

Living as



A Biblical exploration of our true and distinct lives in Christ

Blue Ridge vSTP

Summer 2021

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Introduction

Welcome to the Blue Ridge Navigators summer Bible study! Thank you for joining us for this unique opportunity to study God's word together across our region. We have several hopes for you as you jump into this study:

1. That you would intentionally study God's word wherever you are this summer.
2. That you would meet with God and relish in the good news of the Gospel.
3. That, by the end of this study, you would understand what it means that you are **living distinctly within God's design.**

Throughout this study you will notice that there is room for observations, answering thoughtful questions, creating applications, and memorizing scripture. The guided questions are meant to be a launching pad for your study. Take time each week to ask questions of your own observations and then look for answers.

Here's an example of the layout. Prayerfully read this passage and make some observations. It helps to have a pen and highlighter handy to mark up the passage, to better help you see things in the text.

Ephesians 2:1-5

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath. But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in

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mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.

What do you notice in this passage about who you were before Christ? About who you are now in Christ?

What might it look like for you to discover more of your distinctive identity in Christ this summer? The rest of your life?

What are your hopes and goals for this summer? What about specifically for the summer program with The Navigators?

Spend some time praying over your answers to the questions above and rejoicing in the good news of our confidence in Christ!

What to expect

Each week we will be studying a different aspect of living as the Distinct People of God here on earth.

Our Distinct Identity

Our Distinct Purpose

Our Distinct Focus

Our Distinct Humility

Our Distinct Joy

Our Distinct Love

We will create Biblical definitions for these concepts, study characters who wrestled with them, and look at modern day case studies to help us move it more into our own lives. We will also memorize a verse each week to help solidify the truth we are studying, bringing it more into our hearts to meditate on and believe.

We are so glad you have joined us on this journey. We are praying over each of you as we send out this Bible Study to your inboxes!
-The whole BlueRidge Staff Team

All passages are from the New International Version© or English Standard Version©

Week 1



"But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light."

- 1 Peter 2:9

Distinct Identity

Who is someone you know that has a unique and attractive personality? What makes them that way? Where does this come from?

If you were asked to describe yourself without saying what you do, how you spend your time, or anything about your family, how would you respond?

Biblically defining identity

Investigate the following verses. What could these verses be saying about Biblical identity? (Use the space on the right to jot down observations and build your own definition)

- | | |
|------------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Genesis 1:27 | 4. Colossians 3:12 |
| 2. 1 Corinthians 12:27 | 5. Ephesians 2:10 |
| 3. 2 Corinthians 5:17 | 6. 1 John 3:1 |

Character Study

It's appropriate that we would begin with Jesus and Peter when discussing identity. Jesus was keenly aware of his sonship and belonging with God the Father, and Peter struggled on a moment-by-moment basis to truly trust his new nature in Christ. Peter includes this descriptive passage about our identity as a distinct group of people belonging to God in his first letter. Look first at Peter's description of us, then study how Jesus lived this out in a particularly powerful moment for

Peter. Pay close attention to how Peter describes God's people. Underline, highlight and circle what stands out to you. Use the space provided on the right to write any observations or questions that come to mind.

Peter

1 Peter 2:9-12

⁹But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. ¹⁰ Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. ¹¹ Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. ¹² Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.

Observations & Questions

Living Distinctly

In 1 Peter 2:9-10, how does Peter describe God's people?

For what purpose(s) does Peter say we have been given this distinct identity (vs 9, 11, 12)?

What part of this description is hardest for you to see in the Body of Christ as a whole? What is hardest for you to see in yourself?

How do you imagine life would change if you fully embraced this definition of your identity?

Now, let's look at Jesus and the example he set for his disciples that last week of his life on earth. Make sure to mark up the text and write down everything you observe about how Jesus's identity impacted his actions.

Jesus

John 13:1-8

1 It was just before the Passover Festival. Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.

2 The evening meal was in progress, and the devil had already prompted Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus. **3** Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; **4** so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. **5** After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

6 He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?"

7 Jesus replied, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand."

8 "No," said Peter, "you shall never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me."

Observations & Questions

What did Jesus know to be true about himself and his circumstances (vs 1, 3)?

What did Jesus do with this knowledge? How did his identity impact his actions?

