

# GOSPEL: Kingdom Come Leader MC Guide

## Week 1: Gospel Fluency

Example Timing for evening:

@ 7:00 People arrive, are greeting, mingling while dinner is finalized

@ 7:10-15 Dinner

@ 7:55 Transition to living room / space to converse

@ 8:00-8:55 Discussion

@ 9:00 Dismiss / hangout / post party

### Introductions

To start us off, we are going to go around the room and I want everyone to say “your name,” “where you are in life” (working, school, etc) and “If you could be fluent in any language, what language would you be fluent in and why?” (You start, then go around the room sharing clockwise or counter-clockwise. Do NOT popcorn here. We want everyone to speak so they feel comfortable talking, and we want it to end back with you so you can then launch into the first question).

### Cast Vision

1. Tonight, we hope you experience deep community and actually maybe even start to build a family
2. This is a safe place for us to explore God and process things together.

Tonight, as we process and share together, here are the rules:

Number 1: There is NO judgement

- Everyone in the room is in a different place on their spiritual journey. Some of us love Jesus and some of us are still figuring out what we believe about Him.
- So we listen well & instead of giving advice or correcting each other, we share examples from our own lives

Number 2: We talk about Jesus often (because we think He is pretty awesome)

60 Second Recap (Do NOT read- speak from you heart)

This spring, CBC College + is walking through a series about the gospel. The hope for us over the next 8 weeks, is that we would learn more about what the gospel is, and how it impacts our lives in the day to day. This begins by immersing ourselves in the culture and story of the gospel that we might become fluent. We believe this begins by identifying what unbelief is, who Jesus is, and what being fluent looks like. And that’s what we are going to talk about tonight...

**Conversation** (Remember // the goal isn't to get through all the questions but to take people on a journey. Trust the Holy Spirit) - Remember that not everyone will be a believer nor will have read the guide; try articulating questions in a way that is accessible to the various backgrounds in your group, and is natural for you as the facilitator. Don't feel pressure to ask all of the questions, the point isn't to get through them all, but to foster genuine conversation. If all you do is sit in question one and Jesus is moving, that is a win!

1. Based on the readings this week or on your previous experiences, how would you define unbelief, the idea that everyone is an unbeliever?

2. How would you define being fluent in the gospel?

A key concept from Reading #3 is this: "Language fluency requires immersion into a community of people who speak the language constantly. Gospel fluency requires immersion into a community of people so saturated with the gospel of Jesus Christ that they just can't stop speaking the truths of Jesus wherever they go and in whatever situations they find themselves."

3. What would you say that our community fluent in? What is the "language" that we speak?

4. What are some barriers, temptations, and lies that may exist both personally and as a family that keep us from believing God (being gospel fluent)? Where do we not believe God?

5. Are there any commitments we can make together in light of this, as we pursue "gospel immersion" together? What would it look like for our community to move from unbelief to belief?

6. In what ways do we need the truth and power of the gospel to help make us a community that overcomes barriers, talks about Jesus, speaks truth in love to each other, and grows together?

7. Based on the readings, your experiences this week or our discussion, in a sentence, if Jesus were to speak to you, what would he be saying?

8. If that is what Jesus were to say to you, are there any actions that need to be taken today or this week either individually or as a community?

60 Second Wrap up- (Do NOT read)

Tonight has been amazing, thank you so much for being brave and for sharing your thoughts. This has been incredible. We love hearing your different perspectives and learning more about where you've been. We believe that God loves you and longs for you to become fluent in the

gospel, that the filter through which you see the world around you would begin to change. Our hope is that each of us, regardless of where we are on our spiritual journey would begin to move from unbelief to belief. I really love getting to do life with you guys!

Well, real quick, I'm going to talk to God and thank Him for this incredible night, I want you to know that if you need prayer for anything specific, please feel free to come share this with me or \_\_\_\_\_ before you leave here tonight and we would love to pray for you.  
(Pray for them! Be brief and not overly-spiritual / Christianese)

## Leader Tips //

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- Between you and the team, try to get everyone's number, casually and organically and NOT with a sign up sheet before they leave
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- Memorize the questions. Write the questions in your journal if you think you may forget (don't use your phone)
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# GOSPEL: Kingdom Come Leader MC Guide

## Week 2: The Gospel

Example Timing for evening:

