When God Builds His Church
PREPARATION

**STUDY**

Spend the week studying Ephesians 1:3–2:10. Consult the commentary provided and any additional study tools to enhance your preparation.

**DETERMINE**

Which discussion points and study questions will work best for your group.

**PRAY**

Pray for our pastors and this week’s message, the upcoming group time, your group members, and their openness to God’s Word.

**LANDING POINT**

When Jesus is at the center of my life, He shapes me into the person I was created to be.

GROUP DISCUSSION

**CONFIDENTIALITY** | What’s said in the group stays in the group.

**NO CROSS-TALK** | Be considerate of others as they share. Refrain from side conversations and texting during group time.

**NO FIXING** | We are not in the group to fix each other. Jesus does that part.

**SHARING** | Be sensitive to the amount of time you share. Don’t talk too much or too little. Every person brings something valuable to the group.
As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

A MOVEMENT OF CHANGE

Jesus chose twelve men to be His disciples. For three-and-a-half years they followed Him, observing Him and learning what it meant to live their lives with Jesus at the center. God used these men and other followers of Jesus to lead a movement that forever changed the world. That movement continues today.

The Jesus-Centered Life is God’s way of showing others what it looks like to live the life we were always meant to live, a life in relationship with God. The Jesus-Centered Life is both a joy and a challenge. It gives us ultimate identity and purpose, but it is also a struggle. Living life with Jesus at the center runs counter to the way the world works and what the sinful side of ourselves (our flesh) wants.

This week your group will explore what it means to live the Jesus-Centered Life and how you can lead others to experience that kind of life.

Q: Why did Jesus choose these twelve men? Why does God choose unlikely people to fulfill His purposes?

Q: How is the Jesus-Centered Life a struggle for you personally?

Select 2-3 questions from this section to answer.

THE JESUS-CENTERED LIFE

What does it mean to live your life in a Jesus-Centered way? What does it mean to live your life in light of the salvation, identity, life, and authority you have in Christ? The good news is you don’t have to find these answers on your own. God has given you Himself, His Word, and His people to help you understand what it means to live the Jesus-Centered Life.
The New Testament reveals four basic principles of the Jesus-Centered Life, which act as our compass. They point us to our true North, Jesus Christ. When we live the Jesus-Centered Life, we see our:

**SAVATION IN JESUS**

Salvation only comes through Jesus. Jesus is the Son of God who became a man, lived a sinless life, and died willingly as part of God’s plan to pay the penalty for sin and bring you back into relationship with God. Jesus redeemed you out of sin and into new life. Through Him, you stand “in the right” (or righteous) before God. Now the Holy Spirit dwells in you as proof of your salvation and belonging to God.

**IDENTITY IN JESUS**

Salvation doesn’t just get you into heaven. It gives you new identity. Now, you are who Jesus says you are. You are chosen, holy, loved, righteous, perfect, and a child of God forever. No longer are you defined by your past, your sin, and your struggles. You are defined by the perfect obedience of Jesus. The Bible declares you are royalty, a child of the King, chosen to belong to God.

**LIFE IN JESUS**

Living the Jesus-Centered Life means you no longer live for yourself and by yourself. Jesus now lives in you, and you live your life by faith in Him. The old you (i.e., your old way of living) has died and God has made you a new creation in Jesus. You have a new heart that beats for God. No longer do you live by the flesh (or your old way of life). Now you live by God’s Spirit and His direction.

**READ:** Read Ephesians 1:3–2:10. In what ways does this passage reflect the Jesus-Centered Life?

**Q:** What causes you to doubt your new identity in Christ?
**Q:** What does it mean to live by faith in Jesus? How is that different from living by faith in yourself?

**AUTHORITY IN JESUS**

With God’s Spirit living in you, you now have direct access to the Father and live in a different reality, the reality of God’s kingdom. You are no longer powerless to overcome sin or defeat your enemies. God’s power lives in you and, as God’s child, you are called to exercise that power. You have authority to make disciples, heal, and fight spiritual battles against your enemies.

**Q:** In what areas of your life do you feel powerless to overcome sin? How does the gospel encourage you with hope that victory over sin is possible?

---

**JESUS-CENTERED LIFE DRAWING**
Select 2-3 questions from this section to answer.

How can you live out these four principles? Let’s look at four practical ways.