Why do you think Peter responds the way that he does? What part of his identity was he operating from?

Would Peter have responded differently if he had been fully convinced of the identity of the people of God that he wrote about later (1 Peter 2:9)?

If so, how?

Case Study

Now we will look at an example from modern culture where we see this dynamic of identity playing out. Notice where these characters are finding their sense of worth. Consider yourself in this situation, what identity pieces are at play?

Jason & Lorelai

Gilmore Girls: Season 4, Episode 19

In this episode of Gilmore Girls, Lorelai and her boyfriend Jason were discussing a major incident that had occurred in the family. Jason had just been forcibly pushed out of business with Lorelai's father in a shady deal. Jason tells Lorelai that he's going to sue her father. Lorelai reacts with a bewildered look and Jason says, "I have to, Lorelai."

Lorelai: "No you don't."

Jason: "I've gone over it. I've weighed every option...I can not sit back and do nothing while my career is going up in flames."

Lorelai: "Please don't do this."

Jason: "You know I wouldn't do this if I didn't have to."

Lorelai: "You don't have to."

Jason: "If I intend to continue working in my chosen profession then yeah, I have to."

Lorelai: "Don't do that. Don't be just some business guy, put this on another level, please!"

Jason: "I have no choice...you know how hard I work. My job is who I am. I can't lose everything."

After this, Lorelai says she cannot be with someone who is suing her family and she walks out.

Observations & Questions

How do you think the general public view this relational conflict? Do you think Jason's argument is legitimate to most viewers?

What is defining Jason's identity? What will it cost Jason to continue placing his identity where it is?

What could this situation have looked like if he had his identity firmly placed in Christ above everything else? What could have changed?

Application

Where are you most tempted to place your identity outside of Christ's life, death, and resurrection?

How has being a member of God's chosen people changed your life?

Considering Christ's solid foundation and Peter's change of heart, what about your identity in Christ are you curious to learn more about?

Memorize: 1 Peter 2:9

Commit to memorizing this verse for the rest of the week. Let it remind you of the solid and sure identity you've been given in God. Pray that truth over yourself and the believers in your life.

Week 2



*"We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God."
- 2 Corinthians 5:20*

Distinct Purpose

What are some common answers for what a person's purpose is?

What happens when someone forgets their purpose? Can you have a purpose but not know it? Can you live out of a purpose if you don't know it?

What is the difference between one's purpose and one's role? Can there be people with different roles yet pursuing the same purpose?

Biblically defining Purpose

Investigate the following verses, what could these verses be saying about Biblical purpose? (Use the space on the right to jot down observations and build your own definition)

1. 2 Corinthians 5:20
2. Ephesians 2:10
3. Matthew 28:19-20
4. 1 Corinthians 10:31

Character Study

Next, we will look at three characters in the Bible: Jeremiah, Saul, and Jesus. Make observations on their purpose and take note of any similarities and differences. Are these differences pointing to different purposes? Also keep the definition you formed in mind while reading and answering the questions that follow each passage.

Jeremiah

Jeremiah 1:1-10

¹ The words of Jeremiah, the son of Hilkiah, one of the priests who were in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin, ² to whom the word of the Lord came in the days of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah, in the thirteenth year of his reign.

³ It came also in the days of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, and until the end of the eleventh year of Zedekiah, the son of Josiah, king of Judah, until the captivity of Jerusalem in the fifth month.

⁴ Now the word of the Lord came to me, saying,

⁵ *“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations.”*

⁶ Then I said, “Ah, Lord God! Behold, I do not know how to speak, for I am only a youth.” ⁷ But the Lord said to me,

“Do not say, ‘I am only a youth’; for to all to whom I send you, you shall go, and whatever I command you, you shall speak.

⁸ *Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you, declares the Lord.”*

⁹ Then the Lord put out his hand and touched my mouth. And the Lord said to me,

¹⁰ *“Behold, I have put my words in your mouth. See, I have set you this day over nations and over kingdoms, to pluck up and to break down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant.”*

Observations & Questions

How is this passage similar to Ephesians 2:10 that we previously looked at?
Is Jeremiah being a prophet his role or purpose?

What is Jeremiah's response to God appointing him as a prophet? How does God respond back?

