

Selfless
LIVING
IN A *Selfie*
WORLD

Leader's Guide

Pam Gillaspie

Selfless LIVING IN A Selfie WORLD

My fellow leaders, as with any study of God's Word, this one is for us leaders as much as it is for our students. Perhaps in this case, it is even more applicable to us. Positions of strength, be they political, vocational, religious, or relational can feed and fuel pride. Even being "the teacher" at a local Bible study can do it. My prayer for you is that you will lead this study with grace and patience as God does His work through His Word not only in the hearts of your students but in your heart as well. He's certainly been working on mine! Pride is so stealthy—it shows up in likely *and unlikely* places. But praise be to God who *will complete* the good work that He has started in us!

Many blessings,

pam

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Selfless Living in a Selfie World

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Week One

Mirror, Mirror on the Wall . . .

Class-at-a-Glance

<i>Segments</i>	<i>1 Hour Class</i>	<i>Topic</i>
Segment 1:	10 min.	Class Basics • Introductions • Ground Rules • How to Use this Study
Segment 2:	5 min.	Inductive Study Basics
Segment 3:	5 min.	Considering How We Think
Segment 4:	10 min.	Humility Personified John the Baptist: John 3:22-36
Segment 5:	15 min.	The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly Last Days People: 2 Timothy 3:1-5 Different Wisdoms: James 3:13-18
Segment 6:	15 min.	Arrogance Personified Ezekiel 28:11-19 Isaiah 14:3-15

BEFORE YOU START**HOW TO LEAD THIS STUDY:****The Basics**

Well here you are! You've either been called, appointed, or dragged into leading a Bible study. Regardless, here is some good news—this study is designed to be flexible to both students and teachers alike, to give newer teachers the help they need, and to give more seasoned teachers wings to grow their gifting. With this in mind, please use the Leader's Guide to help you prepare to lead. Always remember that it's a guide, not a strict set of step-by-step rules and edicts.

Although presented as a 6-week study with weekly homework, *Selfie* can be stretched over a longer period of time with "homework" sections done either at home or during class time. If class time is limited, as is often the case for Sunday School, leaders may choose to work through smaller portions of a lesson together. Thus, it is possible for this 6-week Bible study to flex and expand to fill a 12-week session or more depending on how deep you and your students want to go.

For those who have ample time and are running a 6-week study, consider adding an additional week or two for a technology day or a guest speaker on a topic of interest. This person can be a pastor, local Bible professor, or someone well-versed on a particular topic in the text. With the advance of technology, it's now possible to bring in people from other parts of the country or the world to talk to your class via tools like Skype. Additional people and material mix things up and keep the class on its toes. This additional week gives you the flexibility to match the class length to the needs of things like, say, the church calendar. Hey, it's reality!

Some of you who are reading this Leader Guide are thrilled to be leading because you have the spiritual gift of teaching. You may find that you don't even use this guide—that's fine! If God has gifted you to teach and you like doing your own research and prep, that is great!! Praise God! Go entrust to the faithful who will be able to teach others also! Others of you, undoubtedly, have been dragged in kicking and screaming. (That was me for a few years while I was still resisting my gifting!) Somebody had to lead and you were drafted. It is my deep hope that you will find help in this guide to make your leading experience not only less traumatic but also filled with great joy!

Small groups or Sunday School classes may decide to simply talk through the questions that are in the lesson but study groups will benefit from additional talk points and material.

About the Leader Guide

This leader guide is a basic outline, a road map of one way to go in a class discussion. Just like there are many ways from Chicago to Chattanooga, there are different ways to run a class.

Each week you'll find background information and suggested discussion questions in this guide, but you'll always need to be on the lookout in class for timely opportunities to help your students move from Observation and Interpretation to

* Skype is a free service that allows you to use the internet to video conference in guest speakers or those who just want to listen in to your class. Learn more at www.skype.com.

Application. We want them to learn the truths of Scripture not so they can win at Bible trivia but so that their thinking will be renewed and their actions will more and more reflect the One they belong to (Romans 12:1-2). The goal, that only the Holy Spirit accomplishes, is *transformation!*

For the sake of space, we typically list only suggested discussion questions. Also, when possible we'll leave space for you to fill in your own thoughts so you don't have to go flipping back and forth between the student book and the leader guide. Finally, you may look at the material and think, "There is no way that I can cover all this in the allotted time!" If that's the case, you can pick and choose from the elements to craft your lesson.

Starting on Time

One way to start on time every week is to read through the week's main text(s) at the beginning of class. In doing this you will reinforce the importance of continually being in the text of Scripture itself. As odd as it may sound, when we study deeply the temptation to stray away from the text and toward commentaries can be intense. By reading the text every week and starting promptly (even if it is just you and your most prompt student!), you will reinforce the importance of the text and gain the added bonus of training stragglers to arrive on time.

START CLASS HERE

SEGMENT #1: CLASS BASICS

Introductions and Ground Rules

- **Introduce yourself**
- **Have class members introduce themselves**
- **Set boundaries (see below)**

Make sure you allocate adequate time the first week of class for general introductions and ground rules. If you're teaching men or a mixed group, estimate based on the size of your class. If you're teaching women, take the time you think this will require and double it. Asking everyone to share their name and respond to a specific question will help keep things moving. If you ask for "a little bit about yourself," you're sure to get more than a little bit! Start out by introducing yourself in a concise manner to set the tone. Feel free to use an icebreaker game or other ideas you have to help people connect.

You'll also want to establish ground rules during Week One. The time to set effective boundaries in any relationship is the first meeting. A boundary can always be relaxed, but it is very difficult to establish or strengthen one if you do not set it properly at the start. This applies both to how you will lead your class discussions and how you will let your class interact with you throughout the week. Depending on your situation, you may ask them to contact you primarily by e-mail and make certain times of the day off-limits. My classes know I rarely answer the phone when my kids are home

from school. That is my boundary. When they are home, my primary job is being their mom. Your class will respect this and perhaps even learn the importance of proper boundaries in their own lives from your example.

Let your class know that it is your job as the teacher/facilitator to keep the discussion on track and that you may from time to time have to reel a person in, stop a rabbit trail, or discontinue until after class an interesting but off-topic discussion. Also let them know that you do not have all the answers. No one has all the answers, even those who have studied a lifetime. While acknowledging your limitations may seem uncomfortable at first, you'll find it is freeing for everyone! If someone asks a question you can't answer, either look into it further yourself or (preferably) assign it to the questioner for further study. This will draw out future teachers—who come back with it answered and prepared to share. Assigning questions also helps people begin discerning what makes a germane question.

Encouraging your class to ask questions and helping them learn how to ask right questions is a huge part of your job as a teacher. Still, as important as questions are, more questions can be asked than we have biblical answers for. Sometimes you will simply have to answer with an honest, "I don't know."

HOW TO USE THIS STUDY

Basics of the study guide and philosophy

- **WEEKLY STUDY material**
- **FYI boxes**
- **ONE STEP FURTHER and other sidebar boxes**
- **DIGGING DEEPER boxes**

While the study is self-explanatory, reinforce its flexibility with your students. Direct them to the "How to use this study" page of their books and encourage them to find a level of study that brings joy and not guilt. They can do more one week, less the next; they can mix and match and find the fit that is right. You may have students who are overburdened and overbooked. Piling on and guiltting them with a ton of homework will not fix the problem. Rather, help them find the joy and sweetness of God's Word and ask His Spirit to begin healing through the power of the Word. Take some time to read the "How to use the study" page (prior to Week One) with them and let them know you believe in them and their ability to use this material.

Take special care in stressing the flexibility to long-time *Precept-Upon-Precept*[®] students as many have a finish-every-question-at-all-cost mentality. Such discipline in studying God's Word is beautiful. The every-last-question mind set, however, can throw people off with a flexible study. Because the material is designed to flex to very advanced students, the volume of material can overwhelm people who force themselves through every question and sidebar. Assure your class that most students won't finish every question every week by design. Some weeks they will, but probably not every week. If every student finished every week, the study would not be flexing to meet the needs of the most advanced students. The goal in allowing the material to flex is not to have people study less; it is to have each person take the next appropriate step from where they currently are and to study and apply more as they are continually drawn into deeper relationship with Jesus.

CROWD BREAKER

Use This or Make Your Own

In the book of Hebrews, we're told that Abraham "when he was called . . . went out, not knowing where he was going."

Where is the most interesting place God has had you live so far?

SEGMENT #2: INDUCTIVE STUDY BASICS**Observation | Interpretation | Application**

If your students are unfamiliar with inductive Bible study, be sure to take some time to give them the basics. They will catch up and catch on as we go, but giving them an overview will help put them in context! In recent years, I've taken to doing a very basic review of this weekly when I have students who are new to inductive study. You'll want to impress on your students that inductive Bible study simply means the Bible is our main source of truth. Before looking for insights from people and commentaries about the Bible, we get into the Word of God itself. We go to the primary source and learn to discover truth for ourselves. Inductive Bible study involves three basic components: observation, interpretation, and application.

1 Observation

This is a very interactive process, well worth the time because the truths you discover for yourself will be accurate and profound. It begins by asking the five W and H questions.

Who is speaking? Who is this about? Who are the main characters? Who is the author speaking to?

What subjects and/or events are covered in the chapter? What do you learn about the people, the events, and the teachings from the text? What instructions are given?

When did or will the events recorded occur?

Where did or will this happen? Where was it said?

Why is something said? Why will an event occur? Why this time, person, and/or place?

How will it happen? How will it be done? How is it illustrated?

Careful observation leads to interpretation—discovering what the text means.

One important part of observing the text involves identifying key words. A key word helps to “unlock” the meaning of the text. It is vital to understanding the text and is often repeated.

Help your students remember that three basic tools of **observation** are:

- Asking the **5 Ws and H**
- Identifying and marking **key words**
- Making **lists** of what they've learned from the key words

2 Interpretation

The more you observe, the easier it will be to understand God's Word. Since Scripture is the best interpreter of Scripture we'll be looking at contexts and cross-references to help us understand God's message that was communicated to the original audience. Observation and interpretation lead to application.

Help your students remember that three basic tools of **interpretation** are:

- Paying close attention to context
- Checking cross-references
- Looking for the one meaning of the text

3 Application

After we've observed the text and discovered the meaning, we need to think and live accordingly. Although the text of Scripture has one interpretation—what God inspired the author to write to his original readers—we can have numerous applications. The result is a transformed life—the more you and I are in the Word of God and adjusting our thinking and behavior to its precepts for life, the more we are changed into the likeness of Jesus Christ! He is the living Word of God who became flesh, the Savior of the world, our coming King of kings!

It is exciting to learn and know about the faith of others. It is transforming to live what we have learned!

