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## An Age and Stage Model for Spirit-Empowered Disciples

First-century faith followed a pattern of belong- become-believe!

- “Come follow me” Matt. 4:19; (Belong)
- “Lord, teach us to pray” Luke 11:1; (Become)
- “You are the Christ” Matt. 16:16; (Believe)

### CAUTION!

Numerous studies, including the Willowcreek *Reveal* study, indicate that the process below, in many ways, has broken down between stages 2 and 3 ( i.e. what we have *explored* and personally *embraced* has *not become an experienced lifestyle* and thus not the believer’s identity).

**EXPLORE** truths of the faith in the safety of accepting relationships.



*Allow belonging before believing.*

**EMBRACE** truths of the faith in a personal way.



*The imperative is moments of personal decision, encounter, and application.*



# *Belong-Become-Believe*

The Willowcreek *Reveal* study uses the four terms, Exploring Christ, Growing in Christ, Close to Christ, and Christ-Centered.

Early church followers used stage terms such as seeker, hearer, kneeler, faithful. The Apostolic Tradition written around A.D. 215 by Hippolytus, bishop of Rome, is documented by Robert E. Webber in *Journey to Jesus* (Abington Press, 2001), pages 11–15.

**EXPERIENCE** truths of the faith in everyday life.



**CAUTION!** Monday–Friday living is where discipleship too often breaks down.

**EXPRESS** truths of the faith to others through your identity as a Christ-follower.

## ***Selected Outcomes:***

### **A Spirit-Empowered Disciple:**

- Listens to and hears God.
- Lives life through experiencing Scripture.
- Shares His love with near ones beginning at home.
- Yields to the Spirit for intimacy and discernment, direction and empowerment.

***Identity is contagious as others follow this Explore–Embrace–Experience–Express process.***

# EXPLORING Truth

## Age Model: Pre-School

**EXPLORE** *truths of the faith in the safety of accepting relationships.*



**Sunday, 12:30 p.m.** Amy giggles in her car seat as Daddy drives home from church. Joining in the fun, Amy's mother turns to the back seat: *"What did you learn at church today, sweetie?* [a rational inquiry] *Did you make something?"* [a behavioral inquiry]

Imagine the shock on mom and dad's faces when Amy gleefully replies, *"During Temple Time, I heard God tell me to love my brother better."* [a relational response]

**Flashback, 11:00 a.m.** Children's church begins. Today's discipleship outcome has a focus on *"Listening and Hearing God"* (1 Samuel 3:8-9). After every five-year old completes a drawing of his or her family, they remove their shoes and one by one enter the "Temple." They pray and wait. *"Who in my family would you want me to better love? Speak Lord."*

## Principles *and* Best Practices

*and*

## Best Practices

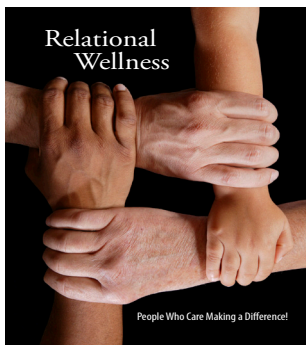
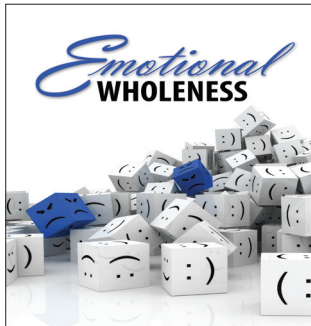
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|---|--|
| <p>1. <b>Families</b> give priority to devotional times and “family nights” with a focus on truly “knowing” your kids and letting them “know” you.</p> <p>2. <b>Families</b> focus on “catching” children “doing” Bible verses and celebrating!</p> | <p>1. Parents coming to know their children’s key Relational Needs—attention, security, affection, etc., is a key aspect of knowing children. “When I was your age, I...” is a simple way to let children know you. <b>Family Night</b> ideas and <b>Relational Needs</b> inventories and lists are available.</p> <p>2. “Jonathan, when you shared your video game with your sister—you were really “doing” a Bible verse of thinking of others” (Phil. 2:3,4).</p> |
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## EXPLORING Truth

## Pre-Schoolers Exploring Truths of the Faith in the Safety of Accepting Relationships

Principles	and	Best Practices
3. <b>Families</b> focus on Jesus being very present, available and caring.	⋮	3. “Just like Jesus prayed for his friend Peter—He’s praying for you today.”
4. <b>Families</b> focus on doing life together as Jesus followers. Parents remove fear and anger as significant hindrances to a safe relationship.	⋮	4. Fear is removed through attentive presence, removing anger, loving reassurance, and the security of promises kept. Anger is replaced with gentle words, self-control, and loving boundaries with appropriate consequences. <i><b>Model together helping at a food kitchen, preparing Angel Tree gifts for children whose parents are in prison.</b></i>
5. <b>Pre-school ministries</b> provide opportunities to truly “relate” to God.	⋮	5. “Temple Time” is a regular learning center where pre-schoolers remove their shoes, enter quietly, and encounter God...as they share gratitude, listen for His Spirit, ask to be changed, etc.
6. <b>Pre-school ministries</b> focus on frequent encounters with Jesus, the cornerstone of faith (Eph. 2:20).	⋮	6. Jesus still prays for us, hurts with us, and welcomes us (Luke 22:32, John 11:35, Luke 19:7).
7. <b>Pre-school ministries</b> focus on actually “doing” Bible verses together.	⋮	7. Today in our Temple Time, we will live out Psalms 100:2 as we “share a glad heart with the Lord.”
8. <b>Pre-school ministries</b> focus on sharing God’s truth with one another	⋮	8. Today we will be sharing words of appreciation with one another like the Bible encourages in Eph. 4:29. “I’m glad you’re my friend because _____.”
9. <b>Churches</b> equip parents in the fundamental truths of the faith...encouraging parents in their role of discipling their children.	⋮	9. Baby dedication services gift the baby his/her first Bible and the Unshakable Truth course to parents, encouraging them in their own adequacy to be well grown in the fundamental truths of the faith. (www.unshakabletruth.org)
10. <b>Churches</b> facilitate times of inter-generational Spirit-led ministry.	⋮	10. Pre-schoolers join in times of praise, worship, and prayer—experiencing God’s presence alongside adults.
11. <b>Churches</b> affirm pre-schoolers’ significance, worth, and value to Jesus.	⋮	11. Utilize Mother’s Day, Father’s Day and other special times to publicly involve and affirm pre-schoolers. “You are His beloved child with whom He is well pleased.”
12. <b>Churches</b> include and empower pre-schoolers in times of worship and ministry.	⋮	12. Older pre-schoolers can give thankful testimony, share praise-filled worship and offer prayers of faith—drawn from the certainty of God’s Word.

## EXPLORING Truth



## Stage Model For Exploring Truths of the Faith in the Safety of Accepting Relationships

*Relational Wellness* and *Emotional Wholeness* are two of the eight hour courses offered at no cost to engaged and married couples at a local community college. Attendees are often living together and have little faith background, but they practice exercises that enrich their relationships without knowing that they are actually *doing* Bible verses!

The Jesus-following leaders are equipped to “relate—instead of react” as shocking stories, language, and world views are often expressed. As attendees explore and are enriched by Biblical truth shared by accepting leaders, many respond positively to faith-based follow-up options.

