



BRANCH CHURCH

# DISCIPLESHIP GUIDE

EIGHT WEEK JOURNEY AS YOU  
BEGIN TO FOLLOW JESUS

# EIGHT WEEK JOURNEY AS YOU BEGIN TO FOLLOW JESUS

## START HERE

Welcome to discipleship at Branch Church! Discipleship is a lifelong journey of growth as we seek to become more like Jesus everyday. A journey of faith in Jesus is a never ending experience of becoming what we cannot become without Him. We hope that in the next 8 weeks that you will be encouraged in your walk with Jesus as you learn the basics of Christian faith. We've outlined some practical first steps that will help you build confidence and learn to boldly share your story with others.

### Meeting location and time:

Find a place to meet each week that works for both of you. Ideas: You might try a coffee shop, restaurant, someone's house, or even ZOOM. If possible, set a consistent time so that it becomes part of your regular schedule. Make this a #1 priority in your life.

### What you'll need each week:

This workbook.

A Bible, preferably a NIV translation as this is the version used in our church.

A willingness to commit to meeting for 8 straight weeks. Seriously, top priority!

### Helpful terminology and tips:

**New Believer:** this is the person who just made the decision to follow Jesus.

**Discipler:** this is the person who has already been following Jesus and is now teaching and modeling *how to follow Jesus* to the New Believer.

**Write down your questions:** This is a life-long journey and it's normal to not understand everything right away. Be curious and ask questions! Write down your questions, tensions, and "ah-hah" moments as you go. Bring them to each meeting and use them as discussion points.

**Look up new words:** If you come across a word that is new to you, stop and look it up. New terminology or unfamiliar words can be stumbling blocks if they don't have meaning or are used out of context. Your faith will grow when you understand more of God's Word and it's intent. Use the back of your Bible if it has a dictionary/concordance or a study Bible. The internet can be helpful, but make sure you talk about good resources to use with your Discipler.

**Navigating the Bible:** The Bible is not like a typical book. It is actually made up of several books (66 to be exact). Each book of the Bible is broken up into chapters and each chapter is broken up into verses. For example, John 3:16 is the book of John, chapter 3, verse 16. You can find a table of contents in the front of your Bible. For easy reference, all scripture will be bold and underlined throughout this workbook.

# Course Topics and Schedule

Here are the topics you will cover over the next eight weeks:

- **Week One: *Sharing your Story***
- **Week Two: *Reading the Bible***
- **Week Three: *Prayer (Talking to God)***
- **Week Four: *Following, Obeying, and Trusting Jesus***
- **Week Five: *Community***
- **Week Six: *Baptism***
- **Week Seven: *Serving***
- **Week Eight: *Evangelism***

Each week will follow a simple model that will help you stay engaged and focused.

**Review:** Spend a few minutes at the beginning of your meeting going over any questions or thoughts that came up since your last meeting and going over the review question(s) in the workbook.

**Digging into the Bible:** Each week there are specific verses to help you study the Bible and dive deeper into each topic. Use this as “homework” to complete prior to meeting together, and review your reflections together.

**Next Steps:** This may involve making a plan, taking action, or preparing for your next meeting.

**Prayer:** End each time together in prayer. The Discipler should lead and encourage the New Believer in how to pray.



**Digging into the Bible:**

In order to grow in our relationship with Jesus, we need to spend focused time learning about him. We believe the Bible is God’s inspired Word to us and tells us what we need to know about God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit and our lives. Today we’ll be studying a few verses from the Bible to better understand how we are saved by Jesus.

Find the Letter of Romans in the Bible (you’ll want to use the Table of Contents in your Bible often these next 8 weeks) and then read **Romans 3:23** & **Romans 6:23**.

What do those two verses in the Book of Romans tell us about sin? What do you learn about God?

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Read **Ephesians 2:8-9**.

Here are a few definitions of some key Biblical words to help you:

*Grace:* Undeserved favor

*Works:* Doing good things or good deeds

What does it mean to be saved? Why does it say we aren’t saved by our good deeds?

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Read **John 3:16-17**. What do these verses say about God and the gift of eternal life in Heaven through Jesus?

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Read **Romans 10:9**. What do we need to do in order to be saved? Have you done this?

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Read **2 Corinthians 5:17**. What does the phrase “in Christ” mean? What happens to those who are “in Christ”? What would you identify as “old you”?

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**Next Steps:**

Disciplers, talk about finding your identity in Christ versus finding your identity in the world. Talk about what it means to turn away from sin and put on your “new self.” (See also **Ephesians 4:20-32**, and **Romans 6**.) Make sure the New Believer also understands what it means to be “saved by grace.” Talk about how the New Believer is now saved, forever. Jesus saw even their future sins, and still loved them, took their sins upon Himself, and died in their place.