SEGMENT #3: Consider the Way You Think

If you have enough people in your class to break into small groups, do so and have the groups discuss presuppositions students are bringing to the class. If you have a small class, simply discuss the questions on page 2 together.

If you've broken into groups, pull them back together to see what each one discussed.

Remember that at this point we are listening and examining what preconceptions and terms we are bringing to the table. For example, some people may view pride and arrogance as synonyms (and in some contexts they may be), while others will see arrogance as unacceptable and pride (for instance in a job well done) as virtuous. Don't let your students get hung up or start wrangling about English definitions of words. Let them discuss and remind them that as we go to the Scriptures, we'll let God's Word speak for itself.

What "smells" right in your life today?

What "smells" wrong?

How do you view humility? Do you see it as virtuous or weak? Why?

How do you view arrogance? Do you distinguish between pride and arrogance? If so, how?

Do you struggle with pride? How do you respond when you see it in others?

SEGMENT #4: Humility Personified: John the Baptist, John 3:22-36

- Key Talk Point:**
- Each Christian life should exemplify John's declaration: "He must increase, I must decrease."
 - Culture preaches an opposite "gospel" of upward mobility.
 - A life of obedience to Christ will *always* be at odds with culture.

John 3:22-36

John the Baptist's life and ministry give a compelling snapshot of the healthy Christian life. Jesus increases and we decrease. Not only does John accept this; he also affirms the necessity of these truths in John 3:30, "He must (Greek: *dei*) increase, I must decrease."

Up to the time Jesus appeared on the scene, the people had been pursuing John the Baptist, coming out of the city to hear his message and to be baptized by him. When Jesus arrives, everything changes. Many of the people who had shadowed John now follow the One John told them to follow. While the Baptist has no qualms about this, his disciples bristle at it saying, "He who was with you beyond the Jordan, to whom you have testified, behold, He is baptizing and all are coming to Him."

John clearly understands his place in God's economy as evidenced by the following statements:

- "A man can receive nothing unless it has been given him from heaven," v. 27
- "I am not the Christ," v. 28
- "He must increase, but I must decrease," v. 30

John knows and explains that he has been sent ahead of the Christ (v. 28)—he is not the bridegroom but the bridegroom's friend (v. 29). While Jesus is from above, John is from the earth (v. 31).

Undergirding John's proper view of self is his proper view of God. Your class may notice that John speaks of all three members of the Trinity when speaking about God—Father, Son and Spirit. While the point of this section is to use questions and answers to help your students see John's correct view of himself in relation to God, be sure to take the opportunity to review the Gospel message of John 3:36, "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him." Today may be the day of salvation for someone in your class!

Sample Discussion Questions:

If you have a large group, let your students discuss these questions around tables and then bring it back for a large group summary discussion. I suggest giving them one set of questions at a time.

Observation/Interpretation Questions:

What happens to John when Jesus enters the scene?

How does John view himself? How does John view God? How do these drive the way he responds to his changing role?

Application Questions:

What are some ways we increase ourselves and decrease Jesus in day-to-day life?

What about in ministry and in churches? (Use wisdom and discretion in asking and fielding this question. Don't let this become a "church-bashing" session.)

What specific changes would you need to make to follow John's increase/decrease paradigm?

What are some biblical ways to counteract self-centered thinking and behavior? (Depending on class responses, you may want to direct your students to Romans 12 and/or Hebrews 12:1-3.)

**SEGMENT #5: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly:
2 Timothy 3:1-5 and James 3:13-18**

- Key Talk Points:**
- There are "forms" of godliness that are not godly at all.
 - Earthly wisdom and heavenly wisdom are easily distinguished.

2 Timothy 3:1-5

As you move through this section of the discussion, help your students see how they can address Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How questions to the text for themselves.

Second Timothy 3:1-5 tells us what people “in the last days” are like. While we’re forced to live “up close and personal” in a culture, it’s critical that we understand how *God’s Word defines it* and not just how it describes itself. Why? Because the world actively sells a lie. It spins a narrative casting itself as the protagonist, the hero, while redefining terms to suit its purposes. The true Creator and Savior becomes the enemy as truth is recast, evil is called good and good is called evil (Isaiah 5:20).

Reason with your students to help them see how the culture of unbelief has glorified many behaviors the Bible calls sin:

- “lovers of self” (v. 2) have good self-esteem
- “lovers of money” (v. 2) have good financial sense
- the “boastful” (v. 2) take pride in their work
- “lovers of pleasure” (v. 4) know how to seize the day

Paul gives believers two commands:

1. **Realize** (*ginosko*) that difficult times are coming and that people will live sinfully.
2. **Avoid** (*apotrepo*) those who live in sin while “holding to a form of godliness.”

Specifically, Paul says that last-days people will be:

- lovers of self (*philautos*).
- lovers of money (*philargyros*) – see also Luke 16:14 – the Pharisees were known money lovers.
- boastful (*alazon*) – see also Romans 1:30.
- arrogant (*hyperephanos*) – see also Luke 1:51, Romans 1:30, 2 Timothy 3:2, James 4:6, 1 Peter 5:5; LXX Psalm 119:21 among others. From the Greek *hyper* (over) and *phaino* (light or shine).
- revilers (*blasphemos*) – see also Acts 6:11, 1 Tim 1:13, 2 Peter 2:1.
- disobedient to parents (*apeithes goneus*) – see also Luke 1:17, Acts 26:19, Romans 1:30, Titus 1:16, 3:3.
- ungrateful (*acharistos*) – Luke 6:35 – the Most High is kind even to ungrateful men.
- unholy (*anosios*) – 1 Timothy 1:9 – law is for sinners, unholy, profane.
- unloving (*astorgos*) – Romans 1:31 – without familial love.
- irreconcilable (*aspondos*).
- malicious gossips (*diabolos*) – literally “devils” or “devilish” in terms of slander and accusation; see also 1 Timothy 3:6, 2 Timothy 3:3, Titus 2:3.
- without self-control (*akrates*).
- brutal (*anemeros*) – without gentleness.
- haters of good (*aphilagathos*)

- treacherous (*prodotes*) – “traitor” used of Judas in Luke 6:16, translated “betrayers” in Acts 7:52.
- reckless (*propetes*) – Acts 19:36 translates as “rash.”
- conceited (*typhoo*) – see also 1 Timothy 3:6 (don’t make a new convert an elder quickly so he won’t become conceited) and 1 Timothy 6:4 (references the conceit of those who are proponents of false doctrine).
- lovers of pleasure (*philedonos*).
- hold to a form (*morphosis*) of godliness (*eusebeia*) while denying its power.

While God calls His people to love Himself and others, these love themselves (*philedonos*), money and pleasure.

Explain to your students that some Greek words that begin with an alpha (“a”) are a composite of a negation and something else, for example *astorgos* on the previous page (*unloving*). Some are clear in English because of equivalent negating prefixes (a-, dis-, un-, non-, and ir-) and suffixes (-less: *astorgos* can equally be translated *unloving* or *loveless*) while others hide. The brutal (*a-nermeroi*) are those without gentleness; the haters of good (*a-phil-agathos*) literally lack love of the good.

Paul commands believers to *realize* and *avoid* these people who claim “godliness” but deny its power. Don’t put your head in the sand, don’t deny what is there; don’t unite with false brethren. Acknowledge the reality of the wicked days we live in and particularly avoid those who claim to be heaven’s citizens but live like hell. Note carefully that Paul doesn’t say “Engage these people!” So often we’re conditioned by culture to try to figure out how to engage everyone, but that isn’t biblical. In fact, Paul says *more* than “don’t engage” these people; he says positively avoid them. If they throw themselves at you, don’t just ignore them; run away. By their behavior they show themselves to be fools who believe they’re right and who will not change apart from the work of the Holy Spirit. They are not brothers to be corrected, they are impostors to be avoided.

If you have time, show your students the strong correlation to similar words used in Romans 1:30-31.

Let your students share the biblical ways they have discovered to counteract this type of behavior. If they struggled with this, take some time to direct them to Romans 12 and the early verses of Hebrews 12.

James 3:13-18

As Paul tells Timothy to realize that he is living in oppressive days with oppressive people, James gives his readers a diagnostic tool to test the wisdom in their hearts.

In a world where pride is exalted and humility is looked down on, where an evil culture routinely spins its own “moral” compass, we need to know God’s truth for ourselves. James lays out a black and white diagnostic:

Wisdom from Above

- is gentle (*prautes*), (v. 13)
- is pure (*hagnos*), (v. 17)
- is peaceable (*eirenikos*), (v. 17)

- is gentle (*epieikes*), (v. 17)
- is reasonable (*eureithes*), (v. 17)
- is full of mercy (*eleos*) and good (*agathos*) fruits (*karpos*), (v. 17)
- unwavering (*adiakritos*) – without partiality, (v. 17)
- without hypocrisy (*anupokritos*) – without pretending, (v. 17)

Make sure your students notice that James uses the word “peace” three times in describing “wisdom from above.” Remind them that Jesus said peacemakers will be called sons of God (John 5:9). It is true peace, not just the claim of peace as in the days of Ezekiel and Jeremiah when prophet and priest would declare “Peace, peace” *when there was no peace* (Jeremiah 6:13-14).

While wisdom from above is characterized by peace and gentleness, earthly “wisdom” has a distinct bite to it as we’ll see in the next section.

Earthly Wisdom

- is bitterly (*pikros*) jealous (*zelos*), (vv. 14 and 16). For bitter see also James 3:11. *Zelos* is ethically neutral and has to qualified. Here’s it’s “bitter” but elsewhere it is used in a positive sense, as in John 2:17’s description of Jesus: “ZEAL FOR YOUR [God’s] HOUSE WILL CONSUME ME.”
- is selfishly ambitious (*eritheia*) (vv. 14 and 16) – this resides in the flesh of Christians as well (see Philippians 1:17, 2:3). See also Romans 2:8, 2 Corinthians 12:20, Galatians 5:20.
- is arrogant (*katakauchaomai*), (v. 14).
- is earthly (*epigeios*), (v. 15).
- is natural (*psychikos*), (v. 15.)
- is demonic (*daimoniodes*), (v. 15).

It accompanies disorder (*akatastasia*) and every evil (*phaulos*) thing (v. 16). See also Luke 21:9 (disturbances), 1 Corinthians 14:33 (confusion—“God is not a God of confusion, but of peace”), 2 Corinthians 6:5 (tumults), 2 Corinthians 12:20 (disturbances).

When you’re together with others, is there peace? Can you “play well with others”? Is there someone on your team who you can’t get along with? Has someone in ministry left a “trail of bodies”? When you see these negative characteristics, do you deal with them or ignore them?

