

Stories have a way of capturing our attention.

That is why Jesus so often taught through parables. He invited people to look beyond the surface, to wrestle with deeper truth, and to discover the heart of the Kingdom of God. Throughout the first half of Summer Parables, we explored those stories and found that the Kingdom is often different from what we expect. Now we continue the journey—but we look backward before we look forward.

Long before Jesus was born in Bethlehem, before He preached beside the Sea of Galilee, before He carried the cross to Calvary, God was already telling His story.

The prophets preached with pictures.

Jeremiah showed us a Potter carefully shaping clay.

Ezekiel saw a throne that remained unshaken in the middle of exile.

Daniel watched earthly kingdoms rise and fall while an everlasting Kingdom endured forever.

Isaiah, Micah, Zechariah, David, and many others painted a portrait of the coming King long before He arrived.

These prophetic pictures are more than fascinating visions or ancient mysteries. They reveal the character of God, expose the condition of our hearts, strengthen our confidence in Scripture, and ultimately point us to Jesus Christ.

The Bible is not a collection of disconnected stories.

The Law gives us the foundation.

The stories reveal the pattern.

The prophets paint the picture.

The Gospels reveal the Person.

The epistles explain what He accomplished.

Revelation shows us how the story ends.

From Genesis to Revelation, there is one Hero—Jesus Christ.

As you walk through these next five weeks, don't rush through the readings. Slow down. Read the Scriptures carefully. Listen for the voice of the Holy Spirit. Ask what each passage reveals about God, about yourself, and about how you are being invited to live differently because of Christ.

Our final week will culminate in something special. Rather than simply hearing another message, our church family will become the message as we serve our city together. The prophetic pictures were never intended to satisfy our curiosity—they were intended to lead us to Christ. And following Christ always moves us outward in love, compassion, and mission.

My prayer is that by the end of this journey, you won't simply know more about the prophets. My prayer is that you'll know Jesus more deeply.

Love Serve Go

Ronnie

Until All Have Heard

Sermon 5 - Summer Parables

The Potter's Wheel

The Potter has Authority Over the Clay

Jeremiah 18:1-23 | Hebrews 12:6 | Romans 6:1-2 | James 4:4-8

Sermon 5 - Notes

City Group Guide – Week 5: Summer Parables

The Potter's Wheel

1. Welcome & Check-In

2. Opening Prayer

3. Scripture Reading: Jeremiah 18:1-23 | Hebrews 12:6 | Romans 6:1-2 | James 4:4-8

4. Observation & Reflection

What does this passage tell us about God?

What does this passage tell us about people?

Is there a sin to avoid, a command to obey, a promise to claim, or an example to follow?

5. Personal Obedience – Application & Mission

“Because resurrection is true, this week I will _____ as an act of obedience to Jesus.”

6. Reinforcement Scriptures

Use these during the week for prayer or reflection:

Romans 12:1-2

7. Closing Prayer & Requests

8. Rhythms for Spiritual Formation (Practice for the Week)

Encourage the group to practice these rhythms during the week:

Scripture: Read Jeremiah 18:1–10 each morning and note one phrase that stands out.

Prayer: Begin each day by praying, “Lord, shape me according to Your will.”

Confession: Name one attitude or habit that is making your heart resistant.

Community: Ask someone you trust for honest feedback about an area where you need growth.

Service: Use one ordinary responsibility as an opportunity to serve God faithfully.

Summer Parables Week 5: The Potter and the Clay

Monday, August 3: The Potter's House

Focus Scripture: Jeremiah 18:1–3

Reflection:

God told Jeremiah to go down to the potter's house because there was something Jeremiah needed to see. God could have simply given him information, but instead He gave him a picture.

The potter was working at his wheel. The clay was spinning, pressure was being applied, and a vessel was slowly taking shape. What may have looked repetitive or unproductive was actually the work of formation.

God often teaches us in ordinary places. He uses waiting rooms, difficult assignments, family responsibilities, disappointments, and seasons of obscurity as classrooms. We may pray for God to change our circumstances while God is working through those circumstances to change us.

Formation rarely feels dramatic. Most spiritual growth happens through daily surrender, repeated obedience, and faithfulness when nobody is watching.

Application:

Consider your current season. Instead of only asking, "God, when will this change?" begin asking, "God, what are You forming in me through this?"

Challenge:

Identify one frustrating circumstance and write down one way God may be using it to shape your character.

Closing Prayer:

Father, open my eyes to see Your work in ordinary places. Help me trust that You are forming me even when progress feels slow. Teach me to cooperate with Your hands today. Amen

Tuesday, August 4: Staying in His Hands

Focus Scripture: Jeremiah 18:4

Reflection:

The vessel Jeremiah observed became spoiled in the potter's hand. Something went wrong with the clay, but the potter did not throw it away. He reworked it into another vessel.

Failure did not end the process.

Many people assume their mistakes have disqualified them from being used by God. We look at what collapsed and conclude that our story is over. But the potter saw possibility where others might have seen ruined clay.

God's grace does not excuse sin, but it means sin and failure do not have to write the final chapter. Repentance allows the Potter to rework what has become distorted. God does not abandon surrendered people because they have been marred.