@ 7:00 People arrive, are greeting, mingling while dinner is finalized

@ 7:10-15 Dinner

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@ 8:00-8:55 Discussion

@ 9:00 Dismiss / hangout / post party

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Number 2: We talk about Jesus often (because we think He is pretty awesome)

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1. Based on the readings this week or on your previous experiences, how would you define "The Gospel"? - *\*lead towards an understanding of the story of God (I.e creation, fall, redemption, new creation)*

- How would you describe
  - Creation
  - Fall
  - Redemption
  - New Creation

2. Where do we see the pieces of the Story of God being retold and experienced in everyday life?

3. Has anyone's definition of the gospel, Fluency, or being gospel fluent changed over this week? How has it deepened/expanded?

The simple fact is that each of us has blind spots as we consider our own lives and relationships with God: those blind spots are often magnified in areas of sin and disbelief.

4. Where has it been difficult to believe God this week/a lie you have believed about him? *(Potential sources of unbelief: 1- We don't believe because we lack the truth about God; 2- We believe lies about God; 3 - We fail to put our faith in what we know to be true of God).*

5. What would it look like to move from unbelief to belief? How can we as a community come alongside you in that?

6. In what ways do we need the truth and power of the gospel to help make us a community that overcomes barriers, talks about Jesus, speaks truth in love to each other, and grows together?

7. Based on the readings, your experiences this week or our discussion, in a sentence, if Jesus were to speak to you, what would he be saying?

8. If that is what Jesus were to say to you, are there any actions that need to be taken today or this week either individually or as a community?

60 Second Wrap up- (Do NOT read)

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## Week 3: The Gospel in My Heart

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@ 7:00 People arrive, are greeting, mingling while dinner is finalized

@ 7:10-15 Dinner

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@ 8:00-8:55 Discussion

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**Conversation** (Remember // the goal isn't to get through all the questions but to take people on a journey. Trust the Holy Spirit) - Remember that not everyone will be a believer nor will have read the guide; try articulating questions in a way that is accessible to the various backgrounds in your group, and is natural for you as the facilitator. Don't feel pressure to ask all of the questions, the point isn't to get through them all, but to foster genuine conversation. If all you do is sit in question one and Jesus is moving, that is a win!

1. What concepts were new, or especially stood out, from this week's readings? What was difficult from the readings? What questions do you have from the readings?

2. As a group, how would we together describe the three things we battle, explain why the gospel is "good news," and define "love" (specifically as it relates to Jesus)?

Much of this week has been about the life of the mind: my belief and unbelief; sin, temptation, and accusation I believe; work of the flesh or fruit of the Spirit in me. And remember, this week only brought us to the halfway point of "The Gospel in Me." While next week will give you more practical ways to fight the war of our minds and to take our thoughts captive, use what you've already experienced—from this Handbook and otherwise—to practice helping increase each other's love and affection for Jesus.

3. Looking back over things you circled (not those you starred or wrote) in Reflection #3, share areas of unbelief that God has transformed into belief. Let this be a celebration with your friends, praising and thanking God for helping you know, love, and trust him more.

4. Look back at Reflection #1: what are some of the things you wrote down, that you love and talk about more than Jesus. Discuss why those things are more exciting and appealing to you than Jesus. Ask each other to help you see Jesus as the object of your greatest affection, and to talk about Him more.

5. Apply the gospel, even to this conversation: sometimes even admitting we need help—from God and others—is a difficult "first shot" in the war of the mind. Take a moment and discuss why it's difficult to admit our need for God and others, and why it's hard to ask others for help in our own fights for holiness. Consider those reasons, in light of this week's and previous weeks' content.

6. As we wrap up this week's difficult task of battling for truth, we acknowledge that it can be lonely—or impossible—if we try it alone. Are there any commitments your group needs to make to each other, as you pursue "regularly rehearsing the gospel" in each other's lives together?



7. Based on the readings, your experiences this week or our discussion, in a sentence, if Jesus were to speak to you, what would he be saying?

8. If that is what Jesus were to say to you, are there any actions that need to be taken today or this week either individually or as a community?

