
PART 2 **CONNECT GUIDE**



WALLACE MEMORIAL BAPTIST CHURCH

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AS WE BEGIN

A READING PLAN

WEEK 1

- Day 1: Luke 14:25-33
- Day 2: Genesis 22
- Day 3: Daniel 1
- Day 4: Daniel 6
- Day 5: Luke 14:25-35

WEEK 3

- Day 1: Matthew 24
- Day 2: Hebrews 12
- Day 3: Isaiah 40
- Day 4: Romans 8
- Day 1: Matthew 24

WEEK 2

- Day 1: John 15
- Day 2: Galatians 5
- Day 3: Mark 4
- Day 4: Psalm 1
- Day 5: John 15

WEEK FOUR

DAY 1: LUKE 14:25-33

UUPG Prayer Focus: Yemeni Arabs in Entrea / Konkabav in Guinea

The world we live in today is all about convenience. Every show we watch is streaming at the push of a button. Our food comes pre-made, and we just reheat it with a couple of buttons. You can contact everyone you've ever known and shop at every store with a handheld device. It seems as if we've completely ordered our entire existence around how easy we can make it to accomplish the largest number of tasks with the least amount of effort. Our obsession with convenience has made us disciples of our own laziness. When we make all of our decisions with comfort and ease as our priority then we simply worship at the altar of self idolatry.

Jesus isn't looking to "fit in" to a life that is based on your convenience. He makes it very clear in Luke 14 that we need to arrange our entire lives around following Him and living out His teaching. Jesus has no place for "I raised my hand and prayed a prayer, so now I can go back to living my own life." Jesus tells us that we must be so devoted to Him and His calling that it looks like we hate everything else. So as we read this week, let's ask ourselves if we are renouncing everything to be Jesus' disciples, or if we are simply trying to add Him to the list of things we decide make our lives more convenient?

- Why is it so tempting to base everything we do around comfort and convenience?
- What priorities need to be rearranged in your life to follow Jesus more closely?

DAY 2: GENESIS 22

UUPG Prayer Focus: Middle-Eastern Tukomans in Jordan / Sungor in Chad

Does following Jesus cost you anything? Does trusting God ever ask anything of you? For many of the men and women of the Bible, it cost them everything, but they ended up receiving so much more. Abraham had no descendants. His wife was well past child bearing years, and quite frankly he should have been too. Yet they had the miracle child that God promised them... but then God asked Abraham to... sacrifice him?!?! If you've read the story you know that God ended up rescuing Isaac, and promising to provide the sacrifice Himself. This story proves that God isn't asking us to destroy or sacrifice our families, but to simply trust Him above even our good desires.

In Luke 14 Jesus tells us that we must "hate" our mothers, fathers, wives, children, brothers, sisters, etc. This sounds terribly harsh, but the reality is that if we don't arrange our priorities to the point where our love for God makes everything else look like hate, then we aren't making the best choice

for those very people. We can be “protective” of our family and our “legacy” in a way that makes us self centered and worldly. If we truly begin to follow Jesus then we will become the type of person that acts in our family’s best interest at all times. No, God isn’t asking you to lay your kids on an altar like Abraham. He might be asking you to send them to the mission field though. He might be asking you to prepare them to plant a church in a different state. He is definitely asking you to raise a family that loves Him more than it loves you. In the end what can we say, because God Himself proves that He was willing to make that sacrifice on the cross. The least we can do is follow Him with everything we have.

- What are some things we try to “protect” our families from that are actually for their good?
- How does the selflessness of Christianity make us better people for our families?

DAY 3: DANIEL 1

UUPG Prayer Focus: Arain in India / Suda in India

Prosperity preachers like Joel Osteen, Creflo Dollar, and Joyce Meyer would have you believe that Your relationship with God looks a lot like writing letters to Santa Claus. The false concept of Karma would have you believe that when you do the right thing you’ll only receive good in return. The Bible,

however, tells us it “rains on the just and the unjust alike.” The New Testament warns us that we will face suffering and persecution as followers of Jesus. Will we only remain loyal for as long as things are going our way?