The safest place for broken clay is still in the Potter's hands.

Application:

Bring your failure into the light. Confess it honestly without defending it, minimizing it, or allowing shame to define you.

Challenge:

Pray specifically about one failure you have been hiding. Receive God's forgiveness and take one practical step of repentance.

Closing Prayer:

Jesus, thank You that my failure does not have to be the end of my story. Forgive me, restore me, and keep me surrendered in Your hands. Rework my life according to Your grace. Amen.

Wednesday, August 5: The Pressure of Formation

Focus Scripture: Hebrews 12:6, 10–11

Reflection:

The pressure of the potter's hands is not evidence that the potter hates the clay. It is evidence that he is working with it.

God's correction is sometimes uncomfortable. He exposes attitudes, confronts habits, challenges motives, and removes things that cannot remain if we are going to become more like Christ. We often ask God to make us useful while resisting the very process that produces usefulness.

Hebrews teaches that God disciplines those He loves. His discipline is not rejection; it is the faithful correction of a Father who desires His children to share in His holiness.

The pressure may not be punishment. It may be formation.

Rather than immediately asking God to remove every uncomfortable feeling, we should ask whether the Holy Spirit is revealing something that needs to change.

Application:

Examine your response to correction. Do you become defensive, blame others, withdraw, or humbly listen?

Challenge:

Ask a trusted believer, "Is there an area of my character where you believe God is asking me to grow?"

Closing Prayer:

Father, give me a teachable spirit. Help me receive correction without defensiveness and recognize Your love within the process. Form holiness in me. Amen.

Thursday, August 6: The Right to Reshape Us

Focus Scripture: Jeremiah 18:5–6

Reflection:

God asked Israel a searching question: “Can I not do with you as this potter has done?”

The clay does not determine what the finished vessel will become. The potter does. That truth confronts our desire for control.

We often present God with our preferred plans and ask Him to bless them. We want Him to support the life we have designed rather than surrendering ourselves to the life He desires to form.

Sometimes God reshapes our timeline, relationships, ambitions, ministry, or understanding of success. We may resist because we misunderstand His intentions. Yet the Potter’s authority is inseparable from His love. He is not careless with the clay. He knows what He is making.

Surrender means trusting that the Potter sees what the clay cannot.

Application:

Notice where your prayers have become demands. Replace “God, You must do this” with “God, shape this according to Your wisdom.”

Challenge:

Open your hands as you pray and verbally surrender one plan or outcome to God.

Closing Prayer:

Lord, You are the Potter and I am the clay. Forgive me for trying to control what belongs to You. Reshape my desires until they reflect Your purposes. Amen.

Friday, August 7: Formed for His Glory

Focus Scripture: 2 Timothy 2:20–21

Reflection:

The goal of the Potter is not merely to create an attractive object. He forms a vessel that can be used.

God is not only interested in making our lives more comfortable or impressive. He is forming people who can carry His presence, reflect His character, and participate in His mission.

Paul describes believers as vessels prepared for honorable use. Preparation involves cleansing, surrender, and separation from what corrupts us. Holiness is not about proving that we are better than others. It is about becoming available to God.

The question is not simply, “What do I want to accomplish?” The deeper question is, “What does God want to carry through my life?”

A surrendered vessel can carry encouragement into a discouraged room, peace into conflict, truth into confusion, generosity into need, and the gospel into darkness.

Application:

View your home, workplace, school, and neighborhood as places where God wants to use you.

Challenge:

Choose one intentional act of service that reflects the character of Jesus today.

Closing Prayer:

God, prepare me for honorable use. Cleanse my heart, shape my character, and make my life available for whatever brings You glory. Amen.

Saturday, August 8: RPMS Check-In: Remaining on the Wheel

Focus Scripture: James 4:7–8

Reflection:

Spiritual formation involves the whole person. Take time to review how you responded to the Potter's work this week.

Relational:

Have I remained connected to people who encourage surrender and growth?

Is there someone I need to forgive, encourage, or ask for help?

Physical:

Have I cared for my body as something entrusted to God?

What physical habit would help me become more attentive and disciplined?

Mental:

Which thoughts have produced resistance, shame, defensiveness, or fear?

What truth from Scripture needs to replace them?

Spiritual:

Where have I submitted to God?

Where have I resisted His hands or climbed off the wheel?

Application:

Choose one small adjustment in each area that will help you remain surrendered next week.

Challenge:

Complete this sentence in writing: "This week, I believe the Potter is forming _____ in me."

Closing Prayer:

Holy Spirit, search every part of my life. Show me where I am resisting You and give me grace to surrender. Keep me in the Potter's hands and form me for Your glory. Amen.

Sermon 6 - Summer Parables

The Throne of God

God's Throne is Never Out of Control

Ezekiel 1:1-28 | 2 Chronicles 16:9

Sermon 6 - Notes

City Group Guide – Week 6: Summer Parables

The Four Living Creatures

1. Welcome & Check-In

2. Opening Prayer

3. Scripture Reading: Ezekiel 1:1–3 | Ezekiel 1:4–21 | Ezekiel 1:22–28

4. Observation & Reflection

What does this passage tell us about God?