New Believers, now that you’ve studied what it means to be saved by grace, try and explain it back to the Discipler.

**Prayer:**

Disciplers, please be sure to close your meetings in prayer.

## WEEK TWO: READING THE BIBLE

### Review:

Based on what you've learned so far, in your words, what does it mean to be a Christian?

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### Have One Person Read The Following Aloud:

The Bible is a collection of 66 different books. It's the story of God's interaction with humanity from the very beginning and throughout all time. There are two distinct sections – the Old Testament and the New Testament – but it is all woven together to create one big story of how great and wide is God's love for us! The Old Testament reveals to us how the world began, how we are created in God's image, how God interacted with His people and sent prophets to tell about the promise of salvation through Jesus. In the New Testament we read first-hand accounts of Jesus' teachings, His life on earth and how the early church began. We learn why Jesus came to die for us and how we are forgiven from our sins through Jesus' life, death, and resurrection! The New Testament reveals what it looks like to follow Jesus in everyday life through the power of the Holy Spirit. We also learn how God will reveal Himself further as time draws closer to when Jesus returns again! The Bible is called God's Word, because it is the Truth He wants us to live by. It reveals His character and helps us draw nearer to God the more we dive into it.

### Digging into the Bible:

We believe the Bible is God's special Word to us. We believe it is true, reliable, fully inspired by God, and authoritative in our lives. We believe that for a number of reasons:

1. Because of the Bible's consistency in history and in teaching (66 books with consistent translations across thousands of years!)
2. Hundreds of prophecies from the Bible have already been fulfilled!
3. The Bible itself has radically changed so many of our lives personally.
4. Because of how often the Bible amazingly speaks to us as we read it!
5. Jesus Himself fully believed in the Bible as God's authoritative and true Word.
6. Because of what it says about itself (see below).

Read **2 Timothy 3:16-17** together. This was written by the Apostle Paul, one of the early church leaders. What do you learn about the Bible (Scripture) from these verses?

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The Bible is written to guide you in your everyday living. Read two verses from Psalm 119 together. **Psalm 119:105** and **Psalm 119:130**. Discipler, how have you seen God do this when you read His Words?

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The Bible also can sometimes convict us of wrongdoing as we read and then lead us back to following God. Read **Hebrews 4:12** together. What do you think this may look like? Or, Discipler, can you give an example of how this has happened in your life?

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What questions do you have about the Bible so far?

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*Discipler, if you're not sure of the answer, that's okay! Just simply write the question down and ask a pastor or church leader to help you.*

### **Next Steps:**

Because the Bible is where we learn about God and how to live for Him (and also how we often hear from Him), we try to read it every day. However, the Bible doesn't necessarily read the easiest if you read it straight through in order. Some of the hardest books are towards the beginning, and some of the easier ones are towards the back. Starting in the book of John, one of the Gospels, is a great place to start. The Gospels focus on the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.

Discipler, help the New Believer come up with a plan for **what** they will read in the Bible this week, **when** you will read each day, and **how** (Paper Bible vs. App) you will read. New Believer, be prepared to report back next week on how it went and ask any questions you came up with!

### **Prayer:**

Disciplers, please be sure to close your meetings in prayer.



# WEEK THREE: PRAYER (TALKING TO GOD)

## Review:

How is your Bible reading going from last week? What have you learned about God as you have read? What questions do you have about your reading?

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## Have One Person Read The Following Aloud:

One of the most important things you'll do as a follower of Jesus is talk to Him! Often people make prayer out to be a lot more complicated than it actually is. Prayer doesn't need to be something you recite from memory or a fancy formula. Prayer is simply the way we talk to God. You can pray in your head, out loud by yourself, or out loud in a group. Prayer is our personal and collective connection with God. We pray to seek and know God's heart and follow His will for the church and for our lives.

## Digging Into the Bible:

Read **Philippians 4:6-7**.

What do you learn about prayer in these two verses? What can you pray about? What does prayer do for your heart?

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Read **Luke 18:1-8** together.

What is the Bible teaching about persistence in prayer?

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Read **Matthew 7:7-12**. These are the words of Jesus.

How does God look at you (or see you) when you pray?

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## What Should I Talk About When I Pray?

You can talk about whatever you want. Prayer is how our relationship with God grows. Try and talk to God like you would your best friend. Some people find it easier to pray when they have a model or a method to pray through.