Daniel was one of the few faithful people in Judah when the Babylonians came and conquered Jerusalem. Even though he was following God, he saw his whole life torn away from him in moments. He was enslaved, exiled, and mutilated by his captors. The only thing they offered him was good food... food that broke the dietary laws God had set before him. Daniel and his friends rejected the one gift that they were offered and even risked their lives to remain faithful to God. Even when everything had fallen apart. They remained faithful. They “counted the cost,” as Jesus suggests in Luke 14 and they decided that remaining faithful to God was still worth it even though they had lost everything.

- Has there ever been a situation in your life that caused you to doubt your dedication to God?
- What can you say to encourage someone who is trying to stay faithful in the midst of a bad situation?

DAY 4: DANIEL 6

UUPG Prayer Focus: Ganda in Tanzania / Agri in India

We live in a strange time and place in human history. It's entirely possible to claim Christianity, be publicly applauded for it, and then immediately discouraged from actually following Jesus. We love public displays of prayers and crosses, but then we see a cost for helping the poor, loving the immigrant, or showing grace. It can be very profitable to embrace the vague civic religion of false Christianity, and it can cost us everything to actually live like the Bible says.

In Daniel 6, there is a similar problem. Daniel has worked hard, and is now well respected as a wise man in the court of the foreign king. However, this king's officials began hatching a plot to create a syncretized civic religion where the king himself must be exclusively worshipped as God. They know Daniel won't bend so they seek his execution. In that instance God miraculously saved Daniel. The question for us though, is will we have the same courage when we are faced with the same decisions? When our political rulers demand that we embrace sin for economic gain will we comply or remain faithful? When we are asked to endorse leaders as "christian" when their character is abysmal, will we comply and talk about "the lesser of two evils?" In Luke 14 Jesus tells us we need to forsake this world and every other allegiance to only follow Him. Are we willing to pay that price for being faithful, or will we make more compromises to get along with the world?

- Why is it so easy to claim Christianity in our culture without actually following Jesus?
- Have you ever had to pay a price for remaining faithful? What happened?

DAY 5: LUKE 14:25-33

UUPG Prayer Focus: Deaf Libyans in Libya / Parkavakulam in India

Being a disciple of Jesus isn't something where we can negotiate the terms. We are either all the way on or all the way out. No, that doesn't mean we have to be perfect, or none of us would be here. It does mean that Jesus won't tolerate being treated as "one of many," options. Yet for centuries, humanity has tried to negotiate with God about what being His follower actually looks like. We cannot pursue God and our own comfort, yet the prosperity preachers try and convince us we can. We cannot pursue God and tolerate our own sin, yet slave owners spend generations trying to claim "divine right." We cannot follow Jesus on Sunday, and then say "it's just business," when we treat people poorly. We can't claim to follow Jesus if we hold our political, social, and cultural opinions as equal to His teaching.

So today, I'd like to ask you to pray a dangerous prayer. Take a few minutes and ask God where your priorities are out of line. Is there a cost we haven't counted? Have we truly renounced everything to follow Him? Do we love Him so much it looks like we hate everything else? Ask the Spirit to reveal

your allegiances in your heart, and then have the courage to own up to them. It will be uncomfortable, but Jesus is worth it.

- Where are your priorities out of line?
- How can you renounce those areas to follow Jesus?

DISCUSSION GUIDE: OCTOBER 25, 2026

WEEK FOUR: LUKE 14:25–33

ALLEGIANCE

This week we talked about the cost of following Jesus. In Luke 14 He is very clear that to be His disciple we must love Him and His teaching so much it looks like we hate everything else. We must be willing to renounce everything and follow Him. Today your campus pastor will explain what it looks like for us to abandon everything and follow Jesus as a church.

ACTION STEP

How will I live out the action step this week?

