a practice that we share as believers, but especially as members of the Vineyard. Sit quietly and invite the Holy Spirit to calm your hearts and soul, and to speak personal words to each member in the

group. Since Jesus is alive and well, we believe his Spirit still moves in power today. He could speak in a sentence or phrase, or bring a memory to mind, or a random picture. No matter what the Spirit does or does not bring, slow down, rest, and be open to God. Take 2-3 minutes total, and at the end give the voluntary opportunity for everyone to share aloud his or her experience. As the leader, begin an open-forum style prayer for the group, allowing others to jump in and pray as well. Ask another leader or group member to close the prayer after a few minutes.

## **Week 2:**

### **Option 1:**

Have a time of confession—in pairs or groups of three (men with men/women with women), allow time for each person to confess a sin they are struggling with, maybe something that was stirred up during the discussion time. Pray for each person.

### **Option 2:**

Pray for your group's leadership/hosts. Gather around your leaders as a group and pray for them to be refreshed, or if they have specific requests, pray for those.

### **Week 3:**

#### **Option 1:**

Invite the Holy Spirit to speak to your group about places in their lives where God would have them grow in maturity. If they are prone to jealousy, ask for contentment and comfort in knowing that they are a beloved child of God. If they are quarrelsome, invite the Spirit to soften their hearts and increase their patience and tame their tongue.

#### **Option 2:**

One aspect of spiritual maturity that Paul exemplifies in this text is that when we believe in God's power, we can rely on His help to do His work. Invite the Holy Spirit to work through the lives of your small group. That the group would not entirely depend on the eloquence of their words, or the skill of their craft, but rather that they would submit themselves to be used by God, however He sees fit. Invite the Holy Spirit to reveal any places where there is pride, or where we may be reluctant to go where God is calling, and help us to rely more on God's power.

## **Week 4:**

### **Option 1:**

What does “God is love” mean to us, and how are we to love as God does? During prayer time this evening, open up the scripture to 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 and read aloud. Read the passage aloud a second time, replacing the words “love” and “it” with God. Let this reality of how God loves sink in. Then, ask each group member to sit quietly and reread the passage to themselves, this time replacing “love” and “it” with their own name. Are these things true? As none of us are perfect, we can surely become better in at least one of these areas. Spend some time individually in prayer asking God to help us love others more like he does.

### **Option 2:**

At the beginning of today’s passage, John wrote about discerning between spirits and overcoming the spirit of the antichrists that are at work in today’s world. This concept of a world filled with good and bad spirits can be overwhelming, but should not worry us, because the Holy Spirit dwells in us and is greater than the spirits of the world. For prayer time tonight, break into pairs or groups of three and pray for a greater indwelling of the Holy Spirit, that you might better be able to test and know what spirits are from God.

## **Week 5:**

### **Option 1:**

Step 1: Explain that we believe at the Vineyard that God speaks to us through the Holy Spirit, and that the group will be sitting in silence for three minutes to wait on the Lord. Have someone set a timer for three minutes, and start the timer after you open in brief prayer asking the Holy Spirit to come. Example: “Holy Spirit, come now and fill the hearts and minds of people in this room with the truth you want to speak to us.”

Step 2: Wait for three minutes. If you want, you can softly play worship music in the background.

Step 3: Ask if anyone feels they have a word or image from the Lord to share. Stress that this is a safe place to share, that sometimes we receive words or pictures that seem to mean nothing to us but are intended for others in the group. Have the group break up into groups of two or three, guys with guys and girls with girls, and have everyone pray about each other's needs. If someone in the group feels that a word or image from someone else applies to them specifically, have those people pray together.

### **Option 2:**

Step 1: Pass out writing materials to the group. Explain that the group will sit in silence for three minutes, and you'd like everyone to write down four things: 1) A way in which they feel especially loved by God, 2) A way in which God's love has seemed distant, 3) A way in which they've loved others well, and 4) A way they could do a better job of loving others. Have someone set a timer

for three minutes, and start the timer after you open in brief prayer asking the Holy Spirit to come.

Step 2: Wait for three minutes. If you want, you can softly play worship music in the background.

Step 3: Explain that the group will sit in silence for another three minutes, and this time you'd like everyone to pray to God and wait on his Spirit regarding the items written on the cards.

Step 4: Wait for three minutes. If you want, you can softly play worship music in the background.

Step 5: Ask if anyone would like to share what they've written on their cards, or what God has spoken to them during this ministry time. This is strictly voluntary, and an opportunity for the group to lift each other up both in weakness and blessing. Open this up for discussion only if you feel your group would be comfortable with it.

Step 6: Have the group break up into groups of two or three, guys with guys and girls with girls, and have everyone pray specifically about the items on each other's lists.

## **Week 6:**

### **Option 1:**

In addition to taking time to take prayer requests and waiting on the Lord to speak (see LT2 Naturally Supernatural on [vcsmallgroups.org](http://vcsmallgroups.org)).

Read over verses 12 - 17 again and list some ideas how your group could take action or how individuals could take action to live out the mission to transform the world. It could involve adopting an international refugee family that has just moved to Columbus (email [smallgroups@vineyardcolumbus.org](mailto:smallgroups@vineyardcolumbus.org) for more info) or could involve serving the neighbors near the host's home.

### **Option 2:**

Break up into smaller groups no more than three. Ask one another if while studying this passage you need to repent of words or deeds that worked against the mission of God. Hold one another accountable, too, as much wise restitution as may be made.