How does it make you feel that God not only gives us purpose but also formed and knows us (vs 5)?

Saul

Acts 9:1-22

¹But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest ²and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. ³Now as he went on his way, he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven shone around him. ⁴And falling to the ground, he heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" ⁵And he said, "Who are you, Lord?" And he said, "I am Jesus, whom

Observations & Questions

you are persecuting. ⁶ But rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do.” ⁷

The men who were traveling with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one. ⁸ Saul rose from the ground, and although his eyes were opened, he saw nothing. So they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. ⁹ And for three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank.

¹⁰ Now there was a disciple at Damascus named Ananias. The Lord said to him in a vision, “Ananias.” And he said, “Here I am, Lord.” ¹¹ And the Lord said to him, “Rise and go to the street called Straight, and at the house of Judas look for a man of Tarsus named Saul, for behold, he is praying, ¹² and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him so that he might regain his sight.” ¹³ But Ananias answered, “Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your saints at Jerusalem. ¹⁴ And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on your name.” ¹⁵ But the Lord said to him, “Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel. ¹⁶ For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name.” ¹⁷ So Ananias departed and entered the house. And laying his hands on him he said, “Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road by

which you came has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.”¹⁸ And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and he regained his sight. Then he rose and was baptized;¹⁹ and taking food, he was strengthened.

For some days he was with the disciples at Damascus.²⁰ And immediately he proclaimed Jesus in the synagogues, saying, “He is the Son of God.”²¹ And all who heard him were amazed and said, “Is not this the man who made havoc in Jerusalem of those who called upon this name? And has he not come here for this purpose, to bring them bound before the chief priests?”²² But Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who lived *in Damascus by proving that Jesus was the Christ.*

What was Saul’s initial purpose?

What made Saul’s purpose change, and what did it change to? How can you relate to this?

How was Saul able to change his deeply held purpose of persecuting the church to proclaiming Christ?

Jesus

John 4:31-38; 8:28-29

³¹ Meanwhile the disciples were urging him, saying, “Rabbi, eat.” ³² But he said to them, “I have food to eat that you do not know about.” ³³ So the disciples said to one another, “Has anyone brought him something to eat?” ³⁴ Jesus said to them, “My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work. ³⁵ Do you not say, ‘There are yet four months, then comes the harvest’? Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see that the fields are white for harvest. ³⁶ Already the one who reaps is receiving wages and gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together. ³⁷ For here the saying holds true, ‘One sows and another reaps.’ ³⁸ I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor. Others have labored, and you have entered into their labor.”

John 8:28-29

²⁸ So Jesus said to them, “When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he, and that I do nothing on my own authority, but speak just as the Father taught me. ²⁹ And he who sent me is with me. He has not left me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to him.”

Observations & Questions

What is Jesus' purpose according to these passages?

How does Jesus connect his purpose to His actions?

What does Jesus say to the disciples about different roles in the harvest? (vs. 36-38) What are they both leading to?

Case Study

Here is a cultural example of purpose using a professional football player and a retired professional football coach. The first is from an interview with Tom Brady back in June 2005 (he is up to seven rings 16 years later). Talk about the two different perspectives and answer the following questions.

Tom Brady (from an interview)

"Why do I have three Super Bowl rings and still think there's something greater out there for me? I mean, maybe a lot of people would say, 'Hey man, this is what is.' I reached my goal, my dream, my life. Me, I think, 'God, it's got to be more than this.' I mean this isn't, this can't be what it's all cracked up to be."

What's the answer?

"I wish I knew. I wish I knew," says Brady.

Tony Dungy (from his book - "Quiet Strength")

"I love coaching football and winning a Super Bowl was a goal I've had for a long time," he wrote. "But it has never been my purpose in life. My purpose in life is simply to glorify God. We have to be careful that we don't let the pursuit of our life's goals, no matter how important they seem, cause us to lose sight of our purpose. I coach football. But the good I can do to glorify God along the way is my real purpose."

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Their perspectives are so different, in what ways? What do you think that leads to in each of them?

Based solely on Tom Brady's response, does he seem satisfied? Do you think the four Super Bowl rings he has gotten since helped with that?

If Tom Brady said - "it's got to be more than this" - to you what would you say? Would you say something different if it was your classmate, coworker, family member, etc?