What does this passage tell us about people?

Is there a sin to avoid, a command to obey, a promise to claim, or an example to follow?

5. Personal Obedience – Application & Mission

“Because resurrection is true, this week I will _____ as an act of obedience to Jesus.”

6. Reinforcement Scriptures

Use these during the week for prayer or reflection:

2 Chronicles 16:9

7. Closing Prayer & Requests

8. Rhythms for Spiritual Formation (Practice for the Week)

Scripture: Read Ezekiel 1 in smaller sections throughout the week.

Prayer: Repeatedly pray, “God, open my eyes to see that You are already here.”

Gratitude: Write down three things each day for which you are thankful.

Creation: Spend at least fifteen minutes outside in quiet attentiveness to God.

Obedience: Complete one overlooked responsibility with excellence and without complaint.

Summer Parables: Week 2 Devotional Guide, The Four Living Creatures

Monday, August 10: God in Exile

Focus Scripture: Ezekiel 1:1–3

Reflection:

Ezekiel was not standing in Jerusalem when the heavens opened. He was beside the Chebar canal in Babylon.

He was an exile. His expected future had been interrupted. The temple was far away, his homeland was behind him, and everything familiar had changed. Yet it was there that Ezekiel saw visions of God.

Israel may have assumed God's presence belonged to Jerusalem, but God revealed Himself in Babylon. Exile had changed Ezekiel's location, but it had not removed him from God's reach.

We sometimes assume God is more present in certain places or seasons. We expect to encounter Him when life is peaceful, worship is powerful, and our plans are unfolding. Yet God often reveals Himself in unfamiliar territory.

Your current address does not limit God's presence.

Application:

Name the place or season where you have struggled to recognize God. Begin looking for evidence that He is already at work there.

Challenge:

Spend ten quiet minutes outside today. Ask God to make you attentive to His presence.

Closing Prayer:

God, meet me in the places I did not choose. Open my eyes to see that You are present in every season and greater than every location. Amen.

Tuesday, August 11: Do Not Despise the Training Ground

Focus Scripture: Ezekiel 1:1; Psalm 105:19

Reflection:

Ezekiel expected to become a priest. Instead, he was taken into exile before his priestly service began. What looked like the destruction of his calling became preparation for a prophetic assignment.

Ezekiel believed he was a priest in exile. God saw a prophet in training.

We often judge our current season by how closely it resembles our preferred future. If the work feels unnoticed, the assignment seems small, or progress appears delayed, we may assume the season has no value.

But God develops people before He enlarges their influence. Hidden seasons reveal whether we will remain holy, humble, and hungry without applause.

Obscurity is not inactivity. God may be developing character strong enough to sustain the calling He has placed within you.

Application:

Approach your current responsibilities as training rather than interruption. Practice excellence in something you have been tempted to neglect.

Challenge:

Complete one ordinary responsibility today without complaining, and offer it to God as worship.

Closing Prayer:

Father, forgive me for despising small or hidden assignments. Make me faithful in this training ground and prepare me for whatever You desire to entrust to me. Amen.

Wednesday, August 12: The Character of the King

Focus Scripture: Ezekiel 1:5–14

Reflection:

Ezekiel saw four living creatures with faces resembling a man, lion, ox, and eagle. The sermon describes these images as invitations to consider the character of God.

The man points toward wisdom and intelligence.

The lion reflects sovereignty, courage, and royal power.

The ox represents service, perseverance, strength, and patience.

The eagle points toward majesty, mystery, and deity.

The vision is unusual, but its message is comforting. The One ruling above the chaos possesses perfect wisdom, unlimited power, sacrificial strength, and divine majesty.

Our confidence is not based on understanding every detail of our circumstances. It is rooted in knowing the character of the King.

When life feels uncertain, rehearse what is certain about God.

Application:

Choose one aspect of God's character that you particularly need today: wisdom, courage, strength, patience, sovereignty, or majesty.

Challenge:

Write a one-sentence declaration beginning, "Because God is _____, I can _____."

Closing Prayer:

King Jesus, help me trust Your character when I cannot understand my circumstances. You are wise, powerful, patient, and worthy of all my confidence. Amen.

Thursday, August 13: The Wheels Are Moving

Focus Scripture: Ezekiel 1:15–21

Reflection:

Ezekiel saw wheels moving wherever the Spirit directed. The throne of God was not trapped in one location. God was actively moving, even in Babylon.

We frequently interpret delay as inactivity. Because we cannot see immediate change, we assume nothing is happening. But God's work is not limited to what we can observe.

He may be preparing a person, arranging an opportunity, exposing what is hidden, strengthening our character, or moving into places we are afraid to enter.

The vision reminds us that God's sovereignty is not passive. His throne moves. His Spirit leads. His purposes advance.

Our responsibility is not to force the wheels to turn. It is to remain surrendered to the direction of the Spirit.

Application:

Release the pressure to manufacture an outcome. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you the next faithful step.

Challenge:

Before making an important decision today, pause and pray, "Holy Spirit, where are You leading?"

Closing Prayer:

Holy Spirit, keep me from running ahead of You or refusing to move with You. Make my life responsive to Your direction. Amen.

