



REAL LIFE FIELD GUIDE



20

face-to-face conversations to help you learn, listen and forge ahead.



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Special thanks to the team who contributed their gifts and expertise to The Real Life Field Guide!

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Making the Most of Field Encounter Conversations

Meet at least 12 times.

Allow enough time to really talk.

Each conversation should aim to be 60 minutes long. It is important for both Guide and Journeyer to strive for this so that dialogue can really get going.

Meet where you can really talk.

It is also good to meet in a relaxed environment, such as over coffee or a meal. Sometimes doing an activity while conversing—like walking or playing disc golf—is also beneficial. Any especially demanding activities like basketball or running are fine to utilize, but there should still be a good hour of focused dialogue before or after. Guides can invite Journeyers to their home if it is a quiet, accessible, and appropriate environment.

Customize the plan.

How many of the conversations do you want to have?

You can opt to use all 20 conversations, or just select those that are most relevant. The goal is to meet at least twelve times. Make sure you start with Field Encounter Conversation #1 and end with Field Encounter Conversations #19 and #20 for the most effective start and finish.

How often do you want to meet?

Although the most obvious schedule for 12 conversations in 12 months is for you to meet once a month, you can also choose to meet weekly or bi-monthly. This allows for a slower/faster pace in the mentoring process. The most important thing to keep in mind on timing the meetings is to keep them consistently spaced and set a pace that both of you can handle in your schedule.

How do you want to choose conversations?

IN SEQUENCE - The conversations follow a sequence of Gospel of John passages so that while you are working through important topics about your life, you are also experiencing a scriptural journey through most of one book of the Bible.

BY TOPIC THEMES - Below is an outline for following conversations under different life themes: relationships, choices, future, etc. This allows you to talk about a particular area of your life over several conversations.

CONVERSATIONS BY THEME

Beginning Conversation

Field Encounter # 1: My Story

Relationships

Field Encounter # 8: My Church

Field Encounter # 11: My Family

Field Encounter # 12: My Intimate Relationships

Field Encounter # 15: My Friendships

Life Challenges

Field Encounter # 6: My Baggage

Field Encounter # 7: My Health

Field Encounter # 9: My Fears

Field Encounter # 14: My Struggles

Spiritual Life

Field Encounter # 2: My Spiritual Reality

Field Encounter # 4: My Unanswered Questions

Field Encounter # 5: My Spiritual Growth

Field Encounter # 16: My Worship

Field Encounter # 18: My Convictions

Direction and Choices

Field Encounter # 3: My Money Matters

Field Encounter # 10: My Priorities

Field Encounter # 13: My Big Dreams

Field Encounter # 17: My Gifts and Talents

Ending Conversations

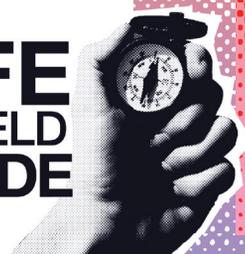
Field Encounter # 19: My Response to the Life of Christ

Field Encounter # 20: My Purpose

Commit to confidentiality.

Pray for each other.

REAL
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Field Encounter #1

MY STORY

Scripture Guide

John 1:1-5

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

This is the beginning of sharing your story. Just as John's purpose was to share his personal, frank and sometimes astounding story of knowing and walking with Jesus for several years, the purpose of these conversations is to share the ups and downs of your journey. This is a time to examine the beautiful and the lackluster events of your life, and to reflect on the past so you can ready yourself for the future. It's a time to help you contemplate the life God has made for you and how the light of Christ can shine more brightly in every moment.

So, think of these dialogues as a walk alongside Jesus, and how talking about his story with a wise friend helps you understand your story better and live more intentionally.

Conversation Guide

- Share about your favorites...music, food, film, books, hobbies, activities, etc. You choose!
- What are some special growing up memories that you carry with you? How have they shaped you?
- Who has been the most influential person in your life so far?
- Describe your life right now. What is going well? What is not going so well? How do you feel about where you are?
- Share some recent events or experiences that stand out as significant.
- What are you hoping to gain from these conversations?
- What questions do you have?

Life Guide

This week, find a few photos from your childhood up through now that tell your story in pictures. Spend some time reminiscing those moments and how they have shaped your story. Feel free to bring them to the next conversation.



Field Encounter #2

MY SPIRITUAL REALITY

Scripture Guide

John 1:35-51

The next day John was there again with two of his disciples. When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, "Look, the Lamb of God!" When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus. Turning around, Jesus saw them following and asked, "What do you want?" They said, "Rabbi" (which means "Teacher"), "where are you staying?"

"Come," he replied, "and you will see." So they went and saw where he was staying, and they spent that day with him. It was about four in the afternoon.

Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus. The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, "We have found the Messiah." And he brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas" (which, when translated, is Peter).

The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, he said to him, "Follow me."

Philip, like Andrew and Peter, was from the town of Bethsaida. Philip found Nathanael and told him, "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.

"Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?" Nathanael asked.

"Come and see," said Philip.

When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him, "Here truly is an Israelite in whom there is no deceit."

"How do you know me?" Nathanael asked.

Jesus answered, "I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you."

Then Nathanael declared, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the king of Israel."

Jesus said, "You believe because I told you I saw you under the fig tree. You will see greater things than that." He then added, "Very truly I tell you, you will see 'heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on' the Son of Man."

Although this account of some of the first disciples is rather abrupt, try to imagine the back story for each of these people. Andrew had been following the leadership and teaching of John the Baptist. We have to fill in the blanks about what Phillip was doing and what previous encounters he might have had with Jesus before accepting the invitation to follow him. And for Peter and Nathaniel, they were trusting in the experience of someone who told them about Jesus.