60 Second Wrap up- (Do NOT read)

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## Leader Tips //

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## Week 4: The Gospel in My Me

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@ 7:00 People arrive, are greeting, mingling while dinner is finalized

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@ 8:00-8:55 Discussion

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### Introductions

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Number 2: We talk about Jesus often (because we think He is pretty awesome)

60 Second Recap (Do NOT read- speak from you heart)

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**Conversation** (Remember // the goal isn't to get through all the questions but to take people on a journey. Trust the Holy Spirit) - Remember that not everyone will be a believer nor will have read the guide; try articulating questions in a way that is accessible to the various backgrounds in your group, and is natural for you as the facilitator. Don't feel pressure to ask all of the questions, the point isn't to get through them all, but to foster genuine conversation. If all you do is sit in question one and Jesus is moving, that is a win!

1. What concepts were new, or especially stood out, from this week's readings? What was difficult from the readings? What questions do you have from the readings?

2. As a group, how would we together describe "submitting our thoughts," and define "confession" and "repentance"?

This week's theme has centered around the methodical deconstruction of disbelief, and reconstructing a right worldview of belief in God, as it relates to specific areas we wrestle with. It's the second week we consider the gospel in ourselves, and it's a vital piece of becoming fluent in the gospel.

3. In what ways are the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5) and the armor of God (Eph. 6) only possible if we see our lives through a gospel lens? Why is it difficult to adopt such a lens?

4. Why is it so easy to miss the "root" of our brokenness and disbelief, and instead try to merely solve or fix the "fruit"? What's the result, both short-term and long-term of stopping at the "fruit" instead of getting to the "root"?

5. Apply the gospel, even to this conversation: sometimes it's hard to get to the root of things. Discuss why it's difficult to "dig beneath the surface," and why it's hard to ask others for help in our own fights for holiness. Consider those reasons, in light of this week's and previous weeks' content.

6. Next week turns to consider "the gospel with us" —our need for each other as we grow in gospel fluency. As you consider that, are there any commitments you group needs to make to each other, as you pursue "regularly rehearsing the gospel" in each other's lives together?

7. Based on the readings, your experiences this week or our discussion, in a sentence, if Jesus were to speak to you, what would he be saying?

8. If that is what Jesus were to say to you, are there any actions that need to be taken today or this week either individually or as a community?

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## Week 5: The Gospel Around the Table

Example Timing for evening:

@ 7:00 People arrive, are greeting, mingling while dinner is finalized

@ 7:10-15 Dinner

@ 7:55 Transition to living room / space to converse

@ 8:00-8:55 Discussion

@ 9:00 Dismiss / hangout / post party

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the first three of seven specific practices, designed to help draw our community more strongly together, as we specifically consider the familial nature of our life in Christ.

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1. What concepts were new, or especially stood out, from this week's readings? What was difficult from the readings? What questions do you have from the readings?
2. As a group, how would we together describe this week's three ways of rehearsing the gospel with each other? Which of the ways was most meaningful to you? Which seems the most difficult for you? Why? This week's Readings and Reflections have taken us a few steps into deeper life together. Even over the past several weeks' Group meetings, we have been reminded that God has made us into a people, and that we are called to be devoted to each other, and use our own gifts, skills, perspectives, and knowledge and love of God for each others' sake.
3. Considering Reflection #1, what are some ways that you have been intentional with the meals you eat, and/ or what are some ways you came up with to be even more intentional? Who have you felt compelled to invite to your table and why?
4. Considering Reflection #2, does anyone have any negative views or history with the Lord's Supper that we can help you work through? How can we speak the gospel into that? (If not, simply spend some time discussing how the Lord's Supper is both a remembrance and a declaration of Jesus' death and resurrection)
5. Considering Reflection #3, can each person share at least one area you defined Jesus as "the Better..." in comparison to the human version of that relationship? Are there any areas in which anyone needs help seeing how Jesus is "the Better..." of any of those relationships?
6. Especially in light of this week's community-focused theme, are there any commitments your group needs to make to each other, as you pursue "regularly rehearsing the gospel" in each other's lives together?
7. Based on the readings, your experiences this week or our discussion, in a sentence, if Jesus were to speak to you, what would he be saying?

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## Week 6: The Gospel With Us

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@ 8:00-8:55 Discussion

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Tonight, as we process and share together, here are the rules:

Number 1: There is NO judgement

- Everyone in the room is in a different place on their spiritual journey. Some of us love Jesus and some of us are still figuring out what we believe about Him. You don't have to believe in order to belong.
- So we listen well & instead of giving advice or correcting each other, we share examples from our own lives

Number 2: We talk about Jesus often (because we think He is pretty awesome)

60 Second Recap (Do NOT read- speak from you heart)

This spring, CBC College + is walking through a series about the gospel. The hope for us over the next 8 weeks, is that we would learn more about what the gospel is, and how it impacts our lives in the day to day. This begins by immersing ourselves in the culture and story of the gospel that we might become fluent. Tonight we find ourselves talking about finding Jesus in God's

story and in your story and how it changes the way we see ourselves, those around us and Jesus himself.

