



THE FUTURE OF THE CHURCH

A vision series from Pastor Derek
January 14- February 11, 2024

Thanks for walking through this series with your LifeGroup! We are excited to take steps toward our future together with you and every member of your group. As preparation for your meeting time, please watch the video from Pastor Derek and read the overview below. If you have additional questions, they can be submitted using [this form](#).

Video Link: [Life Group Leaders future church.MOV \(dropbox.com\)](#)

Overview:

As we look toward the future of Grace Church in the Erie region, Derek will give a big picture overview in week 1 of the series. The changes will be tactical and methodological. These include a new mission statement and a restatement of our values, which we will share with you soon. We have created a new strategy pathway that moves the finish line for individuals at Grace from inside our walls to outside our walls. Here's what is not changing – our statement of faith and constitution as a church. We will continue to stand steadfastly in historic Christian orthodoxy and will not be making any biblical/theological shifts.

In weeks 2-5 of the series, Derek will be highlighting our new discipleship measures. These are four roles that make up what we're calling a "Dream Disciple." These roles are exemplified by Jesus and His followers, and we believe that when we embody them, we will become disciples who will make an impact in our region for generations to come. The language for each role is very accessible, and there is a deep well of meaning within each one. As we move forward, tools and training will be provided.

- 1- **Compassionate Storyteller:** I know God's story and my place in it, and I am motivated to tell the people in my life.
- 2- **Savvy Follower:** I discern God's voice and follow his lead at the right time in the right way.
- 3- **Intentional Friend:** I partner with God to build healthy relationships and restore broken ones.
- 4- **Embedded Influencer:** I understand how God has purposefully gifted and positioned me to multiply His work in the world.

We encourage all LifeGroup members to use the accompanying reading plans on YouVersion or find the pdf at [whoisgrace.com/read](#).

- Jan 14- Praying Through Change (5 days)
- Jan 21- Becoming a Compassionate Storyteller (3 days)
- Jan 28- Becoming a Savvy Follower (3 days)
- Feb 4- Becoming an Intentional Friend (3 days)
- Feb 11- Becoming an Embedded Influencer (3 days)



THE FUTURE OF THE CHURCH: Intro

Pastor Derek

January 14, 2024

Life Group Discussion

Encouragement:

- How do you feel about change (personal or external)? Have you experienced institutional change in your workplace or a church? What was that experience like for you and for the larger organization?
- Derek gave an overview of the history of Grace church. What surprised you? What did you learn? (you can read the story at whoisgrace.com/about)

Scripture:

- What is your initial reaction to Pastor Derek's list of shifts for the church? Do you see evidence of any of these now?

Less big; more small

less attraction; more mission

less new; more old

Less slick; more authentic

less performance; more presence

less noise; more space

Less counting attendance; more counting discipleship outcomes

less "me"; more "we"

Read [John 3:17](#); [John 15:26-27](#); [John 20:21-22](#); [Matthew 28:18-20](#)

- When mankind is lost, God sends. The gospels reveal "cascading sending." Who is being sent and what is the mission? *Look at each verse individually and then look at them all as a progression.*
- Reflecting on these scriptures, respond to this quote from Pastor Derek: "The Church doesn't have a mission. God's Mission has a Church."
- What does God's mission require of His Church? What does that mean for you and I? *See Matthew 28:18-20 for an overview.*

Read [John 17:14-19](#)

- What is the heart of Jesus' prayer for all of His followers?
- Christians are not OF the world but have been sent INTO the world. We are sent ones. This requires a "Missional reorientation" of our entire lives. Instead of us in the middle always choosing between God and the world, picture instead God in the middle, and as we move toward God, we begin to move together with God into the world as the sent ones **You** → **God** → **the world**
- What does it look like for us to move toward God and begin to move with God into the world?



Prayer: Change of this magnitude will not be easy. Pray for continued wisdom and discernment for Pastor Derek and the leadership of Grace Church. Invite the Holy Spirit to convict, challenge, and stir up each of you as you follow Jesus, participate in Grace Church, and move into the world on mission.

Next Steps: Commit to the series. If you miss being in church on a Sunday, use the Grace Church app or whoisgrace.com/sermons to catch up. If you meet every other week, consider spreading out your time in this study to be able to discuss the whole sermon series, even if you end after the sermons are over. You can still access them online,



THE FUTURE OF THE CHURCH: Compassionate Storyteller

Pastor Derek

January 21, 2024

Life Group Discussion

Encouragement: Have you heard someone share their story lately? What captivated you?

Scripture:

Remember, as a church we're shifting from measuring bodies to measuring discipleship. Disciples live sent lives, on mission with God in the world. We're calling our new discipleship measures "dream disciple roles."

What is your response to this first Dream Disciple Goal? *As a compassionate storyteller, I will know God's story and my place in it and am motivated to tell the people in my life.* (Tip: Our natural response is to respond with the negative response. Encourage your members to also share what they like or are drawn to with this goal.)

God's Story: Scripture is telling one story. It is The Story of God and His good rescue plan. The story can be broken into five movements. Describe what we know about each part using the scriptures as guides:

Creation ([Genesis 1-2](#))

Fall ([Genesis 3](#) through the entire Old Testament)

Redemption (promised in the law and covenants, foretold by the prophets, fulfilled in Jesus; see [Matthew 1:21-23](#), [Mark 1:15](#), [Luke 24:44-48](#), [John 3:17](#); [Romans 5:6](#); [2 Corinthians 1:20](#); [Galatians 4:4-5](#))

Mission ([John 20:21](#), [Matthew 28:18-20](#), [Acts 1:8](#), the New Testament)

Restoration ([Revelation 21:1-6, 22-27](#))

Your Story: God's rescue story, His love story, is The Story in which all of our stories find meaning.

