

The background features a series of overlapping triangles in shades of gray and blue, with a large gray circle in the upper left. The text is centered over these shapes.

GREATER THINGS

Growing
As A Disciple

Ron Pickell

***Greater Things* – Participant’s Guide by Ron Pickell**

Available at:
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Journey...

is about the life God has in mind for all of us—the life you have always wanted.

In Jane Austen's famous *Mansfield Park*, Tom, the oldest son of the Bertram family, once asks his father—a cruel, heartless slave trader—for a nobler mission. "Give me a noble mission, father," Tom cried. He wanted something more noble than the slave trade.

Tom's request is the cry of the human heart: for a life purpose that measures up to the magnificent beings we were created and meant to be. The life and mission that Jesus calls us to—in whatever service or use of our talents that God has blessed us with—is this nobler mission. It is the call of discipleship. It is the call of Jesus.

Who was Jesus? What was His mission? What can Jesus teach us about ourselves, life's meaning, and our relationships with others? Invitation, the first lesson in the *Journey* series, is an introduction to the life and mission of Jesus. *Greater Things* builds on it by exploring the call of discipleship. Through the voice of Matthew—one of Jesus' closest followers—we are going to learn, experience, and practice the rhythms of discipleship with Jesus.

Titles
and
Topics
Covered
in *Greater
Things*

1. Greater Things! *The Call of Discipleship*
2. Discipled by Matthew: *A Great Disciple?*
3. Can I Get a Witness? *The Great King*
4. The King's Inaugural: *A Greater Service*
5. The Ethics of Jesus' Kingdom, Part 1: *A Greater Life*
6. The Ethics of Jesus' Kingdom, Part 2: *A Greater Focus*
7. The Ethics of Jesus' Kingdom, Part 3: *A Greater Community*
8. Giving Away the Kingdom: *A Greater Mission*
9. Proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus: *A Greater Message*
10. Leading by Example: *Becoming Greater Leaders*
11. Making All Things New: *A Greater World*
12. The Reclamation of All Things: *A Great New Identity*

Breaking
Down
Journey

Journey was created for college students to use in larger, weekly meetings either on or off campus in a teaching and small group discussion setting. The beginning paragraph is an illustration that introduces the topic of study.



- **Journey Together** helps ease participants into the topic through ice-breaker related questions.



- **Road Map** is the main Bible passage discussion will focus on, and the questions that follow will help flesh out the topic. If you are leading *Journey*, feel free to depart from these as needed and come up with your own, as long as they stay on track with the main direction of the lesson laid out in the leader's guide.



- **My Journey** is a continuation of the larger group meetings meant for smaller groups of people that meet during the week to check in with one another and reflect on how God is using *Journey* in their daily life. I recommend these groups be flexible in terms of location and meeting time. Keep in mind that the amount of questions have been purposefully limited in this section to allow for more personal interactions and life application.

What
You're
Going to
Need for
*Greater
Things*

What You're Going to Need for *Greater Things*:

- Good soil—An open and receptive heart
- Willingness to work the soil—Determination and diligence
- Hunger and thirst—A desire for God

The Five S's of Hearing and Discerning God's Voice

- **Seek:** Pray for God to open up each week's Bible passage to you. Is there a promise for you to claim, a sin to confess, words for you to follow, or an insight to share?
- **Soak:** Read the passage each day and write down any observations, thoughts, questions, connections, or anything God says to you about it.
- **Seal:** Seal God's Word to you deep within your heart by taking some time to meditate on whatever the most important truth to you was this week. Ask God to open the deeper recesses of your heart to teach you what you need most for your life this week.
- **Script:** Journal or write—even if only a few lines—noting the ways that God spoke to you during your reading, your meditation, or the group's time together. This will help you keep better track of God's voice and the way He is speaking through Scripture.
- **Share:** Share with someone what you are learning from your time with God in Journey. As you share what you are learning, it will help drive God's word home to you even more and you will notice how God will use what He has revealed to you to bless others.

More about
*Greater
Things*

Becoming like Jesus? There is no greater privilege or accomplishment in discipleship than to become like one's teacher. But Jesus actually inspires and promises to help us do even greater things in Him through His name. Greater than the works of Jesus? That may seem impossible and even blasphemous, but that is what Jesus promised: a discipleship that would continue His mission from one disciple to the next—Jesus living on and magnifying His efforts in all those who would pick up their cross and follow Him. Jesus spurred His disciples on with these words: "You will do even greater things than these because I am going to the Father" (John 14:12).

What kinds of greater things can we do through Jesus? How open was Jesus' mission? In what way was the kingdom of God to continue and advance after He was gone? What authority did Jesus extend to His followers that would enable them to continue what He had started? How were His disciples expected to accomplish even more in Jesus' name? What was the strategy? What resources was He providing? How could they be expected to do even greater things than Jesus with less spiritual power and divine resource than Him?