Friday, August 14: The Throne Above the Chaos

Focus Scripture: Ezekiel 1:26–28

Reflection:

Above the creatures, fire, movement, and overwhelming imagery, Ezekiel saw a throne. Someone was seated upon it.

Babylon appeared powerful. Israel appeared defeated. Ezekiel's future appeared interrupted. But above everything was the throne of God.

The vision did not deny the reality of exile. It revealed a greater reality: God had never surrendered His authority.

Our world may feel chaotic. Governments change, families experience crisis, finances become uncertain, and plans collapse. Faith does not require us to pretend these things are unimportant. Faith means remembering that none of them occupies the highest place.

There is still a throne, and God is still seated upon it.

Application:

Identify one situation that has occupied too much emotional authority in your life. Place it beneath the sovereignty of God in prayer.

Challenge:

Every time anxiety rises today, repeat: "God's throne is not out of control."

Closing Prayer:

Sovereign God, You reign above everything I can see. Quiet my fear and teach me to live with confidence beneath Your throne. Amen.

Saturday, August 15: RPMS Check-In: God Is Already There

Focus Scripture: 2 Chronicles 16:9

Reflection:

God's eyes search throughout the earth to strengthen hearts that are fully committed to Him. Review the places where you recognized—or overlooked—His presence this week.

Relational:

Did I bring God's character into my relationships?

Was I patient like the ox, courageous like the lion, thoughtful like the man, and attentive to God's majesty?

Physical:

Did I create space to slow down, go outside, rest, breathe, and become aware of God?

Mental:

What situation felt chaotic?

Did I allow fear or God's sovereignty to shape my thinking?

Spiritual:

Where did I encounter God unexpectedly?

Where have I assumed He is absent?

Application:

Name your "Babylon"—the place where you least expect God to work. Begin praying for awareness and obedience there.

Challenge:

Write and display this statement: "God's throne is already there."

Closing Prayer:

Father, make my heart fully Yours. Strengthen me to remain faithful in every place and help me recognize that Your presence has gone before me. Amen.

Sermon 7 - Summer Parables

The King's Dream

Every earthly kingdom eventually falls, but God's Kingdom never ends

Daniel 2:1-49

Sermon 7 - Notes

City Group Guide – Week 7: Summer Parables

The Great Image and the Four Beasts

1. Welcome & Check-In

2. Opening Prayer

3. Scripture Reading: Daniel 2:26–35, 2:44–45 | Daniel 7:9–14 | Philippians 3:20

4. Observation & Reflection

What does this passage tell us about God?

What does this passage tell us about people?

Is there a sin to avoid, a command to obey, a promise to claim, or an example to follow?

5. Personal Obedience – Application & Mission

“Because resurrection is true, this week I will _____ as an act of obedience to Jesus.”

6. Reinforcement Scriptures

Use these during the week for prayer or reflection:

Matthew 6:31-34

7. Closing Prayer & Requests

8. Rhythms for Spiritual Formation (Practice for the Week)

Scripture: Read Daniel 2:44–45 and Daniel 7:13–14 each day.

Prayer: Pray for local, national, and global leaders without placing ultimate hope in them.

Fasting: Take a one-day break from news, social media, or political commentary.

Witness: Look for an opportunity to explain why your hope is in Christ.

Service: Use your influence to strengthen someone with less power or visibility.

Summer Parables: Week 7 Devotional Guide, The Great Image & The Four Beasts

Monday, August 17: There Is a God in Heaven

Focus Scripture: Daniel 2:26–28

Reflection:

Nebuchadnezzar demanded that his advisers reveal both his dream and its interpretation. No human wisdom could meet his demand.

Daniel did not pretend to possess supernatural ability. He said plainly, “There is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries.”

Daniel lived in a culture filled with astrologers, sorcerers, and competing spiritual claims. Yet he remained anchored in the living God. His confidence did not come from his position, education, or ability. It came from knowing the One who reveals what human wisdom cannot discover.

Our culture offers endless voices promising insight, security, and direction. Followers of Jesus must remember that wisdom begins with God.

We do not need to know everything. We need to know the One who does.

Application:

Before seeking advice, scrolling for answers, or reacting to uncertainty, bring the matter to God.

Challenge:

Set aside fifteen minutes to pray about one unresolved question without immediately searching for another answer.

Closing Prayer:

God of heaven, You see what I cannot see and know what I cannot know. Give me wisdom, humility, and confidence in Your voice. Amen.

Tuesday, August 18: The Kingdoms of Men

Focus Scripture: Daniel 2:31–43

Reflection:

Nebuchadnezzar dreamed of a massive statue made of different metals. The image appeared impressive, strong, and intimidating. Yet every section represented a kingdom that would eventually be replaced.

Human power always appears permanent while it is dominating the present. Babylon looked unbeatable—until it was not. The same would be true of the kingdoms that followed.

We are tempted to place excessive hope or fear in governments, economies, leaders, institutions, and cultural movements. These things matter, but they are not eternal.

Daniel's vision adjusts our perspective. Earthly kingdoms rise and fall, but none of them can carry the weight of our ultimate hope.

Our first allegiance belongs to the Kingdom of God.