Read [John 9:25b](#) (optional: read the entire story)- *I was blind, now I see.*

The simplest story, yet so profound. In six words, we know who the man *was* and who he is *now*. In the context of the story, we know that the comma points to Jesus. The blind man's encounter with Jesus changed everything. How does a story like this impact other people?

-What is your story? Can you frame it in a simple "once was...now" sentence?

Prayer: Pray over one another in pursuit of becoming compassionate storytellers who know God's story and our place in it and are motivated to tell the people in our lives.

Next Steps: Where has my story intersected with God's story this week? Who needs to hear God's story through my story?



THE FUTURE OF THE CHURCH: Savvy Follower

Pastor Derek

January 28, 2024

Life Group Discussion

Encouragement:

Remember, as a church we're shifting from measuring bodies to measuring discipleship. Disciples live sent lives, on mission with God in the world. We're calling our new discipleship measures "dream disciple roles."

What is your response to this Dream Disciple Goal? *As a savvy follower I will discern God's voice and follow his lead at the right time in the right way.* (Savvy = wise, thoughtful, knowledgeable, sensible)
(Tip: Our natural response is to respond with the negative response. Encourage your members to also share what they like or are drawn to with this goal.)

Scripture:

This dream disciple role came from studying the life of Jesus. Brainstorm stories from the gospels that give evidence to Jesus being savvy. (A few examples: temptation [Matthew 4:1-11](#); parables; [John 6](#)- feeds 5000 then teaches I AM the Bread of Life; [John 7:1-24](#))

Read [Matthew 10:16](#); [John 14:10-17](#); [16:12-14](#); [Romans 12:1-2](#)

-What do these passages reveal about being spiritually savvy- "having the perspective of God on the inside and allowing it to shape what happens through us on the outside."

-Can you share an example of someone being spiritually savvy?

-How can we become more spiritually savvy? (God's Word, wise counsel, biblical teaching, etc.)

Let's put this into practice:

-What has God spoken to you through His word this week? What are you doing about it?

-What decision are you facing right now that requires God's unique perspective? How will you seek it?

Prayer: Pray over one another in pursuit of becoming savvy followers who discern God's voice and follow His lead at the right time and in the right way.

Next Steps: Read and meditate on [Psalm 19](#) for several days in a row. Invite God to fill you with renewed love and hunger for His Word.



THE FUTURE OF THE CHURCH: Intentional Friend

Pastor Derek

February 4, 2024

Life Group Discussion

Encouragement:

Think of your closest friend(s)- what do you value about your friendship?

What is your response to this Dream Disciple Goal? *As an intentional friend I will build healthy relationships and help God restore broken ones.* (Tip: Our natural response is to respond with the negative response. Encourage your members to also share what they like or are drawn to with this goal.)

Scripture: [John 15:9-17](#); [2 Corinthians 5:16-20](#)

-Imagine 3 concentric circles of people you have relationship with- Intimacy, Influence, Care. Who falls into each circle? How do we see Jesus interact with people in these three circles?

- Intimacy: It's your 3-5 close friends – those are the ones that you will become like.

- Influence: These are more than acquaintances but not quite part of your inner circle. These friends have influence on you and you have influence on them – but you probably wouldn't call them in the middle of the night.

- Care: these are people who you are investing in and caring for in some way. But you're not hanging around them all the time.

-Brainstorm -What are some key elements to having healthy relationships in each area?

-What are the barriers to developing healthy relationships with family, friends, coworkers, neighbors?

- Johari Window Exercise (more info- <https://harbingerjournal.com/johari-window-explained/>)

In order to be growing spiritually, you need to become more and more holy and more and more whole. In terms of the Johari window, true growth is happening when your Open Self is becoming increasingly larger and the other parts smaller. This requires healthy relationships which allow for self-disclosure, feedback, and self-discovery.

-How would the Johari window be helpful as you consider your relationship circles?

Prayer: Pray over one another in pursuit of becoming intentional friends who build healthy relationships and help God restore broken ones.

Next Steps: Who in my life needs me the most during this season and what's my next step? Where do I need to lean into a relationship that has become distant or broken?



THE FUTURE OF THE CHURCH: Embedded Influencer

Pastor Derek

February 11, 2024

Life Group Discussion

Encouragement:

Name a couple of people who have influence in your life? Do you follow any social media influencers? What is your response to this Dream Disciple Goal? *As an embedded influencer I understand how God has purposefully gifted and placed me to multiply His work in the world.* (Tip: Our natural response is to respond with the negative response. Encourage your members to also share what they like or are drawn to with this goal.)

Scripture:

Read [John 20:19-22](#) -these verses summarize God's story, Jesus' mission, and the mission of the church.
-How would you describe the *mission dei* (mission of God) in your own words?

Too often, we settle for a lesser story, a shadow mission. Generally, a shadow mission hovers around one of our idols. Do you resonate with any of these shadow missions in any area of your life?

Power: a longing for influence or recognition / avoid humiliation

Control: a longing to have everything go according to my plan / avoid uncertainty

Comfort: a longing for pleasure / avoid risk

Approval: a longing to be accepted or desired / avoid rejection

Read [Esther 4:11-17](#)

-How might Esther have been tempted to live a shadow mission? How might she have had to set aside these idols in order to obey God?

-Who was an embedded influencer in Esther's life? (*Mordechai*)

-Where do you have influence? Who do you have influence over? Who influences you?

Prayer: Use [1 Corinthians 7:17](#) to lead you into prayer for one another as you pursue becoming embedded influencers who understand how God has purposefully gifted and placed us to multiply His work in the world.

Next Steps: How have I leveraged my unique skills or position for God's mission recently? What is one situation or person in my life right now that I am uniquely equipped to influence?