This is what we are going to explore together over the next few weeks. We want to dig deep into the question of what it means to become like Jesus so that Jesus' life and mission lives on in us—so that Christ is literally present on earth as a living body in the lives of those who call Him Lord.

Mathew, one of Jesus' earliest followers, was so compelled by Jesus' vision that he left his very lucrative business of tax collecting to become a follower of Jesus. In Matthew's account, we find not only a narrative of Jesus' life and ministry, but an actual reference to Jesus' pattern of discipleship and the competencies expected of His followers. In other words, what we learn from Matthew is how Jesus disciplined him, what Jesus expected a disciple to learn, and how Jesus wanted His disciples to incorporate into their lives what they learned from Him as their rabbi.

From the very beginning of Mathew's introduction about Jesus, we discover that Mathew's gospel is about Jesus, Mathew, the disciples, and ultimately us. Jesus is the start of a new people (Abraham) and a new kingdom (David) that will ultimately lead us out of our bondage of sin (Babylon). Jesus is Son of Abraham, the Son of David, and our Deliverer (Matthew 1).

Matthew's gospel centers around five of Jesus' most important speeches, which give us the framework for what discipleship with Him is about. After introducing Jesus to us as the Messianic king—a *greater king*—in chapters 1–4, Matthew goes on to talk about the Sermon on the Mount in chapters 5–7 (a call to have a *greater life*), Jesus' sending out of the twelve in chapter 10 (a call to have a *greater mission*), the woes Jesus pronounced on the Pharisees in chapter 23 (a call to become *greater leaders*), the Olivet Discourse in chapters 24 and 25 (a call to prepare for a *greater world*), and Jesus' call to make disciples in chapter 28 (a call to have a *greater identity*).

In becoming like Jesus, we are surrendering to Jesus as king, taking on His life, carrying out His mission, proclaiming His message, and becoming His *leaders* so we can help prepare others for His new *world* and to accept their new *identity* in Him. These are the seven discipleship competencies that Jesus introduced into Matthew's life after he followed Him.

What
Discipleship
According
to Matthew
Means:

1. Learning that Jesus is more than our Savior, as wonderful as that already is. It means acknowledging Jesus as the number one priority in our lives and surrendering to His lordship.
2. Receiving the life of His kingdom and incorporating His spiritual disciplines, which will help us practice a new inner life and show up in the way we live before God and others.
3. Learning how to tell others about living a life from above—the blessed life. It means learning the compassionate ministry of Jesus and sharing the good news of the kingdom by incorporating the missionary practices of Matthew 10.
4. Explaining the kingdom of God to someone through our own story as well as the parables of the kingdom in Matthew 13, making sure to adapt it to fit where people are at and how they respond.
5. Learning to live by example and living what we say, as well as practicing authentic servant leadership.
6. Reminding others about the consummation of Jesus' kingdom and preparing them for the world to come.
7. Committing to leading an *Invitation* Bible study in your room or somewhere else on campus.
8. Committing to discipling someone in the *Greater Things* discipleship process.
9. Being baptized into the new life and identity we have in and through Jesus Christ.
10. Committing to following Jesus ("Christ in you, the hope of glory").

"We are, to be sure, reconciled to God by Jesus' death, but even more, we are 'saved' by his life (Romans 5:10)—saved in the sense of entering into his eternal kind of life, not just in some distant heaven but right now in the midst of our broken and sorrowful world. When we carefully consider how Jesus lived while among us in the flesh, we learn how we are to live—truly live—empowered by him who is with us always even to the end of the age. We then begin an intentional imitatio Christi, imitation of Christ, not in some slavish or literal fashion but by catching the spirit and power in which he lived and by learning to walk "in his steps" (1 Peter 2:21).

Streams Of Living Water, Richard Foster (1998, p.3)

"Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men" (Mathew 4:19).

Greater Things!

The Call Of Discipleship

I can still remember when our daughter Emily was around six or seven years old and liked to watch while I was tying a string or turning a screw. I could see her watching intently and begin to move her fingers as if she was already performing the task in her mind. She wanted to do what I was doing. Apparently, Jesus knows how much we want to be a part of His mission too. This is discipleship—doing what God does. Our hands and heart long to do what God has done in us and for us. Heeding the call of discipleship is about advancing God’s mission in the world as God works through us, following His example and being led by His Spirit.



1. What is the most important thing you learned from your mom or dad?

2. What are some important things you are learning from others right now?

3. If you could do anything that Jesus did, what would you want to do and why?

Note: Jesus encouraged the disciples by saying that they would one day do even greater things in His name than He was doing. Does this surprise you and why?