Can you let the pursuit of your goals become your purpose as Tony Dungy mentioned? What goal(s) is that for you? How do you prevent that?

Application

Is this purpose seeping into every aspect of your life? Are there areas where it does not? (at school, home, job, hobbies, etc.)

What is a practical way you can consistently remind yourself of your purpose as a follower of Christ?

Look back at your definition you formed using those verses. What feels hardest to live out regarding your purpose? Are there worldly purposes that you are pursuing?

Memorize: 2 Corinthians 5:20

Memorize this verse and let it be a reminder for you to be an ambassador for Christ in all situations. In the areas where it feels hard (from the first application question), pray for courage to initiate and let the verse push you towards action and purpose.

Week 3



*"So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal."
- 2 Corinthians 4:18*

Character Study

We will look at two characters from the Bible next, to find out more about this distinct focus we have in Christ. Read the following verses and begin making observations regarding the person and how they approached their focus.

The Rich Young Ruler

Matthew 19: 16-30

¹⁶ And behold, a man came up to him, saying, "Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?" ¹⁷ And he said to him, "Why do you ask me about what is good? There is only one who is good. If you would enter life, keep the commandments." ¹⁸ He said to him, "Which ones?" And Jesus said, "You shall not murder, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not steal, You shall not bear false witness, ¹⁹ Honor your father and mother, and, You shall love your neighbor as yourself." ²⁰ The young man said to him, "All these I have kept. What do I still lack?" ²¹ Jesus said to him, "If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." ²² When the young man heard this he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

²³ And Jesus said to his disciples, "Truly, I say to you, only with difficulty will a rich person enter the kingdom of heaven. ²⁴ Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God." ²⁵ When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished, saying, "Who then can be saved?" ²⁶ But Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." ²⁷ Then Peter said in reply, "See, we have left everything and followed you. What then will we have?" ²⁸ Jesus said to them, "Truly, I say to you, in the new world, when the Son of Man

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will sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. ²⁹ And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for my name's sake, will receive a hundredfold and will inherit eternal life. ³⁰ But many who are first will be last, and the last first.

Matthew 14: 22-33 (Peter)

²² Immediately he made the disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. ²³ And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, ²⁴ but the boat by this time was a long way from the land, beaten by the waves, for the wind was against them. ²⁵ And in the fourth watch of the night he came to them, walking on the sea. ²⁶ But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, and said, "It is a ghost!" and they cried out in fear. ²⁷ But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid."

²⁸ And Peter answered him, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." ²⁹ He said, "Come." So Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus. ³⁰ But when he saw the wind, he was afraid, and beginning to sink he cried out, "Lord, save me." ³¹ Jesus immediately reached out his hand and took hold of him, saying to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" ³² And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. ³³ And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."

What disrupts the character's focus from being on Christ? How does this disruption impact the character's walk with Christ?

- The rich young ruler:

- Peter:

What lessons about Jesus do you think these characters would have learned regarding having a distinct focus?

What similarities and differences do you have with these characters? How have you seen distraction impact your focus?

What lesson(s)/principles can we learn from these stories about our distinct focus?

Case Study

Use the following quotes from singers, Madonna and Mark Hall (from Casting Crowns) to make observations and insights on what is at the heart of their focus.

Madonna

Madonna says, "My drive in life comes from a fear of being mediocre. I push past one spell of it and discover myself as a special human being but then I feel I am still mediocre and uninteresting unless I do something else. Because even though I have become somebody, I still have to prove that I am somebody. My struggle has never ended and I guess it never will."

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Mark Hall (Casting Crowns)

"Worship is so much more than the songs I sing. Instead, worship is in the heart that lifts the song. If you think about it, worship began when I woke up this morning. My life purpose is to give God glory through everything I do. If my life does not worship Him, my songs don't either."

How is Madonna's focus different from that of Mark Hall's?

How does the focus of the artist impact the way they relate with themselves and their career?

How do you see yourself in each of these artists?

Application

How would your life look different if you lived it fully surrendered to your distinct focus?

What are some of the things/people currently demanding your attention that are distracting you from living a life that maintains its focus on Jesus?

How is your distinct purpose (covered in last week's study) interconnected with your distinct focus?