Application:

Examine whether political or cultural news has shaped your emotional life more than Scripture.

Challenge:

Fast from news or political commentary for one day. Use that time to read Daniel 2 and pray for God's Kingdom to advance.

Closing Prayer:

King Jesus, forgive me when temporary powers capture my hope or control my fear. Teach me to live first as a citizen of Your Kingdom. Amen.

Wednesday, August 19: The Stone That Changes Everything

Focus Scripture: Daniel 2:44–45

Reflection:

A stone not cut by human hands struck the statue and broke it apart. That stone then became a mountain filling the whole earth.

The Kingdom of God did not originate through human ambition, military force, political strategy, or institutional power. God established it.

Jesus later identified Himself with the rejected stone that became the cornerstone. The Kingdom arrived through a King who served, suffered, died, and rose again.

The statue looked enormous. The stone initially appeared small. Yet the stone outlasted and overwhelmed everything else.

Never confuse visible size with eternal significance. A prayer, an act of obedience, a gospel conversation, or a small community of faithful disciples may appear insignificant. But surrendered obedience participates in a Kingdom that will fill the earth.

Application:

Stop measuring spiritual significance only by immediate results.

Challenge:

Take one small Kingdom action today: share your testimony, serve someone, invite someone to church, or pray with a coworker.

Closing Prayer:

Jesus, You are the Cornerstone and eternal King. Use my small acts of obedience to participate in what You are building throughout the earth. Amen.

Thursday, August 20: When Kingdoms Become Beastly

Focus Scripture: Daniel 7:2–8

Reflection:

Nebuchadnezzar saw kingdoms as a magnificent statue. Daniel later saw those same kinds of kingdoms as violent beasts.

Human beings often admire power, expansion, wealth, and influence. God also sees what those systems produce: injustice, oppression, violence, slavery, exploitation, and fear.

Power separated from God's character eventually becomes beastly. This is not only true of nations. It can happen in families, churches, businesses, and individual lives. When we use people rather than serve them, protect our position at any cost, or value winning above faithfulness, we begin reflecting the kingdoms of this world.

Jesus reveals another way. His authority is expressed through truth, sacrifice, justice, humility, and love.

Application:

Examine how you use whatever influence God has given you. Do people become stronger, safer, and closer to Christ through your leadership?

Challenge:

Use your influence to elevate someone else today rather than drawing attention to yourself.

Closing Prayer:

Lord, keep power from corrupting my heart. Teach me to lead like Jesus—with humility, truth, courage, and sacrificial love. Amen.

Friday, August 21: The Son of Man Receives the Kingdom

Focus Scripture: Daniel 7:13–14

Reflection:

Daniel saw One like a Son of Man coming before the Ancient of Days. He received dominion, glory, and an everlasting kingdom. Every people, nation, and language would serve Him.

Jesus repeatedly called Himself the Son of Man. He was not merely claiming humility or humanity. He was identifying Himself with Daniel's promised King.

Jesus' Kingdom will not pass away. It will not be overturned by an election, destroyed by an army, weakened by an economy, or replaced by another empire.

This is the Kingdom to which believers belong. We are ambassadors living within earthly nations while representing another King.

Because we know who wins, we do not have to panic. Because we walk with God, we do not have to be controlled by fear.

Application:

Ask whether your choices today accurately represent your King.

Challenge:

Before each major interaction, quietly pray, "Jesus, help me represent Your Kingdom."

Closing Prayer:

Son of Man, Your dominion is everlasting. Make me a faithful ambassador whose words, attitudes, and actions accurately represent You. Amen.

Saturday, August 22: RPMS Check-In: Where Is My Hope?

Focus Scripture: Philippians 3:20

Reflection:

Our citizenship is in heaven. Review what received your strongest emotional allegiance this week.

Relational:

Did my conversations spread fear, anger, division, or Kingdom hope?

Did I treat people as enemies or as people Jesus loves?

Physical:

Has stress about the world affected my rest, energy, appetite, or health?

What practice would help me live from peace?

Mental:

Which headlines or circumstances dominated my thoughts?

Did I rehearse temporary problems more than eternal truth?

Spiritual:

Where have I placed my hope—politics, money, culture, comfort, or Christ?

How did I participate in God's Kingdom this week?

Application:

Choose one source of false hope to release and one Kingdom practice to strengthen.

Challenge:

Write: "Every earthly kingdom eventually falls, but God's Kingdom never ends." Read it aloud morning and evening.

Closing Prayer:

Ancient of Days, expose every false hope in me. Center my heart on Your eternal Kingdom and teach me to live as a faithful citizen of heaven. Amen.

Sermon 8 - Summer Parables

The Brushstrokes of God: The Portrait of a King

Before God sent His Son, He painted His portrait so the world would recognize Him

Isaiah 53:1-12 | Micah 5:2 | Isaiah 61:1 | Luke 10:02 | Luke 24:1-6 | Psalm 22

Sermon 8 - Notes

City Group Guide – Week 8: Summer Parables
The Brushstrokes of God: The Portrait of a King

1. Welcome & Check-In

2. Opening Prayer

3. Scripture Reading: Micah 5:2 | Isaiah 61:1–2 | Psalm 22:1, 16–18 | Luke 24:1–7, 24:25–27

4. Observation & Reflection

What does this passage tell us about God?