“The person who trusts me will not only do what I’m doing but even greater things, because I, on my way to the Father, am giving you the same work to do that I’ve been doing.”—John 14:12 (MSG)



Mark 6:6–13

1. What were some of the great things that Jesus gave the disciples to do when He sent them out together?

2. What did the call of Jesus entail here? What specific call and instruction does Mark mention here as Jesus extends His authority to the twelve?

3. How many of the things that Jesus instructs the disciples to do have you seen or been used by God to carry out yourself?

Note: There are four important key points in this verse to note about Jesus’ call for us to advance God’s kingdom here.

- a) We are called to “be with Him.
- b) Everything is through Jesus’ name.
- c) We are called to repentance.
- d) We are called to have complete dependence on God.

4. How important are each of these things and why?

5. What are some of the greater things can you think of that the disciples accomplished in Jesus' name? What great things do you imagine God wants to accomplish through you?

6. What further questions do you have from this week's reading?

7. How can this group pray for you?



1. How has God been using Journey in your life this week to do great things for Him?

2. How is God reminding you this week of our call to be with Him?

3. What great things that God can do can we pray about together today?

Discipled Matthew: A Great Disciple?

We switched from Comcast back to AT&T U-Verse for our cable, internet, and phone service recently, and with that came the hassle of syncing everything up and making sure all the remotes worked. I started trying to wrap my mind around all the changes and quickly went from the more detailed instruction book to the quick setup guide with the pictures and graphics. Then the technician sat me down and went over everything. He set up my remote, got me registered on the new account, and walked me through the entire process. Some things are so complicated that it helps to have a guide for the journey.

Being formed in Christ is like that. Life in and through Jesus is so different than our past estranged life from God that we need someone to help us sync up with Christ. To live life as Jesus meant for us to live it takes an instruction book—the Bible. But beyond instruction, we need real tech support to help us with the new installation (life in the Spirit), to explain the various components of our walk with God (spiritual disciplines), and to tell us what to do about problem solving (troubleshooting). Disciplers are spiritual tech support—people who come alongside of us to help explain the Christian life through the lens of their own life journey. They know how to encourage, unpack, and help solve the mysteries of our new life in Christ because they've been on the journey for a while. Being discipled by another devoted follower of Jesus is like having our own personal tech support on the journey from death to new life in Christ.



1. Who was the first real Christ follower that made a lasting impression on you?

2. What impressed you most about them?

3. What lessons did you see and learn from them that you have incorporated in your life?



Matthew 9:9–13

1. What are some things Jesus taught Matthew about discipleship in this first encounter with him? What surprises you most about Jesus' calling of Matthew?

2. In Matthew 10:2-4, Matthew is listed as one of the original twelve disciples. What is unique about Matthew among the other eleven disciples listed here? What was important about Matthew's occupation, and why does he seem to keep bringing it up?

3. What kind of issues and questions did Matthew struggle with in his call to follow Jesus? What made his call so different from the rest of the twelve?

4. What can we learn from Matthew about discipleship with Jesus? How do you feel about being discipled by Matthew? How can you relate to Matthew as a follower of Jesus?

5. What are some of the great things that Matthew accomplished in Jesus' name? How can Matthew help us accomplish great things in Jesus' name?

6. What further questions do you have from this week's reading?

7. How can this group pray for you?



1. How has God been using Journey in your life this week to do great things for Him?

2. How has the life of Matthew been a significant witness and influence in your walk with God this week?

3. How can this group pray for you today??

Can I Get A Witness?

The Great King?

If you were asked to perform or speak somewhere, who would you want to introduce you? Often when I am asked to present, the person tasked with my bio usually mispronounces my name or emphasizes things about me I would rather not have mentioned. Introductions matter, especially when you have a last name like "Pickell." In this week's lesson we have a whole group of witnesses that emerge one at a time to remind us of who Jesus is. Some of them are very unlikely characters and some acknowledge who He is by default, but each one helps tell the story. Pay close attention this week to the list of witnesses provided by Matthew and the ways they introduce us to Jesus.



1. Who would you want to introduce you to others and why?

2. What would you most like people to know about you?

3. What is the most important thing to know about a person?



Matthew 1:1-17

1. Why would Matthew choose to introduce Jesus by tracing His family history? What can we learn about Jesus from His genealogy?

2. What surprises you most about the names on this list? If you could leave out some of these people to protect Jesus' reputation, which ones would you choose and why?

3. So far the entire Old Testament is referenced in the genealogy of Jesus as a witness of who He is. List some of the other important witnesses who provide testimony about the person of Jesus. What are all these characters saying about Jesus? Who is He and why is this important?

4. Everyone from the Old Testament genealogy record, which moves us from Abraham to Jesus in one grand historical sweep, knows who Jesus is. How does this help inform our view of Jesus?

5. How does this great list of witnesses right in the beginning of Matthew impact our obedience and discipleship to Jesus? What difference does it make that we are becoming disciples of King Jesus?

