

FOLLOW

ANYTIME, ANYWHERE, AT ANY COST

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THANK YOU

To Jesus, the One who loves me forever! You are my deepest Friend. You are always here with me. I dedicate this book to You.

To April, my wife, lover and friend. I have traveled the world but have never found a woman who compares to you. You are precious to me. You have encouraged me and stood by me through the writing of this book. Your love and loyalty for God, for me and our children is such an encouragement to me!

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To Delain and Lydia Huggins. Your love for the Creator and all He made inspired all the beautiful photos throughout this book.

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To the fantastic team at the College Press. You work hard, fast and effectively. You are a delight!

A NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR

My friend, more than anything else in all the world, I want you to know Jesus! I am not satisfied with your just knowing facts about Him. I want you to know Jesus for all He is.

Jesus brings positive change into every day of my life. He changes the way I love my wife, the way I invest in our children, the way I treat my friends and the way I love difficult people. He gives me hope when I feel hopeless and a daily purpose to live, to love and to lead.

Countless times He has forgiven me when I have wronged Him and others. His forgiveness and uncompromising love moves my heart and fills me with a great love and desire to follow Him. I have not found anyone on the six continents I have traveled who loves me like Jesus!

I invite you to explore Jesus through each chapter and follow wherever He may lead you. He will never leave you. He will never disown you. He will love you forever. Why not discover who He is for yourself?

Every chapter will help you explore what it means to follow Jesus. The stories capture the lives of those who followed Jesus in the first century. Each story concludes with coaching questions to help you discover how to follow Jesus in the 21st century.

To get the most out of this book, I offer you these suggestions as you begin each chapter:

1. Pray that God will bless you as you begin the chapter.
2. Enjoy the pictures. My friends, Delain and Lydia Huggins, found these beautiful images mostly in their walks through the woods of Tennessee.
3. Read the Scripture on the page opposite the picture and reflect on how God's creation illustrates His Word.
4. Read the story as if you were right there IN the story.
5. Explore Mentoring Moments. I wish I could be beside you as you discover more about following Jesus. Enjoy the coaching questions that I share with you. In addition it can be used for discipling another person or a guide for a small groups.
6. Practice the principles in your life that very same day.
7. Share what you learn with someone who may benefit from following Jesus.

I am praying that God will bless your journey to trust, follow and share Jesus!



THE CALL

Listen—do you hear it?
Soft as a gentle, insistent wind
Vivid like the painted hues of a sunset
Compelling like the whisper of a trusted friend
Impossible to ignore once met

The voice offers freedom, not force
A mostly unopened invitation from a Man
Whose promises transcend the stars in their course
Whose thoughts towards you outweigh the sands

Listen—do you hear it?
Summoning both young and old
Whether the popular fortunate or the lonely defeated
Beckoning the wide-eyed opportunist
searching for gold
And the one who forgot how to dream
and always retreated

Waking sleepy-eyed children to something more
Entreating millions to open their ears
Take a risk and unlock their hearts' door
To endless adventure—eternal peace without fear

Listen—do you hear it?
Echoing through the eons it still rings true
The call to follow is for you

by Julie MacLafferty



Matthew 4:18-20
Mark 1:16-18

CHAPTER ONE

COME

*"Come to Me, all who are weary
and heavy-laden, and I will
give you rest."
Matthew 11:28*

Sunburned. Sand between the toes. Muscles tense as brawny arms sling a sodden net at the lake's edge. As the net whistles through the air, it settles expertly, sinking down into the shallows for a morning catch. The net is dragged in, gathered and flung out again. The fisherman smiles as it slaps the water. It's a good life—predictable, comfortable, and free. He knows his trade, the ropes, the sand and the sea ...but sometimes he wonders...Is this all there is?

It's a living. He puts food on his table every day. He knows what he will do tomorrow, the next day and a thousand days to come. Is there anything more?

Peter is so caught up with his thoughts that he doesn't notice the Teacher walking by the sea. The Teacher

walks barefoot along the water's edge.

Some teachers stay in dry classrooms and breathe old air. Some wait for students to find them. This Teacher is different. He teaches with the wind in His face and the sand between His toes. He goes where the people live.

The Teacher strides straight up to Peter. The fisherman glances up, startled. What would the Teacher want with him? Was he in trouble?

Peter squints into morning sunlight. The Teacher says, "Come." Disbelief floods his mind. Why would such an important person call him? Didn't the Teacher know his reputation, his past, his way of acting before thinking?

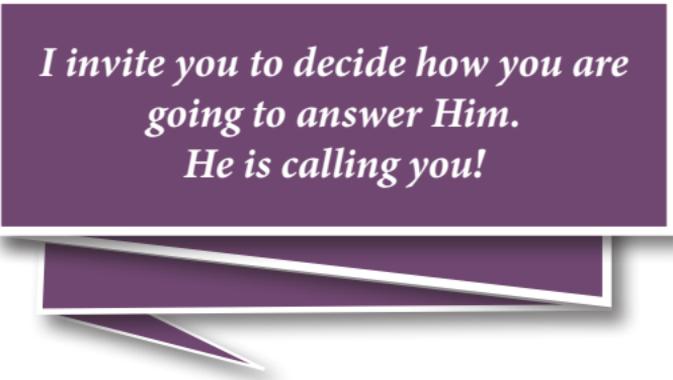
The Teacher smiles at Peter, nods approvingly and continues down the beach without looking back. The nets slip through Peter's fingers, falling in a pile at his feet. He glances at the large clay pot full of flopping fish. He comes to Jesus the Teacher just as he is—a common, ordinary fisherman looking for more.

MENTORING MOMENTS

1. What makes you want to walk toward someone? Why did Peter come to Jesus?

2. Read Matthew 4:18-20. What qualified Peter to come to Jesus? What did Jesus offer?

3. Read Matthew 11:28-30. What does Jesus offer those who come to Him?



*I invite you to decide how you are
going to answer Him.
He is calling you!*

I hope you will come just as you are. Come to Jesus with your problems, addictions, stresses and fears. Come to Him with your guilt, your shame and the weight of painful memories.

Too often we think we have to fix what is wrong in our life before we come to Jesus. I urge you to come to Him without trying to do anything else first. He will take you just as you are.

Jesus' acceptance of me as a person amazes me! To think that He knows me, inside and out, with all my faults and failures and still calls me to come—fills me with love for Him. Let your heart be moved by the way He receives you!

