



Leader's note: Make sure everyone has a printout of this session.

WEEK 1: THE STORY OF GOD

The goal for today's group is for us to know the overarching story of God so we can share more effectively about who He is.

ICEBREAKER QUESTION

You can use one of the icebreaker questions from The Gospel Life website or ask:

- * What was your favorite story growing up and why?

THE STORY OF GOD

There are many ways to talk about the story of God, but all of them contain four basic parts:

- **Creation** - Where did everything come from?
- **Fall** - What went wrong?
- **Redemption** - Where do we find hope?
- **Restoration** - Where is history going?

While there is no perfect summary, below is a good example of the story of God that we'll use to illustrate the four parts:

(**HINT:** Have each member read a paragraph if they are comfortable with reading.)

GENESIS TO REVELATION: THE SHORT VERSION

In the beginning, it was all about goodness. God made the heavens and the earth, and they were good. In fact, God made all things to reflect

THE GOSPEL LIFE | WEEK 1: THE STORY OF GOD

His goodness. But sin twisted the goodness of creation—all that we can see and all that we can't. Every aspect of creation was affected. Our first parents, Adam and Eve, were deceived and believed a lie about God's heart. This is how sin entered the world. As a result, they discovered what it was like to be separated from God's good heart. Down through history, every child of Adam and Eve has experienced this brokenness firsthand. The situation, apart from God, is hopeless, for nothing broken can fix itself. But thankfully, our Maker did not want us to live apart from Him—even in the midst of their sin, God declared that He would make things right one day.

Starting with one man and his wife, Abram and Sarai, God created a nation to be a light to the world. Israel was to walk in God's ways and invite her neighbors to do the same. But Israel blew it. Over and over again, the people disobeyed God, and instead of inviting others to know the true God, they chased after the false gods of their neighbors. It would seem that God's plan had failed. But God's plan never depended on the faithfulness of His people. God is the faithful One.

At just the right moment in history, God himself put on flesh and came to earth to be born of a virgin in Bethlehem. Jesus did what Israel never could: obey perfectly. Jesus did what the sacrifices of animals never could: pay for sin. And Jesus did what broken people never could: make a way back to the Father by dying on the cross and being resurrected by the power of God.

After Jesus' ascension, the Holy Spirit came to form the Church. Now in the Church Age, God indwells believers and is revealed on earth by their actions and witness.

Someday, God will bring heaven down to the earth, and God's presence will be everywhere in the new heaven and new earth. God will finally dwell among His people on earth again. He will put an end to every evil thing and restore the unbroken goodness of God to all creation.¹

Let's take a closer look at the four parts of the Gospel story (Head and Heart questions):

¹ <https://ourdailybread.org/article/the-gospel-a-summary-of-gods-big-story/>

THE GOSPEL LIFE | WEEK 1: THE STORY OF GOD

CREATION

1. In the story above, where do you see the theme of “creation” displayed?
2. Is there anything that you’ve created that you’re proud of or feel like it was well done?
3. What can we learn about God from this part of the story?

FALL

1. In the story above, where do you see the theme of the “Fall” displayed?
2. What can we learn about people from this part of the story?

REDEMPTION

1. In the story above, where do you see the theme of “redemption” displayed?
2. What can we learn about God from this part of the story?
3. What can we learn about people from this part of story?

RESTORATION

1. In the story above, where do you see the theme of “restoration” displayed?
2. What can we learn about God from this part of the story?

PRACTICE

(Leader’s Note: Help direct this section.)

Now that we’ve taken some time to talk about the four parts of the story, let’s practice telling them!

TAKE 10-15 MINUTES AND DO THE FOLLOWING:

Break into groups of four. Each person takes a part, tells that part from the story, and shares that part in plain language using the associated questions below as a prompt. This isn’t a quiz, so help each other out when you get stuck. If you have only three people in the group, allow everyone to be a part of answering the “restoration” part.

THE GOSPEL LIFE | WEEK 1: THE STORY OF GOD

- **Creation** - Where did everything come from?
- **Fall** - What went wrong?
- **Redemption** - Where do we find hope?
- **Restoration** - Where is history going?