There is a line between being spurring others on in the faith, stewarding them well, personally pressing on toward the upward call of God in Christ Jesus (Philippians 3:9-14) and preaching Christ from envy and strife (Philippians 1:15-17). Yes, selfishness can invade even ministry. We don’t like this but it’s true. We can’t purify our bad motives by attaching Jesus’ name to our endeavors. In fact, the self-centered can become even more aggressive *because* they have rationalized and “Christianized” their behavior. Think the Crusades.

Emphasize to your students that this is a powerful text for self-examination and that if they find they are failing the test they have a gentle God full of mercy and willing to forgive . . . to go to.

We are constantly tempted to fight against earthly wisdom with “better” earthly wisdom, but that will never do the job. Fighting toe-to-toe in the flesh always shows flawed thinking since Christians *don't* fight against flesh and blood (Ephesians 6:12).

If you have time, you may want to take your students to Galatians 5 to compare these passages with Paul's teaching on the works of the flesh versus the fruit of the Spirit. Bottom line: heavenly wisdom will issue forth in peace, earthly wisdom will yield the opposite.

Sample Discussion Questions:

Observation/Interpretation Questions:

How do the words of Paul and James compare?

What does Paul say people will be like in the last days?

According to James, how does heavenly wisdom differ from earthly wisdom?

Application Questions:

How are you at distinguishing godliness from “a form of godliness”? Explain.

How can you use James 3:13-18 to diagnose your heart? How can you share it with others?

What consequences do we face if we don't pay attention to these warnings? Have you experienced any consequences of earthly wisdom firsthand? Explain.

SEGMENT #6: Arrogance Personified: Ezekiel 28:11-19, Isaiah 14:3-15

- Key Talk Points:**
- The King of Tyre fell because of pride.
 - The serpent speaks doubt and lies.

Ezekiel 28:11-19

In each of the next two sections—Ezekiel 28 and Isaiah 14—you'll need to be diligent about keeping your class on track since the material can open doors to several other topics. In both cases the texts point to something more than typical human leaders. You may have students who don't believe these texts refer to Satan or another fallen angel. If that is the case, simply show where the descriptions seem to indicate a being who is more than a mortal man and agree that at the very least we are looking at a *supreme* example of pride.

In Ezekiel 28:11-19 the word of the LORD comes to the King of Tyre through the prophet Ezekiel. The king is referred to as "the anointed cherub who covers" (v. 14), an odd qualification for a human. The lamentation is pronounced over him.

Ezekiel describes the king in detail saying that he was:

- perfect (had the seal of perfection)
- full of wisdom
- perfect in beauty
- in Eden, the garden of God
- covered in every precious stone
- created
- the anointed cherub
- on the holy mountain of God
- walked in the midst of stones of fire (see Isaiah 6)
- blameless until unrighteousness was found in him

THEN he was:

- unrighteous
- filled with violence
- a sinner
- cast as profane from the mountain of God
- full of multitude of iniquities

The cause:

- his heart was lifted up because of beauty
- he corrupted wisdom because of splendor

The result:

- he will cease to be forever

To say the King of Tyre began well is a radical understatement. The text says among other things that he “had the seal of perfection,” was the “anointed cherub,” and was “on the holy mountain of God” until his “heart was lifted up because of [his] beauty.” Although he was full of wisdom, his splendor corrupted him. You may want to ask your students if they can think of other biblical characters who sinned in spite of great wisdom. A human poster-child for this is Solomon who in spite of wisdom beyond that of any other human being squandered his life and legacy. Wisdom amounts to nothing when divorced from a whole heart toward God.

Isaiah 14:3-15

In the taunt that Israel will take up, the recipient is called “king of Babylon” (v. 4), “the star of the morning, son of the dawn” (v. 12). He is a furious oppressor (v. 4), a wicked ruler (v. 5), an angry striker/subduer (v. 6). This powerful being who said “I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High” (v. 14) has been “cut down to the earth” (v. 12) and will be thrown into Sheol (v. 15).

This “king of Babylon” thinks God’s throne is attainable for himself, that he can be as God. Note his self-orientation in the following statements:

- I will ascend to heaven (v. 13).
- I will raise my throne above the stars of God (v. 13).
- I will sit on the mount of the assembly (v. 13).
- I will ascend above the heights of the clouds (v. 14).
- I will make myself like the Most High (v. 14).

Everything about this inflated self-perspective is anti-God, anti-Christ. Every unregenerate human attempts to dominate, oppress, and subjugate others while attempting to raise themselves up. Scripture pictures Satan as lord of this evil, the apex of pride and rebellion. It is sobering to see where this climbing and clawing behavior originates.

Sample Discussion Questions:

In what ways do people today behave like these negative examples?

How do you think a person’s view of God impacts their view of themselves? How does this affect how they live?

Wrap-Up Questions:

What is your key take-away point this week?

How will you live it out?

Week Two

Wrong Perception, Wrong Reality

Class-at-a-Glance

<i>Segments</i>	<i>1 Hour Class</i>	<i>Topic</i>
Segment 1:	5 min.	Review basic concepts
Segment 2:	30 min.	Uzziah 2 Kings 15:1-7 2 Chronicles 26
Segment 3:	15 min.	Isaiah Isaiah 6:1-8
Segment 4:	10 min.	Daniel Daniel 9:1-9

START CLASS HERE**SEGMENT #1: Review****Review Basic Concepts**

A little review each week will cement the basics and give your class a framework for study. Although we'll focus on specific inductive tools each week, keeping the basic components of OBSERVATION, INTERPRETATION, and APPLICATION in front of your class consistently will equip them for a lifetime of handling God's Word. Always remind them that the goal is transformation! We don't learn for the sake of learning; we learn because God uses His Word to transform us, conforming us more and more into the image of His Son. Familiarity with the basics will give your students confidence to work through their homework and begin applying and living the texts.

Review Questions:

What are the components of inductive Bible study?

*What is **Observation** and why is it important? What question does it answer?*

*How is **Interpretation** different from **Observation**?*

*What do we need for proper **Application**?*

Application needs to be grounded in the single God-intended meaning of the text, its interpretation.

Be aware at this point that you can run into two distinct problems:

1. Some people do not want to apply. They seek knowledge but bristle at application.
2. Others want to apply the text without dealing first with what God said to the original hearers. They want to know "What this means to me" before "What God said."

It is important for you to continually guide your class toward application that comes from the text. When discussions veer toward speculation or issues that do not promote life-change, redirect them to consider what the Author intends.

For those who gravitate toward opinions and ungrounded applications, gently direct them with questions like “Where do you see that in the text?” Continually point them to the text and appropriate application. It may take some repetition, but they will learn. Always be gentle in your approach remembering Proverbs 16:21b that the “sweetness of speech increases persuasiveness.”

Review Questions:

What did you learn about selfless living from John the Baptist's example?

If self-centered behavior is nothing new (see Ezekiel 28/Isaiah 14) and actually will continue to increase (2 Timothy 3), how do believers need to prepare themselves for action?

What wisdom diagnostic does James 3 give? Have you used it this week?

SEGMENT #2: Uzziah

- Key Talk Points:**
- We need both 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles for the complete picture.
 - Uzziah did well when God helped him.
 - He did poorly when he decided to help himself.

Context/Comments:

In these parallel passages on King Azariah (aka Uzziah) of Judah we see a full picture of a man who began well but brought calamity on himself when he started believing his own press. As you work through this section of the text, help your students to see the **contrasts** not only between Uzziah and Isaiah but also between the beginning of Uzziah's life and the end of it. Remind them that watching for comparisons—both similarities and contrasts—will help them **observe** the text well.

2 Kings 15:1-7

Azariah (“Yahweh has helped”) reigned 52 years in Judah from the time he was 16 until his death at 68. His reign overlapped that of Jeroboam 1 of Israel. Both the 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles accounts grade him as having done “right in the sight of the Lord,” and yet he finished weakly. In this regard he falls into a dubious category with others like Asa, Solomon, Joash, Gideon, and even Elijah. While he did right “according to all that his father Amaziah had done” (v. 3), he did not tear down the high places which were bastions of idol worship in the land.

Standing alone, 2 Kings paints a perplexing picture of a king deemed good being struck with leprosy. The question “Why?” leaps off the page. Use this as an opportunity to help your students understand the wonder of **cross-referencing** to let **Scripture interpret Scripture** as 2 Kings points directly to the parallel and expanded record in 2 Chronicles.

2 Chronicles 26

While Azariah means “Yahweh has helped,” Uzziah means “Yahweh is my strength.” Both were true of this long-reigning king but he forgot both truths as his power grew.

While the basics of the account are consistent between 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles, the chronicler fills in the details of why God struck Uzziah with leprosy and how a good king ended up making such a terrible decision.

In Chronicles, the contrast between Uzziah’s early reign and later life shows throughout chapter 26:

Early Reign	Later Life
Did right in sight of God (v. 4)	Strong, proud, acted corruptly (v. 16)
God helped him (vv. 7, 15)	Army helped him (v. 13)
Sought God (v. 5)	Unfaithful to God (v. 16)
Listened to Zechariah’s counsel (v. 5)	Rejected 80 priests (v. 19)

In addition to showing your students the value of cross-referencing, this is a great place to help them learn first-hand how helpful lists can be. It’s critical that they understand how this consolidates information and brings clarity. This inductive tool feels like “busy work” to some, but it is a valuable way to pay attention to detail.

Azariah in 2 Kings 15:1-7 and 2 Chronicles 26:

- reigned concurrently with Jeroboam 2 of Israel (2 Kings 15:1)
- was son of Amaziah of Judah (2 Kings 15:1; 2 Chronicles 26:1)
- was 16 years old when he became king of Judah (2 Kings 15:2; 2 Chronicles 26:3)
- was made king by the people in place of his father (2 Chronicles 26:1)*
- built Eloth and restored it to Judah (2 Chronicles 26:2)
- reigned 52 years in Jerusalem (2 Kings 15:2; 2 Chronicles 26:3)
- had a Jewish mother—Jecoliah of Jerusalem (2 Kings 15:2; 2 Chronicles 26:3)
- did right in the sight of the LORD (2 Kings 15:3; 2 Chronicles 26:4)
- was struck with leprosy by the LORD (2 Kings 15:5; 2 Chronicles 26:20)
- lived in a separate house while leprous (2 Kings 15:5; 2 Chronicles 26:21)
- co-reigned with Jotham while leprous (2 Kings 15:52; Chronicles 26:21)
- was buried in the city of David (2 Kings 15:7) in the field of a grave that belonged to the kings because of leprosy (2 Chronicles 26:23)

* Azariah is referred to as Uzziah in this passage.