5. What difference would it make in your life if you came to Jesus just as you are right now? I invite you to decide how you are going to answer Him. He is calling you!



7 DAY CHALLENGE

Jesus found you as He found Peter.
This week come to Him daily
without excuses or delay.





*Matthew 9:9;
Mark 2:13-14
Luke 5:27-28*

CHAPTER TWO

FOLLOW

*“And He said to them, “Follow Me,
and I will make you
fishers of men.”
Matthew 4:19*

Before you begin this chapter, take a moment to answer this question: “How did God Help you practice the 7-Day Challenge from the last chapter?”

Rows of coins, lined up like soldiers on the table, gleamed in the Mediterranean sun. Matthew yawned and smiled to himself. His profits from this day alone would surpass what most men would make in a month. He stretched like a lazy cat, contemplating the wealth he would accumulate in the years ahead.

He was at the top of his career—tax collecting. When his friends thought of money, they thought of him. When his neighbors thought about success, they grudgingly thought of him. There was little he wanted...except for one thing.

He longed to be a part of something bigger than

himself, a cause he could give himself to, a person he could believe in.

The Teacher suddenly stood beside Matthew's table, blocking the light streaming through the awning of his tax collector's booth. The Teacher smiled. When the priests looked at Matthew they frowned, muttered "sinner" under their breath and looked the other way when passing him in the streets.

The church of the day sidelined people like Matthew. He represented the scorned religious "under class." He was a cheat and a collaborator with Rome against his own people. His friendship circle was made of those with questionable characters. But Jesus was smiling at him!

Jesus looked at Matthew and said what no other teacher would have said, "Follow Me." Jesus saw Matthew not only for what he was, but what he could become. He saw a faithful follower.

And so it was that Matthew looked down on his neatly-arranged rows of coins. He stared long and hard at his money, his booth and his comfortable life—and walked away, to follow Jesus.

MENTORING MOMENTS

1. Why would you follow Jesus? Explore these Bible passages for reasons to follow Jesus:

John 6:35

John 8:12

John 14:6

2. Read Matthew 9:9-13. What do you think Matthew gave up to follow Jesus? What do you think he gained?

3. How would you follow Jesus today? Here are a few practical steps:
 - (a) Read 1 John 2:6.
 - (b) Read Psalm 119:105. How is God's Word described? How would you need to use Scripture so it could actually provide guidance for your life?

Friend, you may have known Jesus for many years, a few months or not at all. I invite you to read the Scriptures to know for yourself how to follow Him. Do not be satisfied to merely hear what others say of Jesus. Read with a hunger to know Him and to follow Him all the way.

4. What positive results may happen if you were to follow Jesus daily?



7 DAY CHALLENGE

Jesus calls you as He did Matthew from his tax collecting. This week, follow Jesus each day wherever He calls You.





Luke 6:12

CHAPTER THREE

PRAY

*"Keep watching and praying
that you may not enter into
temptation; the spirit is willing,
but the flesh is weak."*

Matthew 26:41

*Before you begin this chapter, take a moment to
answer this question: "How did God Help you
practice the 7-Day Challenge from the last chapter?"*

The skies were full of stars, thousands of them, shining in all their brilliance against a black velvet night. It was quiet, so still that one could hear the rustling of the grass in the gentle breeze. It was a night like thousands of quiet nights before...except...

The old, scarred door of the small house on the street slowly swung open. A shadowy figure purposefully made his way out onto the dusty road, avoiding the trash from last night's party. A drunk sprawled

across the street, and a homeless man shivered in the cold night air. He retraced his steps to put a rolled-up coat under the drunk's head and settled an old blanket on the homeless man. The figure was the Teacher.

The Teacher hiked past a row of shacks and then turned onto a well-used trail leading to the top of a small hill. He looked out over His hometown for a long, long time. He sighed and sank to His knees, still gazing out across the town, wiping tears from His eyes.

He slowly got up and walked to the other side of the hill, where He could see only the stars. He stared long and hard at them—the stars He had created so long ago. Spreading His hands out to the heavens, He shared all that was on His heart. Sometimes He spoke, then paused, listening. He was deep in conversation, unrushed, like talking with a close friend.

The sky paled to blue and then exploded in a fresh display of colors as the Teacher strode back down the hill. He waved to the drunk, smiled at the homeless man, then opened the door to the house...and to another day.

MENTORING MOMENTS

1. Why do you invest time in communicating with your friends and family? Why would you want to invest in communicating with God through prayer?

- (b) Pray using the themes Jesus used when He gave His disciples an example in Matthew 6:9-13.
- (c) Ask in the name of Jesus. See John 15:16. Ask for what Jesus has promised. Many times we ask for what we want rather than what Jesus has promised. If we asked for what Jesus promised, we would receive different results. See 1 John 5:14, 15.
- (d) Pray with expectancy that He will answer. See Psalm 5:3; 91:15.

The way I pray has continued to change over the years. My earliest prayers were quite formal, as if talking to a distant Being, far removed from me. In my youth I read the Psalms and was shocked to discover how David talked with God. I was amazed that David shared his anger, frustrations and doubts with his Maker! His prayers challenged me to talk with God as to a holy Friend, and to be open with what I was experiencing in life.

In the rush of the day, it is far too easy to be distracted and to forget that my whole day can be a conversation with God! What a comfort it is to know that I can share anything with God at any time.

A few years ago I made a discovery in God's Word that continues to powerfully impact me on a daily basis. I read Isaiah 50:4. I realized that God longed to awaken me each morning so that He could teach me as His disciple from His written Word and through prayer. I began an experiment by praying before I fell asleep at night that God would awaken me AT ANY TIME to come and spend time with Him.

I found that God was ready to honor my request according to His promise in Isaiah 50:4. Morning after morning He awakens me to come and seek Him in the Scriptures and to listen for what He has to say about them for my life.

Like a child making a wonderful new friend, I have re-discovered God by having unrushed time to enjoy what He has spoken in Scripture and to wait on Him to see what He would say to me through His Spirit speaking to my heart. God has much more to say to us when we slow down in His Presence.

You may be thinking, “How can I know if I am hearing God speak to my heart?” My friend, ALWAYS test your impressions and convictions by the written Word of God. God will NEVER lead you in a way that contradicts His written Word!

4. What would change in your life if you prayed as an ongoing conversation with God throughout every day?



7 DAY CHALLENGE

Jesus talked with His Father as to a friend. This week, talk with Jesus as openly as you do with your friends.