6. Allowing Jesus to become Lord of our lives is the first step, or competency, of discipleship. When did Jesus become king in your life? If He hasn't yet, what steps would you need to take for Him to take the throne of your heart?

7. What further questions do you have from this week's reading?

Discipleship Challenge: Our challenge this week after re-reading Matthew 1-3 is to surrender to Jesus as the rightful king of our hearts and to offer Him the very first place in all we do. In fact, as a disciple this is our first act of every day—to begin by acknowledging Jesus as Lord of all.

8. How can this group pray for you?



1. How has God been using *Journey* in your life this week to do great things for Him?

The King's Inaugural

A Greater Service

Presidential inaugurations are important, but mostly ceremonial. The first one hundred days in office are what the nation is really looking for to determine what kind of leader the new president will be once the election and inauguration are finally behind them. Though young King David's anointing, or inauguration, was done in secret, he followed it in the very next chapter by going forth and slaying Goliath, Israel's fiercest enemy. Jesus' anointing and mission was a near repeat performance, with the exception that the stakes were infinitely higher. Jesus was "led by the Spirit out into the wilderness" to face our world's greatest enemy and Jesus defeated him by listening to and obeying God's Word. This week's lesson reminds us of Jesus' mission and provides some clues about what discipleship with Jesus is all about.



1. What is one of the greatest responsibilities you have ever been given?

2. How did you prepare for it?

3. What was most difficult about it and how were you able to accomplish it?



Matthew 4:1-11

1. Why does Matthew include the account of Jesus' baptism? What is unique about the baptism of Jesus? How is His baptism connected with Jesus being sent out into the wilderness?

2. How did Jesus' baptism help prepare Him for the devil's temptations?

3. What was the first temptation (turning stones into bread) about? What was the devil tempting Jesus to prove? How has the devil tempted you like this?

4. What was the second temptation (jumping from the temple) about? If Jesus really was the Son of God, why didn't He accept Satan's challenge? What was Jesus being tempted with here? Has the devil ever tempted you in this way, and how?

5. The third and last temptation was less subtle, but perhaps the hardest for Jesus since it was similar to the struggle He would face again at the end of His life in the garden of Gethsemane. It was the struggle of surrendering to God's will even though it means personally suffering instead of the less painful and easier choice to bow to the devil. How have you been tempted with the easy way out instead of paying the price of obedience? Why does bowing to the "prince of this world" always seem easier?

6. What is the first competency in discipleship with Jesus? What is Matthew teaching us about discipleship in the very beginning of Jesus' mission? What spiritual resources does Jesus receive at His baptism that we too must have if we are going to overcome temptation?

Discipleship Challenge: God is challenging us to go beyond belief and acceptance and to join His mission. Ask God to clarify His mission in your life and help you understand what you most need to accomplish it.

7. How can this group pray for you?



1. How has God been using *Journey* in your life this week to do great things for Him?

The Ethics of Jesus' Kingdom — Part 1

A Greater Life

Someone shared a story with me recently about a friend who had been unjustly accused of child neglect. The police were called when a four-year old boy was seen walking around unattended between a neighbor's house and his own home. The boy had wandered off for a few seconds from the neighbor's, but the police pressed neglect charges on the father. In spite of his explanation and personal account of the story, the father was jailed, forced to post an exorbitant bond, acquire an attorney, and forbidden to even see his son for over a month. Governing authorities and laws are meant to protect the rights of the helpless, but sometimes in our hurry for justice we look right past the truth and allow justice to be thwarted. Jesus is the king and the Son of David, and the ethics of His kingdom are built on the transformation of the hearts of His subjects. He is less interested in prosecuting offenders and more concerned about the real story. By establishing a kingdom where justice springs from the heart and is qualified by righteousness at the core of our being, Jesus has created a place where truth works its way from the inside out and where no law can ever count against us. He is crowned king of our hearts!



1. Have you ever been treated unjustly? Describe how it felt.

2. Describe what "God desires truth in our inward parts" means to you.

3. How has God used you to explain the real story when someone was being misrepresented?



Matthew 5:1–20

1. How do the Beatitudes help define the subjects of Jesus' kingdom? What makes the poor in spirit, those who mourn, the meek, those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, etc. blessed? What is the blessing reserved for these people and how is it coming to them?

2. How do these blessings from Jesus speak to you? How do they give you hope? Which ones encourage you the most and why?

3. How is the new government of Jesus a fulfillment rather than a replacement of the old law? What is the law of Jesus' kingdom and where is it written? What is the relationship between this new righteousness of Jesus and being the salt and the light of the world?

Read Matthew 5:21-48. Note: In these verses Jesus addresses the laws regarding murder ("Do not kill"), marriage and divorce ("Do not commit adultery"), oaths ("Do not lie"), and revenge ("Do not bare false witness").

4. What is so different about what Jesus requires in our relationships with one another than what the Law of Moses required?