Conversation Guide

- How would you describe where you are on your journey with God?
- In this story there are individuals who are curious about Jesus, those who are confident in who he is, some who are possibly surprised by his invitation to follow, and even some who are skeptical of the news of a great Messiah. To which of the people who followed Jesus in this story do you best relate? Why?
- What is it that you believe about Jesus?
- Who is the person or what is the experience you recall as your first introduction to Jesus?
- Like Nathaniel, do you feel that God sees your life and understands it? If not, why do you feel differently?
- Can you look back and share a few experiences where you know God was leading your life?
- Where do you think he is leading you now? Is it a place you want to follow him to? Why or why not?

Life Guide

Take an hour or so this week to research the rabbinical tradition for Jewish people. What did it mean for someone to be called “Teacher” in their culture? What did it mean for someone to “follow” a teacher? One website where you can watch a short video to learn more is: <http://www.worshiphousemedia.com/mini-movies/4668/Jewish-Disciple>



Field Encounter #3

MY MONEY MATTERS

Scripture Guide

John 2:13-17

When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple courts he found people selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money. So he made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple courts, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. To those who sold doves he said, "Get these out of here! Stop turning my Father's house into a market!" His disciples remembered that it is written: "Zeal for your house will consume me."

In other places in the gospels, Jesus talks often about money. In this passage he responds not only to the financial activities taking place but also to the venue where business is being conducted.

Conversation Guide

- Put yourself in Jesus' shoes. What kind of stuff must have been going on for him to react so strongly to this situation?
- There are different kinds of "wrong" financial behavior. Some behaviors might be illegal, others might be inappropriate, and still others might just be unhelpful. How would you characterize what was happening in the temple? Why?
- When you consider what you have learned about money matters so far, which lessons (good or bad) have stuck with you the most?
- What practices, if any, do you have in place to manage your money now? What practices do you need to learn, implement or understand better?
- Looking at your own financial activities, if Jesus walked into your life today, would he consider your money choices unhelpful, inappropriate, or even possibly illegal? Why?
- Where would he want to "clean house"?
- How do your choices about money - whether you have much or little - impact your life in big and small ways?

Life Guide

This week, try to keep track of all the places you spend money, need more money, or give money. Keep a chart handy where you can write down each time money plays a part in your daily living. Come to the next conversation with reflections on your financial life, action steps you would like to take, and financial areas in which you need more guidance.



Field Encounter #4

MY UNANSWERED QUESTIONS

Scripture Guide

John 3:1-9

Now there was a Pharisee, a man named Nicodemus who was a member of the Jewish ruling council. He came to Jesus at night and said, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him."

Jesus replied, "Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born again."

"How can anyone be born when they are old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother's womb to be born!"

Jesus answered, "Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit."

"How can this be?" Nicodemus asked.

John 8:32

"...Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

Everyone has questions, from spiritual giants, to people who have rarely thought about spiritual things. And you've probably already noticed that God does not automatically give us an answer to every challenge, confusion or question. But just as Nicodemus found Jesus willing to entertain his questions late into the night, Jesus is willing and able to meet us in our seasons of questioning.

Conversation Guide

- Why do you think Nicodemus sought Jesus out in the middle of the night?
- What does his willingness to become the student instead of the teacher tell us about him?
- What are some of your unanswered questions?
- What are the questions about life that come up often?
- What are the questions about God that you wrestle with?
- How do you respond when you encounter a big life question that does not have an easy answer?
- What circumstances or learning environments in your life complicate your questions even more?

Field Encounter #5

MY SPIRITUAL GROWTH

Scripture Guide

John 3:30

"...He must become greater; I must become less."

John the Baptist said these words as Jesus' ministry was getting started. Those who had followed John were feeling protective of his status as a spiritual leader and did not want this Jesus guy taking the limelight away from John. Yet, John's response to his followers and friends at this point was exactly the opposite of what they were expecting. He announces that it is now time for him to allow Jesus room to make a difference in people's lives. He has to get out of the way so that Jesus can get his work done.

Conversation Guide

- John was a strong personality; passionate, engaging and zealous in how he lived his life. What process do you think he had to go through to move to a more humble, less visible role?
- Why do you think he was so willing to let go of his own influence and agenda?
- As a follower of Jesus, what do you think it means for a person to "become less" and allow Jesus to "become greater"?
- What might that look like in your life?
- What does Jesus becoming greater and a person becoming less have to do with growing spiritually?
- How can you incorporate spiritual practices and habits in your life that result in this kind of spiritual growth and maturity?

Life Guide

Allowing Jesus to become greater and being willing to become less so that he can have room to work in your life requires practice. One exercise you can try is “simple sacrifice.” It works by giving up or “surrendering” something simple that can represent an area of your life that you need to give more of to God. For example, if you need to allow Jesus to be at work in your financial choices, you can give up a daily or weekly splurge. If you feel there is an activity that seems to interfere or diminish your spiritual life, you can reduce its frequency or remove it from your life for a while. Whatever you choose to give up, it is important that you also replace it with a habit or exercise that encourages interaction with God. You can create a prayer space in your home, attend a vesper service each week or volunteer at a soup kitchen or homeless shelter. With a little thought and prayer you will be able to recognize what needs to go and what needs to be added to your life to deepen your faith journey.



Field Encounter #6

MY BAGGAGE

Scripture Guide

John 4:5-26, 28-30

So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about noon.

When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink?" (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.)

The Samaritan woman said to him, "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?" (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.)

Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water."

"Sir," the woman said, "you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his flocks and herds?"

Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water."

He told her, "Go, call your husband and come back."

"I have no husband," she replied.

Jesus said to her, "You are right when you say you have no husband. The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true."

"Sir," the woman said, "I can see that you are a prophet. Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem."

"Woman," Jesus replied, "believe me, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth."

The woman said, "I know that Messiah" (called Christ) "is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us."

Then Jesus declared, "I, the one speaking to you—I am he."

... Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, "Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?" They came out of the town and made their way toward him.