Matthew 14:24-33

CHAPTER FOUR

TRUST

“Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me.”
John 14:1

Before you begin this chapter, take a moment to answer this question: “How did God Help you practice the 7-Day Challenge from the last chapter?”

The Teacher said to leave, so they left—unwillingly. From a practical perspective, this was the worst time to leave the crowd. The Teacher had just fed thousands with a boy’s lunch. Now the disciples could see the exciting possibilities—everyone wanted to make Him king! They had everything to gain by staying, everything to lose by leaving.

Straining, they shoved the old, familiar boat into the lake. A dozen disappointed men slogged through the water’s edge and scrambled into the boat, wondering. The Teacher just didn’t make sense. Why would He

send them away now?

Rowing across the lake, their limp sails soon caught a gust of wind. The men relaxed and smiled as the wind took over their work. Scattered clouds gathered, bunched up like fists and darkened. The wind whistled and whipped the sails. The sun sank below the horizon and the waves sloshed into the boat. Where was the shore?

The storm beat the small boat without mercy. Blown and tossed by the wind, the night black, waves crashing over the boat, the men tasted raw fear: they could all drown!

In the darkness, a flash of lightning revealed the impossible—an eerie figure walked toward them on the water! “It’s a ghost!” they yelled. Terror knifed through their hearts. Was this the spirit of death—signaling their doom?

The water walker turned toward the boat. He spoke, “Take courage. It is I. Don’t be afraid!” The twelve knew the voice. They knew the face. It was their Teacher! It was Jesus.

The disciples were eager for Jesus to join them in the boat. He had made a blind man see and a dead man live. With Him in the boat, they would be safe.

One man dared to believe the impossible. He left the boat to join Jesus right where He was. Peter shouted to the Teacher over the howling of the wind, “Lord, if it’s you, tell me to come to you on the water!” Peter stands, lurching toward the edge of the boat. Clawing hands try to pull him back, keep him down. Sane voices challenge him to stay where he is, to do nothing foolish

and to hold onto something he can trust.

The Teacher's words are like a trumpet blast across the waves, "Come!" Eleven watch. Peter jumps out of the boat—and walks on water! Peter's eyes are on Jesus. He walks where no mere man has ever walked before.

But then Peter shifts his gaze to the wind-whipped waves. Losing his focus on Jesus, he hurtles down as if sucked into a sink hole. "Lord, save me!" he screams. Instantly the Teacher reaches out and pulls him to his feet. Jesus looks deep into his eyes and asks, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?"

Jesus helps Peter into the boat. The storm is silenced. Quiet reigns over the sea. The clouds roll back. The sails sag. The twelve, voices hoarse with strain and awe, breathe the words, "Truly You are the Son of God!"

MENTORING MOMENTS (PART 1)

1. Think of someone you trust. Why do you trust him? or her?

2. Read Matthew 14:22-33. What does this story teach you about trusting Jesus?

3. How do you trust Jesus? Here are some practical steps in growing to trust Jesus:
 - (a) Romans 10:17 Read the Bible. Your faith will increase.

 - (b) Mark 9:24 Ask God to help you with your unbelief.

 - (c) James 2:17; Joshua 3:13-17 When you know God's will, act on it!

4. What would your life look like if you trusted Jesus completely?



7 DAY CHALLENGE

Jesus was there for Peter when he sank into the water. This week, trust Him with something that concerns you.



MENTORING MOMENTS (PART 2)

Discover the joy and peace of trusting your life and future with Jesus completely. Here are five steps to trusting your life and eternal life with Jesus:

1. Read Romans 5:7, 8; 8:38, 39. Be sure that you are unconditionally loved by God.

2. Read Romans 3:23; 6:23. Be sure you need Jesus as your Savior
3. Read Romans 6:23 (last part); John 3:16; Eph. 2:8, 9.

Be sure that Jesus offers you eternal life as a gift when you believe in Him as your Savior.

4. Read 1 John 1:9 Be sure that Jesus gives you a clean heart.
5. Read Revelation 3:20 Be sure that Jesus will come into your life as you surrender your control and invite Him to come and be your LIFE.

Friend, I remember when I did not have peace with God about my salvation. I would worry about whether I was good enough. I focused more on what I was doing instead of what Jesus has done and is doing for me.

When I was in high school someone took the time to help me trust in Jesus and what He had done for me on the cross. I was shown some of the very Bible texts that I have just shared with you. When I read 1 John 5:13, God made me so happy! I was excited to learn that I could KNOW that I had eternal life through Jesus!

Being sure that Jesus has given me the free gift of salvation has filled me with much more love for Him. Because of what He has done for me, I want to serve Him. I want to obey Him. He has given me more than I could ever give Him!

Friend, thank Jesus for loving you just the way you are! Nothing can separate you from His love. It is unconditional. He loves you so much He will help you be all you can be! So run to Him.

Thank Jesus for dying in your place and taking the penalty for your sins. Tell Him that you believe that what He did for you is a gift you receive.

Ask Jesus to forgive you for your sins. He will! He will give you a new heart and a fresh start. So invite Jesus right now to come into your life and be your Life.

For additional week.



7 DAY CHALLENGE

**Jesus died to secure your salvation.
This week, thank Him daily for
your salvation. Share this good
news with someone else.**



John 8:3-11



CHAPTER FIVE

LEAVE

*“Immediately they left their nets
and followed Him.”*

Matthew 4:20

Before you begin this chapter, take a moment to answer this question: “How did God Help you practice the 7-Day Challenge from the last chapter?”

Clothes torn, her long hair disheveled, she waits in terror at the Teacher’s feet. Why had she not screened her last client? Why had she trusted someone who was now betraying her?

The local leaders had stalked her and caught her at the worst time. They let the man go free. They dragged her to the Teacher. They would use her as bait to trap the Teacher in His judgment of her. The law of their people said she should be stoned. The law of Rome said the Jews could not execute someone without their permission. Whatever He said, they could accuse the Teacher of violating a law.

She was good at her profession. Men were drawn by her beauty and paid dearly for an evening with her. She felt in control. She made good money. She was on the fast lane to her idea of success. She always told herself she would leave this kind of life tomorrow, but the knock at the door, the whispered promises of money always tempted her. “Now,” she thought, “I will pay with my life.”

The Teacher looked at the trembling woman at His feet. He carefully took in the whole scene. The self-righteous faces of the leaders. The hatred in their eyes for Him. Their utter callousness toward the woman.