– Central Texas

### Principles

and

### Best Practice Examples

1. **Disciplers/Mentors** live out the principle of “*Relate - don’t React*” as they encounter another person’s fallen behaviors, choices, and attitudes.
  2. **Disciplers/Mentors** focus on truly “knowing” those who are exploring the truth—and also being “known” by them. Knowing this person’s key Relational Needs and important relationships in their life will provide great insight into how to best care for them.
  3. **Disciplers/Mentors** first “live” the gospel in their attitudes and priorities, their caring initiatives, and welcoming acceptance.
  4. **Ministry Leaders** embrace the truth that it’s the Holy Spirit’s work to “convict,” not the leader’s.
1. Practice the Zacchaeus principle from Luke 19. Jesus knew Zacchaeus lied, cheated, or stole—but Jesus welcomed him with His accepting invitation, trusting the Spirit to convict and change him. (One of the most Spirit-filled things we do is to NOT say everything we know.)
  2. Knowing another person’s “story,” important relationships, strengths, goals, challenges, and then caring about them builds trust. (Download *Stones of Remembrance* and *Know Your Neighbor* sheets at [rebootleaders.com/](http://rebootleaders.com/)); vulnerably sharing your “story” including struggles deepens trust.
  3. Live out Romans 15, accept others as you have been accepted. God separates our worth and value to Him from our behavior/performance (Rom. 5:8).
  4. Leaders vulnerably share both past and recent times when the Holy Spirit spoke about needed change—“Just this week after being impatient with my daughter, I sensed the Holy Spirit prompting me to apologize and which, after some arguing with Him, I finally did!”



## EXPLORING Truth

## Stage Model For Exploring Truths of the Faith in the Safety of Accepting Relationships

Principles	and	Best Practice Examples
5. <b>Ministry leaders</b> focus on relational faith and facilitate encounters with Jesus, embracing the present reality that He is the same yesterday, today and forever (Heb. 13:8) and that when we truly encounter Jesus—we go away different.	:	5. “What if it was true that when you woke up today, Jesus was excited to express His love to you? — How might your heart respond?” (Ps. 139:3, Jn. 14:15)
6. <b>Ministry leaders</b> facilitate times of “experiencing scripture,” confident that God’s word does not return void but brings hope (Rom. 15:4) and transformation. (Heb. 4:12)	:	6. “God, if you’re real and the Bible is true—I ask you to help me better love my dad like I’ve read about in John 13:35.”
7. <b>Churches</b> focus intentionally on “unity in diversity”—embracing a principle that diversity of background, ethnicity, language, status, etc., breaks down barriers and facilitates acceptance.	:	7. Churches intentionally at times minister “beyond their comfort zone” so as to give testimony of inclusiveness and kingdom mindedness; church plants “plant” with a diverse leadership team.
8. <b>Churches</b> teach and practice that Biblical absolutes are different from Spirit-led convictions and both are different from personal preferences—lest legalism and condemnation thrive and welcoming acceptance be lost.	:	8. My personal <b>preferences</b> for music styles or carpet colors need to be deferred in the spirit of unity, my <b>convictions</b> like where to send my children to school need to be lived out—and other people given the freedom to hear God for themselves; Biblical <b>absolutes</b> need to be lived out and then lifted up for others to embrace.
9. <b>Churches</b> facilitate times of “engaging fellowship” as God’s people impart His life and love—involving all those present in an atmosphere of inclusive acceptance.	:	9. “Take five” is a regular part of worship and as the praise team sings, the congregation stands and experiences Bible verses together; Today, let’s “re-joice with those who rejoice” as we share in groups of 2 or 3 positive, encouraging, blessings from this past week or so.
10. <b>Pastors/Leaders</b> model appropriate, vulnerable self-disclosure as humble testimony is given that “we are all in this life journey together”—no one has it all perfectly figured out.	:	10. Colossians 3:16 moments are regularly shared in the Pastor’s messages—“letting the word dwell deeply” first in the Pastor: “This week as I prepared this message, the Spirit used this scripture to speak to my own life concerning_____.”
11. <b>Pastors/Leaders</b> affirm in their preaching/teaching the significance, value and worth of every human being—regardless of their behavior, actions, or attitudes. We are to love as we have been loved—and “while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8).	:	11. The Imago Dei—“God’s image” is part of being human and no amount of sin can forfeit it (Gen., James 1:26). Jesus often expressed value and worth to those in sin: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– A woman with many husbands (Jn. 4:7-30).</li> <li>– A demon possessed man (Mt. 8:28-34).</li> <li>– A woman in adultery (Jn. 8:1-11).</li> </ul>
12. <b>Pastors/Leaders</b> share grace and truth (Jn. 1:14) Truth is declared and a grace-filled compassion is expressed.	:	12. The God of all comfort expresses Himself often through Pastors, whose hearts are broken in compassion for “sheep without a shepherd” (Mt. 9:36). “Drug use is so wrong and also so heartbreaking when you encounter the devastation of addiction.”

## EMBRACING Truth

**EMBRACE** truths of the faith in a personal way.

## Age Model: School Age



*Encounters with Jesus* is the theme this term as children enter into Temple Time to meditate on an image of Jesus. The Spirit takes a Bible verse deeply into each heart—this week an image of Jesus praying and the words “He is now interceding for you” (Romans 8:34).



As they encounter Jesus, each child waits before the Lord for the Spirit-prompted response of praise, worship, and gratitude as hearts are touched with the wondrous truth—Jesus at times is praying for *me*!

Principles	and	Best Practices
1. <b>Families</b> speak often of their personal faith journey, their experiences of scripture, and encounters with Jesus.	:	1. (a) “I remember when I was your age, God answering my prayers to give me a best friend at school.”
	:	(b) “I need to apologize to you and God for my anger just like the Bible says.”
	:	(c) “At Grandmother’s funeral today I sensed Jesus with us and He was sad for us because he knows how much we love her and will miss her.”
2. <b>Families</b> include their children in times of prayer and worship, devotions and ministry, listening to and hearing God, enjoying the fellowship of His people.	:	2. “As you go” opportunities (Deut. 6:7) are seized as teachable moments to pray together about rejections at school; ‘listen’ to the Lord for who to befriend this new school year. Regular and intentional times of family devotions, worship, and ministry confirm that Jesus goes home with us after church!

## EMBRACING Truth

## School Age: Embracing Truths of the Faith in a Personal Way

Principles	and	Best Practices
<p>3. <b>Families</b> give priority to other families following Jesus, plus church involvement which allows children to benefit from peer relationships with shared values and beliefs.</p>	•	<p>3. (a) "Let's list some of the families with kids your age that we might get to know better—then let's pray about ones we could spend time with." (b) "Who are some of the students at school or church that you look up to as they treat others the way God would want?."</p>
<p>4. <b>Families</b> invite their children into moments of embracing faith, trusting His word, yielding to His Spirit, sharing His life and love.</p>	•	<p>4. (a) "Why don't you lead our prayer time tonight asking God to help your anxiety about the contest and for His Spirit to give you peace." (b) "Let's read Eph. 4:31 together and then go be kind to Kevin even though he wasn't being nice." (c) "You can trust that God's Spirit will be reminding you that Jesus loves you totally and wants to share with you His life and love; when you're ready, I want to help you with that commitment." (d) "Let's read Mt. 25:35-40 together about loving the 'least of these' as we prepare for our time serving at the homeless shelter."</p>
<p>5. <b>Children's ministries</b> emphasize the fundamentals of Bible faith through stories and activity—but additionally provide important time and space for the Spirit-empowered work of encountering Jesus, experiencing scripture and engaging true community/fellowship.</p>	•	<p>5. Today in our Temple Time we will each consider the question that Jesus asked of Peter—"Who do you say that I am?" As you quietly enter, first ask God by His Spirit to reveal to you as He did to Peter the answer to this question: "Holy Spirit, reveal to my heart—who is Jesus? And second, listen in your heart as His Spirit answers: "He is Savior, He is Lord—consider asking Him to be your savior, your Lord."</p>
<p>6. <b>Children's ministries</b> collaborate with families to lay a strong experiential foundation of <b>Jesus</b> as the cornerstone of faith (Eph. 2:20), ever living (Heb. 13:8) to pray, to welcome, to comfort (Heb. 7:25, Luke 19:7, John 11:35); intentional parent training will be needed.</p>	•	<p>6. Today in Temple Time you'll notice an image of Jesus with tears in His eyes reminding us of the Bible's shortest verse—"Jesus wept." Jesus was sad for his friends and sometimes He's sad for you when you're hurting. Before you leave the temple, consider a recent disappointment, loss, or rejection and thank Him that at times that Jesus hurts for you.</p>
<p>7. <b>Children's ministries</b> give priority to knowing and "doing" <b>Bible verses</b> at church and then—equipping families to reinforce this lifestyle of intentionally "doing the Book" at home; take home sheets, digital resources and intergenerational learning times at church help give parents this adequacy at home.</p>	•	<p>7. Today in Temple Time, you'll enter with a friend, but before you do, first, like the Bible says in Rom. 12:15a, celebrate together about a recent good thing that happened. "I'm glad my dad found a new job." "I'm glad you're my friend." Next, enter the temple together, and, like the Bible says in Ps. 100:2, you'll give prayers of thanksgiving that God brought about these good things. "Thanks God for my dad's new job." "Thanks God for giving me good friends like _____."</p>