SERMON NOTES

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CONNECT DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: WEEK 4

- Have you ever had to make a sacrifice to pursue a dream or goal? What was it that you had to give up? Was the sacrifice worth it in the end?
- In this passage Jesus says we must count the cost of following Him before we do so. What might it cost you in your daily life to follow Jesus? What type of things might you have to give up?
- There are many in our culture who claim to follow Jesus but also want to make compromises with the world? Why does our culture often accept certain compromises in our faith but disdain others? How can we help each other remain consistent?
- Jesus says that we must "hate" our own families to follow Him, yet the book of Ephesians says we should submit to each other and be willing to give our lives for our families? How do we reconcile these two ideas?
- What pursuits, habits, or ideas do you need to renounce this week to follow Jesus more closely?

WEEK 5

DAY 1: JOHN 15

UUPG Prayer Focus: Totela in Zambia / Ya in China

In the world of Christianity, one of the most common things that people search for is assurance. They want to know for sure that they have a right relationship with God. They want to know that they will spend eternity with Jesus. They want to know they've done the right thing. Many well meaning, but misguided people have suggested they "remember when they made a decision," or focus on "believing the right thing." The New Testament, however, tells us that we need to evaluate our lives and look at the "fruit" of our conduct if we want assurance of our salvation.

In John 15 Jesus says that anyone who "abides" in Him will produce fruit. In other words, if you have a relationship with Jesus there will be some type of evidence in your life that will prove that relationship. So don't try and remember your baptism or decision date. Look at your life right now. Do you have more self control than you did a year ago? Are you more patient than you were a year ago? How many people have you shared your faith with in the past year? Christianity is a living relationship with a living God, so don't treat it like a set of ritual actions. Look at yourself now. Does the fruit of your life show the evidence of a living relationship?

- Why do people get caught up in rituals instead of evaluating themselves?
- What fruit do you see in your life?

DAY 2: GALATIANS 5

UUPG Prayer Focus: Central Sama in Malaysia / Gosha in Somalia

It can be very easy to get caught up in vague language when talking about spiritual development. We can make our categories so wide and so obscure that we count anything as spiritual growth. That's why we need to be specific and refer to exact Scripture references when we are discussing our Christian growth. The more specific we are, the better we can live out what Jesus tells us to do. In John 15 Jesus tells us that we must "produce fruit" to be His disciples. Ok, but what exactly does it look like to "produce fruit?" Do we all need to become banana farmers?

That's why we turn to Galatians 5. Galatians 5 lists out exact characteristics that we must invest in for Spiritual growth. So the production of fruit that Jesus refers to in John 15 is in reality growth in: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self control. So to know whether or not you are following Jesus, you just have to look at your life and evaluate your character in each of these categories. Which seems easy... until you realize that you have a long way

to go in all of them. Don't be discouraged when you feel that conviction though! That feeling in the pit of your stomach that tells you you need to change is the Holy Spirit offering you conviction. That type of interaction tassels us that God is still calling us to Himself. So whether you are encouraged by your growth or by your conviction, follow Jesus today by producing fruit that reveals the inner change He is making in you.

- Which fruit of the Spirit have you grown in the most?
- Which fruit are you struggling with the most?

DAY 3: MARK 4

UUPG Prayer Focus: Deaf Laotians in Laos / Senara Senufo in Burkina Faso

In the parable of the sower, Jesus tells us the same thing that He tells His disciples in John 15. He says that when the word takes root in good soil it will produce fruit that is many times more than its original sprouting. Whether or not we produce the spiritual fruit that is consistent with salvation reveals whether or not we are His disciples. This parable in Mark, however, gives us a great opportunity to reverse engineer the equation that leads us to producing fruit. You see, we're talking about the final step in the process. "Produce fruit." In the parable of the sower, however, there are several contingencies that lead to whether or not that fruit is produced.

We need to ask what type of soil we are in relation to this parable. I know it's easy to assume that we are the "good soil" because we're the ones sitting here reading devotions, but many of the other options are realities in our lives. Is the enemy trying to steal the word from your heart with false Gospels? With fake Christianity? With pain and discouragement? Are you withering because you were rooted in an emotional experience and not the truth of Scripture? Are the cares of the world strangling your faith? How are we engaging in repentance to cultivate the soil of our own lives that we might cultivate fruit? Yes, the Spirit does supernatural work to break us from our sin, but how are we participating in that repentance so we might become disciples who produce much fruit?