He knelt in the dust and started writing with His finger. Curious, the leaders crowded around, eager for the kill. When they saw what He wrote, they saw themselves as they had never seen themselves before. The accusers became the accused.

The rocks slipped from their hands as they walked away.

In a few moments the Teacher stood alone with the woman. “I do not condemn you. Go and sin no more,” He said.

There would be many more struggles for her soul in the days ahead as she wrestled with the possibility of whether to leave all she knew. The Teacher loved her like no one had ever loved her. He valued her as a person, a daughter of the King. He gave her what no one had ever given her—self-respect. So she walked away from her past. She left everything behind to follow a Man who would never turn His back on her.

MENTORING MOMENTS

1. Think of a time when you benefited from leaving something behind. Why did you leave it?
2. Read John 8:1-11. What was Jesus inviting the woman to leave behind? Read Matthew 16:24-26. What expectations does Jesus have of His disciples?
3. How do you leave something harmful that you love? Here are some practical steps:
 - (a) Read 1 John 1:9. Admit to God and to your friends that you have done wrong and you want to change. Receive God's forgiveness and the forgiveness of others if needed.
 - (b) Read Ezekiel 36:26, 27. Ask God to give you a new heart and to send the Holy Spirit to give you the power to desire the right things. Surrender to God.
 - (c) Read Acts 2:38. Turn away from what you know to be wrong.

- (d) Invite a trusted friend to be your prayer partner and to hold you accountable each day to be true to your decision. See Galatians 6:2.
- (e) Claim God's promises. See Philippians 4:6, 7, 13, 19.

Stay away from the friends and environments that encouraged you in the wrong path. Replace the wrong with something life-giving from God. See 2 Timothy 2:22.

- 4. Think of something in your life that is keeping you from Jesus. What would be the positive results in your life if you chose to leave it behind you today?



7 DAY CHALLENGE

Jesus offered hope to the women caught in adultery. She left her old life behind. This week, with His love to strengthen you, leave whatever would compromise your relation with with Him.



John 13:1-9



CHAPTER SIX

SERVE

“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”

Mark 10:45

Before you begin this chapter, take a moment to answer this question: “How did God Help you practice the 7-Day Challenge from the last chapter?”

The room felt oppressive to the twelve. But it wasn't really the temperature or the humidity that was the problem—it was the unspoken expectation that something needed to be done by someone other than themselves.

Baskets of fresh bread and jugs of grape juice covered much of the table. A basin of freshly-drawn water waited by two large stone water pots with a towel neatly folded beside it. What was missing on that warm evening was a servant to bring the water

and towel and wash those thirteen pairs of feet. Obviously, one of them would have to step forward. The Teacher's followers each had an idea of who should humble himself. Those with seniority thought that the younger members of the team should step forward. The newcomers thought that they were just as good as anyone else on the team. So each man waited, refusing to serve.

The Teacher quietly stood and walked across the room. Deliberately he removed his cloak, folded it and set it aside. He wrapped the large towel around His waist and bent over to pick up the basin of water. He walked over to one of His followers, knelt down and washed his feet.

For years the Teacher's calloused hands had held a hammer, nails and rough-cut lumber. Now they held the dusty feet of His followers. One by one, He washed His followers' feet and dried them thoroughly with His towel. Repeatedly He had to pour out the dirty water and replace it with fresh.

Everyone watched.

The Teacher sat down to eat. Everyone's feet were now clean, except His. No one served Him. He felt no resentment. He had just served...and that was all that mattered.

MENTORING MOMENTS

1. Think of a time when someone served your needs in an unselfish way. How did their kind act impact you? Think of a time when you served someone with no benefit to yourself.



Why does unselfish service need to be a daily part of your life?

2. Read John 13:1-20. What did Jesus teach about serving others by His example? Discover what groups of people God calls us to especially serve:

Isaiah 1:17

Jeremiah 7:6

Jeremiah 22:3

James 1:27

4. What would be the result if you intentionally served the needs of orphans, widows, strangers and the poor?



7 DAY CHALLENGE

Jesus served His disciples. This week find practical ways to serve the orphans, widows, strangers, poor or anyone in need.



John 19:25-27



CHAPTER SEVEN

LOVE

“By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

John 13:35

Before you begin this chapter, take a moment to answer this question: “How did God Help you practice the 7-Day Challenge from the last chapter?”

Clenching his jaw, the young disciple forced himself to watch Jesus die. Hours before things had seemed so perfect. He was enjoying dinner with Jesus, sitting right next to Him—his favorite place. After dinner they had gone for a hike together up to the olive groves. Then the perfect evening became the worst nightmare of his life.

A mob brandishing sticks and clubs burst through the trees. Judas confidently announced, “This is the One!” The mob grabbed Jesus and bound Him. Bewildered and afraid, the disciples abandoned Jesus to the mercy of the crowd.

John crept from shadow to shadow following the crowd from a safe distance as they half led, half dragged Jesus to the court. He slipped into the courtroom and watched as Jesus was accused, beaten and sentenced to death. He was silent. Now, too late, he wished he had spoken up.

He found himself at the foot of the cross. Where were all the other disciples? He knew why he was there. As he heard Jesus gasp the words, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing," John reflected on what the Teacher had done for him.

He was the youngest one, "The Kid." There was a big age gap between him and the rest of the team. Why the Teacher asked him to follow was difficult for any of them to understand.

He had not come with recommendations. Everyone knew that he had a violent temper. When he was offended, he responded with a vengeance. No one knew when his anger would explode. So the team expended no extra love on him. No one would have cared if he had just run home to his mother.

But the Teacher loved him as if he were His younger brother. He listened when the others ignored him. He walked beside him.

The Teacher took him everywhere. And the Kid watched, listened and changed. More than anything, he wanted to be just like the Teacher. The honest love of the Teacher transformed the Kid into someone very much like the Teacher Himself.

Now at the foot of the cross, the Kid watched the Teacher die. Hot tears ran down his cheeks when Jesus asked him to care for His mother Mary. The Kid stood by when it seemed the whole world laughed at his Friend. No one had ever loved, cared, and believed in him like Jesus. This time he would not run away.

A few days later he ran to an empty tomb. He lived the rest of his life for the One who loved him most, Jesus, the living, risen Savior of the world. Years later, “The Kid” wrote the Gospel of John. In this letter, John refers to himself simply as “the one Jesus loved.”