# EMBRACING Truth

## School Age: Embracing Truths of the Faith in a Personal Way

### Principles

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### Best Practices

8. **Children's ministries** engage students in an identity of praying, caring, and sharing with one another (John 13:35) as **true community** is experienced—students more deeply know one another's joys and struggles, hopes and dreams, and then intentionally initiate care toward one another as they celebrate and comfort, pray "with" and "for" one another, give to and support one another; involving families in this vital journey of serving one another in love and thinking more highly of others.
9. **Churches** provide opportunities and experiences at church, on mission trips, at church camps, where "cultural faith" or "family faith" becomes **personal** faith as students embrace Jesus, yield to His Spirit express His gifts, minister His life and love.
10. **Churches** model in "big church" that the historical Jesus is "alive and well" as He still changes lives, answers prayer, performs miracles, heals physically/emotionally/relationally and brings freedom and hope to the oppressed.

8. Today in Temple Time after we've each identified one special friend who is present today—being sure no one is left out—you'll enter with this friend's name in mind asking God one question: "Lord, I really appreciate my friend \_\_\_\_\_ especially because he/she \_\_\_\_\_." After God has helped you, write your response, then we will share these grateful words with one another in our small groups.
9. "Each of us is to give account of ourselves" is the theme of this summer's camp (Rom 14:12). None of us will ever stand before God and tell God about others! We'll be challenged to consider: What have I done with His Son? How have I received and yielded to His Spirit? In what ways have I shared His life and love?
10. Pastors/Teachers share vulnerably of their intimate walk with Jesus and life in His Spirit. Opportunities to testify of His wonder-working power are regularly provided as adults and students are encouraged to "give account of the hope that is within."  
  
"This week I experienced an exceptional leading of the Lord as I sensed the Spirit's prompting to speak to a man on the train and offer to pray for him; he began to weep, having just received a throat cancer diagnosis that very morning and he was headed home to tell his wife! After praying over him, I gave him great hope when I mentioned we would have several hundred pray for him today. Allen was so overwhelmed that he and his wife are with us today and they are coming forward for us to join in believing God for him."

## EMBRACING Truth

## School Age: Embracing Truths of the Faith in a Personal Way

### Principles

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### Best Practices

11. **Churches** engage school age students in times of inter-generational “ministry of the word” (Acts 6:4) as God’s Word is experienced together—allowing students to both *receive* the blessing of His Word as well as *share* it with others.
12. **Churches** give priority to loving community (Jn. 13:35) and unity of faith (Jn. 17:21). Loving well is given priority over insistence on being right. Unity among Jesus-followers is given priority over personal preferences. “Where the Spirit of the Lord is—there is liberty” (2 Cor. 3:17).

11. “Having seen from today’s text the humility and gentleness of Jesus (Mt. 11:29-30)—in a few moments we are going to receive prayer from one another that His Spirit might manifest in us these works of Christ-likeness, experiencing together (I Jn. 5:14-15) that we are asking according to His will, confident that we’ll go away different. If you’re here as a family—parents, you may want to first pray and claim this promise for your children and then invite your children to pray for you.”

12. “Today from I Peter 1:22, we’ve been reminded that our obedience to truth is essential but it’s higher purpose is that we might fervently love one another.

As the praise team sings in a moment, we’ll stand—listen quietly to the Lord for who we might fervently love here today—and then we’ll go love them!

- Who might you appreciate?
- Who might you rejoice with in their joy?
- Who might you encourage?
- Who might you comfort?

## EMBRACING Truth

## Stage Model For Embracing the Truths of the Faith in a Personal Way

Moments of decision and commitment along with times of receiving from His Spirit make personal His work in the new follower's life.

Expressions of His Spirit in giftedness and worship allow followers to make personal their intimacy with Jesus and life in His Spirit.

A recent exploration of *Loving the Real God* challenged followers of another faith to consider Jesus—His life and love—leading attendees to consider that the real God is not disappointed in or distant from them but excited to love them! Two new followers of Jesus were baptized!

—Australia



### Principles

and

### Best Practice Examples

1. **Disciplers/Mentors** are first sensitive to listen attentively to "Their story" and then initiate vulnerable sharing of "My story" as it relates to My personal journey including:
  - Embracing Jesus
  - Yielding to His Spirit
  - Ministry of His gifts
  - Imparting His life and love

1. I'm often overwhelmed with gratitude for how:
  - (a) During my Junior year of college at a very low point in life, Jesus became so personally real to me; I look forward to sharing more with you about that turning point.
  - (b) I struggled to follow Jesus like I wanted to for several years but during a time of extended prayer, I experienced the Holy Spirit's fullness in ways that have empowered my walk with Him ever since.

# EMBRACING Truth

## Stage Model for Embracing Truths of the Faith in a Personal Way

Principles	and	Best Practice Examples
<p>2. <b>Disciplers/Mentors</b> continue to lovingly accept “Their story,” vulnerably share “My story”—and seize every opportunity to share “His story”—the Jesus story. He is the object of faith, He is the source of new life, He is the cornerstone of true faith and fellowship. Special sensitivity to important relationships with family and friends is important. It’s often these important relationships in marriage, with children, family, and friends that provide immediate opportunity to see God work in profound ways.</p>	:	<p>2. “As I found myself disappointed in my angry reactions at work this week—I had my own “Zacchaeus moment” where it seemed Jesus whispered to me, “I still want to be with you, David; I still love you.”—I ended up being so grateful for His loving forgiveness that the next day at the office I apologized for my angry outburst. Let’s review this Luke 19 story together—we’re all going to need it at some point!</p>
<p>3. <b>Disciplers/Mentors</b> routinely extend invitation to join them in “doing the book” as Bible truth is experienced through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Times of listening to the Lord</li> <li>– Times of yielding to His Spirit as obedience is empowered</li> <li>– Times of receiving Jesus’ love and life with thanks giving</li> <li>– Times of imparting His life, love and gifts</li> </ul>	:	<p>3. (a) Let’s pause and pray together over this scripture asking God what we should do related to our friendships (2 Tim. 2:22).            (b) Holy Spirit, empower humility in me as I accept responsibility and apologize (James 5:16).            (c) Thank you Jesus for the promise of Your cleansing and forgiveness as I have confessed to you. (1 Jn. 1:9)            (d) Might Your Spirit live through us as we share a portion of our time, talents and gifts today with the “least of these.” (Mt. 25:40).</p>
<p>4. <b>Ministry Leaders</b> embrace personal transformation as coming through <b>Encounters with Jesus</b>; all across the gospel pages are stories of lives transformed by encountering Jesus!—Zacchaeus, Saul, Peter, the woman at the well, lepers, the woman caught in adultery, the blind and lame—and Jesus “is the same, yesterday, today, and forever” (Heb. 13:8); Jesus’ encounters still transform!</p>	:	<p>4. “In the midst of deep grief at the death of our son, I was overwhelmed by the God of all comfort who comforted me. The same Jesus who wept for His friend Mary (Jn. 11:35), was hurting for me; I was not alone in my sorrow and in some strange way I was blessed and grateful that Jesus was very present and that He cared” (Mt. 5:4). He is available to you in this same way.</p>
<p>5. <b>Ministry Leaders</b> embrace personal transformation as coming through <b>Experiencing Scripture</b>—experience God at the point of His Word and something changes, and it won’t be God, or His Word—but you! Pentecost brought the powerful demonstration that “this” you are experiencing “is that” written in scripture (Acts 2:16). We must live a “this is that” lifestyle as we daily “do God’s book.”</p>	:	<p>5. Today in our time together we’re believing God to change us—for His Holy Spirit to prompt brokenness and empower repentance. We’ll pause quietly and consider the deeds of the flesh (Gal 5:19-21)—asking God to help us to focus on one area of needed repentance, then, we’ll experience together a meditation from 2 Cor 7:8-10 as the Holy Spirit ministers “Godly sorrow”—confident that His word works and the promise of repentance is coming!</p>