Life Guide

This week, pack a suitcase with labeled heavy items representing the baggage you are carrying around every day. Carry it to a place where you can unload the burden and give it to God. Refill the bag with one slip of paper that says, “Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls” Matthew 11:29. Carry the suitcase home.



Field Encounter #7

MY HEALTH

Scripture Guide

John 4:43-54

After the two days he left for Galilee. (Now Jesus himself had pointed out that prophets have no honor in their own country.) When he arrived in Galilee, the Galileans welcomed him. They had seen all that he had done in Jerusalem at the Passover Festival, for they also had been there. Once more he visited Cana in Galilee, where he had turned the water into wine. And there was a certain royal official whose son lay sick at Capernaum. When this man heard that Jesus had arrived in Galilee from Judea, he went to him and begged him to come and heal his son, who was close to death.

"Unless you people see signs and wonders," Jesus told him, "you will never believe."

The royal official said, "Sir, come down before my child dies."

"Go," Jesus replied, "your son will live."

The man took Jesus at his word and departed. While he was still on the way, his servants met him with the news that his boy was living. When he inquired as to the time when his son got better, they said to him, "Yesterday, at one in the afternoon, the fever left him." Then the father realized that this was the exact time at which Jesus had said to him, "Your son will live." So he and his whole household believed. This was the second sign Jesus performed after coming from Judea to Galilee.

Here is a guy who did not just want to see the remarkable power of Jesus in action. He desperately needed it at work in his life. He's dangerously close to losing his son. What is interesting is that Jesus is rather stern with him at first, almost challenging the man's motives. But, this father already believed. He already trusted that if he could just find Jesus and tell him about his suffering little boy, that Jesus' touch would heal his son. Two other things stand out. First, the father did not wait for a more convenient time; it is almost as if he frantically interrupted what Jesus was doing. Second, Jesus took the man to a deeper level of belief by asking him to trust a different plan and healing his son without ever going near him.

Conversation Guide

- Even though this encounter with Jesus focuses on healing a sickness, how can this father's experience with Jesus be applied to other areas of your health?
- What are the physical, mental or emotional health issues you face?
- Describe any that leave you feeling desperate for help or overwhelmed by the stress they put on your life.
- Share your health story – when and how did these health stressors begin in your life?
- How has this health struggle impacted your daily living? Your faith? Your mental and emotional well-being?
- Although one short story about a man encountering Jesus may not easily solve your dilemma, what truths and encouragement can you take from his experience?
- How might God be able to use this difficulty in your health to take you to a deeper level of belief?
- What part of your health challenge does God want you to take more ownership of – what is the hard work God needs you to do in order for him to do his work for you?
- How can you surround yourself with support and encouragement, i.e. prayer partners, support group, more information?

Life Guide

If you have a particular health challenge that you want healing for, have your Guide help you set up a private prayer service where believers anoint you with oil, lay hands on you and pray for God's healing in your life. Remember, sometimes healing looks different than we might expect; it can be immediate, but it can also be gradual and slow. Often it can be a long process that still requires our participation and treatment from experts. And sometimes healing can mean learning to live vibrantly with a condition and allowing God to be glorified through it in your life.

Field Encounter #8

MY SPIRITUAL FAMILY

Scripture Guide

John 6:1-13

Some time after this, Jesus crossed to the far shore of the Sea of Galilee (that is, the Sea of Tiberias), and a great crowd of people followed him because they saw the signs he had performed by healing the sick. Then Jesus went up on a mountainside and sat down with his disciples. The Jewish Passover Festival was near.

When Jesus looked up and saw a great crowd coming toward him, he said to Philip, "Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?" He asked this only to test him, for he already had in mind what he was going to do.

Philip answered him, "It would take almost a year's wages to buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!" Another of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, spoke up, "Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?"

Jesus said, "Have the people sit down." There was plenty of grass in that place, and they sat down (about five thousand men were there). Jesus then took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed to those who were seated as much as they wanted. He did the same with the fish.