5. What is the relationship between the way the first half of the chapter talks about blessing, and how it says we are to treat one another in the last half? Which of these commands do you find most difficult and why?

6. If surrender to King Jesus is the first competency of discipleship, what is the second one? What steps will you need to take to move forward with Jesus as your rabbi?

Discipleship Challenge: Jesus is challenging us to live from above. Focus on your own poverty of Spirit this week in contrast to Jesus gift. What do you need to follow Jesus from the heart?

7. How can this group pray for you?



1. How has God been using *Journey* in your life this week to do great things for Him?

2. How has God been working in your heart this week?

3. How can this group pray for you today?

The Ethics of Jesus Kingdom — Part 2

A Greater Focus

The Internet is such a great place to hide—to pretend to be more than we are. Facebook is bad enough, but dating sites like OkCupid and Match.com are some of the best places to fashion our own avatars. An avatar is the alter ego we want others to see and to know us by. Religion can be another place to hide and develop spiritual avatars by doing religious practices for show—things like public prayer, living by our titles, and referring to the good things we have done at just the right moment. This was what Jesus hated most about the Pharisees, who were considered by many to be the most committed of all the religious groups in His day. The Pharisees were a lay movement that rigidly practiced Jewish law. They even followed rules surrounding the law to protect it and keep themselves from breaking it. This is how they appeared to be so devoted. But it's also why they came into such conflict with Jesus, because Jesus saw right through their pretense. They practiced their right living before men instead of God. When religious practice in spite of our poverty of spirit bubbles up from God's blessing, we are living from the new self God formed in us instead of the self-made avatars we fashioned for the attention and praise of others. This is the spirituality of the kingdom—spirituality from the inside out!



1. What are some of the most ridiculous lies you have seen on the Internet?

2. What are some pretentious things you have seen people say or do on the Internet?

3. What are some pretentious things you have seen people say or do at church?



Matthew 6

1. Matthew 6 is about practicing the righteousness we want others to see. What does this look like? When and where have you seen this? Have you ever been tempted to pretend that you are more spiritual than you really are? Why are we tempted to do this?

2. Jesus says to practice our faith in secret. What does He mean by a "secret" faith? Why does He instruct us to pray, give, and make promises in secret? What relationship do these practices have with the Beatitudes and the "better righteousness" of Matthew 5?

3. In what way is giving to others a spiritual discipline? How have you been blessed by giving something away?

4. What do you find most rewarding, difficult, frustrating, or easy about prayer? How does the prayer that Jesus taught His disciples help you in your own communion with God?

5. What does Jesus mean by "storing up our treasures in heaven"? How is this a spiritual discipline? How is our relationship with earthly goods an insight into our soul? What relationship does this have with the Beatitudes of Matthew 5 and the better righteousness of the kingdom?

6. What does Jesus mean by "seeking first the kingdom"? What is the relationship between the spiritual practices of Matthew 6 and seeking first the kingdom?

Discipleship Challenge: Jesus is challenging us in our spiritual practices. Focus this week on your prayer life, the help you give to others, and the value you place on material things. How can you tell if these practices are for God or to be seen by others?

7. How can this group pray for you?



For further study John 3:22-36.

1. How has God been using Journey in your life this week to do great things for Him?

2. How has God been guiding you in the practices of your heart this week?

3. How can this group pray for you today?

The Ethics of Jesus' Kingdom — Part 3

A Greater Community

I watched a touching YouTube video the other day about two preschoolers. They were arguing about which of their mothers was right. The little girl's mother had said it wasn't going to rain that day and the little boy was holding fast that his mother's weather report, that it *would* rain, was correct instead. The disagreement escalated and their voices kept getting louder and louder until the girl drove her point home by poking the boy in the chest, announcing once and for all that her mother was right. The boy put his hand to his chest and cried out, "You poked me in the heart!"

Unfortunately, sometimes we act the same way and are so certain that we are right that we reach the point of hurting one another. In Matthew 7, Jesus challenges us to live by another standard—the standard of God's judgment—instead of judging ourselves and others. He wants us to trust the judgment that God has already given on our behalf. He wants us to live out of Jesus' beatitude and ask ourselves what we can do for others instead of what we can expect from them. When we accept God's account of us, we will stop comparing ourselves to others and live among them as equally blessed people instead of our spiritually impoverished lives. This will enable us to bless instead of curse. Living from above and before God is how He would have us live among others.



1. Who do you tend to compare yourself with?

2. When was the last time you were completely wrong about someone?

3. Who are the most encouraging people in your life?



Matthew 7

1. Matthew 7 is about the judgments we make about others and about ourselves. Have you ever been misunderstood or falsely accused? Describe how it felt.

2. Jesus says to judge others with the same standard of judgment we would want for ourselves. If God is the judge of all, how has He judged us? How should that influence our judgment of others?