What are some goals or boundaries you could set that would help you remember the focus of your life throughout this summer?

Memorize: 2 Corinthians 4:18

As you continue throughout the week, commit to memorizing this verse. Spend some time praying this verse over yourself and asking the Lord to use it to remind you of your distinct focus.

Week 4



*"He must increase, but I must decrease."
- John 3:30*

Distinct Humility

List the top 5 qualities that you look for in a leader. Explain.

Is it wrong to seek power? How might power be used properly or improperly in a leadership position?

Biblically defining humility

Investigate the following verses, what could these verses be saying about Biblical humility? (Use the space on the right to jot down observations and build your own definition.)

1. Micah 6:8
2. Isa. 53:7-8
3. Matt. 11:29
4. Phil. 2:3-11
5. James 4:6,10

Character study

Read the passages about the following biblical characters and observe the attributes of humility or the lack of humility.

John the Baptist
John 1:19-34

19 Now this was John's testimony when the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask him who he was. **20** He did not fail to confess, but confessed freely, "I am not the Messiah."

21 They asked him, "Then who are you? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not."

"Are you the Prophet?"

He answered, "No."

22 Finally they said, "Who are you? Give us an answer to take back to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?"

23 John replied in the words of Isaiah the prophet, "I am the voice of one calling in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way for the Lord.'"

24 Now the Pharisees who had been sent questioned him, "Why then do you baptize if you are not the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?"

26 "I baptize with water," John replied, "but among you stands one you do not know. **27** He is the one who comes after me, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie."

28 This all happened at Bethany on the other side of the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

29 The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! **30** This is the one I meant when I said, 'A man who comes after me

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has surpassed me because he was before me.’ **31** I myself did not know him, but the reason I came baptizing with water was that he might be revealed to Israel.”

32 Then John gave this testimony: “I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him. **33** And I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, ‘The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.’ **34** I have seen and I testify that this is God’s Chosen One.”

How did John the Baptist respond to his position as Jesus’ forerunner? How was that an act of humility?

How was John the Baptist’s ministry different from Jesus’s? Inferior? Did that make his role insignificant? Why or why not?

How did God receive praise through John’s life as seen in the passages above?

Naaman and his servant girl
2 Kings 5:1-19

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1 Now Naaman was commander of the army of the king of Aram. He was a great man in the sight of his master and highly regarded, because through him the Lord had given victory to Aram. He was a valiant soldier, but he had leprosy. **2** Now bands of raiders from Aram had gone out and had taken captive a young girl from Israel, and she served Naaman's wife. **3** She said to her mistress, "If only my master would see the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy."

4 Naaman went to his master and told him what the girl from Israel had said. **5** "By all means, go," the king of Aram replied. "I will send a letter to the king of Israel." So Naaman left, taking with him ten talents of silver, six thousand shekels of gold and ten sets of clothing. **6** The letter that he took to the king of Israel read: "With this letter I am sending my servant Naaman to you so that you may cure him of his leprosy."

7 As soon as the king of Israel read the letter, he tore his robes and said, "Am I God? Can I kill and bring back to life? Why does this fellow send someone to me to be cured of his leprosy? See how he is trying to pick a quarrel with me!"

8 When Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had torn his robes, he sent him this message: “Why have you torn your robes? Have the man come to me and he will know that there is a prophet in Israel.” **9** So Naaman went with his horses and chariots and stopped at the door of Elisha’s house. **10** Elisha sent a messenger to say to him, “Go, wash yourself seven times in the Jordan, and your flesh will be restored and you will be cleansed.”

11 But Naaman went away angry and said, “I thought that he would surely come out to me and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God, wave his hand over the spot and cure me of my leprosy. **12** Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Couldn’t I wash in them and be cleansed?” So he turned and went off in a rage.

13 Naaman’s servants went to him and said, “My father, if the prophet had told you to do some great thing, would you not have done it? How much more, then, when he tells you, ‘Wash and be cleansed!’” **14** So he went down and dipped himself in the Jordan seven times, as the man of God had told him, and his flesh was restored and became clean like that of a young boy. **15** Then Naaman and all his attendants went back to the

man of God. He stood before him and said, “Now I know that there is no God in all the world except in Israel. So please accept a gift from your servant.”