If there is more time, rotate so that different members get a chance to try telling different parts of the story.

Come back together and ask: How was the practice time? Did it help you? If so, how?

HANDS AND PRAYER

- * Do you have a specific prayer request or prayer need that we can pray for as a group?
- * Do you have someone(s) in your life that God would want you to share His story with? If so, let's pray for opportunities to share. If not, let's pray that God would start to bring people to your mind and heart as we walk through this series together.

THE GOSPEL LIFE | WEEK 2: WELCOMING

Leader's Note: Have some paper and pens ready for the practice portion. (It could be a printout of this or just some 1/2 sheets of paper)

WEEK 2: WELCOMING

The goal for today's group is for us to increase our ability to offer hospitality

ICEBREAKER QUESTIONS

You can use one of the icebreaker questions from The Gospel Life website or ask:

- * Whose house did you like hanging out at when you were young? Why?
- * Did you share the story of the God with anyone? If so, how did it go?

SCRIPTURE

Luke 15: 1-2, 11-32

HEAD

1. What did the Pharisees accuse Jesus of?
2. What was the father's response when the son came home?

HEART

1. What does this story reveal about God?
2. What was Jesus teaching them in this story?
3. How has God extended his welcome in tangible ways to you? What impact has it had on your life?

HANDS

1. What are you willing to change to make people feel more welcome in your "places" and "spaces"?

PRACTICE

There are three ways that we can be more intentional about increasing our ability to be welcoming. To keep it simple and memorable, here are three aspects to focus on—your **face**, your **space**, and your **place**. Let's

THE GOSPEL LIFE | WEEK 2: WELCOMING

briefly unpack each one:

1. YOUR FACE

Welcoming starts with your facial expression. Have you ever heard the sarcastic comment: “If you are so happy to see me, why haven’t you told your face?” Our attitude and disposition of having a welcoming spirit should be reflected on our face. A smile and warm look directly in someone’s eyes goes a long way toward helping someone feel welcomed by you. When you frequently encounter people and greet them in this way, they will begin to remember your face; you have begun to lay the groundwork for the connection to deepen.

2. YOUR SPACE

This is the nonphysical environment around you that includes the impression of openness you express nonverbally to others. You can offer people a safe and caring presence, free of judgment. Do you present yourself in a way that invites people to know you or be known by you?

3. YOUR PLACE

This is the physical environment—your home, office, or car. When you have a comfortable place for people to meet in, it makes people more relaxed and accepted. Do the physical spaces that you control provide a way for people to feel instantly comfortable and welcomed?²

PAIR UP WITH SOMEONE AND DO THE FOLLOWING

Describe and write down some simple, doable “welcoming practices” that fit your personality in each of these three categories:

- your everyday life
- your work
- your neighborhood

Plan to give an update on how it went when you tried it.

HANDS:

1. What are you willing to change to make people feel more

2 Q Place Arts of Spiritual Conversations, “Welcoming”

THE GOSPEL LIFE | WEEK 2: WELCOMING

- welcomed in your and/or into your life?
2. Pray and ask God for opportunities for us to practice hospitality in our homes and in our everyday lives this week.

Leader's Note: Next week's story is John chapter 9. If the chapter seems like it's too much for one person to remember, invite people to team up and share telling the story.

THE GOSPEL LIFE | WEEK 3: TELLING YOUR GOSPEL STORY

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The goal for this week is for people to know how their story intersects with God's story and how to tell their story in light of that.

ICEBREAKER QUESTIONS

You can use one of the icebreaker questions from The Gospel Life website or ask:

- * Do you recall a story that your parents told you about their growing-up years? If so, what was one of them?
- * How did your attempts to be more welcoming go?

“Stories tend to follow a common structure that takes us on a journey. If we pay attention to how the author builds the structure, we will get a sense of the kind of story being told and the meaning that we are to encounter. Just as the Bible moves from **Creation** to the **Fall** through millenniums of **redemption** to an ending [**Restoration**], so all stories move from ‘shalom’ [peace] to a shattering and then to a search that comes to a temporary, but satisfying ending.”³

SCRIPTURE

John 9:1-34

HEAD

1. What did the blind man tell the Pharisees the first time they asked him what happened? (verse 11)
2. What did it cost the blind man to share his story?