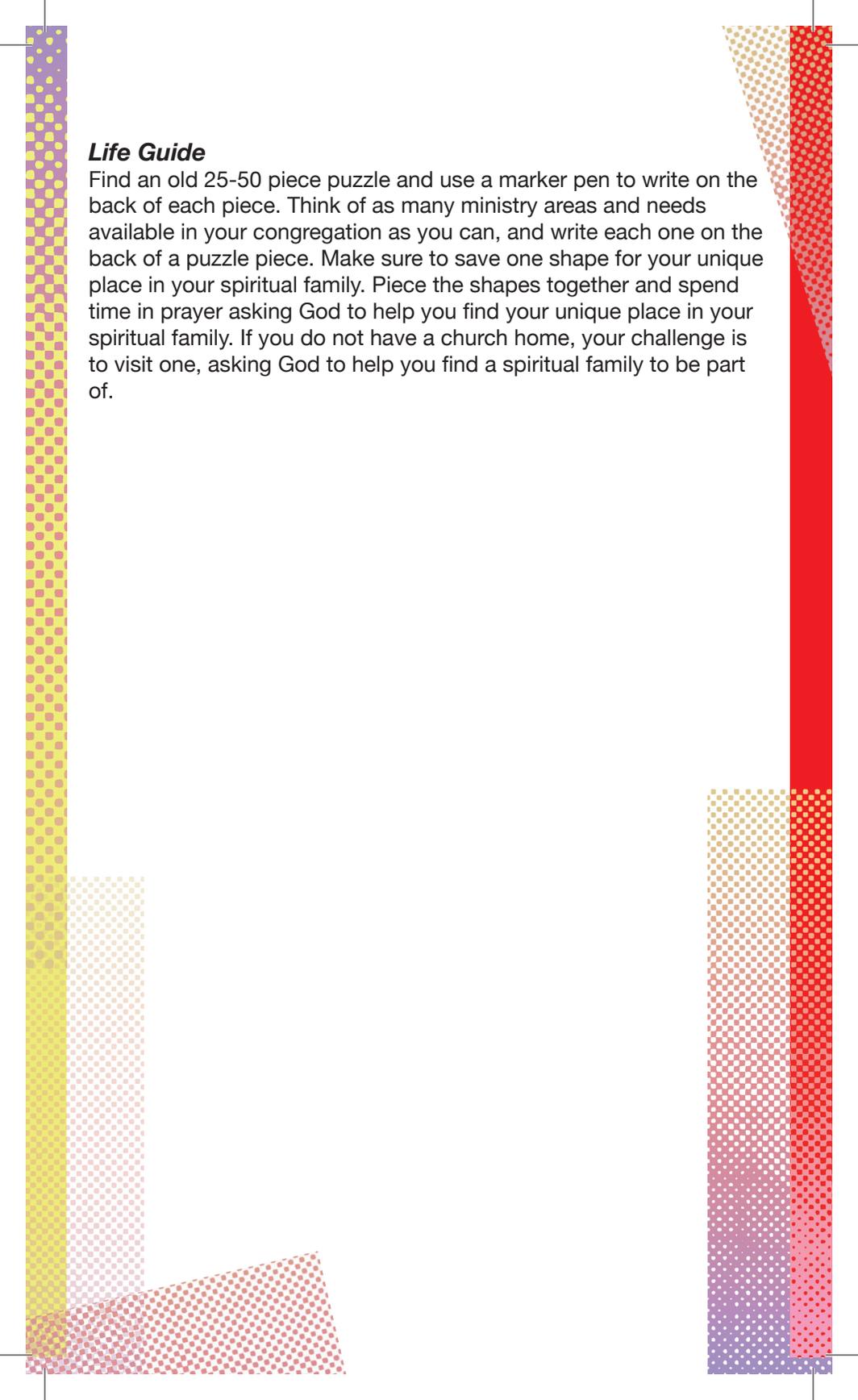
When they had all had enough to eat, he said to his disciples, "Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted." So they gathered them and filled twelve baskets with the pieces of the five barley loaves left over by those who had eaten.

Although this passage is not directly about a church, it offers a unique perspective on the new reality the disciples were facing. Here they were in the midst of a large group, beyond just their tight knit group of disciples. They were now surrounded by others who, like them, were drawn to Jesus but had to figure out what it looked like to be a part of this group. Should they blend into the crowd? Those individuals that are drawing closer to Christ often live with a foot in their current reality and a foot in their new emerging reality as a disciple. Would blending in compromise the new reality in which they were living?

On another note, should they be irritated that they had to change plans with Jesus because so many people showed up? Should they help? How exactly did they fit into this dynamic where so many people and needs were present? And, the young boy with the fish and loaves adds another interesting dynamic. Even though he has no idea what Jesus is going to do with his food, the young boy is willing to give what he has. He does not seem to be paralyzed by the need. He just does what he can, when he can, where he can. He takes a fish and a couple pieces of bread, gives it away and sees what God can do.

Conversation Guide

- If you grew up in a church youth ministry, how does church feel different now that you are no longer in the youth group?
- What are some emotions and thoughts you have experienced since aging out of youth ministry?
- How has the church helped or not helped you find your place within the greater body of believers?
- What have you gained in this process? What have you lost or had to give up?
- If you belong to a church, how do you feel that you fit into that spiritual family?
- If you do not have a connection to a community of believers, what is keeping you from experiencing that?
- How do you need to be more intentional about connecting to a spiritual family?
- What is it like to have friends in two distinct groups, those who are following Christ in community, and those who are not?
- Do you see a place where God can use you to serve and reach others so that they can know Christ as you have known him?
- Are there gifts or abilities you would offer to share with your church but have hesitated to give or lead because you have no idea how God can use you?



Life Guide

Find an old 25-50 piece puzzle and use a marker pen to write on the back of each piece. Think of as many ministry areas and needs available in your congregation as you can, and write each one on the back of a puzzle piece. Make sure to save one shape for your unique place in your spiritual family. Piece the shapes together and spend time in prayer asking God to help you find your unique place in your spiritual family. If you do not have a church home, your challenge is to visit one, asking God to help you find a spiritual family to be part of.

Field Encounter #9

MY FEARS

Scripture Guide

John 6:16-21

When evening came, his disciples went down to the lake, where they got into a boat and set off across the lake for Capernaum. By now it was dark, and Jesus had not yet joined them. A strong wind was blowing and the waters grew rough. When they had rowed about three or three and a half miles, they saw Jesus approaching the boat, walking on the water; and they were frightened. But he said to them, "It is I; don't be afraid." Then they were willing to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat reached the shore where they were heading.

There are definitely times in our lives when we feel a sense of dread; moments where the light of courage fades. The disciples understood this feeling. In this encounter with Jesus, though, it talks about their fear after they saw Jesus walking on the water! Now, logically, if we saw someone walking across the water, we would be a little freaked out too. But this story does broaden the discussion about fear beyond those things that could hurt or hinder us to our fear of change, or fear of the unknown, or even a healthy fear of something far bigger than us.

The number one command in the Bible, Old and New Testaments is "Do not be afraid." This command was given even more than to love God or love people. Could this be because fear makes us say and/or do irrational things? Fear is also something that we, uniquely, as humans, can choose to override (for example, the person who runs into a burning building to save someone).

Conversation Guide

- What were some of your fears as a child – big or small?
- Describe a time when you realized you no longer needed to be afraid of something.
- What did your family or surroundings teach you about fears? (i.e. – ignore them, battle them, face them, you are being silly...)
- Why doesn't this passage talk about the disciples being afraid of the storm?
- Put yourself in their shoes – how would you be feeling at the moment Jesus appeared to them walking on the water?
- Do you think they recognized him? Do you think they understood what was going on?