3. What does Jesus mean by “giving to dogs what belongs to God” and “throwing our pearls before swine”? What does this have to do with our “good advice” for others?

4. What does living by the Golden Rule—giving to others—have to do with a life of blessing?

5. Jesus says not to judge others, but then tells us to pay attention to people’s actions. Isn’t this a form of judging? If not, what is the difference between the two?

6. Why is calling Jesus our Lord, casting out demons, and performing healings in His name not a sure sign of knowing Him? How is it possible to engage in such important spiritual practices and not connect with Him? What have we learned about life in the kingdom so far from Jesus’ sermon that contrasts with these dramatic practices?

7. Jesus says that the wise person not only learns the spiritual life lessons of His kingdom, but puts them into practice. In other words, they build their life on them. How are we to go about putting the ethics of kingdom life into practice?

Discipleship Challenge: Jesus is challenging us in our relationships. This week we are going to practice speaking to God about others instead of speaking to others about God.

8. How can this group pray for you?



1. How has God been using *Journey* in your life this week to do great things for Him?

2. How has God been guiding you in your relationships this week?

3. How can this group pray for you today?



Giving Away The Kingdom

A Greater Mission

I recently started a home project that I hoped would be a simple repair to a leak and some dry rot in the floor of our bathroom. Unfortunately, as we opened up the floor we soon began to realize that the water damage was much worse than we had expected. I knew I needed help, so I asked my brother-in-law, who specializes in home repair, to spend a couple days with us scoping out the problem. Again, the more we tore out, the more the project grew from patching the floor and replacing the shower to ripping out the entire flooring and replacing all the plumbing. We had to rent a jackhammer, add gravel filling, and pour a new concrete floor. What began as a simple home repair turned into a major demolition and complete remodel of our bathroom. I could not have accomplished it without help from Glen, my wife's brother. Even with him, however, both my wife and I realized we would need even more help from people who could prepare and pour a new concrete floor, and later from a crew who could rebuild and tile the shower area.

In the same way, as Jesus' mission began to grow, He needed more and more help to advance His kingdom. He appointed twelve disciples at first, but according to Luke, He later needed to appoint another seventy to multiply His efforts and continue what He was doing. Jesus led by example in Matthew 8 and 9 and then sent out His followers to do the same. This was the beginning of the greater things Jesus expects of all His disciples.



1. Describe a recent time in your life when you needed someone's help to complete a task.

2. Share one thing you have learned about helping others.

3. What do you like/dislike about asking for help?



Matthew 10

1. In Matthew 10, Jesus appointed twelve followers to join Him as His disciples and to help advance His mission. What was so different about being a disciple of Rabbi Jesus?

2. How were the disciples to go about their task? What were some of Jesus' specific instructions to them? What did He want them to do? How did Jesus provide for their success?

3. What message were the disciples supposed to share with people, and how were they to deliver it? What things were to accompany their message? What did those things have to do with Jesus' mission?

4. What did the disciples need most to carry out their mission? What were they to expect from others? Why was it important to stay in one place instead of moving around from place to place?

5. What other instructions did Jesus give? How many of these instructions are still relevant today, and how would you apply them?

6. Following Jesus' example and giving away the kingdom as Jesus instructed His followers to do here in Matthew 10 is another core competency of our discipleship with Jesus. What are some ways you have been giving away the kingdom recently? What is standing in your way of this discipleship competency?

Discipleship Challenge: Jesus is challenging us to care about others and proclaim His kingdom. Prayerfully ask God to show you the needs of others around you and how meeting their needs will advance God's kingdom. Joining Jesus

mission and spreading the good news of His kingdom is the joy of discipleship with Jesus!

7. How can this group pray for you?



1. How has God been using *Journey* in your life this week to do great things for Him?

2. How has God used you to advance His kingdom this week?

3. How can this group pray for you today?



Proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus

A Greater Message

One of the most important competencies in building a strong relationship is communication. The art of communication is just that—a great art that requires practice and skill. Practicing assertive communication and active listening is fundamental to any healthy relationship. Couples that do not learn how to verbalize their feelings and wishes or practice really listening to their partner by staying focused with their eyes, heart, and body have not learned how to truly hear and understand each other.

There is a similar problem going on between Jesus and most of us. We often fail to hear and do what Jesus is telling us to do in Mark 4—the companion version of the parables of the kingdom in Matthew 13. Here Jesus warns us, “Consider carefully what you hear...with the measure you use, it will be measured to you and even more” (Mark 4: 24). Unfortunately, many have not really heard Jesus’ message. When asked what the gospel is, people respond with many different answers, such as “God is love,” “Jesus saves,” “For God so loved the world...” or “Jesus is coming very soon.” This is all very good news, but the gospel that Jesus proclaimed and taught His disciples to share was, “The kingdom of heaven is here!” The Good News of Jesus was the good news of the kingdom. If we are going to share Jesus’ gospel with others, we too will need to understand His message of the kingdom and learn how to share it in a way that others can understand and embrace with their whole life.