HEART

1. What is something new that you learned or have not seen in this story before?
2. Why do you think it's powerful when someone shares their story?
3. Notice that the blind man didn't get into a theological debate

³ Dan Allender: To Be Told Pg 41. Editor's Note: While we endorse the contents of this book, we, as a church, do not endorse all of Dan Allender's teachings/writings.

THE GOSPEL LIFE | WEEK 3: TELLING YOUR GOSPEL STORY

- about Jesus but just told his story. How do you think this could be informative in the way we live? Does this mean that we shouldn't have theological conversations? Why did you answer the way that you did?
4. When in your life have you noticed how God's story can be seen in your story?

PRACTICE⁴

Pair up and take 10 minutes to answer the following questions with one another:

- * What were the things you focused on before you became a Christian? **(Creation)**
- * At what point did you realize that the things you focused on were not providing what your soul truly needed? **(Fall)**
- * When did you decide to start following Jesus? What happened that led up to this decision? Describe how you made the decision **(Redemption)**
- * How has your life changed since you decided to follow Jesus? How have you become more like Jesus since you became a Christian? **(Restoration)**

Even as Christians, we're still a work in progress. We always have room to grow and become better reflections of Christ. Don't leave that out of your testimony! Admitting that you still struggle with certain things can highlight the fact that it's only through God's power that we can obey him.

SOME CLOSING THOUGHTS BEFORE PRAYING

- * Next week's message will be an Easter message. Our group time will be spent on sharing our testimonies.
- * Take time this week to answer the questions on the handout in more depth and write out your story.

⁴ <https://www.focusonthefamily.com/bring-your-bible/share-your-faith-story-tips-for-creating-your-testimony>

THE GOSPEL LIFE | WEEK 3: TELLING YOUR GOSPEL STORY

- * Next week, we will share our stories with one another. If we don't finish them all next week, we'll take time in the following weeks to hear one or two until everyone gets to share.

COME BACK TOGETHER TO CLOSE IN PRAYER

- * Do you have a specific prayer request or prayer need that we can pray for as a group?
- * As we pray, let's pray that the Good News that is shared during Easter will lead to salvation for many. Also pray for opportunities to share your story with others.

THE GOSPEL LIFE | WEEK 3: WRITING YOUR GOSPEL STORY

HANDOUT FOR HOME

HELPFUL HINTS FOR WRITING YOUR STORY

- Pray before you write out and share your story.
- Write the way you speak.
- Don't be overly negative or positive. Be honest.
- Don't criticize or name any church, denomination, organization, etc.
- Think about your listeners. Avoid overly religious terms.
- Keep it short. Aim to tell your story in three to five minutes.
- Practice telling your story until it becomes natural.

When we commit our lives to Christ, change is sure to follow. Look at what your life was like before and after you decided to follow Jesus.

WRITING PROMPTS:

- * What were the things you focused on before you became a Christian?
(Creation)
- * At what point did you realize that the things you focused on were not providing what your soul truly needed? **(Fall)**
- * When did you decide to start following Jesus? What happened that led up to this decision? Describe how you made the decision
(Redemption)
- * How has your life changed since you decided to follow Jesus? How have you become more like Jesus since you became a Christian?
(Restoration)

Even as Christians, we're still a work in progress. We always have room to grow and become better reflections of Christ. Don't leave that out of your testimony! Admitting that you still struggle with certain things can highlight the fact that it's only through God's power that we can obey Him.

THE GOSPEL LIFE | WEEK 4: YOU HAVE A STORY TO TELL

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SHARING YOUR GOSPEL STORY

Make sure you have enough time today to give each person in your group 3-5 minutes to tell their story and a little time to answer questions.

Today, take time to practice telling your gospel stories to each other. Sit in a circle, not at a table, but in a living room or comfortable setting if possible.

Listen carefully and be prepared to ask questions any clarifying questions that you find yourself being curious about. Pray prayers of thanksgiving for each person after they have finished reading (or telling) their story.