**Conversation** (Remember // the goal isn't to get through all the questions but to take people on a journey. Trust the Holy Spirit) - Remember that not everyone will be a believer nor will have read the guide; try articulating questions in a way that is accessible to the various backgrounds in your group, and is natural for you as the facilitator. Don't feel pressure to ask all of the questions, the point isn't to get through them all, but to foster genuine conversation. If all you do is sit in question one and Jesus is moving, that is a win!

1. Based on our journey together or your previous experiences, what do you think of when you hear "The Story of God?"
2. We've been talking a lot about "Gospel Fluency" - how would you now describe being gospel fluent? What do you think it means to be Bible fluent and how is it different than being gospel fluent? (It is easy to become Bible fluent without seeing Jesus in the Bible, and without relying on God's gospel work for all that the Bible teaches).
3. Finish the statement: Jesus is the better \_\_\_\_\_?
4. We all have a story, in a short description (1 min version) what's yours?
5. Who is the hero of your story? (Point your people towards we often make ourselves the hero of our own stories rather than Jesus.)
6. How does your story fit within THE story of God? What is the hardest part of identifying your story within his story?
7. Based on the readings, your experiences this week or our discussion, in a sentence, if Jesus were to speak to you, what would he be saying?
8. If that is what Jesus were to say to you, are there any actions that need to be taken today or this week either individually or as a community?

60 Second Wrap up- (Do NOT read)

Tonight has been amazing, thank you so much for being brave and for sharing your thoughts. This has been incredible. We love hearing your different perspectives and learning more about where you've been. We believe that God loves you and longs for you to become fluent in the gospel, that the filter through which you see the world around you would begin to change. Our hope is that each of us, regardless of where we are on our spiritual journey would begin to move

from unbelief to belief. I really love getting to do life with you guys!

Well, real quick, I'm going to talk to God and thank Him for this incredible night, I want you to know that if you need prayer for anything specific, please feel free to come share this with me or \_\_\_\_\_ before you leave here tonight and we would love to pray for you.

(Pray for them! Be brief and not overly-spiritual / Christianese)

## Leader Tips //

- Plan a follow up "Hang out" to invite people to Ex: Movie night, bowling, trip to the Pearl. This gives an instant invite and really helps foster community
- Between you and the team, try to get everyone's number, casually and organically and NOT with a sign up sheet before they leave
- Try to have coffee with new people and get to know their story, it's not about events but about the individual
- Memorize the questions. Write the questions in your journal if you think you may forget (don't use your phone)
- Practice the flow of the conversation. Ask the questions in your own words like you are having a conversation and NOT like you are reading from a cue card.
- Don't re-ask a question if people have gotten ahead of you and start to answer.
- Do NOT answer the question, feel free to share but remember, unless it's a personal experience, once you answer people assume you are the authority and the conversation dies.
- Do NOT teach. You are taking people on a journey of self-discovery by asking good questions.
- God, CBC and Pastor Drew have entrusted you to love, lead and shepherd these people. You are NOT leading a discussion but a people. Treat this group like your very own house church that you have been entrusted to pastor. Connect. Engage. And Follow Up. You are shepherding impact that goes way beyond Thursday night.

# GOSPEL: Kingdom Come Leader MC Guide

## Week 7: The Gospel to Others

Example Timing for evening:

@ 7:00 People arrive, are greeting, mingling while dinner is finalized

@ 7:10-15 Dinner

@ 7:55 Transition to living room / space to converse

@ 8:00-8:55 Discussion

@ 9:00 Dismiss / hangout / post party

### Introductions

To start us off, we are going to go around the room and I want everyone to say “your name,” “where you are in life” (working, school, etc) and “What is the best news you have ever received?” (You start, then go around the room sharing clockwise or counter-clockwise. Do NOT popcorn here. We want everyone to speak so they feel comfortable talking, and we want it to end back with you so you can then launch into the first question).