*God is our refuge and strength,
an ever-present help in trouble.*

*Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way
and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea,
though its waters roar and foam*

*and the mountains quake with their surging.
Psalm 46:1-3*

Lectio – read it out loud carefully and slowly. Feel free to jot down thoughts and ideas that stand out to you.

Meditatio – Meditate on the passage or even just on a phrase or word so that the Holy Spirit can work it into your spiritual conscience. You can use repetition, imagination, drawing, or writing for example to help you focus.

Oratio – this is where you pray with two intents – 1) to converse with God the Creator and 2) to offer something to him as an offering.

Contemplatio – spend a few last moments just focusing on God, and the joy of His presence in your life.



Field Encounter #10

MY PRIORITIES

Scripture Guide

John 6:23-27, 35

Then some boats from Tiberias landed near the place where the people had eaten the bread after the Lord had given thanks. Once the crowd realized that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they got into the boats and went to Capernaum in search of Jesus.

When they found him on the other side of the lake, they asked him, "Rabbi, when did you get here?"

Jesus answered, "Very truly I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw the signs I performed but because you ate the loaves and had your fill. Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. On him God the Father has placed his seal of approval."

...Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty."

Like many of us, the people Jesus had fed several days earlier were enamored with the immediate ways Jesus had satisfied them, but missed seeing the enduring things he could offer. Jesus challenges them to look beyond those things that will not last and examine life from an eternal perspective.

Conversation Guide

- If you had been one of the people following Jesus that day, do you think you would have recognized the magnitude of Jesus' power? Why or why not?
- How would you describe the pace and intensity of your daily pursuits?
- How does your schedule reflect your values and priorities?
- Where are places in your life that you might be settling for things that perish instead of things that last?
- Which of these categories do you feel could be most distracting to your spiritual life: material belongings, success in career, personal relationships, addictions, busyness, or other?
- What would need to happen in your life to allow Jesus to really be the "bread of life" that satisfies your soul?
- What are some things you could do to stay on track with an eternal perspective for your life; to focus on the things that really matter?

Field Encounter #11

MY FAMILY

Scripture Guide

John 7:1-9

After this, Jesus went around in Galilee. He did not want to go about in Judea because the Jewish leaders there were looking for a way to kill him. But when the Jewish Festival of Tabernacles was near, Jesus' brothers said to him, "Leave Galilee and go to Judea, so that your disciples there may see the works you do. No one who wants to become a public figure acts in secret. Since you are doing these things, show yourself to the world." For even his own brothers did not believe in him.

Therefore Jesus told them, "My time is not yet here; for you any time will do. The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify that its works are evil. You go to the Festival. I am not going up to this Festival, because my time has not yet fully come." Having said this, he stayed in Galilee.

It should be comforting to all of us that Jesus had family issues too. Even the Savior of the world was misunderstood and sometimes at odds with the expectations of his relatives. We might find his experience hits even closer to home when we realize that Jesus' family struggles were around the manner in which he was living out a family faith that they all shared. At this point in his ministry, Jesus' family did not really see that he was THE difference maker for their whole spiritual understanding. They just saw a person who wanted to live the faith differently. Even from this short excerpt of family tension, there is much we can learn about how not to treat our family and how to respond when mistreated.

Conversation Guide

- What seems to be the motivation for the comments made by Jesus' brothers?
- What parts of this family exchange can you relate to?
- How would you describe Jesus' response to his brothers?
- What is the good, the bad and the ugly in your relationship with your family right now?
- What are the difficult or challenging relationships that always seem to be there?
- Can you relate to the idea of not rejecting outright the faith of your family, but expressing your faith by living it out in very different ways

long and pledge to work towards complete reconciliation with that relative.

If you do not feel that there are any relationships that need repairing right now, write a short note to each of your parents and siblings and remind them of why you treasure their relationship, what you have learned from them, how you see God at work in their lives or your hopes for the future of the relationship, etc. Just make sure you say some of the things that we too often let go unsaid.



Field Encounter #12

MY INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS

Scripture Guide

John 8:1-11

...but Jesus went to the Mount of Olives.

At dawn he appeared again in the temple courts, where all the people gathered around him, and he sat down to teach them. The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group and said to Jesus, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?" They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him.

But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, "Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her." Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground.

At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. Jesus straightened up and asked her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?"

"No one, sir," she said.

"Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared. "Go now and leave your life of sin."

It is amazing how this woman's situation resembles the media frenzy surrounding high profile sex scandals of today. It makes you wonder if the man she was caught with was a well-known individual. Regardless, the people who brought her to Jesus wanted to humiliate her and trap Jesus in a contradiction of the law.

Just imagine what was going on in the minds of the people involved. For the woman—she probably had thoughts of regret and was mentally retracing the missteps of her life that got her to this point. For the accusers—they had a distorted sense of righteousness that inflated their moral egos and dwarfed any hint of mercy, and at the same time, possible conviction about blatant inconsistencies of their own lives, too. And the crowd—some may have been empathetic to her situation, but were they relieved they had not been caught as she had? Were some more like the teachers of the law—enjoying an ungodly thrill from her predicament?

Conversation Guide

- What stands out to you most about this story? Who do you identify with the most?
- This woman was facing very adult consequences for her actions. As someone who is several years removed from adolescence, how are intimacy issues different now than when you were in high school? How are the consequences different?
- The choice this woman made was certainly going to leave an imprint on her life. How have your dating relationships so far left an imprint on your life?
- Can you share a time when you were humiliated by a relationship situation? How did that feel?
- Talk about electronic communications in our society and how the ease of wireless access actually can hinder or hurt intimate relationships.
- Just as the man involved with the woman in this passage is nowhere to be found, often the judgment or blame in a two-sided conflict feels one-sided and unfair. Have you ever had a similar experience that left you feeling alone and misunderstood?
- What do you believe in your heart of hearts is true about what God wants for your intimate relationships? Why do you think he wants that for your life?
- What needs to take place in order for you to have healthier intimate relationships, now or in the future? How can you feel free to go to God in honest reflection?
- What can you take away from Jesus' response to the woman that you can trust in for your own life?