PRAYER:

- * Do you have a specific prayer request or prayer needs that we can pray for as a group?
- * As we pray, let's give thanks for the stories we heard and pray that God would use our stories to point people to Him this week.

If your group will not be meeting this week due to Easter, consider replacing the icebreaker question in the following weeks with group members telling their testimony.

THE GOSPEL LIFE | WEEK 5: INTENTIONAL LISTENING

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The goal for today's group is for all of us to be able to increase our ability to listen to people's stories so we can eventually connect them to God's story.

ICEBREAKER QUESTIONS

(You can use one of the icebreaker questions from The Gospel Life website page or use one of these.)

- * What was one of the best things that happened to you this week?
- * Did anyone take the time to share your story with someone during this past week?

SCRIPTURE CONNECTION

GOD, THE GREAT LISTENER

If we look over the story of God in the Bible, we'll notice that God asks people questions quite frequently.

- Where are you? (Genesis 3)
- Who has made man's mouth? (Exodus 4)
- Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation? (Job 38)
- Who is like Me? (Isaiah 44)
- Who do you say I am? (Matthew 12)
- Whose image is this? (Mark 12)

Why do you think that God would ask these questions if He already knows the answers?

LEARN TO LISTEN FIRST

When we approach people with the intent to tell them what we know but don't really try to understand where they're coming from, they will put up defenses. A better approach is to remember the counsel of James:

JAMES 1:19-20

My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be

THE GOSPEL LIFE | WEEK 5: INTENTIONAL LISTENING

quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry, because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires.

QUESTIONS

1. Is it generally easy for you to live out James' directive? If so, why? If not, why not?
2. Who in your life has modeled good listening skills? Why would you say that about them?
3. What does it communicate to others when we take the time to focus in, ask good questions and truly listen to them?
4. Share of a time where you were glad that you listened first, or share of a time where you wish you would have listened first.

PROVERBS 1:5

Let the wise listen to these proverbs and become even wiser. Let those with understanding receive guidance.

QUESTIONS

1. According to this passage, how do the wise become wiser? Why is listening a required action of the wise?

PRACTICE: REFLECTIVE LISTENING

If you want to increase the quality and the quantity of your gospel conversations, challenge yourself to put the spotlight on the other person. You become the listener and the learner. The quality of your listening skills powerfully affects your potential to build trust, engage conversationally, and establish relational credibility.

In every conversation, you have the opportunity to demonstrate that you've been listening well. If you don't take that opportunity, the conversation is likely to die out. A clear way to assure someone that you have heard them is to reflect back what you thought you heard them say. As you seek to understand people better through your listening, it is wise to begin with a humble, tentative opening followed by a brief paraphrase of the feelings and ideas you thought you heard.

Here are some example phrases to help you demonstrate that you have heard and are seeking to understand.

THE GOSPEL LIFE | WEEK 5: INTENTIONAL LISTENING

- * So, if I'm hearing you right...
- * Let me make sure I'm tracking with you. You're...
- * You're saying you feel... Is that right?
- * Wow! You're really...
- * What you really want me to grasp is that...
- * It's like... Does that capture it?
- * So what ticks you off the most is...
- * So what excites you most is...
- * So the really big thing for you is...
- * Do you mind if we take a quick time out so that I can replay what I thought I heard you say?
- * You seem to be saying...
- * I think I hear you saying...
- * It sounds like...

(Hand this back to the facilitator to give instructions.)

Pair up with a partner. Designate who will share (S) first and who will listen (L) first.

- * **S:** Take 2 minutes and share a challenge you're facing right now in your life's journey.
- * **L:** Reflect back what you heard using one of the reflective listening phrases provided or one that you come up with.
- * **S:** Affirm your partner when he or she connects with what you are saying. Graciously let (L) know if he or she is missing the essence of what you are trying to say and give him or her another chance.
- * **L:** Keep working at it until (S) feels heard.

Switch roles.

THE GOSPEL LIFE | WEEK 5: INTENTIONAL LISTENING

After you have finished the exercise, gather back together in your group. Share what it felt like to be listened to.

QUESTIONS

1. What were some of the challenges you faced in your attempts to listen to each other?
2. Was there anything that surprised you as you practiced reflective listening?