### Cast Vision

1. Tonight, we hope you experience deep community and actually maybe even start to build a family
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Tonight, as we process and share together, here are the rules:

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This spring, CBC College + is walking through a series about the gospel. The hope for us over the next 8 weeks, is that we would learn more about what the gospel is, and how it impacts our lives in the day to day. This begins by immersing ourselves in the culture and story of the gospel that we might become fluent. Tonight we find ourselves talking about the Gospel to those around us - how we are to live in light of who we have been called to be.

**Conversation** (Remember // the goal isn't to get through all the questions but to take people on a journey. Trust the Holy Spirit) - Remember that not everyone will be a believer nor will have read the guide; try articulating questions in a way that is accessible to the various backgrounds in your group, and is natural for you as the facilitator. Don't feel pressure to ask all of the questions, the point isn't to get through them all, but to foster genuine conversation. If all you do is sit in question one and Jesus is moving, that is a win!

1. How would you describe the "art of listening?" Why is it hard for us to listen?
2. What does two way listening look like? (Lead you people towards understanding that in a conversation we should be listening both to the person, and the Holy Spirit at the same time.)
3. Who are 3 people in your life who need the hope that you have experienced? What does good news sound like to each of them?
4. Who have we been called to be? (Lead them toward seeing themselves as a holy nation, royal priesthood, chosen race - our identity).
5. When it comes to living life with people who may not be at the same place as you in your spiritual journey do you tend to abstain from being with them, become like them, or live in the middle among them? What does it mean to abstain, be alike, be among? Talk through living in the tension.
6. What is a way you can demonstrate the hope you have experienced this week in word and deed?
7. Based on the readings, your experiences this week or our discussion, in a sentence, if Jesus were to speak to you, what would he be saying?
8. If that is what Jesus were to say to you, are there any actions that need to be taken today or this week either individually or as a community?

60 Second Wrap up- (Do NOT read)

Tonight has been amazing, thank you so much for being brave and for sharing your thoughts. This has been incredible. We love hearing your different perspectives and learning more about where you've been. We believe that God loves you and longs for you to become fluent in the gospel, that the filter through which you see the world around you would begin to change. Our hope is that each of us, regardless of where we are on our spiritual journey would begin to move from unbelief to belief. I really love getting to do life with you guys!

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# CBC College +

*GOSPEL: Kingdom Come*

## The Gospel to Others

Part 2

**Week 8**

Our final week together brings us to some of the most difficult aspects of the Christian life. As we look again at “The Gospel to Others,” we dive into actually sharing the gospel, with our words, to those who don’t know Jesus. But our words are only meaningful if we consider the heart behind them: so while we consider our gospel declaration this week, we end our eight-week journey by looking at our hearts, and our own need for God’s love and wisdom.

### Declare the Gospel

Week 8, Reading 1

I’ve found that when we live our lives intentionally as display people, we get plenty of opportunities to talk about why we do it. Lives full of grace and love; schedules rearranged to make space to listen and serve; budgets adjusted to feed and care for people; or words spoken to protect and build up all demand explanations. These things really don’t make sense apart from the gospel. Yet in our explanations to others, we so often forget to give them Jesus.

Paul says to the church in Rome, “How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!” (Rom. 10: 14–15). The feet that run to carry our hands and faces that display the gospel must also bring along mouths ready to declare the gospel.

When we live Jesus like lives but don’t share the reason we can and do, we rob Jesus of

his glory. He deserves the credit for what we do, not us. I understand that we often experience fear or insecurity when opportunities like these come up. I know that it's not easy for many of us to share Jesus with others.

I believe there are many reasons for this. First, as I said in Week 3, we are in a spiritual battle, so the enemy of our souls tries everything possible to keep us from speaking about Jesus. He can intimidate us to remain silent lest we be mocked or accused. Second, many of us love what people think of us more than we love people. So, in our fear of rejection, we keep our mouths shut. I pray you will love people more than their opinion of you. Third, most Christians have never tried to share their gospel hope, and therefore have never experienced the Spirit of God giving them words and boldness. When you do step out in faith, it's amazing how he gives you what you need. Fourth, many Christians just don't know the gospel very well or, if they do, don't practice sharing it with other believers very often. They aren't gospel fluent.