What does this passage tell us about people?

Is there a sin to avoid, a command to obey, a promise to claim, or an example to follow?

5. Personal Obedience – Application & Mission

“Because resurrection is true, this week I will _____ as an act of obedience to Jesus.”

6. Reinforcement Scriptures

Use these during the week for prayer or reflection:

Colossian 1:15-20

7. Closing Prayer & Requests

8. Rhythms for Spiritual Formation (Practice for the Week)

Scripture: Read one Hebrew Bible prophecy and its New Testament fulfillment.

Worship: Spend time thanking Jesus for His cross and resurrection.

Mission: Encourage, serve, or pray with someone who is hurting.

Testimony: Practice explaining who Jesus is and what He has done in two minutes.

Invitation: Invite someone to church, group, or a personal conversation about fai

Summer Parables: Week 8 Devotional Guide, The Portrait of the King

Monday, August 24: One Unified Story

Focus Scripture: Luke 24:25–27

Reflection:

After His resurrection, Jesus walked with two discouraged disciples on the road to Emmaus. Beginning with Moses and the Prophets, He explained the things written about Himself.

Jesus did not treat the Hebrew Scriptures as disconnected stories. He showed that they were part of one unified story pointing toward Him.

A single prophetic promise can seem like one brushstroke on a canvas. But when the promises of Moses, David, Isaiah, Micah, Zechariah, and Malachi are viewed together, a portrait emerges.

The Bible is not primarily a collection of heroes we should imitate. It is the revelation of the one true Hero—Jesus Christ.

Reading Scripture this way changes our central question. Instead of only asking, “What should I do?” we first ask, “What does this reveal about Jesus?”

Application:

As you read Scripture this week, look for God’s character, humanity’s need, and the work of Christ.

Challenge:

Read one Hebrew Bible passage and write one sentence explaining how it points toward Jesus.

Closing Prayer:

Jesus, open my eyes to see You throughout Scripture. Help me recognize that every part of the story finds its fulfillment in You. Amen.

Tuesday, August 25: The King Was Announced

Focus Scripture: Micah 5:2

Reflection:

Long before Jesus was born, Micah announced that a ruler would come from Bethlehem. Other prophets added more detail: He would come from David's line, be born of a virgin, and be preceded by a messenger.

God was not making up the story as history unfolded. He was preparing the world to recognize His Son.

This also reveals something about the character of God: He is purposeful. History is not outside His knowledge, and your life is not outside His attention.

We may not possess a prophetic document describing every detail of our future, but we know the God who searches us, knows us, forms us, and guides our steps.

Our lives have meaning because they belong to Him.

Application:

Reject the belief that your ordinary work, family responsibilities, or present assignment lack spiritual value.

Challenge:

Perform one routine responsibility today with unusual faithfulness, believing it matters to God.

Closing Prayer:

Father, thank You that You are purposeful and faithful. Help me live as though my work, relationships, and obedience truly matter in Your story. Amen.

Wednesday, August 26: The Mission Was Revealed

Focus Scripture: Isaiah 61:1–2; Luke 4:16–21

Reflection:

Isaiah described the Messiah's mission: good news for the poor, healing for the brokenhearted, liberty for captives, and freedom for those who were bound.

Centuries later, Jesus read those words in Nazareth and declared that they had been fulfilled.

Jesus did not invent His mission. He fulfilled the Father's mission.

His miracles were not random demonstrations of power. They revealed the promised Kingdom. The blind received sight, the broken found healing, outsiders were welcomed, and good news reached those who had been overlooked.

That same mission now sends the Church. The Church does not create its own mission; God's mission has formed and sent the Church.

Application:

Look for people around you who are discouraged, isolated, burdened, or searching for hope.

Challenge:

Bring good news to one person today through encouragement, practical service, prayer, or sharing Jesus.

Closing Prayer:

Jesus, align my life with Your mission. Send me toward the overlooked, broken, and burdened with good news, compassion, and truth. Amen.

Thursday, August 27: The Cross Was Not Plan B

Focus Scripture: Psalm 22:1, 16–18

Reflection:

Psalm 22 describes rejection, mockery, pierced hands and feet, divided garments, and intense suffering. Written centuries before Calvary, it reads with astonishing similarity to the crucifixion.

The cross did not surprise the Father. It was not an emergency response after humanity's sin became worse than expected.

Jesus came to give His life.

The prophetic portrait shows a Savior who would be rejected, betrayed, pierced, counted among criminals, and buried in a rich man's tomb. The Messiah's victory would come through sacrificial suffering.

This means your salvation rests on the deliberate love of God. Jesus did not reluctantly endure the cross. He willingly gave Himself to rescue you.

The cross proves that God does not ignore sin, and it proves that His love moved Him to bear its cost.

Application:

Lay down the belief that you must earn the love Jesus has already demonstrated.

Challenge:

Spend several quiet minutes thanking Jesus specifically for His sacrifice.

Closing Prayer:

Jesus, thank You that the cross was not an accident. You willingly gave Yourself for me. Teach me to live in worship-filled gratitude for Your grace. Amen.