**GRACE PLUS NOTHING**

To be Jesus-Centered means to always be aware of your need for God. There is nothing you can do to earn your way into God’s kingdom. You can’t be good enough or do enough good things. Jesus saved you by grace alone and, daily, you’re in need of His grace and guidance. Without Him, you’d be lost and hopeless. With Him, you have every reason to be joyful and thankful for all you have in Christ.

Q: In what ways does God’s grace make you joyful and thankful?

**IDENTITY CHECK**

It’s very hard for the enemy to fight against someone who has embraced their identity in Christ. When the enemy tries to get you to doubt who you are in Christ, it’s time for an identity check. Declare to your enemy, “Because of Jesus I’m a child of God, I’m a new creation and I have a new heart. I don’t have to sin. I will find my joy in God, not sin.”

Q: What’s one thing you can do this week to remember your identity in Christ?

**ONE KING, ONE KINGDOM**

As King, God calls you to submit yourself *totally* to Him and His authority. When Jesus is King in your heart, it means you give Him free reign to speak into every area of your life. Nothing is off limits and anything less than complete obedience to Him is unacceptable.
**Position and Power**

You are a child of the Father. As a son or daughter, you can come to the Father with all your needs, big and small. God also gives you authority to do things that were once impossible without Jesus in your life. God wants to use you to advance His kingdom and spread a joy for His name to others.

**Never Settle for Less**

Our desires drive us. We live by them. That which we desire most is what we spend our time on, invest our money in, and set our hearts and hopes on. Jesus came to show us that there is something worth desiring above all other things—Him. Jesus is the answer to every desire that’s ever entered our heart.

Never settle for less than that for which you were created. Choose the Jesus-Centered Life and find the ultimate joy and satisfaction your heart truly desires. God has made you for Himself, and your heart is restless until it finds rest with Jesus at the center.

- **Q:** What areas in your heart are “off limits” to God? Why don’t you allow Him into those areas?
- **Q:** Where do you see God working now in your life to advance His kingdom? How can you join Him in His work?
- **Q:** What does your life reveal about your desires (i.e., how you use your time, talent, and treasure)?
- **Q:** In what ways can you encourage others not to settle for less in this life?
Spend time thanking God for all you have in Jesus. Thank Him for the salvation, identity, life, and authority you have in Jesus. Ask Him how you can live your life in a more Jesus-centered way and model a Jesus-Centered Life before others.

Midway through this week, send a follow-up email to your group with some or all of the following:

- Read Luke 9:23 and reflect on how Jesus’s words call you to make Him the center of your life.
- Ask the group to share any stories or lessons learned where they see God at work in their lives.

When God Interrupts Your Life

Jesus invades your life with a call to make Him the center of your life. If you want to change, you must be willing to let Jesus interrupt your life and change you from the inside out, even if it disturbs your norm.

Be willing to have the steadiness in your life disrupted if knowing God better requires it. The good fight is fought with a sweaty passion that develops only when the evenness of our soul is upset. God wants to change good disciples into powerfully loving servants who leave an indelible mark on people they touch. But His method of changing us, from the inside out, can be disturbing. Be open to new levels of struggle.1

The Gospel in a Nutshell

“Paul praises God for his spiritual blessings in Christ (1:3). These blessings are based on the work of the triune God: election and adoption by the Father (vv. 4–6), redemption in Christ (vv. 7–12), and sealing in the Spirit (vv. 13–14). Each of these three subsections concludes with a similar refrain that praises God’s glory (v. 6, 12, 14). This entire section presents a grand sweep of God’s saving purposes. It begins with our election from ‘before the creation of the world’ (v. 4) and climaxes with the pronouncement of God’s will to bring unity to the cosmos under Christ (v. 10).”2

Infinite Joy

Our problem is not that we have desires, but that we desire lesser things in this life. C.S. Lewis explains it this way: “We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased.”3
Looking to have greater personal impact? Learn to share and multiply your faith using these simple drawings at re:Disciple. Visit pinelake.org for opportunities at one of our five campuses across the state of Mississippi.
There are three essential parts that make up each person. God has created all of us with a body, a soul and a spirit.

The apostle Paul puts it this way: "Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

1 Thessalonians 5:23
ENDNOTES: