

Circle of Faith – Week 1: W.E.D.

Looking to Jesus over the past few weeks, we see that in Him lies everything we are and everything we need. In Him, we find our identity, true purpose, mission, and a call to go forward in faith into all that He has for us—despite our past, our pain, or our inadequacies. His grace is sufficient, and we can walk in confidence knowing He will accomplish all He said He will do.

Looking around our country, our culture, and the world today, it is clear they need Jesus. The church is the vehicle God uses to mobilize the Gospel to bring freedom, healing, deliverance, and salvation to those who are broken, lost, bound, and wounded. It is time for us to take what we have been given and offer it to those drinking from dry wells. Over the next 8 weeks, I will teach you how we are called to take the Gospel into the world as we see the plan of heaven as the answer to the onslaught of hell.

God's Design and Redemption

God always has a plan to win against the evil plots of the enemy. His design was always to have a people who dwell with Him and bear His image. Sin broke that design, but God has been restoring us ever since:

- **The Law:** Given to show us how to live morally and demonstrate that we cannot do it on our own. It serves as the mirror showing our need for a Savior.
- **Jesus:** Sent to be the perfect sacrifice to atone for sin under the law and usher in a new covenant that redeems us from sin.
- **The Holy Spirit:** Sent to live in us and help us lead a holy life that not only bears His image but exudes His character.

The Marching Orders: Seeking the Two

How do we take our marching orders as good soldiers in His army and go forward in victory? We live the plan Jesus demonstrated through His life. He was always seeking two kinds of people:

1. **The Lost:** He came to seek and save the lost.
2. **True Worshipers:** Those who would worship in spirit and in truth.

Jesus carried out His ministry through a clear, continuous cycle:

- He sought to **Win** the lost.

- He sought to **Equip** His followers to be disciples.
- He **Deployed** His disciples to be fishers of men.

Those who were once lost were now winning others. Those who knew the truth but lacked training were equipped to know the truth and be made free. The circle of faith is always moving and reproducing the Kingdom on earth. **It is not a program to be implemented; it is a burden to be activated.**

This simplicity of **Win, Equip, Deploy** is how Jesus carried out His mission. It did not die with Him; it gave birth to the New Testament church, carried on through His disciples, and continues its work today.

The heart of the Father beats for reconciling humanity to Himself. This isn't just a strategy; it is the urgent longing of a Father's heart. In **Luke 14:23**, Jesus tells the parable of the Great Banquet where the master commands his servant:

"Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled."

God's heart is not satisfied with an empty house while people are starving at dry wells. He calls us to be ambassadors for the Kingdom and ministers of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:17-20), sent out to actively compel the hurting, broken, and hesitant to enter His grace.

The Biblical Pattern

- **Win** - *Proverbs 11:30* — "The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, And he who wins souls is wise."
- **Equip** - *Luke 6:40* — "A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone who is perfectly trained will be like his teacher."
- **Deploy** - *Luke 10:2-3* — "Then He said to them, 'The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few; therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest. Go your way; behold, I send you out as lambs among wolves.'"

More than just a Biblical pattern to follow, this is the burden of the Father. If we catch His heartbeat through intimacy and fellowship with Him, it becomes a burning passion that fuels us to be about our Father's business. This is not a program to adopt or a formula to apply; it is what I received from studying Jesus' life and encountering Him in my own darkness.

Testimony: Encountering Jesus in the Darkness

Not everything was bad growing up, but a lot of it was not good either. I suffered significant physical and mental abuse, exposed by age 7 to things no child should ever see: drugs, alcohol, divorce, and the occult. By my teenage years, I was angry, traumatized, and full of hatred, bitterness, and rage.

My early church experience was just religious dogma—teaching me that rules were more important than souls, programs more important than people, and systems and sacraments more important than fellowship and salvation. I wanted nothing to do with it.

Empty, hurting, dejected, and needing love, I looked for hope in all the wrong places:

- I thought the music I related to would be the therapy to heal me. *It wasn't.*
- I thought playing guitar would bring belonging and acceptance. *It didn't.*
- I thought a relationship would give me meaning and worth. *I was wrong.*

Eventually, I lost all hope and wanted to end my life.