# EMBRACING Truth

## Stage Model for Embracing Truths of the Faith in a Personal Way

Principles	and	Best Practice Examples
<p>6. <b>Ministry Leaders</b> embrace personal transformation as coming through <b>engaging genuine fellowship/</b> community...encouraging one another unto love and good deeds (Heb. 10:24-25).</p>	:	<p>6. Today as we reflect on the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23) we'll pause and ask the Lord what deepened aspect of His fruit might we need to better manifest. Then, let's gather with one another in groups of 3, yielding ourselves to be prayed for by two others that His Spirit might better express His life and fruit in your life.</p>
<p>7. <b>Churches</b> provide time and "space" for "sharing stories"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Believing that the Holy Spirit will be at work through one person's sharing to challenge, convict, enlighten, and empower others through the story.</li> </ul>	:	<p>7. Today during our "take 5" sharing time—as our instrumentalists play—let's stand in groups of 2 or 3, reflect on I Pet. 4:10 as each of us has "received the gift" and share with one another a significant time when the Spirit manifested His presence through you: "I recall the time when _____ and the Holy Spirit _____." After sharing we'll close in prayer that each of us might be a "good steward of the manifold grace of God."</p>
<p>8. <b>Churches</b> regularly celebrate significant personal events as life with Jesus is presented as a "walk" with Him (Col. 2:6) —and each important step with Him is celebrated, as followers of Jesus embrace truth through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Receiving Christ</li> <li>– Yielding to His Spirit</li> <li>– Experiencing answers to prayer</li> <li>– Steps of faith being honored</li> <li>– Bondage being broken</li> <li>– Reconciliations experienced</li> <li>– Leading others to follow Jesus</li> </ul>	:	<p>8. A culture of celebration is developed in worship services, classes, small groups and individual discipleship where time is allocated to "rejoice with those who rejoice" (Rom. 12:15).</p>
<p>9. <b>Churches</b> give priority to new believers/new "members" first learning to "love God" (Mt. 22:37).—Not by "doing things" for Him, but by relating intimately with Him; only from this loving intimacy with Him will come the prompting and power to live for Him. Next will come the priority to love our "nearest ones" in marriage, family, and with friends.</p>	:	<p>9. New believer/new member classes don't start with doctrine or church polity, stewardship or church programs—but with "loving God" So how is it that we really "love God?"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– We love Him by listening to Him; "speak Lord, Your servant is listening" (I Sam. 3:8-9).</li> <li>– We love Him by yielding to His Word, "be it unto me according to Your Word" (Luke 2:29)</li> <li>– We love Him with our faith--coming up to the edge of all the light we have and taking one more step upon His Word.(Heb. 11:1; Rom. 5:17).</li> <li>– We love Him through a grateful, glad heart; "serve the Lord with gladness" (Ps. 100:2).</li> </ul>



Principles	and	Best Practice Examples
<p>10. <b>Pastors/Leaders</b> vulnerably share their continued walk with Jesus as His Spirit leads them in decision-making and empowers deepened commitment. Col. 3:16 moments become a routine part of any sharing of God's Word: "Let the Word of Christ dwell deeply in you, teaching and admonishing others."</p>	:	<p>10. This week as I meditated on Jesus' experience in the Garden with His three disciples, I was struck by the words in red letters, "Can you come pray with me just one hour?" (Mt. 26:40). The Spirit convicted my heart that I often times leave Jesus praying alone...I've been renewed in my discipline of consistently spending quality time with Jesus.</p>
<p>11. <b>Pastors/Leaders</b> minister/serve God's Word (Acts 6:4) through times of experiencing scripture. During these times of "doing God's Word," people are given opportunity to respond to the Spirit's leading as decisions are made and faith is expressed. Experiencing scripture engages it's relational purpose as we are drawn to more deeply love the God who wrote the Word (Matt. 22:40). "During times of experiencing scripture, the Holy Spirit who "breathed" the Book is very present to both:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Speak to Jesus' followers, and</li> <li>– Draw others to <i>become</i> followers of Jesus.</li> </ul>	:	<p>11. "Today as we have focused on John 13:34 and its admonition to "love one another," we'll now pause and ask His Spirit to speak to us about someone in our life who needs more of His love through us."</p> <p>– <i>"Speak Lord, we're listening; who in my life would You desire for me to better love?"</i></p> <p>"As you sense you have heard Him, thank Him that you've heard Him and then ask God to prompt His love through you."</p> <p>"Secondly, maybe you're struggling to hear God—Jesus said 'My sheep hear my voice' (Jn. 10:27)."</p> <p>Could you be struggling to hear Him because you're needing to receive Him?; You've <i>explored</i> the life and love of Jesus-and maybe now is the time to receive Him as your Savior and Lord.</p>
<p>12. <b>Pastors/Leaders</b> lead others into transforming encounters with Jesus; they let Jesus "extend the invitation" for those who have explored various truths of the faith.</p> <p>It's these encounters with Jesus that ground decisions in a secure Relational faith; the very present Jesus who "is the same yesterday, today, and forever" (Heb. 13:8) is still inviting others to follow Him through the Holy Spirit:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) Asking "who do you say I am" (Mt. 16:15).</li> <li>(b) Inviting us to receive "rivers of living water" as His Spirit flows through us! (Jn. 7:37-39)</li> <li>(c) Encouraging us to yield to His leadership and to join Him in loving others (Mt. 11:28-30).</li> </ul>	:	<p>12. (a) "In these next moments let's pause to consider the words of Jesus as He asked of Peter, 'Who do you say that I am?' Meditate as His spirit still probes your heart with this question—and then consider your response: "You are the Christ, God's son."</p> <p>(b) "If any man is thirsty, let him come unto Me and drink."—Receive by faith the flow of His Spirit that from within you, His life will empower you.</p> <p>(c) "Come unto me—take My yoke upon you and learn from Me for I am humble and gentle" (Mt. 11:28-30).</p>

## EXPERIENCING Truth

EXPERIENCE *truths of  
the faith in everyday life.*

## Age Model: Middle School—Experiencing Truths of the Faith in Every Day Life



Committed for the Holy Spirit to lead these NextGen students in actually *Doing the Book* (Experiencing Scripture), this semester's focus was on 2 Timothy 2:22. First they turn aside to listen to the Lord concerning what they are to *flee* and then to the rest of the passage, "pursue after righteousness, faith, love, joy and peace—with those who call upon the name of the Lord from a pure heart." Each student listens for His Spirit concerning "with whom should I spend more time *pursuing the Lord* this semester?" They yield to the Spirit and share together concerning friends that they sense the Lord would have them spend more time with Monday through Friday.

—Western Europe

### Principles

and

### Best Practices

1. **Families** express and celebrate their daily faith expressions as they impart their very life—and the gospel.
2. **Families** "doing life" with other Jesus-following families—gaining benefit from both positive youth peer relationships and mature adults who can add blessing, wisdom, and support to your kids.
3. **Families** living "life on mission" as school friends and families, neighbors and co-workers are included and accepted as they "explore" truth in the safety of our family's life and love.

1. "Today I had opportunity to share one of the fast food gift cards I carry with a homeless man who was on the bus with me."  
"After my lunch conversation with Sandy, she's asking more and more great questions about Jesus."
2. "How about inviting the Andrew's family over for one of our family night times—and then see if they might have interest in joining us on our family missions project?"
3. "Can we host a youth gathering in our home, inviting some of the students from school and the neighborhood?"  
"I'm wanting to include several of my co-workers in our backyard cook-out...they are a little rough but they're each needing friends—and our family is great at that."