One model we highly suggest is the ACTS prayer model. It's an acronym for 4 different types of prayer. The goal is to spend a minute or two praying through each of the 4 sections. They are as follows:

**A – ADORATION:** This is where we honor God, worship Him, or tell Him what we “adore” about Him. Start your prayer time by telling God why He’s good, or powerful, or loving. Talk to Him like you’d talk to a Great King.

**C – CONFESSION:** This is a time to confess our sin to God and tell Him where we’ve fallen short of His ways. It’s also a time to receive His forgiveness. As His new child, accept that He loves you and already sent Jesus to die for you. You are forgiven!

**T – THANKSGIVING:** Thanksgiving is where we give thanks to God for all of the things He’s done in our life. You can thank Him for things big and small. The more you thank Him, the more you’ll notice Him working in your life.

**S – SUPPLICATION:** Supplication is a fancy word for “asking God for what you need.” This is what we typically think of when we think of prayer. It’s asking God for help. You’ll find that this final section will go better if you’ve already talked to God about A, C, & T.

### **Next Steps:**

Mark 1:35 says, *“Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.”*

Jesus Himself sets an example for us of just how important it is to have daily conversation with His Father in heaven.

One of the most important things you’ll do as a new believer is to set a daily time to, not only read your Bible, but to talk to God in prayer. Some people call this a “Quiet Time,” “doing their devotionals,” or just simply their time to “read [the Bible] & pray.”

Whatever you call it, we find that different people prefer different times of the day. Some prefer to “read & pray” immediately when they wake up, some while they drink their coffee in the morning, others do it on their lunch break, while still others do it before bed. Whenever you do it, the most important thing is to try and establish a daily rhythm where you’ve set aside a certain time to connect with God. Once you’ve found a time that works, do whatever it takes to keep that time every day and not let anything else interrupt it or take its place. Make Jesus the #1 priority in your life.

Discipler, share what has worked for you in the past.

New Believer, how will you put prayer into your daily habits?

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**Prayer:** Encourage New Believer to close the meeting in prayer.

# WEEK FOUR: FOLLOWING, OBEYING, AND TRUSTING JESUS

## Review:

Were you able to find time to read the Bible and pray last week? What things are you learning about your relationship with God?

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## Have One Person Read The Following Aloud:

Christians are often called “followers of Jesus.” We are, as believers in Him, called to be followers of His ways and His voice. We are called to follow Jesus’ instructions by obeying and trusting in His ways, even when it seems difficult. If we love Him, we will (naturally) obey Him and find that His ways are good! We won’t ever be perfect at obeying God, but when we are a new creation in Christ, His Holy Spirit lives in us and will begin to change us from the inside out. The longer that you walk with God, the more you’ll learn to discern His voice guiding you through His written Word in the Bible and the presence of the Holy Spirit.

## Digging Into the Bible:

Read **Matthew 7:24-27** together. Jesus is teaching using a parable. What does Jesus tell you will happen if you obey and live out His teachings?

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Read **1 John 2:3-6** and also **John 14:21**. What do you notice about these two passages?

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The more you obey and trust God, the more fruit He will grow in your life. Read more about that process in **Galatians 5:22-25**. As you read about the Fruits of the Spirit, which of these qualities would you like to see the Holy Spirit produce in you?

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**Next Steps:**

Discipler, what has it looked like for you to follow, obey, and trust Jesus? Where is it hard? How does He help you? How has He changed you over time?

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New Believer, what do you think will be the hardest part for you about following Jesus Christ and obeying Him?

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**Prayer:**

Close together in prayer, asking God for help in learning to walk in obedience to Him.

# WEEK 5: COMMUNITY

## Review:

Where have you felt challenged in following Jesus, lately? How has your time in prayer and reading the Bible helped you?

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## Have One Person Read The Following Aloud:

As a follower of Jesus, you weren't meant to walk alone. We are made for a relationship with God and with each other. We see this evidenced from the beginning of God's creation and in the purpose of why He created the church. God designed the church to be a group of believers that "do life together." As a body of believers we are like a family seeking to include everyone, have equal concern for one another, being held accountable to one another, and encouraging one another to grow in our faith. Church is not a building or simply a place to go for worship, the church, as Christ intended is a way of living in authentic community that will point people towards the love of God. The church is the body of Christ and everyone has a part in it.

## Digging Into the Bible:

The Book of Acts is the story of how the early church got started after Jesus went back to heaven. (It's the Acts of the Apostles – what they did as followers.) Read **Acts 2:42-47**. What stands out to you as you read this passage?

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One of the best ways to grow in your relationship with God is to spend time talking about God and the Bible with other Christians. Read **Hebrews 10:24-25**. What are we called to do together?