- sought God in the days of Zechariah (2 Chronicles 26:5)
- prospered by God as long as he sought Him (2 Chronicles 26:5)
- helped by God politically and militarily against:
 - Philistines (2 Chronicles 26:6)
 - Arabians (2 Chronicles 26:7)
 - Meunites (2 Chronicles 26:7)
 - Ammonites (2 Chronicles 26:8)
- grew in fame because he was very strong (2 Chronicles 26:8)
- accomplished many things (2 Chronicles 26:10)
 - built towers
 - hewed cisterns
- possessed much land and many servants (2 Chronicles 26:10)
 - much livestock
 - lowland, plain, hill country, and fertile fields
 - plowmen
 - vinedressers
- amassed armies (2 Chronicles 26:11-15)
 - battle-ready, highly equipped
 - elite army of 307,500 to wage war and help the king
- employed inventors to build engines of war (2 Chronicles 26:15)
- “marvelously helped” by God until he was strong (2 Chronicles 26:15)

When Azariah Became Strong He:

- became proud (2 Chronicles 26:16)
- acted corruptly (2 Chronicles 26:16)
- was unfaithful to the LORD (2 Chronicles 26:16)
- entered the temple to burn incense (2 Chronicles 26:16)
- was opposed by the priests (2 Chronicles 26:18)
- became enraged with the priests (2 Chronicles 26:19)
- hastened out of temple when struck with leprosy (2 Chronicles 26:20)
- was a leper to the day of his death (2 Chronicles 26:21)
- was cut off from the house of the LORD (2 Chronicles 26:21)
- was written about in Isaiah (2 Chronicles 26:22)

In Uzziah we see a similar cycle.

The young king sought God when he needed Him. But as God prospered and strengthened him, Uzziah began to “strengthen himself” and rely on himself instead of God. Soon he began to replace God’s fame with his own. It’s not a unique story. As sin, pride never *knocks* at the front door; it *crouches* (Genesis 4:7), waiting to pounce without warning. It sometimes attacks when our attention is directed, as in this case, in the mirror. And even when we’re diligent to combat it, it relentlessly sets about slithering in to infest by another route.

Even among the greatest of men, there is none like the Almighty. Mere humans can but dwell in His shadow, but in spite of this the adversary continually tempts us to usurp.

Sample Discussion Questions:

How did Uzziah misuse God’s good gifts? What did he already have? What did he usurp?

How do we at times do the same?

Do we ever contribute to others’ failures by elevating them more highly than we should? In other words, can our “idolatry” of people cause damage to them as well as to ourselves? Explain.

What can we learn from Uzziah to keep us from sinning against God??

SEGMENT #3: Isaiah

- Key Talk Points:**
- Humble Isaiah’s vision comes in the year of proud Uzziah’s death.
 - Isaiah’s life is informed by how he sees God.

Isaiah 6:1-8

Isaiah 6 opens with the death of King Uzziah who thought much of himself and tried to approach God on his own terms. Although God had greatly helped the him, Uzziah stopped depending on God as his strength grew and started depending on himself. Isaiah stands in stark contrast. It’s not an accident that humble Isaiah’s vision of God comes in the year of proud Uzziah’s death.

Seeing a vision of the holy LORD of hosts enthroned, lofty and exalted as king, worshiped by Serephim, and all His glory filling the earth Isaiah sees himself in comparison and responds with “Woe is me!” Isaiah realizes his own sin and his unworthiness in comparison to God. He also sees and identifies with the sins of his people . . . he may be better than his countrymen in some regards, but he is still one of them as Daniel evaluated himself, which we saw this week.

Help your students reflect on the profound difference between pride which rationalizes sin as “their” problem and humility that knows it as a “we” problem.

Isaiah’s correct view of himself does not paralyze him. Because of God’s forgiveness, it frees him to live a life of further service to God.

Sample Discussion Questions:

How do we do better if we admit that we are at least part of the problem in the sin of our community? Our country?

Are you a “we” or a “they” thinker with regard to sin? What about your church? Explain.

SEGMENT #4: Daniel

Key Talk Points: • Righteous Daniel identifies with the people’s sin.
• “They” and “we” prayers.

Daniel 9:1-9

Daniel knew why his people were in captivity and when he read the writing of the prophet Jeremiah he learned that the exile would last 70 years. In response to this, he humbled himself before God seeking Him “by prayer and supplication, with fasting, sackcloth and ashes.” Daniel, of whom nothing negative is said in all of Scripture lumps himself in with his wicked countrymen when he says “we have sinned.” *We, us, and our* fill his prayer.

The young man who neither ate the king’s food nor bowed to his culture, numbers himself with his sinful brothers. He doesn’t pray for God to forgive “them.” He confesses as one of the rebels who deserves open shame. What an example to you and me . . .

Sample Discussion Questions:

What did you learn from Daniel's view of himself, others, and God?

If you were to pray for your people today as Daniel did for his, what kinds of things would you confess?

Wrap-Up Questions:

What is your key take-away point this week?

How will you live it out?

Week Three

Living Unentitled in a Me-First Culture

Class-at-a-Glance

<i>Segments</i>	<i>1 Hour Class</i>	<i>Topic</i>
Segment 1:	5 min.	Review
Segment 2:	10 min.	Overview • Luke 1-7
Segment 3:	15 min.	Zacharias and Elizabeth • Luke 1
Segment 4:	15 min.	Mary • Luke 1
Segment 5:	15 min.	God's View of the Humble • Proverbs 3:34 • James 4:6-10 • 1 Peter 5:5-7

START CLASS HERE

SEGMENT #1: Review

Review Basic Concepts

Review Questions:

What are the components of inductive Bible study?

How do they function together?

What risks do we run if we don't correctly observe the text? (Misinterpretation and misapplication)

What risk do we run if we don't apply personally?

SEGMENT #2: Luke 1-7 Overview

- Key Talk Points:**
- John and Jesus foretold and born.
 - Like Isaiah, Peter knew he was a sinful man.

Luke 1-7

Don't take too long on this section as we want to spend the bulk of our time focusing on the first chapter. Below are some of the highlights your class may mention. Again, we're just setting general context here, so make sure your class has the overall flow but try not to bog down in specifics. Instead of having them talk in small groups about this section, simply go through it informally together.

Luke 1 John the Baptist's and Jesus' births foretold; John born to a priestly family.

Luke 2 Jesus born to a poor virgin.

Anna and Simeon at temple identify Him when He was a baby.

Mary and Joseph "lose" Jesus at the temple when He's 12.

Luke 3 John the Baptist's ministry begins, preaches repentance.
John baptizes Jesus.

Luke 4 Jesus:
Tempted in wilderness
Begins public ministry
Rejected in hometown
Casts out demons and heals people
Identified as "the Holy One of God" by demons

Luke 5 Jesus:
Calls disciples
Heals more people and forgives sins

Luke 6 Jesus:
Heals on the Sabbath
Chooses the twelve
Teaches

Luke 7 Jesus heals centurion's servant and raises a widow's only son.
John sends disciples to ask Jesus if He is the Expected One.
Jesus tells parable.

Mark 6:14-32 records the end of John's life, his dying at the hands of Herod.

As you talk through these chapters, make sure your class identifies Elizabeth, Zacharias, Mary, Anna, and Simeon as persons of interest. Also, see if any of them picked up on the similarity of Isaiah's response to the vision of God with Peter's response to Jesus in Luke 5:8: "Go away from me Lord, for I am a sinful man."

SEGMENT #3: Zacharias and Elizabeth

Key Talk Points:

- God builds humility into people born with religious advantages.
- How does having a sense of entitlement (yours or others) affect you?

Luke 1

On paper, Zacharias and Elizabeth had almost everything—born of priestly stock, righteous in God's sight, blessed with long life. The one thing they lacked, though, brought disgrace. Elizabeth was barren and the couple childless. Take your class through Luke 1 verse by verse to see what they learned about this godly couple.

Facts about Zacharias

v. 5

- priest (division of Abijah)
- wife from priestly line (Elizabeth from daughters of Aaron)

v. 6

- righteous in sight of God
- walked blamelessly

v. 7

- childless
- barren wife
- old, advanced in years

v. 8

- active priest, "performing his priestly service"

v. 9

- chosen by lot to enter temple and burn incense

v. 11

- stood before an angel "standing to the right of the altar of incense."

v. 12

- became troubled and afraid by the angel

v. 13

- commanded "Don't be afraid" by the angel
- his petition was heard
- told Elizabeth will bear a son
- told the son's name will be "John"

Specific Prophecies about John

- will be great in the sight of the Lord
- will be filled with the Holy Spirit in womb
- will turn many of the sons of Israel back to the Lord their God
- will go before Jesus in the spirit and power of Elijah
- will make ready a people prepared for the Lord

v. 18

- questions the angel "How will I know this for certain?"

v. 63

- obediently names son John

v. 67

- filled with Holy Spirit and prophecies

Facts about Elizabeth

v. 5

- daughter of Aaron (i.e. in the priestly bloodline)

v. 6

- righteous
- kept God's Law

v. 7

- old and barren

v. 13

- pregnancy foretold by Gabriel

v. 24

- became pregnant in old age
- secluded herself for five months

v. 25

- disgrace taken away by God

v. 41

- filled with Holy Spirit when Mary comes to see her

v. 57

- gave birth to son in her old age

v. 60

- says son's name is John when everyone thought he should be named after his father

Zacharias and Elizabeth were godly, faithful . . . and old. Elizabeth's barrenness put them both in a strange position culturally. Since their society so highly valued progeny, any sense of rank from their priestly caste would be offset by this "shame."

Help your students process the facts they've compiled. For example, it's notable that Zacharias and Elizabeth are both called "righteous in God's sight" because although barrenness was sometimes associated with disobedience and judgment (see Exodus 23:26, Hosea 9:14) Luke makes sure his readers know this is *not* why Elizabeth is without a child.

Childless Elizabeth (v. 7) and voiceless Zacharias (v. 20) walk blamelessly and fulfill God's plan. There is no bitterness or anger, there is no second-fiddle grousing about Mary's Son being greater, only joy over the coming Savior (v. 41).

They are an advance picture of Romans 5 truth: tribulation brings about perseverance; perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope.

Sample Discussion Questions:

What religious and other advantages were you born with or given? Do you have a sense of "entitlement" because of them? If you have had none, have you been jealous of others'?

How have you dealt with these feelings? How did Zacharias and Elizabeth respond when life didn't measure up to their expectations? What have you learned from them?

SEGMENT #4: Mary

- Key Talk Points:**
- Mary signs up for a double-dose of humility.
 - Elizabeth encourages Mary.