# EXPERIENCING Truth

## Middle School—Experiencing Truths of the Faith in Every Day Life

## Principles

*and*

## Best Practices

4. **Families** cultivate and celebrate a Scripture - focused identity. It's important to instill an identity based upon "who" I am—not what I "do."—I am a person who speaks good about others, apologizes when I have been wrong and supports those close to me."
  5. **Youth Ministries** *engage* students throughout the week in a lifestyle of "doing God's book." Put an emphasis on "walking in the light of God's word, God's Son and God's people—lest the darkness of compromise, temptation or worldly beliefs will overtake you" (see Jn. 12:35).
  6. **Youth Ministries** focus on building strength and identity as the "beloved of Jesus" through encounters with Jesus to instill *worth* and *belonging*. **Competence** is instilled as students are trusted with ministry, affirmed in their spiritual gifts and where their talents are discovered and engaged for the kingdom.
  7. **Youth Ministries** instill a "giving first" heart as students focus on sacrificially taking initiative to *give* to the relational needs of others—beginning at home and with fellow students. Reflect often on the first century world noticing that early believers "had been with Jesus" (Acts 4:13) and highlight the importance of "who am I *becoming*?" As a supportive, encouraging, comforting person. Utilize the 360° inventory to survey family members, peers, teachers at the *first* of the semester and again at the close of the semester.
  8. **Youth Ministries** equip students to see people the way God sees them so we can love them the way God loves them. (Mark 8:24) Fellow students are often alone, expressing their pain and sadness in unhealthy/sinful ways.
  4. "Remember in our family we don't say hurtful things (Eph. 4:29a)—and when we have, we apologize quickly (James 5:16)."  
We can celebrate how well we supported one another as we all encouraged Ethan at his game and then supported Zach at his band concert (Gal. 6:2).
  5. From this list of 50 Bible verses, let's see if we can "experience" one a day this week. At the end of the day, let's all post the verse we experienced and a little about "how" and "who" we experienced it with. Text one another during the day as you've experienced your verse as a reminder to others.
  6. "Your *worth* has forever been established as you meditate often on Jesus at Calvary—and allow the Holy Spirit to prompt within you the truth that "He did it for me!!"  
"You **belong** to a community where you're always accepted like Jesus did Zacchaeus (Luke 19:7), supported like Jesus did for the blind man in John 9, and **involved in serving** with Jesus like the disciples did in passing out bread."
  7. "Just as we have explored our key Relational Needs from one another's of scripture (support one another, encourage one another, comfort one another)—this week let's focus on giving to the Relational Needs of at least one other student—and as you receive from a fellow student, post on our youth facebook page a message of celebration and gratitude." "Jon just texted encouragement before my test." Moving from "entitlement" to "generosity" is critical to forming a Christ identity.
  8. In this series of Jesus' stories we'll notice how He compassionately responds to:
    - **Prodigals** who are acting out in selfish rebellion (Luke 15:11-32).
    - **Pain-filled** people who have experienced sad life events, disappointing relationships, and irrelevant religion (Jn. 9).
    - **Pre-occupied** people who are busy with everything else but Jesus until they realize they need Him (Mark 5).

### Principles

### and

### Best Practices

9. **Church Pastors/Leaders** share often of their week-day faith as they impart their very life—and the gospel.

- Students are longing to hear genuineness from their leaders as we live our lives “on mission.”
- If they are to develop a lifestyle of sharing their faith—they need to hear we are sharing ours!
- If they are to live their lives “on mission” they need to hear our “good samaritan” stories (Luke 10:30-37).

10. **Churches** give priority in programming and activity, in budget and resources to extending Christ’s Kingdom, ministry to the “least of these,” and demonstrating unity among His church. (Matt. 25, Jn. 17:21)

Students need to express mercy, live justly, and walk humbly with Jesus (Micah 6:8).

Students will tend to “compartmentalize” their faith to church and Sundays unless we as family and church model a “Go and Love” lifestyle—not a “Come and See” program.

“Love Loud” can become our vision for Monday-Friday living.

11. **Churches** engage students in contributing vision and ministry as their:

- Input is invited and validated
- Spiritual gifts are explored and utilized

Critical to identity formation as a Jesus follower will be having each student’s uniqueness validated within the body as they discover the special ways the Spirit has “placed and gifted” them.

9. While at the ball game this week, I noticed a woman by the concession stand talking frantically on the phone to what sounded like one of her children. I was tempted to walk back into the stands, but found my wife, and together we supported her as we came to know of her daughter’s car accident. The woman had taken the bus to the game and was by herself, so we went with her to the hospital, stayed with her until everything checked out with her daughter, and then took them both to their house.

10. “It’s not about you!” will be the theme of this quarter’s teaching and ministry; key to truly following Jesus is living our faith outside these four walls as we live and love like Jesus.

As we engage in *praying* for those around us who are sheep without a shepherd (Luke 10:2) and then *caring* for them in practical ways, we’ll encounter opportunities to *share* the Jesus story. “When we make life *not* about us but about Him (Jesus), His Spirit moves our hearts to make life about “them”—those all around us in need.

11. This summer we will be involving our middle schoolers in a “deacon apprentice” ministry as they meet in small groups with one of our elders/deacons giving their ideas, input, and opinions for increasing Jesus impact in the community.

This fall we will take several spiritual gift inventories, study the Holy Spirit’s work in you, and engage in ministry utilizing our gifts.

**Principles**

*and*

**Best Practices**

- 12. Churches** provide intergenerational experiences where students are:
- Leading out in ministry (along with new adult followers of Jesus) as His life and love are shared—communicating to the entire body that “we exist to pass on the faith to future generations.”
  - Receiving the affirmation and ministry from other important adults in their life. (Developmentally, middle-schoolers need the interaction with and affirmation of other mature followers of Christ).

- 12.** On 5th Sunday evenings this year we’ll gather together in “family” groups, making sure each student and single is included—spending time allowing our NextGen youth and new Jesus followers, of any age, to share their excitement, passion, and ministry with us.
- Once a month in youth group this year, students will meet in J12 groups with one of our elders for times of prayer, sharing, and ministry; recall that at the age of 12 Jesus was in the temple interacting with the elders; our students will be blessed and then “be a blessing” during these affirming times with our elders. (Jesus @ 12 groups)



## EXPERIENCING Truth

**EXPRESS** *truths of the faith in everyday life.*

## Stage Model for Experiencing the Truths of the Faith in Every Day Life

### Stage Model: Experience Truth

*What Bible verses have I experienced today?* has become the key question in one community of Jesus followers:

- “Ministering to the Lord with a glad heart” begins each day (Psalms 100:2).
- Being still to pray “speak Lord, your servant is listening” still works (1 Samuel 3:8–9).
- Apologizing (confessing) when you’ve been wrong is still right (James 5:16).