1. Who do you know that's a good listener?

2. How can you tell when someone is really listening to you?

3. Which is more difficult—confronting others or being confronted? Why?



Matthew 13

1. Matthew 13 is about the parables of the kingdom. Which of these parables is the easiest for you to understand, and why?

2. The disciples seemed surprised that Jesus had shifted His approach to telling stories. Why did He move from the openly proclaiming the kingdom to telling stories about the kingdom?

3. Jesus tells seven parables illustrating the good news of the kingdom. What can we learn from the following parables?

- The Parable of the Sower
- The Parable of the Weeds
- The Parable of the Mustard Seed
- The Parable of the Yeast in the Bread
- The Parable of the Hidden Treasure
- The Parable of the Pearl of Great Price
- The Parable of the Net

4. What were people expecting concerning the coming of God's kingdom? How do these parables challenge their expectations? What can we learn from Jesus about telling others about the gospel of the kingdom?

5. How would Jesus' message change if He were sharing it with people today? What words would He use and how would He revise His message? How would Jesus have us explain the good news of the kingdom now?

Discipleship challenge: Jesus is challenging us to proclaim His gospel. Practicing the fourth competency of discipleship under Rabbi Jesus—a *greater message*—by telling someone what you have learned about the good news of the kingdom from this lesson.

6. How can this group pray for you?



1. How has God been using *Journey* in your life this week to do great things for Him?

2. How has God used you to explain the message of Jesus this week?

3. How can this group pray for you today?



Leading By Example

Becoming Greater Leaders

In my first official pastoral position out of college, I learned more about what not to do as a pastor than what to do. The truth is that we can learn a lot from the mistakes of others. My lead pastor was rude, he was unkempt, his children were undisciplined, he was always yelling at his wife, and not long after we moved on to our next pastoral appointment he confessed that he was making romantic advances to a young girl in our youth group. He was a terrible example of commitment to Christ and a pastoral leader. Still, I was determined to learn as much as I could, even if it was from his mistakes. Fortunately, I found a great pastoral example in my next lead pastor. He was humble, loved God and people, had a great relationship with his wife and children, and was deeply respected by the church family.

In Matthew 23, we are introduced to the fifth competency of discipleship under Rabbi Jesus: *greater leadership*. Jesus contrasted His own servant leadership style to the pompous leadership of the Pharisees and teachers of the law—the official spiritual leaders of His day. No one is perfect except Jesus, so even though every leader we are paired with will be imperfect in some way, we can still learn from them—if only what not to do.



1. Apart from Jesus, who has been your most inspiring leader?

2. What are some important things you have learned from others?

3. Which of Jesus' leadership traits do you value most and why?



Read Matthew 23

1. Jesus opens with several comments about the Pharisees and the teachers of the law. How would you describe their leadership style? What are some of the most disturbing things that Jesus mentions here?

2. Jesus pronounces seven woes on the Pharisees and the teachers of the law because of their bad example. What is significant about this pronouncement? What is a woe and what does it mean?

3. What word best defines each woe? How are they the opposite of servant leadership?

- Woe 1:
- Woe 2:
- Woe 3:
- Woe 4:
- Woe 5:

- Woe 6:
- Woe 7:

4. What can we learn about the principles of Jesus' leadership from this chapter? What does Jesus value most? What disturbs Him most?

5. Which of these areas of servant leadership is most convicting for you and why? What leadership principle do you most want to develop and why?

Discipleship challenge: Jesus is challenging us to be great leaders. Practice the fifth competency of discipleship under Rabbi Jesus this week by working on your weakest area of servant leadership.

6. How can this group pray for you?



1. How has God been using Journey in your life this week to do great things for Him?

2. Which area of servant leadership have you been working on this week? What has been the greatest challenge for you?

3. How can this group pray for you today?

Making All Things New

A Greater World

When the first explorers discovered the Americas, they believed they had stumbled upon a whole new world—a primitive, untouched land without the taint of European politics and culture. The words of Jesus to the disciples must have seemed no less surprising and unbelievable as He talked about the setting up of His kingdom. Herod’s temple upgrades continued for nearly sixty years and were still in process during Jesus’ day. These improvements were what started the conversation between Jesus and His disciples. The disciples were marveling at the beauty of the temple when Jesus reminded them of the clash of kingdoms that would leave these stones, so recently replaced, strewn all over the ground with no two stacked upon each other. Jesus’ vision for the world included so much more than a mere temple upgrade. Jesus had come to introduce a brand-new world filled with new people, as announced in Revelation 21:5: “Behold, I make all things new!”