Friday, August 28: The Resurrection Completes the Portrait

Focus Scripture: Luke 24:1–6

Reflection:

The women came to the tomb expecting to find the body of Jesus. Instead, they found the stone rolled away and heard the announcement: “He is not here, but has risen.”

The cross was not the final brushstroke. Resurrection completed the portrait.

Jesus did not merely survive in the memories of His disciples. He physically rose in victory over sin and death. Every promise, pattern, and prophecy finds its center in the risen Christ.

Christianity is not simply the belief that Jesus once lived or even that He died sacrificially. It is the announcement that Jesus is alive and reigns as Lord.

Because He lives, forgiveness is available, death has been defeated, new creation has begun, and hope has the final word.

Application:

Bring one place of discouragement beneath the hope of the resurrection.

Challenge:

Encourage someone today with the reminder that because Jesus lives, their present situation is not the end of the story.

Closing Prayer:

Risen Jesus, fill me with resurrection hope. Help me live as someone who believes that sin, suffering, and death will not have the final word. Amen.

Saturday, August 29: RPMS Check-In: Who Do You Say He Is?

Focus Scripture: Matthew 16:15–16

Reflection:

Jesus asked His disciples, “Who do you say that I am?” That remains the most important question we will ever answer.

Relational:

Does the way I treat people reflect the Jesus revealed in Scripture?

Who needs to experience His compassion through me?

Physical:

Am I offering my body and daily energy to Christ’s mission?

Where do I need greater rest or discipline?

Mental:

What false picture of Jesus have I accepted?

Do I see Him only as teacher, helper, or friend while neglecting that He is Lord?

Spiritual:

Which prophetic picture strengthened my faith?

How has this week deepened my worship of Jesus?

Application:

Write your own answer to the question, “Who is Jesus to me?” Include both what you believe and how that belief should shape your life.

Challenge:

Share one truth about Jesus from this week with another person.

Closing Prayer:

Jesus, You are the promised King, suffering Savior, risen Lord, and Hero of the whole story. Let my life reflect the truth of who You are. Amen.

5th Sunday Reflections: Love. Serve. Go.

1. Seeing People Like Jesus

Who did you notice today that you may have overlooked before, and what do you think Jesus wants you to see about them?

2. Serving from Identity

How did serving today remind you that your identity is not just found in what you believe, but in becoming more like Jesus?

3. Living a Lifestyle of Mission

If today wasn't an event but an example, what is one practical way you can continue serving someone in your everyday life this week?

Closing Prayer

Jesus, thank You for showing us what true greatness looks like. You did not come to be served but to serve and to give Your life for many. Teach us to notice people, love without hesitation, and serve with joy. May what we experienced today become the rhythm of our lives. Make us fearless followers who carry Your compassion wherever we go. Amen.

This week, don't ask, "Did I attend church?" Ask, "Did I become the Church?"

City Group Guide – Week 9: Living the Story
Love Serve Go
Until All Have Heard

1. Welcome & Check-In

2. Opening Prayer

3. Scripture Reading: Luke 24:44–49 | 2 Corinthians 5:17–20 | Matthew 28:18–20 |
Romans 12:1–2

4. Observation & Reflection

What does this passage tell us about God?

What does this passage tell us about people?

Is there a sin to avoid, a command to obey, a promise to claim, or an example to follow?

5. Personal Obedience – Application & Mission

“Because resurrection is true, this week I will _____ as an act of obedience to Jesus.”

6. Reinforcement Scriptures

Use these during the week for prayer or reflection:

Matthew 18:28-30 | Acts 1:1-8 | Proverbs 28:1

7. Closing Prayer & Requests

8. Rhythms for Spiritual Formation (Practice for the Week)

Use the RPMS framework to create a sustainable rule of life.

Relational:

Choose one relationship to strengthen, repair, or intentionally disciple.

Physical:

Establish one habit that increases energy, discipline, rest, or availability for mission.

Mental:

Replace one recurring lie with a specific Scripture truth.

Spiritual:

Set a daily time for prayer, Scripture, worship, and listening to the Holy Spirit.

Mission:

Choose one person to pray for, serve, invite, and share Jesus with over the next thirty days.

5th Sunday: Week 9 - Living the Story

Serving Because We Have Already Been Loved

"For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many." — Mark 10:45

Monday, August 31: One Story, One Hero

Focus Scripture: Luke 24:44–47

Reflection:

Jesus explained that the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms all pointed toward Him. The Bible's many books, authors, centuries, stories, promises, and images come together in one unified story.

The Potter reveals the God who reshapes broken people.

Ezekiel's throne reveals the King who reigns in exile.

Daniel's stone reveals the Kingdom that cannot be destroyed.

The prophets' promises reveal the Savior who came, died, and rose again.

These are not disconnected lessons. They are different views of the same Hero.

Scripture leads us to Jesus, and Jesus sends us to proclaim repentance and forgiveness in His name.

Application:

Review the previous four weeks and identify the image that most changed your understanding of God.

Challenge:

Explain the story of the gospel in your own words in four or five sentences.