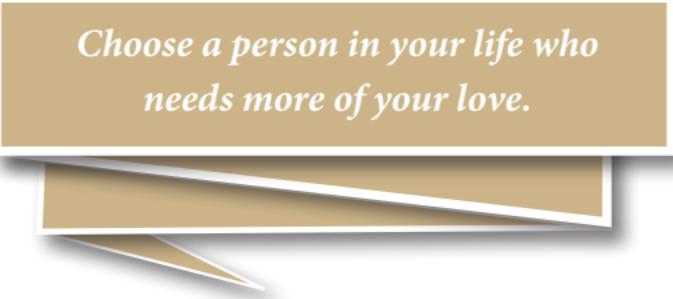
MENTORING MOMENTS

1. Name the top three people you love. Name the top three most difficult people in your life to love. Why do you love some and have difficulty loving others?

2. Read John 13:35. What is the mark of a disciple of Jesus?

3. If you are curious, read the following texts to see how Jesus invested in John: Matthew 4:21; 17:1-13; Mark 5:37-43; 10:35-40; 13:3; 14:32, 33; Luke 9:49-56; 22:8; John 19:26, 27

4. How do you love people in your life who are very difficult? Read Ephesians 4:29-32.



*Choose a person in your life who
needs more of your love.*

Try out these helpful steps:

- (a) Pray for them.

- (b) Ask God to give you a love for them.

- (c) Say only what would build them up with kindness and respect.

- (d) Surrender all your bitterness to God.
 - (e) Go out of your way to bless them.
5. What would happen in your life if you began to love everyone you meet like Jesus loves you?



7 DAY CHALLENGE

Jesus' life transformed "The Kid."
This week take practical steps to
love the challenging people
in your life.





— — — — —
Luke 24:13-32
— — — — —

CHAPTER EIGHT

LIVE

*“...If you continue in My word,
then you are truly disciples
of Mine.”
John 8:31*

Before you begin this chapter, take a moment to answer this question: “How did God Help you practice the 7-Day Challenge from the last chapter?”

The two weary travelers compared notes from the weekend. They had sincerely believed that the Teacher was the One prophesied. His capture and death by the authorities had left them in shock and dark depression. How could this have happened?

A lone traveler joined them. They didn't care. He asked what they were discussing and listened patiently to the whole story. They spoke of their disappointment and discouragement.

Their companion referred to Scriptures that they

had forgotten. Point by point He explained the Holy Word with a passion that left the two men breathless. He showed how God had prophesied that the Messiah would come, live, die for His people and enter His glory. God's Word breathed new life into the darkness of these discouraged men.

The travelers listened intently. They had heard these Scriptures many times in the past. These ancient prophecies had been there for them to read, believe and live by every day.

But they had not acted on what they had heard. They had missed the main point of the prophecies.

The two slowed their pace as they neared their village. Home was just around the corner. The sun was low over the fields. The Stranger started to walk on alone.

"Come home with us!" They called after the Stranger. "It is too late to walk on alone." The Stranger smiled to Himself, turned and followed them home.

The evening meal was full of surprises. The Stranger lifted His hands to bless the food. That is when they saw His torn hands. That is when they remembered His Voice. Jesus! They would live by His Word forever!

MENTORING MOMENTS

1. Whose word do you listen to in your life? Your best friend? Your spouse? Your colleague at work? Why do you listen to that person?
2. Read John 8:31, 32. What does it mean to continue in the Word of Jesus?
3. Read Luke 24:13-35. How did Jesus value Scripture? How can you read and obey the Word of God in Scripture? Here are a few helpful hints:

John 5:39 Always keep Jesus as the focus of what you are reading. Ask yourself, "What is the passage teaching me about Jesus?"

- (a) John 16:13 Before you begin reading, pray for the Holy Spirit to be your Teacher

- (b) James 2:17 Before you close your Bible, ask God, “How can I apply what I read to my life today?” Then, go practice what God impressed you to apply to your day.
4. What would change in your life if you read God’s Word daily and lived by His Word?



7 DAY CHALLENGE

Jesus reveals Himself to you through His Word. This week read it daily to make a discovery about Jesus and to apply this discovery to the way you live.





Acts 2:1-8

CHAPTER NINE

WAIT

“Gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised...”

Acts 1:4

Before you begin this chapter, take a moment to answer this question: “How did God Help you practice the 7-Day Challenge from the last chapter?”

Squinting up at the brilliant sky, the disciples strained to see Jesus as He rose and was swallowed up in a billowing cloud. The Teacher was alive! Unbelievable! The disciples were filled with joy and excitement.

A few days before they had thought all was lost. Their Teacher had died on a cross. They had spent the weekend fearful they would share the same fate.

For forty days the resurrected Teacher had walked and talked with His disciples. Concepts that seemed difficult before the resurrection now made sense to them. Then He gathered them together on this mountain. The disciples were eager to tell the world about their Teacher.

Their Teacher had forgiven them. He loved them enough to challenge them to be what He saw they could become. They had a new life, hope and purpose because of Him.

They were eager to go to the whole world with this news, but the Teacher had one word for them, "Wait." He told them to wait for the promised Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God would transform them and light an unquenchable fire within them to make disciples for Jesus!

It was hard to wait. Their souls were filled with love for the Teacher. It seemed odd to return to the Upper Room to wait and pray for what the Teacher had promised. People asked, "What are you doing up there in that room?" They would respond, "Waiting."

For ten days the disciples waited in the room. As they waited, they prayed. As they prayed, they repented of all that had kept them from loving the Teacher and each other completely. Enemies became friends in that room. Believers became brothers. Those who had gossiped about each other became brothers and sisters. The focus was simply Jesus. The grudges were gone. The bitterness given up.

The promised gift did not come at once. For nine days nothing extraordinary happened. The Teacher's promise remained unfulfilled.

On the tenth day, the Holy Spirit poured out His Presence with raw power! The Spirit roared into the room like a mighty rushing wind. What appeared to be flames of fire hovered over each believer.

Each person was overwhelmed with a hunger to live for Jesus. Every believer was moved to be fearlessly faithful to God, without regard for the consequences. They now spoke with a convincing power that called people to stand up for Jesus, to run from compromise and to follow Him anywhere, anytime, at any cost.

MENTORING MOMENTS

1. Think of a time when you were very thirsty. What would you have given for something refreshing to drink? Why?

2. Read Acts 1-3. What did Jesus promise? What happened as a result of the disciples waiting and preparing to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit of God?

3. How will you receive this gift Jesus promised? Practice these steps:

Acts 2:38-Repent

Luke 11:11-13-Ask God for the Holy Spirit.

Acts 1:4, 5-Wait with expectancy for the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

4. What if you asked for the Holy Spirit of God to fill you every day? How would your life change? I invite you to ask God now for this gift.

7 DAY CHALLENGE

**Jesus promises you His Holy Spirit.
This week ask God to give you
the Holy Spirit each day to
transform your life.**

Acts 8:25-39



CHAPTER TEN

DISCIPLE

“And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

Matthew 28:18-20

Before you begin this chapter, take a moment to answer this question: “How did God Help you practice the 7-Day Challenge from the last chapter?”

Heat waves shimmered. Dust swirled in the searing winds. This was a place of death. Philip reviewed the angel's instructions to walk the desert road. Why would God send him to such a desolate place?

As Philip rounded a large outcropping of bare rock, the winds died down. His vision cleared. He involuntarily jumped as he heard hoof beats; a chariot was

approaching. Who, in his right mind, would choose to come here?

Two fine Arabian horses pulled a richly-ornamented chariot. Seated in the chariot was an official from the court of Candace, Queen of all Ethiopia, returning from worshiping God in Jerusalem. The Spirit of God whispered to Philip, "Go up and join this chariot."

Philip ran over to the chariot, amazed to hear the official reading from Isaiah. "Do you understand what you are reading?" Philip asked. The official wrinkled his forehead, "Well, how could I, unless someone guides me?" He invited Philip to come up and join him.

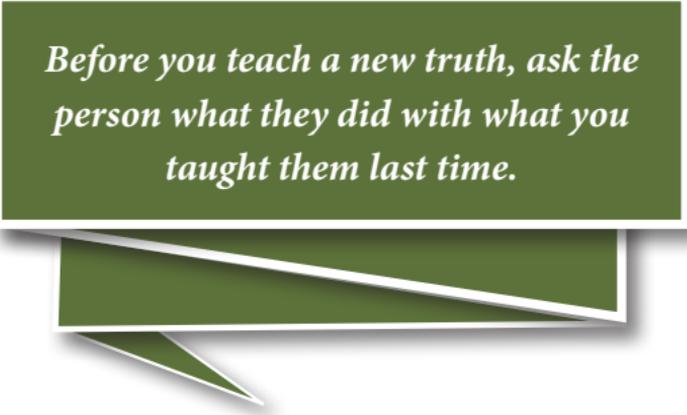
Grateful for the unexpected opportunity, Philip explained the very prophecy that had puzzled the official, telling him all about Jesus. Side by side, studying the Scriptures, the two became brothers in faith.

As they continued along the way, they came to some water. The official exclaimed, "Look! Water! What prevents me from being baptized?" Philip, smiling, assured him that he could be baptized if he fully believed. Earnestly, the Ethiopian cried out, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."

The chariot lurched to a stop. The two jumped out and waded into the water, where Philip immersed him as a symbol of burying his old ways and committing to new life in Jesus. The two men parted company and the Ethiopian headed home praising God with a loud voice—a new disciple in an unlikely place!

MENTORING MOMENTS

1. Who has mentored you to do something that has added value to your life?



Before you teach a new truth, ask the person what they did with what you taught them last time.

2. Read Matthew 28:18-20. What did Jesus challenge His disciples to do? What authority does Jesus possess? What promise did He give for those who make disciples for Him?
3. What if you intentionally disciplined the people God has brought into your life? List the people in your circle of influence who do not know Jesus and the new life He brings.

Circle of Influence:

-
-
-

4. Beside each name, list the interests and needs of that person right now in their life.



7 DAY CHALLENGE

Jesus sends you to disciple others.
This week follow the Holy Spirit to
be a friend to someone.



*John 1:35-42;
6:1-14; 12:20-23*



CHAPTER ELEVEN

DISCIPLE-2

“Behold the Lamb of God!” John’s voice thundered out to the crowd as he recognized Jesus. Andrew looked up from tying his sandals. “Who was John referring to?” he wondered. He surveyed the crowd—the poor, the wealthy, and the stern Roman soldiers standing stiffly in the morning breeze. But all he saw was a rather ordinary-looking man, a carpenter, no less.

Before you begin this chapter, take a moment to answer this question: “How did God Help you practice the 7-Day Challenge from the last chapter?”

The Carpenter moved quietly through the staring crowd as if nothing out of the ordinary had been said. But for Andrew, John’s announcement was what his heart had longed to hear for as long as he could remember. He didn’t hesitate. If John said the Messiah had come, he would follow Him!

He wanted to be as close as possible to this Promised

One. Jesus showed him where he lived. Andrew spent the day with Jesus, walking, talking and breaking bread with Him. That day was the first of more than a thousand days of walking beside Jesus, living as He lived.

In those first hours, Andrew knew that Jesus would change his life forever. He had discovered the long hoped-for Messiah! He could not keep this good news to himself. For generations every one of his countrymen had hoped to see the Messiah who God sent to earth as a man. He had to tell his brother!

Andrew walked faster and faster, jogged and then ran to find his brother Peter. "How could he convince his brother to follow Jesus?" Should he quote the ancient prophecies? Should he present his most powerful arguments? His sandals pounded on the path to Peter's home, his boat, and his favorite spots. Finally he found Peter.

Andrew did the most important thing for his brother: He brought Peter to Jesus! Andrew could have sent him to Jesus, but he chose to come with Peter. Andrew personally invested himself in becoming a bridge to connect Peter with the Savior!

Andrew saw how Jesus had changed his own life. He watched the next few years as Jesus radically changed his brother's life. Andrew saw how Jesus continually encouraged Peter, challenged him, and sent him out to teach others. Jesus patiently walked with Peter day in and day out until Peter began to mirror His own character. Over time, Andrew saw Peter change from being self-centered and impatient to becoming a man of unselfish love and kindness.

Andrew loved bringing people to Jesus! One day when

the crowd listening to Jesus was hungry, Andrew found a little boy with a lunch and brought him to Jesus. When some Greeks came to the temple looking for Jesus, Andrew immediately connected these outsiders to the Savior.

No one could say that Andrew was exceptional. He lived in the shadow of the brother he brought to Jesus. He lived outside the circle of those closest to Him. He simply followed Jesus wherever He led him and repeatedly brought the people he met to the One who had changed his life.