Luke 1

Unlike Zacharias and Elizabeth's public status, Mary's status with God is invisible. God's favor is, of course, the only favor that truly matters, but having no societal status still comes with its challenges. Like Zacharias, Mary receives a message from God via Gabriel. The angel brings the news while she is a virgin engaged to be married. Already in a humble state, she selflessly submits to a condition that will guarantee humiliation in a culture that rejects adultery and fornication based on God's Law.

The sacrifice that Mary and Joseph bring to the temple after Jesus' birth provides evidence of their modest means. According to Leviticus 12:6-8, a woman was to bring a sacrificial lamb to the temple after the birth of a child so she could be cleansed. Those unable to afford a lamb were to bring either two turtledoves or two young pigeons, which is precisely what we see in Luke 2:21-24:

- 21 *And when eight days had passed, before His circumcision, His name was then called Jesus, the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb.*
- 22 *And when the days for their purification according to the law of Moses were completed, they brought Him up to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord*
- 23 *(as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "EVERY firstborn MALE THAT OPENS THE WOMB SHALL BE CALLED HOLY TO THE LORD"),*
- 24 *and to offer a sacrifice according to what was said in the Law of the Lord, "A PAIR OF TURTLEDOVES OR TWO YOUNG PIGEONS."*

This humble young girl who ponders the angel's words and willingly submits to a career of humiliation has found favor with the only One who truly matters—the Lord. And if there was room for her to doubt, God provided the additional encouragement of Elizabeth's own pregnancy in spite of barrenness, which stood as a confirmation to Mary's in spite of virginity.

Mary, like Isaiah, has a right view of God and self. She regards herself as a "bond-slave" (v. 38, 48) and knows that God is *the* "Mighty One" and *her* "Savior."

In this one chapter Luke introduces his readers to two unlikely mothers, one a virgin, the other barren. For one the unexpected pregnancy would bring dishonor, for the other it would finally do away with her "disgrace among men" (Luke 1:25). One woman was very old, the other very young, but both were righteous and favored by God. Both bore sons who were prophesied; both sons would preach repentance for the forgiveness of sins and die bringing God's planned salvation to the world.

Sample Discussion Questions:

How do you view God? How do you view yourself?

When obedience is hard and potentially humiliating, how well do you do at it?

SEGMENT #5: God's View of Pride and Humility

- Key Talk Points:**
- The world promotes and rewards pride.
 - God opposes the proud.

Context/Comments:

In this section we looked at two New Testament writers, James and Peter, who quote from Proverbs 3:34 with reference to pride and humility. In our workbook, we looked at both the NASB and ESV translations. James and Peter likely quoted from the LXX, the Greek translation of the Hebrew scriptures.

Proverbs 3:34

*Though He scoffs at the scoffers,
Yet He gives grace to the afflicted. (NASB)*

Both “scoff” and “scoffer” come from the Hebrew root *ts* which means “to boast.” The word has a highly negative connotation. It conveys not confidence in a job well done (e.g. I’m proud of myself for exercising”) but rather contempt and scorn for others. Both the NASB and ESV capture this negative sense in their translations from the Hebrew.

Contrasted with the scornful scoffer is the “humble” (ESV) or “afflicted” (NASB). The Hebrew *ani* carries a range of meaning from poor and weak to humble or afflicted. The *ani* is one who suffers in some way or ways.

James 4:6-10

James and Peter, both following the LXX, write that God is opposed to (Greek: *antitasso*, literally “arranged against”) the proud (Greek: *hyperephanos*, one who over [*hyper*] shines or shows [*phaino*]; at the core the proud elevate themselves to the point of thinking they have no need of God). In addition to James and Peter, Mary uses the word in Luke’s account and Paul uses it in Romans and 2 Timothy to describe the godless.

Luke 1:51-52 *“He has done mighty deeds with His arm; He has scattered those who were proud (hyperephanos) in the thoughts of their heart. He has brought down rulers from their thrones, and has exalted those who were humble.”*

Romans 1:28-32 *“And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper, being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; they are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant (hyperephanos), boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful; and although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them.”*

2 Timothy 3:1-5 *“But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant (hyperephanos), revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; avoid such men as these.”*

James doesn't leave his readers hanging with this truth about God's disposition toward the proud and the humble. He uses ten imperatives to teach them how to live God's way:

- Submit to God
- Resist the devil
- Draw near to God
- Cleanse your hands
- Purify your hearts
- Be miserable
- Mourn
- Weep
- Let laughter be turned into mourning
- Humble yourselves

Make sure your class understands that this is not a call to live morose, miserable lives. A relationship with Jesus brings joy and peace along with persecution and tribulation. The context here is repentance from hostility toward God. As Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:4) those who mourn over their sin will be comforted.

1 Peter 5:5-7

Peter also puts feet to living humbly and adds the kicker that humility is not something that plays out only in the vertical relationship; it also has a horizontal element. This is hard teaching. It makes sense for finite human beings to humble themselves before an infinite God, but living humbly before other fallen humans? Oh my! This is rubber-meets-the-road time. In the early verses of 1 Peter 5, Peter has been talking to the elders. He exhorts them to lead and shepherd like Jesus, living as humble examples and not overbearing lords. Sheep need to be shepherded and guided, not driven like cattle.

Against this backdrop of good shepherds, the younger men are to be subject to them and everyone is to clothe (aorist middle imperative) themselves with humility toward *one another*. The choice is pretty clear: we can place ourselves *under* or God will place Himself *against*.

Sample Discussion Questions:

How does God view haughtiness according to Proverbs 6:17, 2 Samuel 22:28 and Psalm 18:27?

What, if any, help do you need in the area of clothing yourself with humility toward one another?

Wrap-Up Questions:

What have been your biggest takeaways this week?

How is truth you're learning changing the way you think and act?

Week Four

Upside Down: Living Like Jesus and John

Class-at-a-Glance

<i>Segments</i>	<i>1 Hour Class</i>	<i>Topic</i>
Segment 1:	5 min.	Review
Segment 2:	15 min.	Luke 1: John the Baptist and Jesus
Segment 3:	10 min.	Luke 3:1-22
Segment 4:	10 min.	John 1:1-34
Segment 5:	10 min.	Exodus 3:13-15, Matthew 11:25-30
Segment 6:	10 min.	Mark 10:35-45

START CLASS HERE

SEGMENT #1: Review

Review Questions:

What are the components of inductive Bible study?

What is the most important thing you've learned or been reminded of up to this point?

How are you doing with clothing yourself with humility toward others? How about toward your closest others . . . your family?

SEGMENT #2: Luke 1—John the Baptist and Jesus

- Key Talk Points:**
- John, though humanly entitled to much, humbled himself.
 - Jesus, God Himself, humbled Himself to become a man.
 - Jesus also humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death on a cross (Philippians 2:8—but we'll get to this later!).

Context/Comments:

The Jews during this period are expecting a messiah in line with their understanding of Old Testament prophecies. They are excited to find out who John the Baptist will turn out to be but ultimately they want a military messiah who will conquer Rome and free them from their enslavement. Jesus—the promised Messiah—will be more than they want but, except for a few followers, they will reject him in the end.

Last week we looked primarily at the mothers of John and Jesus in the Luke 1 account. This week our focus will be on their miraculously-conceived sons. Talk your class through the lists they compiled about John and Jesus, comparing as you go.

John:

- birth, name, and purpose foretold to his father, (v. 13)
- born into improbable circumstances: old parents and a barren mother, (v. 7)

Other things about John that were foretold included that he will . . .

- be “great in the sight of the Lord,” (v. 15) (Help them cross-reference this with Jesus’ words about John in Matthew 11:11, Luke 7:28.)
- not drink wine or liquor (implying that he will be a Nazarite; see Numbers 6:1-21), (v. 15)
- be filled with the Holy Spirit from the womb, (v. 15)
- turn sons of Israel back to the Lord, (v. 16)
- be a forerunner preparing the Lord’s way, (v. 17)
- be a prophet of the Most High, (v. 76)

Jesus:

- birth, name, and title foretold to His mother, (vv. 31-32)
- born under impossible circumstances, with a virgin mother, (v. 34) (but “nothing will be impossible with God,” v. 37)

Other prophecies of Jesus: He will be . . .

- great, (v. 32)
- called the Son of the Most High, (v. 32)
- conceived through the Holy Spirit, (v. 32)
- given the throne of David, (v. 32)
- the One who reigns over the house of Jacob forever, (v. 33)
- holy, (v. 35)
- called the Son of God, (v. 35)
- Lord, (v. 43)
- a horn of salvation, (v. 68)
- the Most High, (v. 76)
- the Sunrise from on high who will visit and shine on those in darkness, (v. 79)

In Luke’s account, John’s birth is foretold to his father Zacharias while Jesus’ birth is foretold to his mother Mary. Matthew records the angel Gabriel’s words to Joseph. Both birth announcements come prior to conception, both declare the sons’ names, one will be filled with the Holy Spirit from the womb, the other will be conceived through the Holy Spirit. Jesus, the Son of God, the Lord, will be great and John, His prophet, will be great in *His* sight. Again, help your class see this by cross-referencing Luke 7:28 where Jesus declares that “among those born of women there is no one greater (Greek: *megas*) than John.”

The big application struggle in this study and in life is getting past “human standards” of thinking; we are immersed in “me-first” culture. John and Jesus’ lives defy human standards and repeatedly flip the expected on its head. By human standards John, the son of a priest, should have been greater than the carpenter Jesus, the son of a poor unwed mother. By cultural standards at the time, the priest’s son should have been named after his father or at least someone in the family. People were shocked when his father named him John (the Hebrew *Yochanan* means “*Yahweh* is gracious”).

This priest’s son also should have been ministering as his father rather than living in the wilderness and “sticking it” to the religious leaders (“You brood of vipers”). John could have thought a great deal about himself; after all, not only was he from the priestly line of Aaron but his miraculous birth was prophesied by Isaiah and announced by Gabriel. Instead of bending to the world’s way of thinking, John fulfilled his calling.

Let’s not forget that, if it makes little sense for John to humble himself, it makes even less sense for God to become a man and humble Himself in order to save those who have *chosen* to make themselves His enemies. The Gospel itself is counter to man’s fallen thinking. Depending on the make-up of your class and their familiarity with the Gospel, this is a great time to review the basics of the Gospel message, particularly if you have some who are still questioning the claims of Jesus.

Truths about The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit:

Whatever you’re studying, always encourage your students to pay attention to what texts teach about God. Here are some key points you’ll want to make sure they notice.

God the Father:

Throughout Luke 1 God is called righteous, LORD, and Savior. He is also called the Mighty One and is repeatedly said to be merciful. He is a God who communicates to His people as He chooses. He hears and answers prayers. He plans and He fulfills. With Him, nothing is impossible.