—South Africa

Principles	and	Best Practices
<p>1. <b>Disciplers/Mentors</b> give priority to “doing life” during the week with new followers who have “embraced” Jesus and now need to walk in Him (Col. 2:6). (Research indicates new followers want to give more time to unstructured, non-programmed relational connecting)</p> <p>It’s not primarily extensive rational beliefs we share that draws us close but rather, it’s sharing life together.</p>		<p>1. (a) <b>Enter “their” world</b> of work, family, interests, etc., based upon “knowing” them. “I know you enjoy baseball, and with the playoffs coming, I’d like to get tickets so we can go together.”</p> <p>(b) <b>Invite them into your world.</b> “Maybe you and your wife could join us for dinner?” “How about coming by my office and I’ll have lunch brought in.”</p> <p>(c) <b>Build memories together.</b> “I’ll see you Tuesday for breakfast at our regular time and place.” “I’m still sharing with co-workers and neighbors pictures and stories from our mission trip together.”</p>
<p>2. <b>Disciplers/Mentors</b> make “loving God” a life discipline—and—“loving God with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength” is primarily relational and not so much “doing things.” It’s much like an intimate marriage as you express love in communication, initiative, listening, gratitude, and appreciation.</p>		<p>2. “Monday of this week I was overwhelmed with gratitude in my time with the Lord that He was so present and compassionate toward me during Mom’s illness.” “Let’s spend some time together with Him—listening for a sense of His direction concerning how best for you to respond.”</p>

# EXPERIENCING Truth

## Stage Model for Experiencing the Truths of the Faith in Every Day Life

Principles	and	Best Practices
<p>3. <b>Disciplers/Mentors</b> make “loving others,” especially your “nearest ones,” a lifestyle priority.</p> <p>First, there needs to be the testimony of loving family and friends well (3a), then can come, the challenge to join you in loving near ones. (3b)</p> <p>Then comes loving fellow Jesus followers and those who don’t know Him. (3c,3d)</p>	<p>3.</p>	<p>(a) “Thursday night is usually our family night together doing life with our kids, so maybe we could connect Wednesday night.</p> <p>(b) “Let’s try ‘startling’ our wives this week with a short phone call just to say, “I was thinking of you and just wanted to call to check on your day and remind you I love you.”</p> <p>(c) “I’m dropping by to see Aaron at the hospital and wondered if you would like to join me?”</p> <p>(d) “After visiting at your office, I can sense your boss is intrigued by positive changes he’s noticing in you; I wonder about inviting him to join us for our next baseball outing?”</p>
<p>4. <b>Ministry Leaders</b> give priority to reinforcing “walking in the light” (Jn. 12:35) each day as the Holy Spirit:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Reveals Jesus as the light (Jn. 8:12).</li> <li>– Illuminates the light of God’s word (Ps. 119:105)</li> <li>– Empowers true fellowship as a source of light (Mt. 5:14).</li> </ul> <p>A key principle is that the light we experience “at church”—is available to us all week long.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Jesus is available 7 days a week.</li> <li>– Bible verses work at home like they do at church.</li> <li>– Fellowship is available 24/7.</li> </ul>	<p>4.</p>	<p>(a) Just as we have meditated today on a Jesus who caringly pursues us when we’re in pain (Jn. 9), be assured that this week if you experience pain related to life events or disappointing relationships—you can pause to re-encounter this same caring, pursuing Jesus!</p> <p>(b) Just as we have paused to “listen” to Jesus, the Great Shepherd (John 10:2), His voice is available to you 24/7.</p> <p>(c) Just as we have engaged today in the blessing of “encouraging one another unto love and good deeds” (Heb. 10:24-25)—this week let’s keep it going as we call, text, email, and visit with one another providing this same encouragement.</p>
<p>5. <b>Ministry Leaders</b> share a “life on Mission” perspective as Jesus followers “Go About Doing Good” (Acts 10:38) within friendships/neighbors, in the workplace, in community, unto the least of these.</p> <p>“Whole life” discipleship analyzes all the significant places I invest <i>time</i> and allows the Holy Spirit to express Jesus into every corner of life...challenging me at times to stretch my “life on mission” into the furthest corners.</p>	<p>5.</p>	<p>(a) “My wife and I will be “double dating” with neighbor friends next week to a new faith-based movie; let’s review the movie trailer for it and as we do—consider friends you might consider inviting.”</p> <p>(b) “We’re beginning several Business as Unusual studies in workplace settings-so if God leads you to consider this outreach opportunity at your workplace, let’s visit.”</p> <p>(c) “This fall we’re planning mission opportunities in both the inner city and overseas, so pray as God might want to include you.”</p>

# EXPERIENCING Truth

## Stage Model for Experiencing the Truths of the Faith in Every Day Life

Principles	and	Best Practices
<p>6. <b>Ministry Leaders</b> design strategies to extend church “events” into a process of faith formation, thus communicating that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>–Attending events is not the measure of faithfulness.</li> <li>–Events can build adequacy which can then be extended into fruitful daily living.</li> <li>–Events can be catalytic in prompting faithful daily living.</li> </ul>	<p>6.</p>	<p>After experiencing several key relational Bible verses during this small group series, for the next few weeks, let’s each see if these Bible verses work during the week! In our closest relationships, let’s:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Rejoice together over good things (Rom. 12:15a).</li> <li>– Share comfort when someone is sad or disappointed (Rom. 12:15b).</li> <li>– Apologize when we’re wrong (James 5:16).</li> <li>– Share soft, gentle words at the first sign of another’s irritation (Prov. 15:1)</li> </ul> <p>To encourage one another in this week-day journey, maybe we could post our celebrations of “doing the Book” on our class facebook page.</p>
<p>7. <b>Churches</b> promote discipleship as living a <i>prayer-care-share</i> lifestyle.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Followers of Jesus see around them, “sheep without a shepherd” and they are moved with compassion as was Jesus.</li> <li>– Followers of Jesus sense the prayers of Jesus to send forth laborers.</li> <li>– Followers hear His voice and they respond, “Here am I, send me” (Matt. 9:9, Is. 6:8).</li> </ul>	<p>7.</p>	<p>We’ll <i>prayer walk</i> our neighborhoods next Saturday in preparation for “Love Loud” weekend when we’ll care for our neighbors by raking leaves, trimming bushes, painting, repairing cars, and other ways we can love them well...As we seek to build relationship and as we get to know them well, we will listen to their story, share our story, and be sensitive for opportunities to share His story.</p>
<p>8. <b>Churches</b> support and encourage caring-connections during the week as Jesus followers “do life together”—and then “impart their life and the gospel” with those exploring faith.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Coffee shop “discipleship” is informal, with little structure and deals with oftentimes “messy” real life challenges.</li> <li>– Workplace connecting is commonplace as study groups convene, prayer groups meet and faith-based principles inform company leadership training.</li> <li>– Community engagement is facilitated through athletics, civic involvement, community service, social engagement by Jesus followers who have “checked their egos and logos” in order to serve without “credit” or “notice.”</li> </ul>	<p>8.</p>	<p>We’ve sensed the importance of re-thinking our approach to ministry:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>–Too much of our approach has been inviting others to “Come and See” what we believe, what activities we provide, what programs we offer.</li> <li>–Our plan is to simplify what we offer “here,” so you’re freer to “Go and Love,” spending more time connecting with one another and hanging out with those who are exploring faith.</li> </ul>

Principles	and	Best Practices
<p>9. <b>Churches</b> give priority to on-going relational ministry for couples, families, and single adults, equipping them in the adequacy of loving people well.</p> <p>There's nothing more "daily" than marriage, kids, and single adult relationships, and there's no better place to fulfill the Great Commandment of loving "neighbors" each and every day.</p>		<p>9. (a) <i>Intimate Encounters</i> small groups provide equipping for married couples in truly knowing one another, healing inevitable hurts, truly leaving father and mother, and deepening spiritual, emotional, physical intimacy. (<i>Discovering Intimacy</i> is a corresponding course for singles and <i>Parenting with Intimacy</i> for parents).</p> <p>(b) <i>Impact Experience</i> equips youth for the relational skills of loving God and others.</p> <p>(c) Classes using <i>Keeping Marriages Healthy</i>, <i>Relational Wellness</i>, <i>Emotional Fitness</i>, and <i>Top 10 Relational Needs</i> are regularly offered free to engaged and married couples in the community.</p>
<p>10. <b>Pastors/Leaders</b> share often of their own lifestyle journey—both the victories and defeats.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– As pastors/leaders share of their "week-day" expressions of following Jesus—others will be challenged and prompted to do the same.</li><li>– As pastors/leaders share their "week-day" "defeats"—and God's abundant grace, others will find hope and gain strength.</li></ul>		<p>10. (a) "This week after our son's ball game, his coach who I've come to know well, finally opened up about his spiritual questions; pray as we get together next week to talk about his questions.</p> <p>(b) This week I found myself getting angry with a ticket agent as weather caused me to miss my flight; and the more angry she got, the more I expressed my anger, the less helpful she was! God seemed to stop me mid-sentence and remind me of Prov. 15:1, "A gentle answer turns away anger. The Spirit prompted gentleness and new words: "Let me start over. It was wrong of me to be angry at you about the weather. Forgive me, I regret my attitude and actions." You'll never believe what happened next...Her anger subsided, she smiled, found me a seat on another airline, and I made my speaking appearance on time! God's Word works! Even for slow-to learn pastors!</p>

### Principles

and

### Best Practices

11. **Pastors/Leaders** speak courageously into the imperative of living faith “outside” the walls of the church.