I pray that this book has given you a better knowledge of the gospel and some tools for how to grow in your gospel fluency. But the fifth reason for our silence is possibly the most concerning. I have found that most Christians don't really believe that their neighbors, friends, and family members will spend eternity apart from God if they don't have faith in Jesus. Judgment is coming. Hell is real. And apart from faith in Jesus Christ, people will miss out on enjoying life with God forever. It is so important that people are given the good news of Jesus. It's not our job to get them to believe it. That's the Spirit's job. We are called to live lives that demand gospel explanations and, when we have the opportunities, to give people Jesus as the answer for our hope. We might show how Jesus is better than what they have been trusting in. Maybe we listen to their stories and help them find hope, healing, and redemption by filling in the gaps with the true story. Or perhaps, just by listening, we discover their deeper longings and show how Jesus can do for them what nothing and no one else can.

I can pray, display, and declare, but I can't save. That's God's job. So I will keep on listening, loving, blessing, sharing, and praying.

Thoughtfully read the following passages of Scripture related to today's theme. Take a few moments to write down words and phrases that particularly struck you, as well as any thoughts or personal applications they prompted. Make these words a prayer to God.

- Luke 12:8-12
- Romans 3:21-26
- Romans 10:5-15



# Declare the Gospel

## Week 8, Reflection 1

1. Considering the content you read, in your own words describe the necessity of declaring the gospel, even in the midst of a life that displays what God is like.

2. Over the course of this handbook, you've considered several ways Jesus has changed you. Spend a few moments worshipping God by looking back on weeks 1-7 and reflecting on specific areas of sin, unbelief, poor/unwise habits, etc. that God has changed. Write a few down, and simply declare—with your mouth or your pen—praise to God for his work in you.

3. Reasons we hesitate to declare the gospel:

- First, we are in a spiritual battle, so the enemy of our souls tries everything possible to keep us from speaking about Jesus...
- Second, many of us love what people think of us more than we love people. So, in our fear of rejection, we keep our mouths shut...
- Third, most Christians have never tried to share their gospel hope, and therefore have never experienced the Spirit of God giving them words and boldness...
- Fourth, many Christians just don't know the gospel very well or, if they do, don't practice sharing it with other believers very often.
- But the fifth reason for our silence is possibly the most concerning. I have found that most Christians don't really believe that their neighbors, friends, and family members will spend eternity apart from God if they don't have faith in Jesus. Judgment is coming. Hell is real. And apart from faith in Jesus Christ, people will miss out on enjoying life with God forever.
- Looking back over those words, circle all the reasons you feel you've been personally hindered at some point from sharing the gospel. In the space below, write any other things you feel have hindered you.

4. The Apostle Peter encourages followers of Jesus, "always be prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect..." (1 Peter 3:15). Sometimes we don't know how to share the gospel because we haven't thought about it enough to prepare ourselves to speak it when

asked. If someone were to ask you about “the hope that is in you,” how would you explain the good news of Jesus, in your own words? In other words, write down your understanding of the gospel, in light of your hope.

Don't forget, last week's group exercise charged you to share the gospel with someone this week who doesn't know Jesus. as you consider various ways to declare the gospel to others and plan to share with someone, read—and pray that God will help you believe and rest in—this truth, from the letter to the Romans: “How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!’” (Rom. 10:14-15). Consider writing your thoughts and prayers as you reflect.

5. In a sentence, what do you think Jesus is saying to you based on what you have read?

6. Based upon what you believe Jesus is telling you, are there any actions that need to be taken today or this week?

## Grow in Love & Wisdom

### Week 8, Reading 2

I hope that, through this book, you've gained more knowledge about the grace, mercy, and kindness of God through the good news of Jesus. I also pray you've become more fluent in speaking the gospel and listening with gospel ears. However, my greatest hope is that you love Jesus more now than when you started reading. Gospel fluency won't happen through you until it happens to you. You talk most about what you love most. I pray that I have helped you love Jesus more.

I also pray your love for people has grown. One of my concerns is that the tools and ideas in this book will become a hammer instead of a healing balm. The tendency of many well-intentioned people is to take a tool meant for love and instead hurt people with it by handling it without gentleness and care. We sometimes learn new truths and then think that if we just speak the truth to one another, that will be enough. But remember, Paul clarifies that we are called to speak the truth to one another in love (Eph. 4: 15).

While instructing the church in Corinth on how to handle the truths he had given them, as well as the gifts God had given them, Paul says: "If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing" (1 Cor. 13: 1–3).