PRAYER

- * Are there people who God has already put in your path this week to listen to? If so, how can we pray for them? If not, let's pray for opportunities. Consider as we pray: who are some people that God might be wanting you to listen to/for?
- * Do you have a specific prayer request or prayer need that we can pray for as a group?
- * As we pray, let's pray that our group could be intentional about listening to others and that every believer would be intentional listening in a way that allows us to show and share God's story.

BONUS

As you listen, listen for themes that you have in common (often called bridges). These could be things like:

- * Common hobbies
- * Interests
- * Background
- * Experiences

Building these "relational bridges" can lead to open doors to share the gospel over the course of time.

THE GOSPEL LIFE | WEEK 6: SERVING

WEEK 6: SERVING

Leader's note: Today will have more discussion questions because there is no practice section due to serving on Saturday, May 6th.

The goals for this session are for us to recognize our part in serving as well as recognizing the difference that serving others makes.

ICEBREAKER QUESTIONS:

You can use one of the icebreaker questions from The Gospel Life website or ask:

- * Has someone ever done something unexpectedly for you? If so, what?
- * Did anyone take the time to intentionally listen to someone's story this past week? Did you reflect back to them what you were hearing? If so, how did it go?

SCRIPTURE

John 6:1-13

QUESTIONS

HEAD

1. Who were the characters in this story?
2. What did you notice in the story for the first time or what jumps out to you as new/different?

HEART

1. Why do you think that Jesus wanted to feed the people?
2. What role did the disciples play in this story? What are some probable reasons Jesus gave them a role at all?
3. Have you ever served someone because you were directed by Jesus to do so? If so, what happened? How did it go?
4. What do you think God is showing us through this story?

THE GOSPEL LIFE | WEEK 6: SERVING

HANDS

1. We will be serving together this Saturday, May 6th. Is there anyone else that we might be able to serve as a group?
2. After hearing this story, how will you live differently?
3. Do you have a specific prayer request or prayer need that we can pray for as a group?

PRAYER

As we pray, let's remember to pray for the upcoming weekend of serving.

THE GOSPEL LIFE | WEEK 7: WHY IS IT GOOD NEWS?

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The goal of this session is to deepen our understanding and gratitude of what God has done for us

ICEBREAKER QUESTIONS

- * What kind of consequences did your parents give when you were “in trouble”?
- * Did you have a chance to have any spiritual or gospel conversations this week?

GOSPEL DEPTH

The message of the gospel is so special in that it is simple enough to easily convey to a child while also being supremely rich in its depth of meaning. Yes, it is true that “Jesus Christ died to save the lost,” but that simple statement has layers to it that, when understood, deepens our gratitude and grants us confidence in difficult times. Let’s explore just a few of these aspects of God’s salvation and let our hearts be moved towards deeper gratitude...

EXPIATION

The prefix “ex” means “out of” or “from,” so expiation has to do with removing something or taking something away. In biblical terms, it is the removal of the guilt of sin in God’s sight. This happens by the offering of a sacrifice which, in its death, bears the sin of the individual or nation concerned. Expiation reflects the idea that the negative and degrading effects of our sin are removed through the grace of God.

1 JOHN 4:10

This is real love—not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins.

1. Who is the initiator of love in this scripture passage?
2. How would you respond to life’s challenges if you kept the gospel aspect of “expiation” in mind?

THE GOSPEL LIFE | WEEK 7: WHY IS IT GOOD NEWS?

JUSTIFICATION

Simply put, to justify is to “declare righteous.” It is an act of God in which He pronounces a sinner to be righteous because of that sinner’s faith in Christ. It is not that a redeemed person is righteous by their own merit but rather that he/she is declared righteous based on Christ’s perfect sacrifice for us. At our conversion, Christ removes the guilt and penalty of our sin while simultaneously declaring a repentant sinner righteous, which allows us to have our broken relationship with God restored.

ROMANS 5:1

Therefore, since we have been made right in God’s sight by faith, we have peace with God because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us.

1. What difference does it make that we have been “made right” in God’s sight?
2. What is an area where that might apply to you today?