- Which of the soil conditions do you relate to most right now?
- What disciplines can we undertake to make us more receptive to the word?

DAY 4: PSALM 1

UUPG Prayer Focus: Chechens in France / Hajjam in India

There are a number of things in this life that I have tried. I've failed at more of them than I have succeeded at to be sure. One of my most prolific areas of failure is in the area of gardening. I've tried to grow vegetables, trees, fruits, and

even flowers. Turns out the only thing I really know how to grow for sure is brown withering leaves. In most cases, my failures at gardening had a lot to do with when and where I planted the specific items. As I found out, you have to plant in the right area so the roots can have a consistent source of nutrition.

That's exactly what Psalm 1 is describing. This psalm tells us that the righteous person is like a tree planted by water that yields fruit in the proper season. That means that to produce fruit as a disciple of Jesus we have to be spiritually fed on a consistent basis. There is a big difference between surrendering to the Spirit and trying to outsource your growth. Yes, we are completely dependent on the Holy Spirit for our growth, but He is actively inviting us to take part in that growth through daily discipline and change. So let's abide in Jesus like John 15 says, and plant ourselves beside the water like Psalm 1 says. Let's put forth every effort to truly be a disciple of Jesus.

- What disciplines are you committing to in your spiritual walk?
- Where is the Holy Spirit asking you to change?

DAY 5: JOHN 15

UUPG Prayer Focus: Krishnavaka in India / Naita in India

It can be easy to make our character a thing of comparison.

Most people in our culture believe they are right with God, because they "aren't as bad as some other people." Some of us can get depressed and discouraged because it feels like everyone else has it under control. Even still others can treat their personal character and behavior with a moral stand where they are proving someone else wrong. All of these comparisons only serve to confuse the Gospel and make us struggle with understanding what it means to produce fruit.

The only comparison that matters is the one that Jesus gives us in this passage in John 15. Jesus tells us that His commandment to us is that we are to love others as He loved us. This is an ongoing command that was to be passed straight from the mouth of Jesus to every disciple that would ever come after Him. Is it a comparison we will ever live up to? No. Yet it is the only one that matters, and we have HIS Spirit living inside of us to continually push us that way day after day. Each day we need to evaluate the fruit of our lives and ask if we look a little bit more like Jesus today than we did yesterday. We need to lean into that conviction when the Holy Spirit shows us where to go. We need to embrace the daily discipline of working with the Holy Spirit to change our lives, our hearts, and our conduct so that we might follow Jesus more closely.

- What methods are you using to evaluate the fruit in your life?
- How are you encouraging others to do the same?

DISCUSSION GUIDE: NOVEMBER 1, 2026

WEEK FIVE: JOHN 15

PRODUCE FRUIT

This week we learned that Jesus said we must abide in Him and that will cause us to produce fruit as His disciples. We looked at Ephesians to determine exactly what that fruit should look like, and we learned that we should base our confidence in our faith on whether or not we are producing fruit in accordance with salvation. Today your campus pastor will talk about how “producing fruit” looks different for an entire group of believers as opposed to just one individual and lay out a vision for what it looks like to produce fruit as a congregation.

ACTION STEP

How will I live out the action step this week?

SERMON NOTES

[illegible]

CONNECT DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: WEEK 5

- Do you have a favorite sport? A favorite hobby? Maybe even an area of expertise? How do you engage with this pastime? Do you practice? Wear a particular type of clothing? Join a community? That also enjoys this pursuit? What type of changes occur when someone is devoted to a particular hobby or pursuit?
- Jesus says that to produce fruit we must “abide” in Him. What does this mean and how do we do this?
- How do we evaluate the “fruit” that is being produced from our spiritual growth? Are there particular fruits that matter more than others to you?
- It is common for many people in our culture to claim Christianity while having no visible fruit in their lives. How can we talk to people like this about the inconsistencies in their spiritual lives?
- What fruit will you be producing this week?

WEEK SIX

DAY 1: MATTHEW 24

UUPG Prayer Focus: Afrikaners in United Kingdom / Somalis in Canada

Have you ever made a New Year's resolution or a goal? You were all excited, you made a plan, and you couldn't wait to get started. Then that excitement kinda... faded. Maybe it was a fitness goal, but those workouts only lasted til mid February. Maybe it was a goal to read the Bible all the way through, but somewhere in Leviticus all those laws got difficult. It happens to all of us sometimes. We set out for something, but in the end we abandon the goal. The reality, however, is that we will never get the reward if we don't stick with the process. You can have 10 or 20 great workouts, but it takes months of consistency to see results. If we read from Genesis to mid leviticus every year, then we don't get to see the full story of Scripture. That's what all goals and pursuits have in common: You have to make it to the end to achieve the desired result.

In Matthew 24 Jesus tells His disciples that things are not going to be easy for them. Their temple will be destroyed, they will face persecution, they will be caught up in the world's conflicts. It's then that Jesus reminds them that the one who endures to the end will be saved. Too often we assume that because someone prayed a prayer as a child that they are eternally secure. Jesus says that we need to re-evaluate every

single day to make sure our faith is real. Jesus is making sure we know that in the end, the person who abandons their faith never truly believed to begin with. That those who were led astray by false teachers, half truths, and cultural myths can't claim to be His followers. It's a sobering reminder, but one that Jesus sets out as a must for anyone who would follow Him.

- What types of situations cause you to doubt and stray?
- How can you encourage or rebuke someone that is walking away from their faith?

DAY 2: HEBREWS 12

UUPG Prayer Focus: Chenna Dasar in India / Algerian Arabs in Spain

In Matthew 24 Jesus reminds His disciples that things are always going to be tumultuous in this world. He then reminds them that anyone who truly believes in Him will endure until the end. The author of Hebrews also reminds us to endure until the end, but in this case he also offers some encouragement as to how and why. He reminds us that everything we go through can be redeemed by God for our good. I don't know very many people who are going out and actively looking for trouble and suffering, but I know that everyone has hard days and difficult circumstances in this life. The author of Hebrews reminds us that when we experience difficulty we receive discipline from

God and we should rejoice because that's a reminder that we are in fact His children!

The author also gives us some helpful advice on what to do as well. He reminds us that it's a lot easier to keep going when we have something to focus on. If we just sit idly in our difficulty then depression and worry will overtake our minds, but if we actively seek to make peace with others, root out the sin on our lives, and make sure everyone else knows about Jesus then we can take our minds off of our struggles and remind ourselves that this is all worth while.

So be encouraged, even when hard times come. Don't sit around and overthink it, but get busy doing the work of a faithful believer.

- How can you focus on growth instead of difficulty? What are your strategies for keeping focused?
- How can you remember to rejoice when difficult times come your way?

DAY 3: ISAIAH 40

UUPG Prayer Focus: Walloons in France / Deaf Bulgarians in Bulgaria

Most of us have had the luxury of living in peace our entire lives. Yes, we hear concerning things from around the world and we have our own tragedies and anxieties, but the wars, persecution, and struggle that Jesus tells His disciples about in Matthew 24 are an everyday thing for many people around the world today, and even more throughout history. It's one thing to hear "rumors of wars," but another thing entirely to be caught in the middle of one.

In Isaiah 40, the original audience is going through that exact thing. They are caught in the middle of the Assyrian invasion of the northern kingdom of Israel. Many from Israel, particularly the leaders, had lived in excess while the poor suffered. The kings and priests continually allowed for the worship of idols. Sin went unchecked and even praised. Because of that, even the faithful were caught up in the consequences. Yet, as civilization fell all around them, the prophet Isaiah encouraged them to endure in their faith and continue trusting in God... even when everything was at its worst. This chapter of prophecy is filled with promises and reminders of who Jesus will be. IT reminds those in terror that they need to wait upon the Lord and He will eventually take care of them even when this life goes wrong.