Life Guide

You know the phrase “airing your dirty laundry” for everyone in the neighborhood to see? Well, maybe a proactive step to someone else exposing your “dirty laundry” would be to come up with your own laundry list of issues you might need to address in your intimate relationships. If it helps to write each thing down on a dirty sock and hang it up in the bathroom as a reminder to the real life situations you need to tackle, go for it!

Or, maybe you just need to evaluate if you are living in “sitcom” relationships. Just like a TV show that presents big life issues and resolves all the conflict and mistakes in 30-60 minutes, you might be hoping to get a “sitcom” ending to relationships that are not the best for you. Watch a sitcom on dating relationships and make a list of all the big, impacting choices that find their conclusion by the end of the show. Now, compare the list to your own dating relationships. Are there any similarities in action or thinking? What do you see in real life that the sitcom never seems to talk about?

Commit to prayer those relationship places you need to trust God for his best in your life, and ask for wisdom and strength to follow-through.



Field Encounter #13

MY BIG DREAMS

Scripture Guide

John 8:12

When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

Obviously, this passage is not specifically about the dreams you have for your life; it's about much more. Dreaming about what we want for our lives is natural and normal, but what if we asked God what his hopes and dreams are for us? Our culture often communicates that if our dream does not radically change the world tomorrow, it must not be worth dreaming. That kind of thinking ignores the mustard seed reality of God's Kingdom.

So, what if God wants us to see significance in what our culture might deem insignificant? What if God wants us to choose to make the mundane into something holy? Sometimes we forget to let the light of salvation illuminate our future plans, but God would love nothing better than to show us how small things can be greater than we ever imagined.

Conversation Guide

- What are my hopes for the future in my relationships?
- My career?
- The things I want to achieve?
- My faith?
- If I were to ask God what he is hoping to see happen in my life, what might that answer be?
- How does that differ from my big dream list?
- What are some rumblings in your soul about things you should spend your life doing that do not have much "sex appeal" in our culture?
- Are there wants and desires that I might need to surrender to follow Jesus and experience what he has planned for me?
- What stands in the way of me trusting God's plan instead of my own?

Field Encounter #14

MY STRUGGLES

Scripture Guide

John 9:1-7

As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"

"Neither this man nor his parents sinned," said Jesus, "but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him. As long as it is day, we must do the works of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work. While I am in the world, I am the light of the world."

Having said this, he spit on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man's eyes. "Go," he told him, "wash in the Pool of Siloam" (this word means "Sent"). So the man went and washed, and came home seeing.

In this passage, the disciples focus more on why the man is blind instead of considering what Jesus could do to help the man overcome his blindness. And although it is important sometimes to understand why things are the way they are, it's also crucial that we don't get stuck in the blame game. God delights in showing us just how capable he is of wading into the mud and muck of our struggles and bringing healing and restoration.

Along these same lines, the disciples were reflecting a possible cultural prejudice about disabilities; that the man was in fact blind because of some sin he or his family committed. In a sense, the disciples were "blind" as well, looking through a narrow lens of understanding, thus limiting their ability to see what else God might be doing.

Conversation Guide

- What is your "blindness"? Share about any physical, emotional, or spiritual struggles the things that have possibly plagued your life for a long time.
- How has that struggle affected your life? How has it hindered you?
- Do you wrestle with moments of assigning blame rather than letting Jesus get to work at restoring your life?
- The healing that Jesus offers the blind man is messy and involves bodily fluids! If Jesus offered to really get involved and help with your struggle, would you be willing to endure the messiness and vulnerability that it might require?

- In this encounter, Jesus gives the man some responsibility for his own healing process. Why do you think he tells him to go and wash?
- What might God ask you to do for your part in wrestling through your struggle?
- What are the “next steps” you can take to move towards healing or restoration?

Life Guide

When you reach a point in your life where you recognize and are ready to really let God be at work in a life struggle, mark that moment of recognition with this symbolic act. Stir up some homemade mud and gently cover your eyes with it while in front of a mirror. As you wash it off, watch the mud coming off in the mirror and pray for God to be at work in a real and practical way as you begin this journey of healing.



Field Encounter #15

MY FRIENDSHIPS

Scripture Guide

John 11:1-15

Now a man named Lazarus was sick. He was from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. (This Mary, whose brother Lazarus now lay sick, was the same one who poured perfume on the Lord and wiped his feet with her hair.) So the sisters sent word to Jesus, "Lord, the one you love is sick."

When he heard this, Jesus said, "This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God's glory so that God's Son may be glorified through it." Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. So when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was two more days, and then he said to his disciples, "Let us go back to Judea."

"But Rabbi," they said, "a short while ago the Jews there tried to stone you, and yet you are going back?"

Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Those who walk in the daytime will not stumble, for they see by this world's light. It is when people walk at night that they stumble, for they have no light."

After he had said this, he went on to tell them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going there to wake him up."

His disciples replied, "Lord, if he sleeps, he will get better." Jesus had been speaking of his death, but his disciples thought he meant natural sleep.

So then he told them plainly, "Lazarus is dead, and for your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him."

This passage is an amazing blend of Jesus' awesome power and deep love for his friends. Framed by events with acquaintances and strangers, it is a beautiful reminder that there is as much divine worth in those individuals that cross our path for a day; a week; months or a couple years as with those who walk the full life journey with us. If you have a chance to read the entire chapter, it is one of the most in-depth vignettes of Jesus' interpersonal relationships.

Conversation Guide

- Who are the people that walk alongside you on this life journey and what impact are they having on your life?
- Would these friends do what you want or do what is best for you? Would you be able to do what is best for them or would you feel compelled to just do what they ask?
- Why is that difference important?