RECONCILIATION

Reconciliation refers to the restoration of friendly relationships and peace in relationships where there had been hostility and alienation. Ordinarily, it also includes the removal of the offense which caused the disruption of peace and harmony. Jesus Christ is the One who restores the relationship between God and man, with salvation as the result of the union.

2 CORINTHIANS 5:18-20

All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

ACCORDING TO THIS PASSAGE

1. Who does it say that Christ has reconciled?

THE GOSPEL LIFE | WEEK 7: WHY IS IT GOOD NEWS?

2. What difference does Christ's reconciliation make?

ADOPTION

Simply stated, adoption is God saying that we become part of His family once we give our hearts to Christ and trusting in Him alone for salvation—not through the natural process of human conception, but through adoption.

GALATIANS 4:5

God sent him [Jesus] to buy freedom for us who were slaves to the law, so that he could adopt us as his very own children.

1. What actions do we see God taking in this passage?
2. Why did God buy freedom for us that were slaves?
3. As you reflect the answers to the above questions, what are the implications for you?

AS YOU REFLECT ON THESE 4 ASPECTS OF SALVATION...

- Which of the 4 aspects of the salvation is most meaningful to you? Why did you choose that one?
- Which one of the 4 aspects is the hardest for you to believe personally?
- What can you do to remind yourself of these aspects this week?

PRAYER

- Do you have a specific prayer request or prayer need that we can pray for as a group?
- As we pray, let's also pray that each of us would be intentional to listen for opportunities to share these gospel truths - to our own souls and with others as well.

CHALLENGE FOR THE WEEK:

Take a walk somewhere quiet where you can think and listen to God speak. Pick at least two of these gospel truths and apply them to your life, past and present. Which of these gives you the most peace?

THE GOSPEL LIFE | WEEK 8: COMMUNITY ON MISSION

WEEK 8: COMMUNITY ON MISSION

Leader's Note: Make sure the people in your group have something to write with. You will also need some sort of food and drink (grape juice and crackers are common items but truthfully, anything will suffice).

The goal of this session is to put communal practices in place to help us live out the gospel life every day.

ICEBREAKER QUESTIONS

You can use one of the icebreaker questions from The Gospel Life website or ask:

- * Is there a routine or a thing you do that “just makes the day or week better”?
- * Did anyone take the time to intentionally remind yourself or others of an aspect of the gospel? If so, how did it go?

SET THE SCENE

The disciples had just been witnesses to the death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus. They received the promised Holy Spirit and spoke powerfully to the people gathered about what they had witnessed. As a result, about 3,000 people started following Jesus. The following passage will take us into what life was like for those 3,000 people...

SCRIPTURE

Acts 2:42-47

Let's open our bibles and look at this passage together.

HEAD

- What actions took place in this passage? (**Hint:** Look for each verb.) Write these down for future reference.
- What did you notice in the story for the first time or what jumps out to you as new/different?

HEART

- Why do you think Luke included this account?

THE GOSPEL LIFE | WEEK 8: COMMUNITY ON MISSION

- What word(s) are repeated in this passage? Are there any potential reasons why they are there?
- While Luke is offering a description of what took place, what principles do you think are relevant for us today?
- What do you think God is showing us through this story?

PRACTICE: COMMUNION

Communion is a time for reflection, not only on an individual's sin and need of forgiveness, but on the grace and love that Christ displayed on the cross. As Christians take communion together, they demonstrate their union with each other and with Christ. Christians are reminded of Christ's sacrifice and remind each other that He is coming again as they partake of communion together.

Leader: Pass out the communion elements and then have someone read 1 Corinthians 11:23-26.

- * Let a minute or two pass by for reflection.
- * Have someone offer a prayer of thanks for Jesus dying on the cross for our sins.
- * After prayer, invite everyone to eat the bread (food) that represents Jesus' broken body, and then drink the drink that represents Jesus' shed blood.

HANDS

- As you consider some of the principles mentioned today in our group time, what challenged you the most?
- After hearing this story, how will you live differently?
- How can we, as a group, continue to encourage each other?
- Do you have a specific prayer request or prayer need that we can pray for as a group?

As we pray, let's remember to pray for each other's devotion to deepening relationship with Jesus.