God the Son:

God the Son has a name: Jesus. He is called the Holy Child, the Son of God, and the Son of the Most High. In saying that John will go on “BEFORE THE LORD TO PREPARE HIS WAYS,” (v. 76), Zacharias equates Jesus with YHWH Himself. The Son will be given the throne of David and will reign forever. He is fully man, but not merely man. The text clearly says Jesus was born of a virgin and conceived by the Holy Spirit.

God the Holy Spirit:

In the days before Pentecost, reference to the work of the Holy Spirit is typically limited but not in Luke 1. Jesus is conceived by the Spirit who comes upon Mary; the Spirit fills John while he is still in his mother’s womb; Elizabeth herself is filled with the Spirit when she sees Mary and John leaps in her womb, and finally Zacharias is filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesies.

Sample Discussion Questions:

In what ways did both John and Jesus live selflessly on behalf of others?

What can you learn from their behavior and submission to God's plan that will help you live more according to God's Word and ways when you're tempted to yell or even think, "Hey! That's not fair! I deserve better!"? (Teachers: Do be careful with this question to make sure that the discussion does not take a path towards enabling any sort of abusive behavior or encouraging victims of abuse to give abusers a "pass.")

What significant truths did you learn about God in this section?

SEGMENT #3: Luke 3:1-22

- Key Talk Points:**
- John gave up his "rights" to religious position and comfort.
 - John embraced his difficult mission.

Context/Comments:

John the Baptist is set in an Israel dominated by all of the political rulers and religious rulers mentioned—from Tiberius the Caesar all the way to Caiaphas the high priest. While all these rulers are in place, God's Word comes to John not in a temple or a palace but in the wilderness as was foretold by Isaiah the prophet over 700 years earlier. Talk though the basics about what your class learned about John and the instructions he gave. Help them understand that making lists based on key words does take some time but yields helpful results when we're patient.

Facts about John

- the Word of the Lord came to him in the wilderness (v. 2)
- came into the district around the Jordan preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins (v. 3)
- is the voice in the wilderness that Isaiah had prophesied about (v. 4)
- addressed the crowds as a "brood of vipers" (v. 7)
- warned that trees that do not bear good fruit will be thrown into the fire (v. 9)
- people wondered if he was the Christ (v. 15)
- pointed to the One who will baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire (v. 16)

- baptized with water (v. 16)
- exhorted and preached the gospel (v. 18)
- reprimanded by Herod because he spoke against his sin (v. 19)
- imprisoned by Herod (v. 20)

John's Instructions

- “repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of their sins” (v. 3)
- “make ready the way of the LORD, make His paths straight” (v. 4)
- “bear fruits in keeping with repentance” (v. 8)
- share if you have two tunics or extra food (v. 11)
- if you're a tax collector, don't collect more than you're supposed to (v. 13)
- if you're a soldier, don't take money by force; don't falsely accuse; be content with your paycheck (v. 14)

John comes preaching “a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins” (v. 3). Remind your students that repentance comes from the Greek verb *metanoeo*, a compound word meaning to “change [*meta*] mind [*nous*].”

As you discuss John's message with your class, make sure they pay attention to who his main audience was—Jewish people who needed to be called back to the Father. Remember, Jesus came preaching to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Matthew 15:24).

Sample Discussion Questions:

What was John's message to the people of his day? How did he present it?

Who was his main audience? Do you think this affects the way he presented? Why/why not?

According to John, what is repentance and what kind of fruit does it bear?

SEGMENT #4: John 1:1-34, Exodus 3:13-15

- Key Talk Points:**
- Jesus is superior to everything but became flesh for us.
 - John's humility shows as he defines himself entirely in relation to Jesus.
 - John was preparing the way for YHWH.

John 1:1-34

John's purpose in life was to point to Another—to Jesus, God incarnate. He was a witness; he testified to everything Jesus is "so that all might believe through him" (John 1:7). Help your students talk through a simple comparison between Jesus and John making sure to draw out the superiority of Jesus and John's acceptance of his role as Isaiah's "voice in the wilderness" preparing the way of the LORD.

Facts about Jesus

- was the Word (v. 1)
- was from the beginning (v. 2)
- was God (v. 2)
- brought all things into existence (vv. 3, 10)
- in Him was life that was the light of men (v. 4)
- is the true light (vv. 7, 9)
- was in the world (v. 10)
- was neither recognized nor received by His own (vv. 10-11)
- gave right to become children of God to those who received Him (v. 12)
- became flesh (v. 14)
- dwelt among us (v. 14)
- has glory as the only begotten from the Father (v. 14)
- is full of grace and truth; grace and truth are realized through Him (vv. 14, 17)
- was testified to by John (v. 15)
- came after John but existed before him (vv. 15, 30)
- has a higher rank than John (vv. 15, 30)
- is the agent of grace and truth (v. 17)
- is "the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father" (v. 18)
- has explained God (v. 18)
- is the Lamb of God (v. 29)
- takes away the sins of the world (v. 29)
- receives the Spirit who remains on Him (v. 32)

- baptizes in the Holy Spirit (v. 33)
- is the Son of God (v. 34)

Facts about John

- was a man (v. 6)
- was sent from God (v. 6)
- came as a witness to the light (v. 7)
- testified about Jesus
 - He has higher rank (v. 15)
 - He existed before John (v. 15)
 - the Spirit descended and remained on Him (v. 32)
 - “. . . this is the Son of God” (v. 34)
- testified that he was not the Christ (v. 20)
- was a “voice of one crying in the wilderness” (v. 23)
- was commanded to “Make straight the way of the LORD” (v. 23)
- was baptized in water (v. 26)
- did not initially recognize Jesus (v. 31)

Exodus 3:13-15

On page 58 of the workbook, your students saw that Isaiah 40:3—the verse John quotes (John 1:23) with reference to him being the one who prepares the way of the LORD—uses the same Hebrew for LORD as Exodus 3:13-15 where God tells Moses that His name is YHWH, “I AM WHO I AM.” John the Baptist is preparing the way for YHWH who will come in the flesh. These combined passages (just a few of many) provide a strong argument for the deity of Jesus Christ—God in the flesh.

Sample Discussion Questions:

What does this text show us about humility in both the lives of Jesus and John?

What can you learn from this that you can apply to your life?

John described his life primarily in relation to Jesus (at least in the text that we see). How would you describe your life in relation to Jesus?

SEGMENT #5: Matthew 11:25-30

- Key Talk Points:**
- Jesus is the perfect picture of humility.
 - Because we are yoked to Jesus, we can live at rest in gentleness and humility.

Context/Comments:

In verse 25, a word drops from the NASB translation that I think is helpful to pay attention to. The Greek word *apokritheis* indicates an answer to a question or a tie-in to something that has previously happened. In this case, Jesus' reference to "infants" contrasts these humble folk to the wise-in-their-own-eyes leaders of Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum.

As you talk through this section, direct your students to Luke 11:46:

"But He said, 'Woe to you lawyers as well! For you weigh men down with burdens hard to bear, while you yourselves will not even touch the burdens with one of your fingers.'"

The religious leaders weighed the people down with burdens beyond their Law which were too much to bear. Jesus says that His way is light because He has fulfilled the Law so that when we are yoked to Him, He carries the burden.

The certainty of this passage for believers is precisely what makes it unpalatable to a world that thinks it knows it all. Jesus is clear that "all things" have been handed over to Him and that no one can know the Father except those the Son chooses to reveal Him to (Matthew 11:27). There is but one way to God and that is through Jesus. The proud will find only a path that leads to destruction. The narrow path that leads to life and rest, comes only through Jesus (Matthew 7:13-14).

Every other instance of yoke (Greek: *zygos*) in New Testament is associated with harshness. The Pharisees put a yoke on the people that they could not bear (Acts 15:10) a yoke Paul calls slavery (Galatians 5:1, 1 Timothy 6:1).

Jesus' yoke, by contrast, is good and easy and His burden light because He pulls the load. I submit and He empowers me to walk in the good works which He prepared in advance for me to do, but it is entirely by His power at work through me. Perhaps the easiest way for our culture to think of this is a tandem bicycle with Jesus sitting on the front seat.)

Jesus goes on to define Himself as "gentle" and "humble in heart."

Gentle

Matthew is the only Gospel writer to quote Jesus' use of the Greek *praus* ("gentle," see also Matthew 5:5 and 21:5) for His followers ("Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth" Matthew 5:5), Himself ("I am gentle and humble in heart" Matthew 11:29) and a prophecy about Him from Zechariah 9:9 ("BEHOLD YOUR KING IS COMING TO YOU, GENTLE, AND MOUNTED ON A DONKEY" Matthew 21:5).

Although our culture often identifies “gentle” with “doormat,” the Greek knows none of that. In fact, in secular Greek *praus* indicated balance. In the face of a threat, *praus* lies between the extremes of over-reacting and doing nothing.

Humble in Heart

The Greek word translated “humble” in Matthew 11:29 is *tapeinos*. The adjective typically means people in low positions, some chosen, others not. Here is a sampling:

humble like a child (Matthew 18:4)

humble state of His [God's] bondservant (Luke 1:48)

serving with *humility*, tears, and trials (Acts 20:19)

meek as opposed to bold (2 Corinthians 10:1)

with *humility* regarding others as more important (Philippians 2:3)

Jesus *humiliated* Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death (Philippians 2:8)

humble means – having less (Philippians 4:12)

humble circumstances contrast with high ones (James 1:9)

Jesus exemplified a humble heart. Peter tells us this is the proper heart before a holy God:

“Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you” (1 Peter 5:6-7).

How often during times of anxiety do we puff ourselves up in self-defense instead of bowing the knee to God who we know opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble (James 4:6, 1 Peter 5:5)?

Sample Discussion Questions:

Read Luke 11:46 and compare the lawyers' way with Jesus' way.

Which of the following typically describes you and why? Weary or energetic? Proud or humble? Heavy-laden or light-burdened? Pick as many as fit and explain.

SEGMENT #6: Mark 10:35-45

- Key Talk Points:**
- Even the disciples messed up and sought power.
 - Great in the kingdom means serving like the Master served.

Context/Comments:

James and John make a move networkers would laud! Seeing their favorable position with Jesus, they seize the opportunity to ask Him for more in His coming kingdom. They want greatness, guaranteed seats of power at His right and left hand.

It's easy for third-party observers like us to call them out, but James and John behave in classic worldly fashion—in a way “sensible” people often think: If you have an advantage, exploit it before someone else does.

Jesus' way, however, is different. His path up starts off by going down. Instead of climbing to greatness, one stoops. When others push and demand, Jesus' way serves. While worldly leaders claw their way to the top stepping on backs, Jesus' leaders bend low and wash dirty feet.