16 The prophet answered, “As surely as the Lord lives, whom I serve, I will not accept a thing.” And even though Naaman urged him, he refused.

17 “If you will not,” said Naaman, “please let me, your servant, be given as much earth as a pair of mules can carry, for your servant will never again make burnt offerings and sacrifices to any other god but the Lord. **18** But may the Lord forgive your servant for this one thing: When my master enters the temple of Rimmon to bow down and he is leaning on my arm and I have to bow there also—when I bow down in the temple of Rimmon, may the Lord forgive your servant for this.” **19** “Go in peace,” Elisha said.

What was Naaman’s military rank and social status? How might this have influenced his attitude towards life?

List the many ways that God humbled Naaman in this passage.

How did Naaman show his change of heart?

Case Study

Now we will look at an example from modern literature where we see this worldview of humility displayed. Notice what stands out to you about this interaction between characters. Consider yourself in this situation, record your thoughts and questions in the space provided.

Lindon & Orthos

(Wight, Ghostwater, kindle loc. 3155).

In the Cradle series by Will Wight the main character Lindon starts off as the weakest character. Everyone in his village has an ability, and after taking the test to determine his ability, he was considered “unsouled”, i.e. without an ability. As a result, he and the rest of his tribe viewed him as weak and worthless; someone who should stay out of the way of others. However, as the series goes on the reader discovers that he was not “unsouled” as everyone thought.

Later in the series, as Lindon has grown stronger in character and abilities, he has a conversation with one of his mentors, Orthos.

In preparation to defend a friend, Orthos tells Lindon, “Once, you were weak. That boy is long dead, but his Remnant still haunts you.”

He turned to drink from the Life Well.

“Your weakness, Lindon, is thinking you are weaker than you are”

Observations & Questions

Do you identify with Lindon, thinking or believing that you are weaker and less qualified than you are, or do you lean towards over-confidence; believing that you are more skilled and qualified than you are?

Application

What would it look like for you to have an accurate view of yourself and God (humility)?

How would that change your attitude and approach to relationships with yourself? Other people? God?

Memorize: John 3:30

As you continue throughout the week, commit to memorizing and meditating on this verse about humility. Pray this verse over yourself and ask the Lord to use it to remind and inspire you in your distinct humility in Christ.

Week 5



*"You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore."
- Psalm 16:11*

Distinct Joy

In Paul's letter to new believers in Philippi he calls them "rejoice in the Lord always." But what does this actually look like? Are we to perpetually have a smile on our face whether at a wedding or a funeral? How can we, as believers, exhibit distinct joy in all circumstances in a life that is full of challenges and gut wrenching moments? it's critical we have our joy grounded in the Lord!

From your experience

1. Describe a time when you were filled with joy? How did that affect your attitude and your behavior?

2. Where does joy come from and how do we get it?

Biblically defining joy

Look at the following verses and respond to the questions below:

- | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Psalm 16:11 | 4. Romans 12:12 |
| 2. Proverbs 10:28 | 5. Galatians 5:22 |
| 3. John 16:20-22 | 6. Hebrews 12:1-2 |

- 1.) What do you observe?

- 2.) What terms or concepts are associated with joy?

- 3.) Based on your study, how would you define joy?

Character Study

Hannah's story is full of joy and hope, as well as suffering and pain. As you read, make observations about her experience of joy. How about hope? Record your thoughts in the space provided.

Hannah

1 Samuel 2:1-10

And Hannah prayed and said,
"My heart exults in the LORD; MY horn is exalted in the LORD. My mouth derides my enemies, because I rejoice in your salvation.

²"There is none holy like the LORD: for there is none besides you; there is no rock like our God.
³Talk no more so very proudly, let not arrogance come from your mouth; for the LORD is a God of knowledge, and by his actions are weighed. ⁴The bows of the mighty are broken, but the feeble bind on strength. ⁵Those who were full have hired themselves out for bread, but those who were hungry have ceased to hunger. The barren has borne seven, but she who has many children is forlorn. ⁶The LORD kills and brings to life; he brings down to Sheol and raises up.