- Jesus took the dangerous route back to Mary, Martha and Lazarus because of his love for them. Can you think of a time when a friend took a risk for you out of such devotion?
- Have you ever demonstrated that kind of devotion to a friend? What happened?
- Jesus' focus was for God to be glorified in the situation his friends were facing. How can you strive to see God glorified in your friendships?

Life Guide

Two options to consider: First, if you have a friendship that is not glorifying to God because of how people behave or treat one another, write a letter of intent to yourself about what change needs to happen in that friendship. Seal it and ask someone to mail it to you in a month, in case you have lost sight of that goal. Second, if you have a healthy friendship rooted in your faith, invite that friend to pray regularly with you for your other friends and ask God how he can be glorified even more through your friendship.



Field Encounter #16

MY WORSHIP

Scripture Guide

John 12:1-8 *Personal Worship*

Six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus lived, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. Here a dinner was given in Jesus' honor. Martha served, while Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with him. Then Mary took about a pint [of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

But one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray him, objected, "Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year's wages." He did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it.

"Leave her alone," Jesus replied. "[It was intended] that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial. You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me."

John 12: 12-16 *Corporate Worship*

The next day the great crowd that had come for the Festival heard that Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem. They took palm branches and went out to meet him, shouting,

"Hosanna!"

"Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!"

"Blessed is the king of Israel!"

Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, as it is written:

"Do not be afraid, Daughter Zion;
see, your king is coming,
seated on a donkey's colt."

At first his disciples did not understand all this. Only after Jesus was glorified did they realize that these things had been written about him and that these things had been done to him.

Conversation Guide

- Compare these two events in John 12 as well as your own worship experiences. How does personal worship differ from corporate worship?

- Why are each important?
 - What makes both kinds of worship necessary in our lives?
 - Which one seems to fit your personality more? Why might it be important to be intentional about the kind of worship that does not come naturally to you?
 - What can we learn from Mary's act of worship and Judas' response? Can you think of a current example of worship differences that resemble Mary and Judas' situation?
 - How can we unpack Jesus' response? Since he is not here in human flesh right now, how would we apply the truth of this passage to our lives?
 - Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem was rooted in scriptures written long before his birth. To understand what was happening, the disciples needed to understand some history. As one of the younger worshippers in your church, what worship experiences and traditions might help you connect back to your spiritual history and deepen your faith in the process?
 - What questions or dilemmas do you have about worship?
 - Where do you feel God nudging you to evaluate and make change?
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Life Guide

Make it a point to visit different worship experiences this year and welcome opportunities to incorporate new and ancient worship practices into your life. Dialogue and debrief those experiences with a friend or your Guide.



Field Encounter #17

MY GIFTS & TALENTS

Scripture Guide

John 13:1-17

It was just before the Passover Festival. Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.

The evening meal was in progress, and the devil had already prompted Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus. Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?"

Jesus replied, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand."

*"No," said Peter, "you shall never wash my feet."
Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me."*

"Then, Lord," Simon Peter replied, "not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!"

Jesus answered, "Those who have had a bath need only to wash their feet; their whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you." For he knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said not every one was clean.

When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. "Do you understand what I have done for you?" he asked them. "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. Very truly I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.

Sometimes our definition of using our gifts is getting affirmation or credit for a talent. Although talents are certainly God-given, a gift could be described as something that requires nothing in return. Rather it is an act of communicating care and love to another. If pride is the deadliest of the seven classical sins (C.S. Lewis), then humility

—true, unadulterated humility— is the greatest of the seven classical virtues. Jesus illustrates this point for his disciples by taking the custom of foot washing, reserved for servants to perform for house guests, and performs this humble duty himself. Then he challenges the disciples to do the same.

Conversation Guide

- Have you ever participated in a foot-washing event? If so, describe how you felt and what it was like.
- How would you have felt if you were there that night and Jesus washed your feet?
- Each disciple has different strengths, weaknesses and ministry gifts, yet Jesus tells them all that they will be blessed for following his example. What does that tell us about the greatest use of our gifts the world?
- How has God uniquely shaped you to serve, love and make a difference?
- Where does your gifting fit into ministry either inside or outside your church? How can you live out the same humility of washing the feet of another in your daily life?

Life Guide

Participate in a foot-washing service! Gather some friends and use this passage as a guide to this act of humility. As you interact in this humble way, think about the places in your life where God has called you to “wash the feet of others.”



Field Encounter #18

MY CONVICTIONS

Scripture Guide

John 18:1-18, 25-27

When he had finished praying, Jesus left with his disciples and crossed the Kidron Valley. On the other side there was a garden, and he and his disciples went into it.

Now Judas, who betrayed him, knew the place, because Jesus had often met there with his disciples. So Judas came to the garden, guiding a detachment of soldiers and some officials from the chief priests and the Pharisees. They were carrying torches, lanterns and weapons.

Jesus, knowing all that was going to happen to him, went out and asked them, "Who is it you want?"

"Jesus of Nazareth," they replied.

"I am he," Jesus said. (And Judas the traitor was standing there with them.) When Jesus said, "I am he," they drew back and fell to the ground.

Again he asked them, "Who is it you want?" "Jesus of Nazareth," they said.

Jesus answered, "I told you that I am he. If you are looking for me, then let these men go." This happened so that the words he had spoken would be fulfilled: "I have not lost one of those you gave me."