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**Next Steps:**

Getting connected to other believers is an important part of being a follower of Jesus. You are already doing a great job by working on this Discipleship Guide and sharing the ways God is moving in your life. We encourage you to continue building community with other believers – study the Bible in a small group, have meaningful conversations about God, and join a Branch Home!

Visit [branchchurchmn.org](http://branchchurchmn.org) to check out Branch Home options (starting in the Fall of 2021), and talk to your Discipler about ideas for getting more connected!

**Prayer:**

Close together in prayer and thank God for your time together with another believer.

# WEEK 6: BAPTISM

## Review:

What ideas do you have for getting more involved in our church community? Jumping into community can be intimidating. What questions do you have?

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## Have One Person Read The Following Aloud:

After someone makes a decision to receive Christ into their lives as their Savior and Lord and starts a personal relationship with Him, God’s Word commands us to be baptized. Many people and churches have all sorts of different opinions and traditions regarding baptism, so it’s important that we study what the Bible itself actually teaches concerning baptism.

Baptism is meant to be an outward symbol of what God has done inside your heart. Stop and read **Romans 6:1-5** to learn more about this symbolism.

The basic teaching of Romans 6 (and the rest of the Bible) regarding the symbolism of baptism is this: as each person gets lowered down into the water, it firstly symbolizes Jesus’ own burial and then his rising from the dead. However, it also symbolizes how the new believer died to their old self, their old ways, and that they are now burying that old life under water and coming up a new person. And not only that, but that Jesus *washed* away their sins completely. And now, through their faith, they have risen up completely clean in His eyes. Baptism is a very powerful symbol of what happened when you believed in Jesus!

Although baptism is an incredibly important symbol, it isn’t what saves you. Your faith in Jesus saves you. Baptism is like the “wedding ring” of the Christian faith. Putting the wedding ring on isn’t what crosses you over from single to married, but it’s the symbol that you are indeed married. Baptism is similar to that. It’s an outward symbol that you have had your sins washed away by Jesus and have risen up as a new person!

Discipler, please share your baptism story.

## What if I was Baptized as a Baby?

Although many different churches have developed traditions over the centuries of baptizing babies, that isn’t in fact the teaching of the Bible. *Every* time baptism is mentioned in the Bible, it is described as something that is done AFTER someone makes a personal decision to become a believer in Jesus Christ. Baptism is meant to be an outward symbol of your faith in Jesus washing away your sins, and the understanding of that faith isn’t something you can experience as a baby.

We encourage you, even if baptized as an infant, that it's Biblical to make a choice to be baptized again after you've become a true believer in Jesus. Many people find this experience powerful, and a beautiful act of obedience towards God as you declare what Jesus means to you. Pray about it and trust the Holy Spirit's prompting if you feel encouraged to be Baptized!

**Digging Into the Bible:**

Many people wonder, "when should I get baptized?" The short answer: as soon as possible! In the Book of Acts (the story of the early church in the Bible), new believers are always told to get baptized right after they believe (or as soon as they can). Look at what Ananias says to Saul (who became Paul) when he becomes a believer in **Acts 22:16**. Or, notice how fast the process is when you read **Acts 8:34-38**. (Later, read Acts 16 where there are two *more* cases of new Christians getting baptized almost immediately.) What are your thoughts about these passages?

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Did you know JESUS Himself was Baptized? Read **Matthew 3:13-17**. Discuss what this passage means and how it applies to your faith in Jesus.

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**Next Steps:**

Check our website [branchchurchmn.org](http://branchchurchmn.org) to find the next Baptism date and sign up to let us know you are ready! We will explain how to prepare your faith story for sharing, logistics of the day, and what to expect.

**Prayer:**

Close together in prayer, and give praise to God for His plan to save you and all who believe, through Jesus Christ.



# WEEK 7: SERVING

## Review:

What's one positive step you've made towards growing closer to Jesus this week? Have you signed up yet to be baptized?

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## Have One Person Read The Following Aloud:

One of the main ways we look like Jesus and change the world is by serving other people. As God begins to change your heart more and more, He will give you a heart to serve and love other people more than you previously thought possible. We live out our faith and bless others when we joyfully meet the needs of those around us. We use our spiritual gifts to serve God and each other. When we share our time, talents, and resources God is pleased. We give Him glory as we care for the vulnerable, carry each other's burdens, and serve one another humbly in love. One of your main tasks as a new believer in Jesus will be to find where God wants to use you to serve other people.

## Digging into the Bible:

Jesus doesn't just tell us to serve, but He set an example for us. Read **John 13:1-17**. What surprises or encourages you about Jesus' example?