In his last temptation, the devil offered Jesus the world and a way around the cross if Jesus would merely bow to him—the reigning prince of this world. This may have been the only real temptation of the three and Jesus might have fallen for it if He had only come to take over Satan’s kingdom, but in truth He came to introduce a whole new world—a world in which God would be king and everyone and everything would be in sync with God for His glory.



1. What do you look forward to most about Jesus’ kingdom?

2. What are your greatest fears about the return of Christ?

3. What do you want others to know about Jesus' new world order?



Read Matthew 24, 25

1. What prompted the discussion between Jesus and the disciples about the destruction of the temple? What was the connection between the destruction of the temple and the preceding chapter on the woes of the Pharisees?

2. What are some of the signs that point to the nearness of Jesus' coming? How many of these signs have already taken place?

3. What is the main sign that we are to look for in the setting up of His kingdom?

4. Jesus tells four stories about being prepared for His coming:

- The Parable of the Unjust Steward
- The Parable of the Ten Virgins
- The Parable of Investing the King's Gold
- The Parable of the Sheep and the Goats

What are these stories about? How are they different from one another? How are they similar? How do they help us prepare?

5. According to Jesus' answer in His final sermon, how are we to prepare for His coming? What is our role in ushering in Jesus' kingdom?

6. What excites you the most about the return of Christ? What preparations do you still need to make to be ready?

Discipleship challenge: Jesus is challenging us to prepare and be engaged for a new world order. Practice the sixth competency of discipleship—a *greater world*—under Rabbi Jesus this week by imagining the world under the lordship of Christ and by reminding someone about His vision for the world.

7. How can this group pray for you?



1. How has God been using Journey in your life this week to do great things for Him?

2. How has God been helping you set up for His kingdom?

3. How can this group pray for you today?

The Reclamation of All Things

A Great New Identity

In the 2014 movie *Dawn of the Planet of the Apes*, the world has separated into two camps: genetically altered apes and humans. The apes have escaped from the science labs that created them and have found refuge in the mountains. Meanwhile, a deadly virus has wiped out most of humanity and the survivors are holed up in dilapidated cities without electricity or other conveniences the human race once enjoyed. Their world has fallen apart. Through a twisted series of misunderstandings, the apes have come to believe the humans are out to destroy them and vice versa. The consequence: an all-out war.

As the humans develop their defensive plan, we hear their motivation as they fight for survival. One man says, "You all know what we're up against! And I want you to know—it's not just about power! It's about giving us the hope to rebuild, to reclaim the world we lost!"

In this quote, we find the heartbeat of most movies, literature, and sporting events: dominion. Who will come out on top? Who is the strongest? Who will rule? Who will reclaim what was lost?

From Rabbi Jesus, we learn the answer: *He* will reclaim what was lost (Matthew 18:11). And He will do it in the most unlikely way: by living the life humans couldn't live, dying the death humans should have died, and donating His merits to humanity. Now He lives in His people through the same Spirit that brought Him back to life, empowering them to live a new kind of life and partner with Him in the reclamation of all things (Luke 24:49, Romans 8:11). What are the implications of all this?



1. Describe your vision of a perfect world.

2. What can we do as Christ's followers to help shape that world?



Matthew 27-28

1. What do you think is significant about the way Matthew ends his gospel (Matthew 28:16-20)?

2. Read Genesis 1:27-28. What was God's first command to humans? How does it compare with Jesus' last command in Matthew? How would this command benefit the world?

3. Read Genesis 12:1-3. How is God's call to Abram similar to His command to Adam and Eve? Now return to Matthew 28:16-20. What is God still concerned with?

4. Being baptized into the name of the Father, Son, and Spirit is being immersed into a new identity. What changes about you when you're brought into a new identity with the Father, the Son, and the Spirit?

5. Jesus commissions His disciples to spread out and fill the earth with this new and greater identity, which is an expression of who God is and what He has done. How would your life and world change if you personally lived from this greater identity? How might these things reflect Jesus' plan to reclaim and renew all things?

6. Read Ephesians 1:22-23. We read that Christ's church is His people, who "fill all in all." In light of all the texts we've looked at up to this point, what images come to mind when you think of Christ's people "filling all in all"?

7. How can this group pray for you?

Discipleship Challenge: Being a disciple of Jesus means living as a family of missionary servants. This is our new Trinitarian identity and it's not an individual endeavor. The church isn't an event we attend, but a family we belong to. Meet with a few friends this week over a meal and talk about how you might live differently with each other in the next 3-6 months if you really believed you were family. What if you believed you were servants to the least of these? What if you believed the Spirit had given you a purpose for mission? Practice this seventh competency of a *greater identity*

by agreeing with a few friends to live differently in light of your new identity.



1. How has God been using *Journey* in your life this week to do great things for Him?

2. How has this last lesson helped pull together the overall picture of what discipleship under Rabbi Jesus is all about?