Andrew was ordinary and unremarkable, but so faithful to the mission Jesus had given him that he became a shining example to all who would ever follow Him.

Andrew exemplified the Gospel Commission: “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations...”
(Matthew 28:19)

What about you? Andrew’s mission is yours, too!

MENTORING MOMENTS

1. Think of people in your life who introduced you to someone they thought would add value to your life.
Who did this for you? Why did they do it?
2. Making disciples for Jesus Christ is about bringing people to Him. The focus is on coming close to the person and building a trust

relationship. Then you can help that person begin trusting, following and sharing Jesus. What activities did Jesus do with His disciples to help them grow in their faith journey? Look up the following texts and list your discoveries.

Matthew 4:18-20

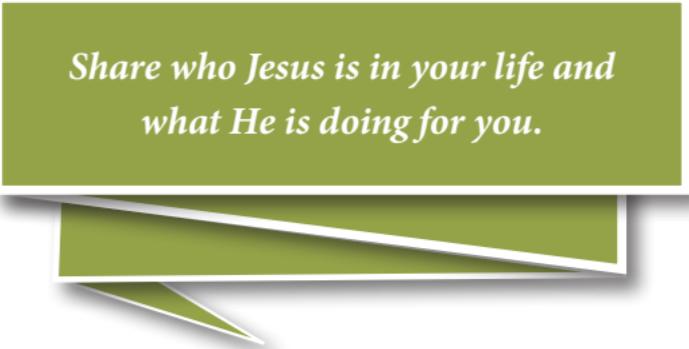
Matthew 14:13-20 (esp. v. 16)

Matthew 14:22-33

Luke 11:1-13

John 13:5-15 (esp. v. 15)

3. How can you take the next step to connect the person you identified in Chapter 10 to Jesus? Pray about what would be appropriate.



*Share who Jesus is in your life and
what He is doing for you.*

- Offer to explore the Bible together each week to discover the good news about Jesus.
 - Pray for this person every day. Model a truth that God has taught you. Teach this truth from the Scriptures.
 - Invite the person to practice what you taught them and apply it to their lives for the next week.
4. Pray earnestly for this person daily. Ask the Holy Spirit of God to encourage this person to live as a disciple of Jesus.



7 DAY CHALLENGE

Jesus draws you to Himself. This week follow the Holy Spirit to connect your new friend to Christ.





*Acts 4:36, 37;
9:1-31; 11:19-26*

CHAPTER TWELVE

DISCIPLE-3

“Behold the Lamb of God!” John’s voice thundered out to the crowd as he recognized Jesus. Andrew looked up from tying his sandals. “Who was John referring to?” he wondered. He surveyed the crowd—the poor, the wealthy, and the stern Roman soldiers standing stiffly in the morning breeze. But all he saw was a rather ordinary-looking man, a carpenter, no less.

Before you begin this chapter, take a moment to answer this question: “How did God Help you practice the 7-Day Challenge from the last chapter?”

Sweat trickled down Barnabas’ neck despite the cold night. Was he about to betray the followers of Jesus to a crazed murderer? He wondered. Hesitantly he led Saul of Tarsus to the secret meeting place where James and the other disciples of Jesus had fashioned a common room into the central headquarters of the early church.

Barnabas slowed his pace. Saul's uncertain footsteps hesitated as well. Looming up before them in the narrow alley was a massive, scarred door. He knew the agreed-upon series of knocks that would signal the disciples within that they could safely open the door. Was he taking too great a risk?

Barnabas personally knew many of those Saul had imprisoned and killed, but he also believed that Jesus Christ had met Saul outside of Damascus. Now Saul was a man changed by the grace and love of Jesus. Saul's hatred for the Savior had been replaced by a love that compelled him to tell anyone he met about the power of Jesus to change a life.

Barnabas knocked and the old door swung open. The disciples of Jesus stared silently, stunned, as Barnabas led Saul into their midst. Barnabas held up his hands to stop an expected avalanche of questions and accusations, and then he pleaded with the disciples to accept Saul as one of them. Tears welled up in their eyes as they listened in wonder to the story of God's grace for this least likely disciple of Jesus.

The disciples cautiously, then joyfully embraced their former persecutor. Saul wept.

Because Barnabas believed in Saul, the church leaders accepted him. Barnabas had risked his life to bring Saul to them, so they risked their lives to receive him. Someone always needs to build the bridge to a challenging person. Barnabas was that person.

But Barnabas didn't stop with giving Saul an introduction. Later he traveled to Tarsus to look for Saul. When he found him, Barnabas took Saul with him to Antioch and worked with him there for a year.

Barnabas knew that God had converted Saul through the power of the Holy Spirit. He also knew that Saul needed to be discipled. Barnabas took the time to build a relationship with Saul. He invited Saul into his life.

For a year Saul had the benefit of walking with a believer in an intensive way. Saul was able to see how Barnabas lived his faith in Jesus. He watched Barnabas pray, study the Word of God, make friends, and influence the city. He was able to see how Jesus transformed the way Barnabas worked with believers and the unbelieving community.

In the months ahead Barnabas discipled Saul. Barnabas did not stop with telling Saul the Gospel; he lived it and daily invited Saul to join him in the adventure of following Jesus!

He invited Saul to join him as he taught God's Word, preaching from house to house, in the synagogues, and out in the rain, the heat, and the cold. Saul watched Barnabas disciple new believers and work with old believers. Barnabas patiently encouraged Saul as he learned to do the same.

Barnabas began to realize that the crowds came to hear Saul, not him. Barnabas watched with awe as the Holy Spirit empowered Saul to preach the good news of Jesus to men and women of great influence and power. He watched as people were moved mightily to come to Christ. Barnabas the disciple-maker quietly shifted from mentor to partner and then to an often-forgotten assistant.

The Holy Spirit of God changed Saul the persecutor into Paul the beloved apostle. Repeatedly Paul returned to the cities where he and Barnabas first shared the

Gospel and strengthened the disciples to win countless thousands to Jesus.

God will lead you to many unlikely disciples for Christ. Take the time. Take the risk. Invest your life in making disciples for Christ who trust, follow, and share Jesus anytime, anywhere, at any cost. Experience the joy of seeing God use these disciples to prepare a people to meet the soon-coming Christ!

Be a Barnabas! Go make disciples!

MENTORING MOMENTS

*Identify someone who believed in your value even when others did not.
Why did they invest in your life?*

1. Do you have someone in your family, friendship circle, school, or work place who looks like an unlikely disciple? Pray that God will help you see what God sees in them.