⁷The LORD makes poor and makes rich; he brings low and he exalts. ⁸He raises up the poor from the dust; he lifts the needy from the ash heap to make them sit with princes and inherit a seat of honor. For the pillars of the earth are the LORD's, and on them he has set the world. ⁹He will guard the feet of his faithful ones, but the wicked shall be cut off in darkness, for not by might shall a man prevail. ¹⁰The adversaries of the LORD shall be broken to pieces; against them he will thunder in heaven. The LORD will judge the ends of the earth; he will give strength to his king and exalt the horn of his anointed."

Observations & Questions

Living Distinctly

Briefly read 1 Samuel 1 for context. How does knowing Hannah's circumstances change the way you read this prayer?

Put yourself in Hannah's shoes. You've wrestled with infertility for years in a culture that highly values offspring. You finally conceive, then feel called to "lend him to the Lord" (1 Samuel 1:28). How do you feel?

How would you describe Hannah's theology from reading her prayer? What does she believe about who God is?

From this passage and the previous verses, describe the relationship between joy and sorrow? Joy and hope?

Case Study

As we move to application let's look at an example from modern culture. Below is a portion of the lyrics from John Mayer's song "Something's Missing." Read and respond to the questions below:

Something's Missing

I'm not alone
I wish I was
'Cause then I'd know I was down because
I couldn't find a friend around
To love me like they do right now
They do right now

I'm dizzy from the shopping mall
I searched for joy, but I bought it all
It doesn't help the hunger pains
And a thirst I'd have to drown first to ever
sate

Something's missing
And I don't know how to fix it
Something's missing
And I don't know what it is
No I don't know what it is
At all

Friends
(Check)
Money
(Check)
A well slept
(Check)
Opposite sex
(Check)
Guitar
(Check)
Microphone
(Check)
Messages waiting on me when
I come home
(Check)

Observations & Questions

How come everything I think I need, always
comes with batteries?
What do you think it means
How come everything I think I need, always
comes with batteries?



What can you glean about John's search for joy?

These lyrics align with the typical college mantra of pursuing money, sex, and influence. How have you seen the same pursuit among your peers?

Application

How have you seen or experienced the same disappointment (or emptiness) in your own experience?

What does it look like for you to find eternal joy in the Lord rather than fleeting joy in things that “come with batteries” (don't last)?

Memorize: Psalm 16:11

Remember that true joy is found in the Lord! Write it down somewhere and commit it to memory, asking God to increase your uncircumstantial joy in Him each time you meditate on it.

Week 6



"This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another."

- 1 John 4:10-11

Distinct Love

Let's face it, whether you open Spotify, turn on Netflix, or overhear a conversation in a coffee shop, there's a good chance the message will be centered around love. Why is that? Love is a huge part of what it means to be human! We encounter love in all of our relationships, whether with our parents, friends, or significant other. But what does the Bible have to say about love? How should the way we love, as believers, be **distinct** from the culture around us?

From your experience

1. Describe a time when you felt loved?
2. How would you define love to a five year old?

Biblically defining joy

Look at the following verses and respond to the questions below:

- | | |
|--------------------|------------------|
| 1. Deuteronomy 6:5 | 4. John 13:34-35 |
| 2. Jeremiah 31:3 | 5. John 15:13 |
| 3. Proverbs 10:12 | 6. 2 Timothy 1:7 |

- 1.) What do you observe?
- 2.) What terms or concepts are connected with love?
- 3.) Based on your study, how would you define love?

Love

1 John 4:7-12

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God.

8 Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.

9 In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him.

10 In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. **12** No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.

Observations & Questions

How does this passage describe love?

How does this passage define knowing God (verse 7-8)?

How does your relationship with God change the way you love those around you? Why?

What are some ways God is calling you to be distinct in the way you love those around you?

Case Study

As we move on to application, let's look at an example from modern culture. Watch this commercial for life insurance and respond to the questions below:

<https://youtu.be/95Gu7Vj1eIc>

What did the main character do to demonstrate love?

How did those receiving his kindness respond? How did those observing it respond? How did their response change over time?

Application

Share an example when someone showed you similar kindness. How did it make you feel? How did you respond?

Memorize: 1 John 4:10-11

Write this passage down somewhere you will see it multiple times a day this week and commit it to memory. Each time you recite it, pray that God increases your capacity for His love to flow in you in a distinct way!