Closing Prayer:

Jesus, thank You for being the center of Scripture and the center of salvation. Help me know Your story and share it clearly with others. Amen.

Tuesday, September 1: Seek First the Kingdom

Focus Scripture: Matthew 6:33

Reflection:

Daniel's visions remind us that human kingdoms are temporary, but God's Kingdom is eternal. Jesus therefore calls us to seek first His Kingdom and righteousness.

Seeking first does not mean ignoring work, family, finances, citizenship, or responsibilities. It means bringing all of them beneath the rule of King Jesus.

The Kingdom comes first when truth matters more than popularity, obedience matters more than convenience, generosity matters more than accumulation, and loving people matters more than winning arguments.

Many believers want God included in their lives. Jesus calls us to something greater: a life reordered around His reign.

Application:

Review your schedule, spending, attention, and conversations. What currently appears to have first place?

Challenge:

Change one part of today's schedule to intentionally prioritize prayer, service, generosity, or Scripture.

Closing Prayer:

King Jesus, reorder my life around Your reign. Show me where lesser priorities have taken first place and teach me to seek Your Kingdom above everything else. Amen.

Wednesday, September 2: Sent as an Ambassador

Focus Scripture: 2 Corinthians 5:17–20

Reflection:

Citizens of God's Kingdom are also ambassadors. An ambassador lives in one nation while representing another.

We live within families, neighborhoods, workplaces, schools, cities, and nations, but our ultimate allegiance belongs to Jesus. We represent His character and announce His message of reconciliation.

An ambassador does not invent the message. The message has been entrusted to them: God was reconciling the world to Himself through Christ.

Your mission field is not only somewhere far away. It is wherever God has placed you today.

The way you respond to conflict, speak about others, handle pressure, serve people, and share your faith reveals something about the King you represent.

Application:

Identify three people within your ordinary circle who need encouragement, prayer, or an invitation to follow Jesus.

Challenge:

Reach out to one of those people today and begin an intentional conversation.

Closing Prayer:

Father, thank You for entrusting me with the message of reconciliation. Help me represent Jesus faithfully in every place You send me. Amen.

Thursday, September 3: Love Made Visible

Focus Scripture: John 13:34–35

Reflection:

Jesus said the world would recognize His disciples by their love for one another.

Prophetic pictures help us see Christ, but Christian love helps the world see Christ through us.

This love is not sentimental. It serves when inconvenient, forgives when wounded, speaks truth with grace, shares resources, bears burdens, and remains present when others walk away.

The Potter shapes us into vessels of love.

The throne gives us confidence to love without fear.

The eternal Kingdom frees us from protecting our own importance.

The cross shows us what sacrificial love looks like.

The clearest evidence that we understand the story is not how many details we can explain. It is whether our lives increasingly resemble Jesus.

Application:

Ask where your love has remained theoretical rather than practical.

Challenge:

Perform one costly or inconvenient act of love without expecting recognition.

Closing Prayer:

Jesus, make Your love visible through me. Free me from selfishness and teach me to serve, forgive, and care for people as You have loved me. Amen.

Friday, September 4: Until All Have Heard

Focus Scripture: Romans 10:13–15

Reflection:

Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. But Paul asks a series of important questions: How will people call on someone they have not believed in? How will they believe if they have not heard? How will they hear unless someone tells them?

God's mission moves forward through ordinary people who are willing to go, speak, serve, invite, and disciple.

The prophets painted the portrait so the world would recognize Jesus. Now the Church proclaims His name so the world can respond to Him.

We are not responsible for forcing belief. We are responsible for faithfully carrying the good news.

Until all have heard is more than a church phrase. It is a personal calling.

Application:

Consider who in your life may never hear a clear explanation of the gospel unless you share it.

Challenge:

Invite one person to church, share part of your testimony, or ask someone how you can pray for them.

Closing Prayer:

Lord of the harvest, send me. Give me courage, compassion, and clarity to share the good news of Jesus until all have heard. Amen.

Saturday, September 5: Final RPMS Review: Becoming a Living Picture

Focus Scripture: Romans 12:1–2

Reflection:

Over these weeks, we have seen the Potter's hands, the throne of God, the kingdoms of the world, the everlasting Son of Man, and the prophetic portrait of Jesus. Now the invitation is to become a living picture of Christ through surrendered obedience.

Relational:

How has God challenged the way I love, forgive, serve, or communicate?

Who is God calling me to disciple or encourage?

Physical:

What habits help me remain available for God's mission?

Where do I need greater rest, health, discipline, or stewardship?

Mental:

Which truth from this series most renewed my thinking?

What pattern of fear, control, shame, or distraction needs to be rejected?

Spiritual:

Where has the Potter reshaped me?

Where did I discover God in exile?

What false kingdom lost its grip on my hope?

How has my view of Jesus grown?

Application:

Write one clear "I will" statement of obedience for the next thirty days.

Challenge:

Share your statement with someone who can pray for you and help you follow through.

Closing Prayer:

Father, thank You for revealing Jesus through every part of Scripture. Continue shaping me, ruling my heart, renewing my mind, and sending me into Your mission. Make my life a living picture of Christ—loving God, serving others, and making Christlike disciples until all have heard. Amen.