2. Read Acts 9:1-8, 19-22, 26-28; 11:22-26. List what steps Barnabas took to help Saul grow as a disciple and a disciple maker of others.

3. When you meet again with the person you started discipling last week, ask that person what they did with what you taught them. Celebrate whenever they apply the truth of God's Word. Be patient when they struggle or forget. God is gracious! Help them explore the possibilities of what God is calling them to do next.

4. When you believe that the person is living and applying the specific truth you taught them, challenge them to share that truth with someone else. Remember that God transforms people at different speeds. Be patient. Just as God has been patient with you, take the time to enjoy the journey as God transforms the person you are discipling.

5. When you see the person next, ask how it went when they shared their faith with someone else. Again, celebrate successes that God

gave and encourage them with any challenges they faced. Ask God to show them what He wants them to do next.



7 DAY CHALLENGE

Jesus invests His life in you. This week invest your life in the person the Holy Spirit has called you to disciple.



MY CHALLENGE TO YOU

What will you do with Jesus? Will you consider, but not commit? Will you savor His love, but refuse to be sent? Will you flirt with His friendship, but stop short of following?

I have known Jesus for nearly a half century. I have read much about Him in His Word and have been comfortable in claiming to be His follower. I review my life and find myself so grateful for His compassion and His care over the years--and yet I grieve for the many times I have followed Jesus halfway, or even most of the way, but not all the way. He is calling me and you to more!

Jesus walked this planet with His own bare feet. He knows our struggles. He knows our fears. He knows our tendencies to hold back, to seek what is safe, and to turn away from sacrifice. He knows us well and how to turn our defeats into victories by His powerful grace.

I am on my knees right now, as I pour out my heart to you. Here is what God has impressed me to say to you:

1. Live every moment knowing that God loves you forever! See Romans 8:38, 39.
2. Surrender completely to God every day, offering Him everything you are and have to be used to bring Jesus great glory. See 1 Corinthians 10:31.
3. Read the Word of God with a commitment to alter your life according to what you read that day. Live what you read. Test everything you believe and practice by His Word. See 2 Timothy 3:15-17.

4. Take unrushed time to talk with God and to listen for His still small voice. Challenge your impressions with the written Word of God. See Psalm 5:3; 46:10; I Kings 19.
5. Be sure of your salvation by the grace of Jesus alone. See Ephesians 2:8, 9.
6. Plead for the daily baptism of the Holy Spirit so that God will grow your character like Jesus and give you a fearlessness in sharing Him with anyone. See Acts 1:4, 5.
7. Husbands, love your wives sacrificially, as Jesus has loved you. Wives, respect your husbands. They will see Jesus' love in the way you respect them. See Ephesians 5:25, 33.
8. Pour your lives into discipling your children to Jesus. This is your calling. Do not give this sacred trust to someone else outside your home. Others may support your work, but they will never, ever replace what God has called you to give personally to your children. If you do not have your own children, find a way to invest your life in helping the next generation to become disciples of Jesus. See Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Malachi 4:5, 6; Acts 2:17.
9. Share what you discover each day in the Word of God with someone else. But do not stop with sharing the Word. Invest your life in helping someone else become a disciple of Jesus so that they may have the joy of trusting, following and sharing Jesus! See Matthew 28:18-20.

10. Seek your God-given dreams, those plans God has had for your life before you were born. Serve Him faithfully wherever you are, but follow Him whenever He calls you anytime, anywhere, and at any cost. Serve God with the urgency of the soon return of Jesus! See Jeremiah 1:5; Psalm 139; Ephesians 3:20, 21; I Thessalonians 4:16-18.

May God bless you as you follow Jesus!

Your brother in Jesus,

Don

USING THIS BOOK TO LEAD A SMALL GROUP

1. Ask God to help you think of people who would benefit by joining a group to explore living as a disciple of Jesus.
2. Pray for those you are impressed to invite to the group.
3. Invite your friends, neighbors, classmates or work associates to your home or some other place comfortable for your group. Invite them to come and experience one session.
4. If they find it helpful, encourage them to come back for the next twelve sessions. (The fourth chapter is best divided into two weeks.)
5. Consider offering a simple meal prior to the small group meeting or refreshments after the meeting. People are often searching for real friendships. Food does not have to be a part of the small group experience, but often it was a part of the first century disciple-making experience.
6. Suggested Small Group Meeting format:
 - A. Welcome each person as they arrive each week. Open with a question such as: "What word best describes your week?" Take a few moments for the group members to share what is happening in their lives. Inviting each person to share with one other person will save time and encourage those who are shy.

- B. After the first week, always invite the group to share what each one did to practice the "7-Day Challenge" given the past week. This is best done one-on-one. Coach the group members to ask each other, "How did it go last week with the challenge?" The point is to encourage and support each other in taking the steps of faith God asks of us. Encourage the group members to ask with love and grace, because one never knows the difficulties someone faces in taking a step of faith to follow Jesus.
- C. Pray for God to bless the group and His written Word as you study and apply it.
- D. Invite the group to study the picture and the Bible verse that open the chapter. Ask for observations regarding how nature illustrates the text.
- E. Ask all those who are willing to read a paragraph of the story.
- F. Continue with the Mentoring Moments in the same way—involving the group in reading the questions and Bible passages. Invite the group to share their observations.
- G. Immediately following the reading of the "7-Day Challenge," share what this challenge means to your life and how God is impressing you to implement this step in following Jesus. Be authentic. Remember that you are learning and growing like everyone else.

You will find that if you are willing to be vulnerable in sharing how the challenge impacts you, you will encourage each group member to do the same.

- H. Make sure that each step in following Jesus is clear to the group. Remind the group that the step will look different in each person's circumstances.
 - I. Close with a prayer of blessing. As the group grows closer together, they will have prayer requests. Take the time to ask and listen.
 - J. Make yourself available for those who have questions or who may need encouragement to follow Jesus.
 - K. Encourage each one to make a commitment to belong to a small group dedicated to following Jesus. This commitment will be encouraged as a way of life.
6. Always mentor one of the group members to lead the small group with you. Pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit. He will help you. Give this person responsibility each week in leading. Start out with small ways they can help and increase their leadership responsibilities as you see God grow them.
 7. Pray for the members of your small group every day. Pray for the Holy Spirit to completely transform each one as they follow Jesus.