The one who wishes to be great will be a servant; the one who wants to be first will be a slave of *all*. Why? Because as the Master was, so will His followers be.

Sample Discussion Questions:

What do you think would happen if the next time you were tempted to pull yourself up, you boosted someone else up instead?

Wrap-Up Questions:

What have been your biggest takeaways this week?

How are these truths changing the way you're thinking and acting?

Week Five

Having the Attitude of Christ

Class-at-a-Glance

<i>Segments</i>		<i>1 Hour Class</i>	<i>Topic</i>
Segment 1:		5 min.	Review
Segment 2:		15 min.	Philippians 2:1-11
Segment 3:		10 min.	Mark 14:32-42
Segment 4:		10 min.	Luke 9:23-27
Segment 5:		10 min.	John 13:1-17
Segment 6:		10 min.	Galatians 5:16-26, Galatians 2:20

START CLASS HERE

SEGMENT #1: Review

Review Basic Concepts

Review Questions:

What are the components of inductive Bible study and why is each important?

What is the most important thing you've learned or been reminded of up to this point?

Has your thinking changed at all during our study so far? If so, how?

SEGMENT #2: Philippians 2:1-11

- Key Talk Points:**
- Jesus provides the prime example of humility.
 - Humility has everything to do with our minds and our thinking.

Context/Comments:

A key word that you'll want to make sure your students have picked up on is the Greek verb *phroneo* which simply means to "think" or "mind"—have a mind-set on some particular. Variations of the word show up four times in the first five verses of Philippians 2:

"the same mind" – *ho autos phroneo* (v. 2)

"intent" (i.e. with a mind set on . . .) – *phroneo* (v. 2)

"humility of mind" – *ho tapeinophrosune* (v. 3)

"this attitude" – *phroneo houtos* (v. 5)

Selfless living does not mean doormatting or simply pleasing people for its own sake. Paul makes this abundantly clear in Galatians 1:10 where he says he would not be a bond-servant of Christ if he were trying to please people. Selfless living, rather, is a mind-set that regards others as more important because Jesus Himself set the example.

Paul thinks that the Philippians are already doing pretty well in this regard. He sees them as encouragers (Greek: *paraklesis*) who love one another and have fellowship of the Spirit, affection and compassion (2:1). He is pleased with the Philippians, but His joy will be made complete (Greek: *pleroo*, also “full”) if they are of the same mind.

Paul calls his readers not only *to* a directed way of thinking, but also *away* from other motives and behaviors. Some of these your class will probably relate to as they are part of the fabric of fallen human nature. Paul says:

- Do nothing from selfishness (Greek: *epitheta*, translated as selfish ambition in Romans 2:8, Philippians 1:17, and James 3:14, 16).
- Do nothing from empty conceit (Greek: *kenodoxia*, literally empty glory).
- Don't look out for your own interests only.

In three statements, Paul attacks the heart of the American way. We may not all give in but these temptations chase every person who draws a breath.

Help your students see the high contrast between “empty conceit” (*kenodoxia*) and the “emptied Himself” (*kenoo heautou*) of Jesus who took the form of a bondservant in order to save mankind and ultimately bring glory to God the Father.

Jesus' example is paramount to how we learn to live selflessly.

THE ATTITUDE of CHRIST JESUS

- Existed in the form of God, but did not regard equality with God to be grasped.
- Emptied Himself
 - took the form of a bond-servant
 - was made in likeness of men
- Humbled Himself
 - became obedient to the point of death on a cross

Jesus showed the depth of humility in becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

Because of this:

- God highly exalted Him
- God bestowed on Him the name which is above every name
 - At the name of Jesus every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Sample Discussion Questions:

What practical ways can you regard others as more important than yourself and/or look out for their interests? At home? At church? Elsewhere?

What practical barriers work against your obedience to this command? What specific truths do you need to hold on to as you set your mind to obey?

SEGMENT #3: Mark 14:32-42

- Key Talk Points:**
- Jesus humbled Himself to the point of death.
 - Obedience is not always easy.

Context/Comments:

Jesus is in the Garden of Gethsemane, just outside of Jerusalem. He sits most of the disciples down and then takes Peter, James, and John with Him as He goes to pray. Later He opens up to them about His inner struggle: “My soul is deeply grieved to the point of death.” He then tells them to stay (Greek: *meno*) and three times (vv. 34, 37, 38) to keep watch (Greek: *gregoreo*). When we look at the broader context, we see in Mark 13 that Jesus has just finished teaching His disciples to be on the alert for His return using the very same word three times. Because the word is translated differently we can’t see its repetition but this pattern also occurs in Matthew’s Gospel (24:42,43, 25:13; 26:38, 40, 41).

While the disciples are left to pray and keep watch, Jesus asks for God three times to remove the cup from Him that the hour might pass Him by. Still, He submits to God’s will. Help your students see that if they wrestle with suffering, they are not the only ones. Wrestling shows that we know what is right and we are striving to do it in a context of suffering. Jesus truly was tempted in all things as we are yet without sin. It is so much easier to run to Him for help when we know that He understands our struggles.

Sample Discussion Questions:

How do you respond when obedience includes suffering?

What did you learn about Jesus and His struggle that can help you in your struggle to submit to the Father’s will?

SEGMENT #4: Luke 9:23-27

- Key Talk Points:**
- Following Jesus means denying self.
 - Following Jesus is daily.

Context/Comments:

People often want several different things at the same time but in Luke 9:23-27 Jesus shows His followers that there are some desires that are mutually exclusive. He talks about two specific wills (Greek: *thelo*): 1. the will to come after Him, and 2. the will to save one's own life. Jesus says these two cannot co-exist; it's one or the other. In other words, you can't take up Jesus' cross of death and save yourself (literally "save your soul" in v. 24) at the same time. Even a cursory look at the text makes this clear since following Jesus necessarily involves denying self which is a form of death—death to self-centeredness, self-absorption, self-awareness, even self(ish) image. Jesus makes it simple when He says anyone wishing to come after Him must:

- deny himself (Greek: *arneomai*, deny or refuse)
- take up his cross daily (continually choose Christ over self)
- follow

For the majority of the disciples this ended in physical martyrdom. History tells us that John was the only one of the eleven not martyred and only because he survived being boiled in oil. For all believers "martyrdom" is "witness" to Jesus and death to self, death to dreams and certainly death to rights and entitlements. We, too, may not be far off from the physical death it has been for countless of our brothers and sisters around the world.

This is a daily choice in the face of challenges that also press in on us day after day. The text mentions several categories of challenges:

- wanting to save this life
- wanting to gain this world
- being ashamed of Jesus and His Words

You may want to have your class look at the parallel accounts in Matthew 16:24-28 and Mark 8:34-38.

In the face of a world that tells us "Satisfy yourself" and "Follow your heart!," we need to be constantly reminded of God's words through the prophet Jeremiah: "The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick . . ." (Jeremiah 17:9). Instead of following our heart, we are to deny self, take up our cross, and follow Jesus fully.

Sample Discussion Questions:

How does Jesus call to follow conflict with the urgings of a selfie world?

What is the biggest challenge you face today in following Jesus? How can the truths of this text help?

SEGMENT #5: John 13:1-17

- Key Talk Points:**
- Jesus, the Master, washed the feet of servants He knew would fail Him.
 - We need to wash feet too.

Context/Comments:

In John 13 Jesus and His disciples gather to celebrate the Passover Feast, but before they eat Jesus begins to wash His disciples' feet. Although the next few days would shock the disciples, Jesus knew exactly what was coming. Take some time to help your students make a list of everything the text says that Jesus knew.

Jesus knew:

- "that His hour had come that He would depart ... to the Father" (v. 1)
- "that the Father had given all things into His hands" (v. 3)
- "that He had come from God and was going back to God" (v. 3)
- "the one who was betraying Him" (v. 11)

Before dinner Jesus washes the feet of His disciples including Judas, His betrayer. He knows He is leaving and in this humble act gives his disciples a profound example before His departure.

Peter, though, wants none of it . . . ever! His reaction shows how big a deal this is. According to custom, Peter acted correctly. A master should never wash the feet of a servant! But Jesus was turning what they knew upside down. The Master, the King of Kings, was washing Peter's feet and Peter and the disciples would now be sent out to wash feet in the same manner. What a far cry from John and James' "Let us sit on your right and left hand" power play (Mark 10:37).

The disciples will soon see for themselves that foot-washing is small potatoes compared to what this Master is going to do for others. He will show them first-hand that "Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13).

The disciples are to do likewise and even though Jesus gave a clear command and a clear example, it is difficult. It is a continual reminder that self is not on the throne in the midst of a world that says anything else is stupidity.

Help your students reason through the implications of not following Jesus' behavior. If we don't follow His command and example we are, in a sense, saying we think we are better than the Master. That is sobering.

Sample Discussion Questions:

What did Jesus know when He washed His disciples' feet?

What practical ways can you “wash feet”?

How have others washed your feet?

SEGMENT #6: Galatians 5:16-26; 2:20

- Key Talk Points:**
- We still battle the flesh.
 - The Spirit in us powers us to live God’s way.

Galatians 5:16-26

The flesh has desires (Greek: *epithumia*) and deeds (Greek: *ergon*) that arise out of the desires. Paul says these works are evident (Greek: *phaneros*—they shine). Think for a minute about the screaming toddler in the checkout line. Everyone around the child knows he has desires for something and his screaming (his “deed”) is an obvious and evident reflection. No one has to guess, the screaming obvious. The deeds of the flesh also have a dire consequence. According to verse 21, “those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.”

While the flesh has desires and passions (Greek: *pathema*) out of which its works arise, those who belong to Christ have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. No sinful passion and no sinful desire means no sinful deeds.

The flesh’s deeds are selfish because they elevate self one way or another. Some that stand out elevating self over others include enmities, strife, jealousy, disputes (Greek: *eritheia* elsewhere translated “selfish ambition”), and envying.

While Paul associates a variety of deeds with the flesh, he says the Spirit produces the fruit composed of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. While some take the singular (Greek: *karpos*) to mean the Spirit produces one fruit (like an orange made up of segments) not multiple fruits as you’d see in a produce department, others disagree, essentially seeing each characteristic existing independently from one another. The bottom line, however, is this: if you have the Spirit, you will see life change. God’s Holy Spirit does not indwell a person and leave him unchanged.

The engine for living God’s way is His indwelling Spirit. If we try to behave on our own, we will fail because we have an active enemy (the flesh) that opposes. We live by the Spirit (v. 25). The Spirit opposes the flesh (v. 17), the Spirit leads us (v. 18), and the Spirit produces fruit. If we belong to Jesus, we have crucified the flesh (v. 24; see also Galatians 2:20).