The Unexpected Invitation

As I was preparing to end my life, someone called my house on a Sunday night to invite me to a youth church service. It was a young girl I knew and was very attracted to, though I didn't think she knew I existed—or if she did, only as a bad person. But she cared about me in a way no one ever had before.

I felt awkward at this church, but it was different. People didn't care how I dressed, how I looked, how my hair was cut, or if I met a prerequisite for attendance. I felt a peace there I had never experienced. My darkness didn't threaten them or their love, and my lack of Bible knowledge didn't make them turn their noses up at me. They just kept loving me.

They likely didn't know how broken, lost, depressed, and close to death I really was, nor the demons inside me. I didn't fully realize it either—I just knew I was a mess and couldn't control myself. I was cutting myself and hearing voices telling me it was for my sins and that I deserved the punishment. I heard "I hate you" more times in a day than I heard "I love you" in a month.

The Breakthrough

Jesus began to break through. I saw Him as holy and perfect, but I didn't know He was also loving. *How could He love me if those closest to me couldn't?* Yet, in that darkness, light allowed me to see Jesus for who He truly is.

Reading the Scriptures, I realized my problem was spiritual—no doctor or medication could fix what was broken in me. I didn't need another treatment; I needed Jesus.

I called that girl over to pray for me because I wanted to be free. After a couple of hours of prayer, the demons were gone. However, because I didn't yet know how to fill myself with Jesus or truly believe He loved me, there was no immediate transformation. Eventually, the burden became too much for her, and she broke off our relationship, as my life was negatively affecting hers.

The Turning Point

With the only person who gave me hope and belonging gone, I was alone again and out of fight. I loaded my single-shot shotgun, put it in my mouth, and pulled the trigger.

- **First Attempt:** It didn't fire. The shell was struck, but it didn't go off.
- **Second Attempt:** Loaded another shell and tried again. Same result.
- **Third Attempt:** Angry, I cursed God out for ruining my plans. As I loaded it a third time, He spoke to me so clearly that it scared me into dropping the gun.

He told me to get a Bible and open to a specific page number:

Numbers 23:19 — "God is not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should change His mind. Has He said, and will He not do? Does He promise and not fulfill?"

He then directed me to another page containing *Hebrews 6:16–20*. He showed me many verses that night I had never read before, promising that if I gave Him my life, it wouldn't be easy, but it would be worth it, and He would be with me every single step.

What I didn't know was that even after breaking things off, that 16-year-old girl had obeyed God when He woke her up to intercede for me. She got on her face and prayed until she could no longer speak English, groaning in the Spirit:

Romans 8:26 — "Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered."

Never underestimate the power of intercessory prayer; it can save a life when God intervenes. That girl is now my wife, Kelly. Never underestimate what God can do through youth or anyone of any age who is a yielded vessel.

From Living Witness to Mission

Out of that darkness, I met Jesus and learned His life:

- **Win:** Kelly won me.
- **Equip:** She helped me start reading and studying the Bible. A men's group started the same week I got saved and disciplined me.
- **Deploy:** Two weeks after getting saved, I began playing guitar for the worship team and assisting in the youth group. I later felt the call to be an Evangelist and entered street ministry to win others.

This strategy of **Win, Equip, Deploy** is lived out in the Bible and has been lived out in my own life and ministry for nearly three decades.

What Jesus gives us in the secret place is never meant to be hoarded. The Living Hope inside you right now is meant to be shared with someone who is hurting today. Consider all the people who are where we once were before encountering Jesus:

- How thankful are you that someone cared enough to share the Gospel with you?
- How thankful are you that someone walked alongside you to teach you about the Kingdom?
- What is holding you back from bringing that into where you live, work, study, shop, and spend your daily life?

We can sometimes feel disqualified, damaged, or afraid that our story isn't grandiose enough. We might fear being mocked, laughed at, or losing relationships. But you cannot afford to keep Jesus to yourself. The world needs Him, and people are searching in all the wrong places. They need someone to show them the way, and you don't have to be a Bible expert to share your story and carry the Father's heart.

Reflection & Call to Action

- Would you be willing to let Him fill you with that burden today?
- Would you be willing to lay down your fears and hindrances to let Him make you a bold witness?
- Will you answer His call: *"Who will go for Me and whom shall I send?"*
- Will you be the ones who say: **"Here I am, Lord! Send me!"**?