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Read **Matthew 25:34-40**. Who does Jesus say will be blessed, and who are we serving when we help "the least of these"?

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God has gifted each and every believer with different spiritual gifts to help us serve one another and this world. Read **1 Corinthians 12:12-26**. What do we learn about using our different gifts and abilities to glorify God? We all have different gifts, but what do we have in common?

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There are a few different places the Bible talks about Spiritual Gifts. 1 Corinthians 12, Romans 12, and Ephesians 4 give the most extensive lists. Read **1 Peter 4:8-11** & **Romans 12:6-8**. How do these verses help you discover how God wants you to serve?

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Discipler, what spiritual gifts do you believe God has given you, and how are you using them to serve God and others?

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**Next Steps:**

Discover your spiritual gifts so you can recognize the unique ways God might be calling you to serve His church. We provide a free online assessment that can help identify your team- or task-oriented gifts. Visit [branchchurchmn.org/serve](http://branchchurchmn.org/serve) to take the Spiritual Gifts assessment. (It only takes about 15 minutes.) Review your results and talk about how you can use your gifts to serve.

There are many different ways to serve others – and this can start in your own family and neighborhood. Another important part of serving is using your gifts to help the church. The church is not just a place, it is a body of believers. When we serve each other, the church is healthier and able to reach more people with the Love of Christ. There are a number of teams at Branch Church where people can feel included and equipped to serve – teams like Kids, Facilities, Hospitality, Greeters, Communications, Prayer, and Care – to name a few! To learn more about these teams or to sign-up, check out the Serving page on our website. [branchchurchmn.org/serve](http://branchchurchmn.org/serve)

**Prayer:**

Close together in prayer, and ask God to reveal where He wants you to use your gifts to help others.

# WEEK 8: EVANGELISM

## Review:

What does it mean to be a Christian? Has your answer changed since you started this process 8 weeks ago?

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What's one area that you still want to really grow in as it pertains to your relationship with God?

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## Have One Person Read The Following Aloud:

Much of the story of the New Testament in the Bible is the story of people telling other people about Jesus. The Bible calls this evangelism. In fact, one of our most important tasks as a follower of Jesus is to spread the Good News that Jesus saves!

## Digging into the Bible:

Some of Jesus' last words before He went back to heaven are known as "The Great Commission." Jesus commissioned His disciples (and His future disciples...us!) to a very critical task. Read "The Great Commission" in **Matthew 28:18-20**. How would you summarize what Jesus wants us to do?

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God has a great plan to help other people learn about His love. His plan is...YOU! Read **Romans 10:9-15** and then read **2 Corinthians 5:17-21**. How did God use other people to help you hear the Gospel (the Good News that Jesus saves)?

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Starting to tell others about Jesus can sometimes feel really natural, and other times it can feel really intimidating. But we must always remember what Jesus did for us and to share that with others who don't know Jesus. Without faith in Jesus, they won't have eternal life in Heaven. Read **Romans 1:16** and **John 14:6**. What do these verses say about the Gospel and Jesus?

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### Next Steps:

How do you talk about God to others? There are a hundred different ways. You may start by just inviting them to hear about Jesus at church. Or start by talking to them about what God has done lately in your life. Remember, no one can disagree with your own personal story of what God has done in your own life! And as your conversation goes further, you'll learn to explain how God saved you: That you weren't good enough on your own to be saved and go to Heaven, but by believing that Jesus died for you and saved you from sin, you can now live with Him for all eternity! That is the heart of the Good News that we want to tell everyone about.

Is there someone that God is putting on your heart that you could share Jesus with? Who might it be? What questions do you have about sharing your faith?

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### Keep Going!

This is our final session together, but it's still just the beginning of your new walk with Jesus! Here are five key habits that will really help you grow, as His new disciple:

1. Keep up your spiritual habit of reading the Bible and praying every day.
2. Come to church every week. No matter what. If you're out of town, go to a different church or invite someone to watch it with you online. Don't do church "alone." Prioritize your schedule around Jesus. You will thrive if you always put Him first.
3. Stay connected to other believers by joining a church ministry team, a small group, or a Branch Home! Continue learning from others and growing in community.
4. Keep exploring your Spiritual Gifts through serving others and serving God.
5. Take your faith public! Get baptized and start sharing what God has done in your life with the other people God has already put in your life. We pray that soon enough *you'll* be leading someone in your life through these 8 weeks of discipleship! That is how we change the world: by making disciples who make disciples who make disciples!

**Prayer:** Close together in prayer, and thank God for the time and growth you've experienced over the last 8 weeks.