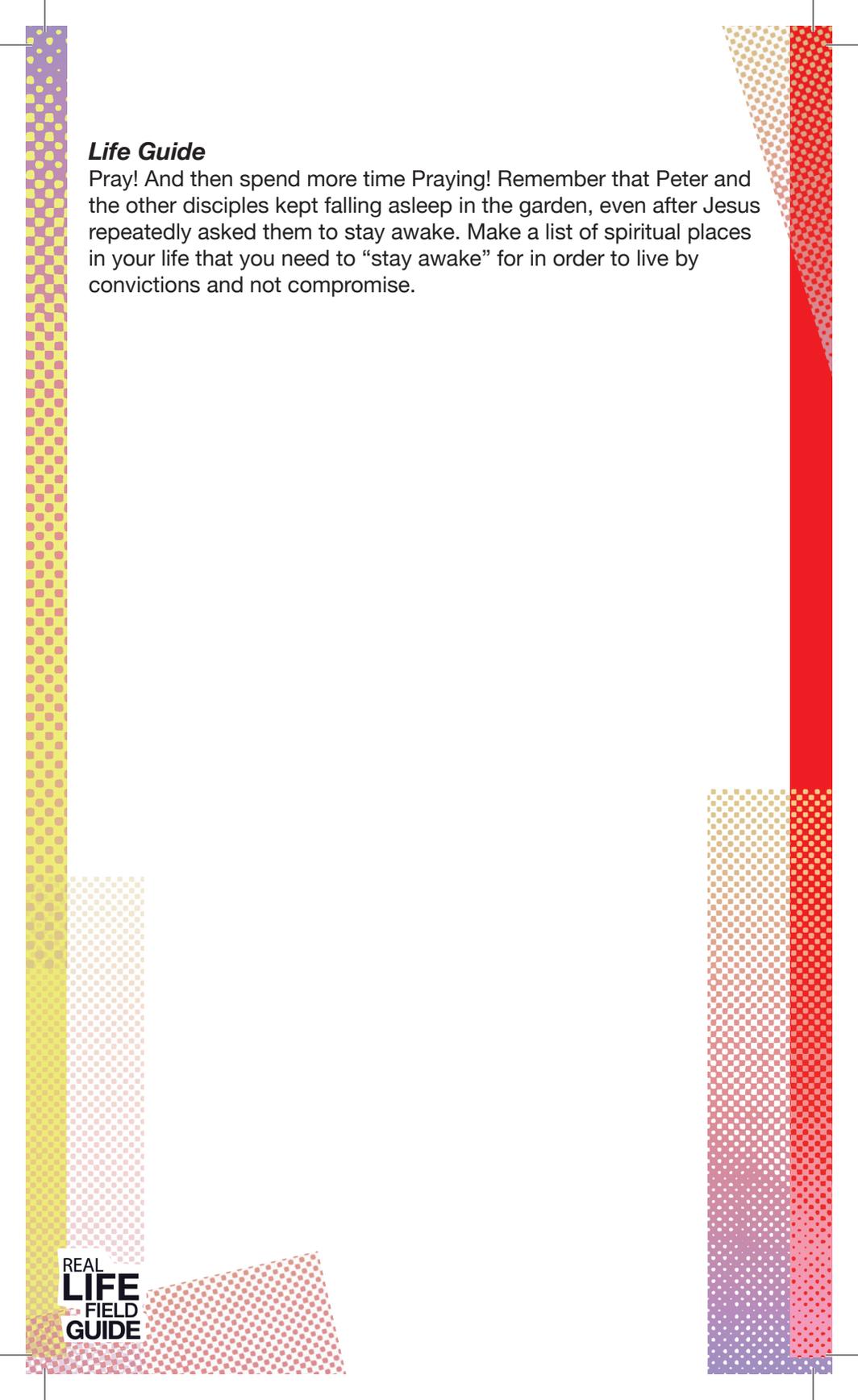
Then Simon Peter, who had a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's servant, cutting off his right ear. (The servant's name was Malchus.)

Jesus commanded Peter, "Put your sword away! Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?"

Then the detachment of soldiers with its commander and the Jewish officials arrested Jesus. They bound him and brought him first to Annas, who was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest that year. Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jewish leaders that it would be good if one man died for the people.

Simon Peter and another disciple were following Jesus. Because this disciple was known to the high priest, he went with Jesus into the high priest's courtyard, but Peter had to wait outside at the door. The other disciple, who was known to the high priest, came back, spoke to the servant girl on duty there and brought Peter in.

"You aren't one of this man's disciples too, are you?" she asked Peter. He replied, "I am not."



Life Guide

Pray! And then spend more time Praying! Remember that Peter and the other disciples kept falling asleep in the garden, even after Jesus repeatedly asked them to stay awake. Make a list of spiritual places in your life that you need to “stay awake” for in order to live by convictions and not compromise.

Field Encounter #20

MY PURPOSE

Scripture Guide

John 21:4-17

Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish you have just caught."

Simon Peter climbed aboard and dragged the net ashore. It was full of large fish, 153, but even with so many the net was not torn. Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." None of the disciples dared ask him, "Who are you?" They knew it was the Lord. Jesus came, took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. This was now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after he was raised from the dead.

When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?"

"Yes, Lord," he said, "you know that I love you."

Jesus said, "Feed my lambs."

Again Jesus said, "Simon son of John, do you love me?"

He answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you."

Jesus said, "Take care of my sheep."

The third time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?"

Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you love me?" He said, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you."

Jesus said, "Feed my sheep."

Two things to ponder in this passage, one is more obvious than the other. This part of Peter's story is about Jesus trying to take him to a deeper understanding of love and commitment that would require facing what had kept him from understanding before. Peter thought he understood, but really he did not.

The second thing to ponder is how Jesus continues to do his work within the context of community. Once again he is demonstrating his grace, power and care for them while they are together. Meals are shared together. Miracles are witnessed together. Loss is grieved together. Restoration is shared together.

As you contemplate your life path, your career and how you will live out your faith, remember that wherever the path takes you, you

mark out all the “mys” in the topic titles that represent those areas. Then, replace them with “our” and jot down in the margin how you can be more intentional about sharing the faith journey with others. Jot down a list of the implications of following Christ together vs. apart. How does that change your perspective for the days to come?



Congratulations! You have successfully completed The Real Life Field Guide. Now, keep learning, keep listening and forge ahead in a meaningful life of faith!

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