We can have right knowledge of the gospel, faith in the gospel, power to proclaim the gospel, and all the tools in the world to creatively do so, but still lack love. And if that is the case, our proclamation will mean nothing. At the heart of the gospel is the love of God. And if we speak about the love of God without love for people, the noise of our lives will drown out the words coming from our lips.

Do you love people? More specifically, do you love those who are different—who don't live like you or believe what you believe? If not, I want to encourage you to ask God to grant you his heart for people. Ask him to give you love for your neighbors, coworkers, family members, and friends. Invite him to fill your heart with his love and then ask him to enable you to feel what he feels for people.

Remember, he loved you while you were still a sinner—his enemy. Jesus suffered and died to forgive you of your sins, make you a child of God, and pour the love of God into your heart by his Spirit. So ask him to give you his heart for people. If you do, be ready. You will find that his love is greater than you imagined and deeper than you know.

The more I ask God to give me his heart for people, the more pain and passion I feel. I have more heart and heartbreak. I shed more tears and have more joy. I feel more sadness and exude more happiness. I observe more crying and I hear more laughter. I see depths of brokenness and watch miraculous healing. I have found that love is not all warm and fuzzy. It also hurts. But the more God's love flows into me, the more my love grows for him and others. As a result, the more careful, gentle, and wise I want to be. This is because love is embodied in wisdom—which is really where I want to end.

Wisdom isn't just increased knowledge, because knowledge without grace leads to pride, and pride precedes destruction in our lives and the lives of others. Wisdom is knowledge applied so that we do the right thing, at the right time, with the right motive, in the right way. Wisdom is gracious, loving, kind, and gentle.

When Peter charges the believers in Asia Minor to be prepared to give an answer for the hope that is in them—to give a gospel explanation for their godly lives—he says they should do it with gentleness and respect (1 Pet. 3: 15). He then points to Jesus as the ultimate good news preacher (vv. 18–22). Likewise, Paul says to the church in Colossae: “Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person” (Col. 4: 5–6). Wisdom is timely. Wisdom is gracious. Wisdom is seasoned with salt, because it is healing, life-preserving, and taste-enhancing. It makes life better, not worse; fuller, not lesser; and more savory, not more sour.

When I was very young in my faith, I read James 1: 5: “If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.” I knew I lacked wisdom, so I started asking God for wisdom almost every day, sometimes several times a day. Since he had promised to give it to those who know they lack it and ask for it, I did. Since then, I have found that friends, both Christian and non-Christian, seek me out for counsel. As a result, I get to share the gospel more often. Thus, I don't just have wisdom from God to share, I also see the fruit of wisdom in my life.

Thoughtfully read the following passages of Scripture related to today's theme. Take a few moments to write down words and phrases that particularly struck you, as well as any thoughts or personal applications they prompted. Make these words a prayer to God.

- 1 Corinthians 13:1-3
- Colossians 4:2-6
- 1 Peter 3:15-22
- James 3:13-18

Look again at how the Apostle Paul spoke to direct areas of need and question in Acts 17:16-34

## Grow in Love & Wisdom

### Week 8, Reflection 2

1. Considering the content you read, in your own words define “love” and “wisdom,” and describe why both are necessary in our declaration of the gospel.
2. How did god display love toward you, as he—through whatever or whomever he used—declared the good news of Jesus to you? How did he display his wisdom, in the specific way in which he saved you?
3. Every week’s group discussion has reminded us of Ephesians 4: 15, which encourages us to “speak the truth in love.” We can have right knowledge of the gospel, faith in the gospel, power to proclaim the gospel, and all the tools in the world to creatively do so, but still lack love. And if that is the case, our proclamation will mean nothing. At the heart of the gospel is the love of God. And if we speak about the love of God without love for people, the noise of our lives will drown out the words coming from our lips. Think back to your non-believing friends from last week’s Reflections. Considering your relationship with each, the lesser stories they live, and their areas of unbelief, in the columns below write ways that would be unloving, then loving, if you were to share the gospel with them. Maybe it’s certain words; maybe it’s situations or places; maybe it’s the activity happening while you’d share. Whatever it is, how would they feel unloved, then loved, as you shared the gospel?
4. Biblical wisdom can be defined as “knowledge applied so that we do the right thing, at the right time, with the right motive, in the right way. Wisdom is gracious, loving, kind, and gentle.” Spend some time praying that God would reveal areas of your life that don't reflect this (they might be defined by "unwise" or "foolishness"). In what specific areas, relationships, or ways doesn't your life reflect biblical wisdom? Write down at least three

ways, then pray for wisdom. Feel free to invite others from your close community into your prayers.