Key to fulfilling the Great Commission, empowering effective discipleship, and realizing spiritual awakening is followers of Jesus expressing His life and love in the traffic patterns of their life.

One of the greatest unfulfilled hopes of the Great Reformation was that the laity would be “loosed” to express Jesus.

12. **Pastors/Leaders** model and champion the imperative of contagious discipleship as followers of Jesus see others come to follow Jesus who see others come to follow Jesus!

11. For many of my first years of ministry, I would have said that “The most important hours of your week are these here at church.” BUT, the Spirit has impressed me otherwise; these few hours here are simply to serve, encourage, and empower you for your most important hours “out there,” where you spend most of your life, where you interact with family and friends, neighbors, and countless people who need to explore Jesus. These few hours are for the purpose that all those others in your life might “take note that you had been with Jesus”! (Acts 4:13)

12. “Our church doesn’t exist for these buildings, or to keep church programs going, or to even keep me and our staff paid—we exist as followers of Jesus for a NextGen imperative—to see a Christ-centered faith passed along to future generations—to see children and youth, young adults and adults of any age, come to follow Jesus.” One of the greatest joys is to see here today my neighbor Sam, who came to follow Jesus and Sam’s co-worker Allen and his family who came to Christ through Sam imparting his life and the gospel.



## EXPRESSING Truth



**EXPRESS** *truths of the faith to others through your identity as a Christ-Follower.*

### Age Model: High School/Young Adult Express Truths of the Faith to Others Through Your Identity as a Christ-Follower

Committed and passionate teens host an outreach, small-group gathering in their home focused on loving the *real God*. Friends gather for food, fun, and to explore truths of the faith. Imagine when you woke up this morning— what did God feel toward you? “*He was depressed,*” said one troubled student from an even more troubled home.

Moment-by-moment the Holy Spirit takes the Word and reveals the real God, who accepts and supports you, hurts for and prays for you. With many tears of joy, this same student yields his life to the real Jesus who looks on him with joy!

—Central Texas

#### Principles

and

#### Best Practices

1. **Families** engage in practical expressions of “love your neighbor” as they actually “**Do It!**”
  - Small group meetings of well-meaning Jesus followers seeking to then reach others, can end up isolating each group member from sharing His life and love with their very own neighbors!

1. Loving Neighbor strategies could include:
  - (a) Families, adults and kids greeting new neighbors with sweets or other “welcome” items—after praying together before going.
  - (b) As the family walks, runs, or rides through the neighborhood, parents and children often pray for specific neighbors.
  - (c) Open house get-togethers are frequent at holidays and special occasions as relationships are developed. and deepened with adults, children, and teens.
  - (d) Opportunities are taken to celebrate with neighbors when they celebrate and express compassion when they are hurting.

## Age Model: High School/Young Adult Express Truths of the Faith to Others Through Your Identity as a Christ-Follower

Principles	and	Best Practices
<p>2. <b>Families</b> impart “Change the world” vision and model a “life on mission” example.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Today’s teens and young adults, more than recent generations, interact with a global community and want to live a life that counts.</li> </ul>	⋮	<p>2. Families engage in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Praying for the miraculous - related to reconciliation and healing, freedom, and spiritual awakening.</li> <li>– Interceding for the Spirit’s work in convicting <i>prodigals</i> (Luke 15), comforting the <i>pain-filled</i> (John 9) and bringing brokenness to the <i>preoccupied</i> (Mark 5).</li> <li>– Attempting the impossible, as the Jesus story is lived and shared with friends and family, to those close and far away.</li> </ul>
<p>3. <b>Families</b> resist programs and events becoming a substitute for “incarnational” ministry and missions. Youth ministry and churches may provide opportunities that become catalysts for exposure and vision-casting, but families prioritize instilling the value of Jesus living through us. His followers are the answer to the heart cry of people’s need.</p>	⋮	<p>3. It’s “Christ in You” that’s the needed hope for today’s world (Col. 1:27).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– It’s His Spirit through you who offers comfort when a friend is down or discouraged.</li> <li>– It’s His faith expressed in your believing prayer that changes things (I John 5:14-15).</li> <li>– It’s His leadership that prompts and empowers your imparting the gospel to one who needs Him.</li> </ul> <p>Life on a mission is not attending every event or involvement in every program—it’s Him living through you.</p>
<p>4. <b>Families</b> are purposeful in modeling a <i>Life on Mission</i> as those who need to know Jesus are included and loved.</p> <p>Effective discipleship instills a contagious heart for evangelism; following Jesus captures His compassion for those who don’t know Him and prompts an identity of one who <i>prays for—cares for—and shares with</i> those who need Him (Luke 10:1-4).</p>	⋮	<p>4. Ministry to friends, family, neighbors, and acquaintances is instilled as our identity as Jesus-followers through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Regular prayer for those God has put on the hearts of dads and moms, children, and teens.</li> <li>– Listening to their “story”—in order to offer <i>care</i>. And then look for ways to meet relational needs for support or comfort, encouragement or attention.</li> <li>– Sharing <i>our</i> story, both it’s celebrations and pain, displaying appropriate sensitivity to when and how best to share “<i>His</i>” story.</li> </ul>
<p>5. <b>Youth Ministries</b> promote living an “open source” life—as we “freely have received, we freely give” (Matt. 10:8).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <b>Generosity</b> is cultivated as a part of our identity - we “give first” to the needs of others.</li> <li>– <b>Serving</b> and <b>sharing</b> are not something we schedule or calendar, it’s our identity.</li> </ul>	⋮	<p>5. (a) Dozens of birthdays are celebrated during the week as students learn to <i>think of others</i> and <i>rejoice</i> with those who <i>rejoice</i> (Phil. 2:4, Rom. 12:15).</p> <p>(b) Volunteerism and serving others become parts of a typical student week: with special focus on mentoring younger students, care for <i>the least of these</i> and care for those we’re praying for.</p> <p>(c) Stories of giving and serving are regularly shared and affirmed as generous living is modeled as following Jesus.</p>