- Take a few minutes to thank God for the peace we have lived through in our lives.
- Pray for those experiencing turmoil around the world

DAY 4: ROMANS 8

UUPG Prayer Focus: Meifu Li in China / Palestinian Arabs in the United Arab Emirates

Jesus reminded his disciples that things were going to be difficult. Not just the normal difficulty of first century life, but also the difficulty of maintaining faith under persecution and harassment. Life is difficult and the Christian life only adds a layer of difficulty to that. So why is the New Testament also full of encouragement to be joyful and loving and thankful? If everything is so hard then why don't we just hunker down and wait til the end? That's because the reward we receive for endurance will make every difficulty in this world look like nothing,

It can be very tempting in the middle of distress to simply focus on the difficulty at hand. In the books of Romans, however, Paul tells us that we should focus on the hope of the life that is to come. We can rejoice when we remember that the struggles of this world are only temporary, and that it won't be worth comparing to what we will receive if we stay faithful and cling to Jesus. Romans 8 is a chapter that can always serve as encouragement to set our eyes forward on what Jesus has prepared for us, so bookmark this chapter and read it over and over when those tough days come your way.

- How can you shift your focus in times of distress?
- How can you encourage someone else going through difficulty with the verses in Romans 8?

DAY 5: MATTHEW 24

UUPG Prayer Focus: Xinping Lalu in China / Tigrai in Sudan

We've talked a lot about enduring difficulty and finding encouragement as we discussed Jesus' words in Matthew 24, but we also need to focus on one particular warning that Jesus puts forward for all who would follow Him. He tells us numerous times throughout this chapter not to be deceived by those who claim to be Him or to be sent by Him. It can be tempting to think of this as an ultimate and apocalyptic prophecy, but we have seen this happen all throughout history.

Every few years we see the rise of some cult where the leader claims to know exactly when and how Jesus will return... even though Jesus strictly warned us not to do that. Right now we have political parties attempting to co-opt the word of Jesus for military recruitment, campaign slogan, and corrupt policies. We even have organizations that claim to be Christian ministries who are running scams, promoting racism, fleecing the poor, and preaching blasphemy. Jesus warned that false teachers, and false messiahs would come erroneously claiming His name. We see it everywhere, and we have to take this warning seriously if we want to stay focused on the real Jesus and endure til the end.

- Why do so many falsely claim the name and authority of Jesus?
- How can you reinforce your doctrine and faith so you won't be led astray by false teachers?

DISCUSSION GUIDE: NOVEMBER 8, 2026

WEEK SIX: MATTHEW 24

PERSEVERANCE

This week we learned about staying faithful in our commitment to Jesus even when life gets difficult. We learned about why we need to prepare for difficulty, and how we can focus on the ultimate reward to keep ourselves on track. Today your campus pastor will discuss how we can encourage each other as a congregation to endure life's difficulties as we follow Jesus and pursue His Kingdom.

ACTION STEP

How will I live out the action step this week?

SERMON NOTES

[illegible]

CONNECT DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: WEEK 6

- In Matthew 24 Jesus warns His disciples about many hardships and difficulties that would come their way. How did these difficulties play out in their lives? (Feel free to answer from other New Testament books or from History.) How are many of these same difficulties still at play in the world today?
- In this passage, Jesus warns His disciples numerous times about false teachers and false messiahs who will come claiming His name and authority? What are some of the false teachings that the New Testament church had to deal with? What verses did they use to reject these teachings? What are some of the primary false teachings we deal with today in our world? What verses do we use to defend against them?
- There are many people in our culture who believe they are "saved" because they raised their hand and prayed a prayer a number of years ago. How does this passage address that misconception? How can we evangelize those who claimed conversion and then walked away from their faith?
- This series has challenged us in many ways about how we follow Jesus as His disciples. What have you learned about being a disciple of Jesus? Are there any disciplines, habits, or ways of thinking you will change after hearing this series?