Because the Spirit always opposes the flesh, the leading of the Spirit counters our natural, sinful desires.

Paul goes right after selfishness issues again in verse 26, exhorting his readers not to be boastful, envying, and challenging to each other. It can be easy for churchy types to think "I'm all good here" if they're not sleeping around or living as drop-dead drunks. Perhaps it is because of this that Paul circles back to boasting, envying, and challenging which are probably the bigger challenges for people reading his letter in churches today.

Galatians 2:20

Jesus, in obedience to the Father, gave Himself up for Paul (and you and me). When Christ was crucified Paul was crucified "in Him." Because of this Paul and other believers now live as alive from the dead. Christ lives in them and their old selves are nailed to a cross. This life is lived by faith in the One who loved us and gave Himself for us (Galatians 2:20).

Paul's life evidences the change in bold relief, having gone from a persecutor and killer of Christians to one persecuted and eventually killed for Christ. This is the kind of transformation the Gospel brings and it comes only from the power of Christ abiding within.

Sample Discussion Questions:

How does the flesh behave? How does this change your perspective on those who don't know Jesus?

What does crucifixion have to do with life in the Spirit? With your life in the Spirit?

Wrap-Up Questions:

What have been your biggest takeaways this week?

How is the truth you're learning changing the way you're thinking and acting?

Week Six

Fools for Christ

Class-at-a-Glance

<i>Segments</i>	<i>1 Hour Class</i>	<i>Topic</i>
Segment 1:	10 min.	Review
Segment 2:	10 min.	Matthew 28:16-20
Segment 3:	10 min.	1 Corinthians 1:18-31
Segment 4:	10 min.	1 Corinthians 2:14, 3:18-23
Segment 5:	10 min.	Isaiah 53
Segment 6:	10 min.	Matthew 10:24-25, John 15:18-22

START CLASS HERE

SEGMENT #1: Review

Review Questions:

In small groups, discuss your biggest takeaway application from each of our previous five lessons.

*What is the biggest takeaway **Application** you have had thus far?*

SEGMENT #2: Matthew 28:16-20

- Key Talk Points:**
- Jesus commands His disciples to make disciples.
 - In this mission, Jesus is with us.

Comments/Context:

The imperative (command) in Matthew 28:16 is “Make disciples.” Following His resurrection, Jesus here tells His eleven disciples to make disciples of all nations. He commands them because He has all authority in heaven and on earth. Certainly, even before His death and resurrection He had all authority. Even then He healed the sick and raised the dead. Now, though, His sovereignty will be on display for all to see and the disciples can take comfort in knowing that this authority is at work on their behalf.

The nature of disciple-making means this is a self-perpetuating commandment. Jesus taught disciples to make disciples . . . each generation will teach others to do the same. For Gentiles it was sweet to see Jesus targeting disciples beyond the lost sheep of the house of Israel to every nation.

He doesn't leave them alone in this, nor does He leave us alone because of the Spirit He has sent.

Sample Discussion Questions:

How are you doing at obeying the command to make disciples?

Do you think this has any bearing on our selfie culture? If so, how?

SEGMENT #3: 1 Corinthians 1:18-31

- Key Talk Points:**
- Christ crucified is foolishness to Gentiles and a stumbling block to Jews.
 - Churches that have wide appeal to the world are not teaching the message of the cross.

1 Corinthians 1:18-31

In this section, reminiscent of Romans 1:18-32, God's wisdom puts to shame the "wisdom" of the world. While the world deems "wise" the scribe, the debater, and the clever and holds in esteem the strong, mighty and noble, God exceeds them to such an extent that even His "foolishness" and "weakness" is exceedingly greater than man's "wisdom" and "strength." The bottom line is this: the world thinks itself wise and clever when in reality it is foolish and perishing.

Take some time to talk through the different groups/individuals mentioned in this section with your class to see what it teaches specifically about the perishing, the saved, and God.

The Perishing

- think the word of the cross is foolishness (v. 18)
- have the wisdom of the world (v. 20)

This group falls into two primary categories for Paul: Jews and Gentiles. To the Jew who love signs, Christ crucified is a stumbling block. To the wisdom-loving Gentiles, Christ crucified is foolishness.

The Saved

- know the word of the cross is the power of God (v. 18)

The called of both the Jews and Gentiles know that Christ is both the power and wisdom of God.

God

- saves people through the foolishness of the message preached (v. 21)
- His foolishness is greater than man's wisdom (v. 25)
- His weakness is greater than man's strength (v. 25)

Although to those who are perishing the word of the cross is foolishness, God has made foolish the “wisdom” of the world. The world can’t “think its way” to God (although biblical faith is entirely reasonable); it can only know God because God has graciously chosen to reveal Himself.

In the cross, God gives us a cure for self-exaltation and arrogance. There is a sense in which the preaching of the Gospel and the foolishness of the cross helps us live in humility.

Sample Discussion Questions:

How would you explain the difference between man’s wisdom and God’s wisdom?

What implications does this have on us as we seek to fulfill Jesus’ Great Commission of Matthew 28:16-20?

SEGMENT #4: 1 Corinthians 2:14, 3:18-23

- Key Talk Point:**
- Only those the Father draws can come to His Son.
 - Be ready with an answer; trust God with the results.

1 Corinthians 2:14

The natural man thinks that the things of the Spirit are foolishness (Greek: *moria*, from which we derive the English word “moron”), because he can’t understand. We are often quick to label “foolish” things we don’t comprehend and the natural man does just that with biblical things.

The only way a person ever understands the Gospel is if truth is revealed to him and he is given the ability to understand. Jesus is clear about this in John 6:44: “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day.” Jesus calls us to be witnesses and to make disciples, but we are totally dependent on Him for both the power and the results. We will be viewed by some, perhaps many, as foolish. This is not an expectation we like, is it? But it is reality.

Take some time to wrestle through this truth with your class. We are instructed to be able to give an answer for the hope that is within us, according to 1 Peter 3:15, but at the same time we need to realize that we will never argue a person to Christ. We give an answer, but God draws men to His Son, saving them from sin.

1 Corinthians 3:18-23

In this section Paul gives two commands:

1. Don't deceive yourself.
2. Don't boast in men.

People deceive themselves in a variety of ways, from thinking themselves more highly than others—which leads to jealousy, strife, and every kind of ugly—to hitching their carts to others they've elevated and boasted about. Both are empty.

In fact, God catches these types “in their craftiness” and their “reasonings” (Greek: *dialogismos*) are “useless” (Greek: *mataios*, vain, empty).

Boasting is never to be in ourselves or even in others, but only in the Lord because Jesus “became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption” (1 Corinthians 1:30).

If you have time, have your class look up the following verses regarding boasting and the approval of God.

1 Corinthians 1:30-31

- 30 But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption,*
- 31 so that, just as it is written, “LET HIM WHO BOASTS, BOAST IN THE LORD.”*

2 Corinthians 10:17-18

- 17 But HE WHO BOASTS IS TO BOAST IN THE LORD.*
- 18 For it is not he who commends himself that is approved, but he whom the Lord commends.*

Jeremiah 9:23-24

- 23 Thus says the LORD, “Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches;*
- 24 but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the LORD who exercises lovingkindness, justice and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things,” declares the LORD.*

Sample Discussion Questions:

How do people today deceive themselves?

How can you identify and stand against worldly wisdom?

SEGMENT #5: Isaiah 53

Key Talk Points: • Jesus bore every form of burden on our behalf.

- We need to accept that if people treated the Master badly, they will treat His servants in like manner.

Comments/Context:

While there is so much you could unpack in Isaiah 53, which gives clear prophecies of Jesus' life, ministry, and death, keep your class focused on how the Suffering Servant was viewed and treated and how this should impact our attitudes when we are viewed and treated poorly.

The Servant was:

- despised
- forsaken of men
- a man of sorrows
- a man acquainted with grief
- not esteemed well
- esteemed as stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted
- oppressed
- assigned a grave with the wicked

What He did/endured . . .

- bore our griefs
- carried our sorrows
- was pierced for our transgressions
- was crushed for our iniquities
- was chastened for our well being
- was scourged for our healing
- bore the iniquity of us all
- rendered Himself as a guilt offering
- his soul was anguished
- poured Himself out to death
- interceded for the transgressors

In all this perhaps the most startling thing is that He did not respond verbally. Isaiah says twice that “He did not open His mouth.” Rather, he was silent. Help your class see how counter-cultural this is. How many can imagine a sinless defendant not speaking a word in his defense? How many can imagine themselves doing this?

Take some time to discuss what they learned by investigating the words despised, forsaken, oppressed, and afflicted.

Despised (Hebrew: *bazah*) – to undervalue, not view as worthy, have contempt for someone or something.

Forsaken (Hebrew: *hadel*) – reject or refuse.

Oppressed (Hebrew: *nagas*) – forcing someone, demanding something from them, often with respect to payment or labor.

Afflicted (Hebrew: *anah*) – connotes submission by force and humiliation.

Sample Discussion Questions:

What kind of suffering did Jesus endure?

Have you been subjected to something similar because you bore the name “Christian”? Do you ever consider that you easily could be?

Read and respond to 2 Timothy 3:12 considering what you’ve read in Isaiah 53.

SEGMENT #6: Matthew 10:24-25; John 15:18-22

Key Talk Points: • Expect ill treatment.

- If you’re treated badly, you’re in good company.

Matthew 10:24-25

Jesus describes two similar relationships in Matthew 10:24-25: disciple/teacher and slave/master. In each pair, one is subservient to the other.

Jesus’ simple point is that if people have treated Him (the Teacher, the Master) badly, the disciples, the bondservants must expect even worse: “If they have called the head of the house [Jesus] Beelzebul, how much more *will they malign* the members of his household [the disciples]!”

John 15:18-22

Jesus teaches that “A slave is not greater than his master.” If the world persecuted the master, the world is going to persecute the slaves as well. Again, this simple teaching is difficult to hear because no one *wants* to be persecuted.

Still, this reality we need to come to grips with is diametrically opposed to our world. Our selfie culture at its core is about wanting everyone to see me and to love me. Jesus’ way is different. He made it clear to His disciples that the cross He was about to suffer they could expect for themselves. The world hates those who belong to Jesus—the One who loved the world enough to die for it.

In the times we struggle with the world’s hatred of us, we can take heart that it is because of our identification with Jesus . . . which is more valuable than anything the world could ever offer!

Sample Discussion Questions:

Considering these verses and others, how can you anticipate persecution from the world without turning into a cynic?

How would you tell someone to live wisely as a Christian in today’s selfie culture?

Wrap-Up Questions:

What is the one big takeaway from your study over the course of the past six weeks?

What is your next-step plan in God’s Word?