As you consider your own need for love and wisdom, read—and pray that God will help you believe and rest in—this truth, from Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians: “If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing!” (1 Cor. 13:1-3). Consider writing out your thoughts and prayers as you reflect.

5. In a sentence, what do you think Jesus is saying to you from what you have read?

6. Based upon what you believe Jesus is telling you, are there any actions that need to be taken today or this week?

## Conclusion

### Week 8, Reading 3

The apostle Paul says that Jesus is the wisdom of God (1 Cor. 1: 24, 30). He is the true and better wisdom. He is also the means by which we get wisdom. The book of Proverbs advises us that the wisest thing we can do is get wisdom (Prov. 4: 5, 7). It also instructs us that in order to get wisdom, we need to get wisdom. In other words, we need to obtain wisdom to understand and apply wisdom. We can’t make sense out of wisdom without the wisdom to do so.

How do we do this? How do we get wisdom to apply wisdom so we can show and tell the good news of Jesus graciously, lovingly, and gently? We have to get Jesus. If you want the wisdom of God but haven’t yet received God’s wisdom for you in Jesus Christ, I invite you to surrender to him now. Receive what he has done for you in his life, death, and resurrection. Ask him to forgive you of your sins; cleanse you and make you clean; and come and dwell in you by his Spirit.

Maybe you believe you’ve already done that. Fine. However, don’t neglect to ask God to keep giving you wisdom. You don’t have enough yet. None of us does. We all need more wisdom from God to work through the situations, struggles, and opportunities that we face every day. As James says, “If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.” Ask God for wisdom and he will give you Jesus. And if you get Jesus, you will get everything you need for every part

of your life. He is good news for the everyday stuff of life.

Don't put your confidence in your knowledge or skills. Don't just look to the principles or practices of this book—or any other book—to make you more effective. What you need, what I need, what we all need is Jesus. That's where wisdom begins. That's where wisdom ends.

That's the heart of this book. If you get Jesus, you get wisdom. Get wisdom from Jesus and you get everything else as well. He is better than everything else, and if you have him, then you'll give him.

Thoughtfully read the following passages of Scripture related to today's theme. Take a few moments to write down words and phrases that particularly struck you, as well as any thoughts or personal applications they prompted. Make these words a prayer to God.

- Proverbs 4:5-9
- John 1:1-18
- 1 Corinthians 1:20-31

## Conclusion

### Week 8, Reflection 3

1. Considering the content you read, in your own words describe how Jesus is the very wisdom of God himself.
2. What are other things you've looked to for wisdom? Create three columns and write at least three other sources you've pursued in the first column below. In the second column, write some of the fruit—both good and not—each has produced. In the final column, describe how Jesus is a greater source of wisdom.
3. What skills, knowledge, or abilities have you relied on instead of God to live a meaningful, productive life? Create three columns again in the space below and write at least three other sources you've pursued in the first. In the second column, write some of the fruit—both good and not—each has produced. In the final column, describe how Jesus is a greater source of wisdom.
4. In what ways have the principles, practices, readings, reflections, discussion, and

exercises of this Handbook helped train you in knowledge and skill, but also wisdom and love, in speaking the gospel, to yourself, your community, and to others?

As you wrap up your final Reflection of this Handbook, read—and pray that God will help you believe and rest in—this truth: “Don’t put your confidence in your knowledge or skills. Don’t just look to the principles or practices of this book—or any other book—to make you more effective. What you need, what I need, what we all need is Jesus. That’s where wisdom begins. That’s where wisdom ends. That’s the heart of this book. If you get Jesus, you get wisdom. Get wisdom from Jesus and you get everything else as well. He is better than everything else, and if you have him, then you’ll give him”. Write out your thoughts as you consider these ideas and turn them into prayers as you reflect.

5. In a sentence, what do you think Jesus is saying to you based on what you have read?

6. Based upon what you believe Jesus is telling you, are there any actions that need to be taken today or this week?

## LOOK BACK

After completing your readings and reflections, take a few moments to look back on what has happened: what have you learned? How has God shaped and impacted you? What do you especially want to remember, do, and/or share with your community this week?