## EXPRESSING Truth

## Age Model: High School/Young Adult Express Truths of the Faith to Others Through Your Identity as a Christ-Follower

Principles	and	Best Practices
<p>6. <b>Youth Ministries</b> model authenticity and truth as the ways of Jesus; “Get real” is the admonition as students are tempted by the world to pretend and wear masks; “the pseudo intimacy” from shallow use of technology is resisted in favor of genuineness.</p> <p>Jesus is the model for us as He shares His joy (Mt. 10:1), His disappointments (Luke 17:17), His need of others (Mt. 26:36-46).</p> <p>The identity of a mature disciple is one who walks daily in the light of the Word (Jn. 12:35)—living a life of experienced truth.</p>	<p>6.</p>	<p>(a) Just as celebrating with one another is common in youth gatherings (Rom. 12:15a), so also is sharing compassion as concerns and hurts are shared; becoming a person often moved with compassion is the goal (Matt. 5:4).</p> <p>(b) Technology is engaged for encouragement and accountability, celebrations and “giving first.” “Just texting to let you know I’m praying for you and your exam today.”</p> <p>(c) Relational accountability is the objective, not based upon performance and activity—but relationships with Jesus, His word, and His people.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– “What am I sensing from the Lord?”</li> <li>– “Who am I <i>praying for-caring for-sharing with?</i>”</li> <li>– “Who am I investing in and <i>doing life</i> with?”</li> <li>– “What Bible verses came “alive” today as I experienced them?”</li> </ul>
<p>7. <b>Youth Ministries</b> equip teens in stewardship and ministry of spiritual gifts in concert with expressing the fruit of the Spirit.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Affirmation of the Spirit’s manifested fruit in the follower’s life is celebrated as daily expressions of the life in Him.</li> <li>– His gifts are explored and affirmed as part of each follower’s unique identity.</li> </ul>	<p>7.</p>	<p>Life in the Spirit is an important focus of study and experience as ministry gives priority to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Waiting before the Lord to listen and hear.</li> <li>– Experiencing encouragement, nourishment, direction, and wisdom from the Word.</li> <li>– Discernment, experience and confirmation of His gifts, ministered through His people.</li> <li>– Stories are celebrated of every day living overtaken by the prompting, empowerment, and manifestation of His Spirit—as others take note “that we have been with Jesus.”</li> </ul>
<p>8. <b>Youth Ministries</b> give priority to a discipleship culture where imparting your life and the gospel is the over-arching goal—disciples making disciples, who make disciples, who make disciples...</p> <p>Effective discipleship inevitably leads to evangelism as a way of life.</p>	<p>8.</p>	<p>(a) Older students mentoring younger ones is commonplace as the Lord brings remembrance that “it’s not about you”—self-focus and entitlement are significant obstacles and enemies of a Jesus’ identity.</p> <p>(b) A three generation perspective includes “who’s discipling me?” and “Who am I discipling?”</p> <p>(c) Discipleship includes intentional, accepting relationships with those still exploring truths of the faith—sensitive to how I lead them into embracing truth, so that they might join our community of faith in daily expression of His life and love.</p>

## EXPRESSING Truth

## Age Model: High School/Young Adult Express Truths of the Faith to Others Through Your Identity as a Christ-Follower

Principles	and	Best Practices
<p>9. <b>Churches</b> give priority to relational skills for life; teens and young adults need adequacy in skills such as developing vulnerability, expressing compassion, and managing emotions.</p> <p>Church and faith remain relevant at this critical stage of life when following Jesus equips for everyday life.</p>	⋮	<p>9. Following Jesus as He illustrates critical relational skills like:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Vulnerability as He shares His disappointment with the quarreling disciples (Luke 22); quarreling disciples—2 words that don’t go together. Being “real” even when disappointed needs to replace “pretending” that all’s good.</li> <li>– Compassion or <b>hurting with those who hurt</b> is critical to being a good friend as Jesus was to Mary (John 11:35).</li> <li>– <b>Prayer</b> for those you care about even when they let you down—resisting the tendency to reject them (Luke 22:32).</li> </ul>
<p>10. <b>Churches</b> give priority to <b>life skills</b> that translate into the classroom, market place and workplace.</p> <p>Older teens and young adults often look ahead with certain anxieties related to further schooling and work in the “real world.” Church and faith remain relevant as they find <b>experiencing scripture</b> equips them for the future.</p> <p>The more that scriptural truth transitions into every day life, the more it is found relevant.</p> <p>The more that scripture is “experienced” at church, the easier it transitions into life.</p>	⋮	<p>10. Scripture becomes a blueprint for the real world as it prepares teens and young adults to deal with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <b>Inevitable conflict</b> as the humility of true confession brings healing; true confession is specific about how we were wrong, without any excuse (James 5:16). “How long has it been since I apologized?”</li> <li>– <b>Deepening relationships</b> through truly knowing others and letting them know you. (Hebrew YADA—Jer. 1:5, SOD—Prov. 3:32).</li> <li>– <b>Giving First</b> as a lifestyle, going about doing good to others as key relational needs for support, appreciation, and acceptance—are discerned in people’s lives and then being intentional about giving (Matt. 10:8).</li> </ul>
<p>11. <b>Churches</b> model a three generational view of being discipled and discipling others.</p>	⋮	<p>11. Today during our “Take 5” moments, we’ll stand and share:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <b>First</b>, an important peer in your life who is intentionally investing in you as you follow Jesus.</li> <li>– <b>Next</b>, we’ll share about someone in our life who we are intentionally walking with as they better follow Jesus.</li> <li>– <b>Later in the service</b>, in our Experiencing Scripture time, we’ll pray together for 2 Tim. 2:2 to become more and more real in each of our lives. “Lord, bless greatly those who have discipled me, especially _____ and help me in my mentoring of _____.”</li> </ul>

## EXPRESSING Truth

## Age Model: High School/Young Adult Express Truths of the Faith to Others Through Your Identity as a Christ-Follower

Principles	and	Best Practices
<p>12. <b>Churches</b> feature and celebrate the stories of Jesus' followers who impart the gospel as evangelism flows supernaturally from disciples "doing life" with those in the traffic patterns of life; being sensitive to listen to "their" story as it relates to the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Prodigal</li><li>– Pain-filled</li><li>– Preoccupied</li></ul> <p>Discerning the right time to share <i>your</i> story and <i>His</i> story.</p>		<p>12. Today during our "Take 5" moments we'll stand and share either:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– "Someone I'm doing life with as they explore Jesus would be _____."</li></ul> <p>OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– "Someone I could encourage to explore Jesus would be _____."</li></ul> <p>Later in the service, our <b>Experiencing Scripture</b> time we'll pray for God's Spirit to move us with compassion and send us as laborers into the harvest (Luke 10:14).</p>



## EXPRESSING Truth

## Stage Model for Expressing Truths of the Faith to Others Through Your Identity as a Christ-Follower

People of various religions and no religion encounter Jesus followers who love like He loved; accept like He accepted; and forgive like He forgave—they are drawn to begin their own exploration of Jesus and His truth.

Community leaders seek Jesus followers to equip teachers and parents in assisting rebellious teens; assist in compassionate support of refugees and the homeless; and support community transformation through healthy families.

—Middle East

Principles	and	Best Practices
1. <b>Disciples/Mentors</b> take seriously making disciples (Greek: "Mathetes") as "learners" who are faithfully living the truths—are now mentored in sharing their life and love with others.	:	1. (a) I'd like to join you for your office prayer time; I'm excited to celebrate your becoming so courageous about your faith. (b) Maybe you and I can invite your friend to an upcoming ball game—you've lived before him a great example of Jesus.
2. <b>Disciples/Mentors</b> engage caring community to deepen and affirm the disciples' contagious faith. For faith to become truly "incarnational," it's done in community/fellowship.  "Let <b>us</b> run the race set before <b>us</b> ..." (Heb. 12:1). Not <b>YOU</b> run the race, but <b>US</b> !	:	2. Engaged fellowship in community further imparts the truth that this is <b>who we are</b> ...and not simply something we do. It's in community that: – We sense where we fit in our <b>spiritual gifts and talents</b> —because it's part of <b>who</b> we are. – Identity is shaped through honoring others when they are honored and caring for others when they suffer (it's in "family" that identity is shaped). – Community is where the value of including others in the family is modeled and instilled.
3. <b>Disciples/Mentors</b> engage disciples in a life of giving and serving	:	3. (a) I'll pick you up Saturday for our time of serving at the homeless shelter (b) Let's spend some time together planning this coming month's "giving first" to various friends and family and others we are doing life with
4. <b>Ministry</b> defines following Jesus as becoming like Him and as we do, His passion to see others follow Him becomes ours.  Separate discipleship from evangelism and both become empty, lacking life—and programs are developed to keep up with an appearance of reality.  Segregate truths into outlines and courses—and you lose identity.	:	4. "Follow me and I'll make you fishers of men" (Matt. 4:19). (We follow, He makes us, we fish). All three parts become our identity as ministry gives priority, focus, and balance to each. – <b>Follow me</b> —we live and love as He did. – We yield to His Spirit, <b>making</b> us...more and more like Jesus. – Being a <b>fisher</b> of others. Ministry embraces this <b>complete</b> statement of who we are.

## EXPRESSING Truth

## Stage Model for Expressing Truths of the Faith to Others Through Your Identity as a Christ-Follower

Principles	and	Best Practices
5. <b>Ministry</b> expresses an urgency about the <b>lost sheep</b> —the one still needing the shepherd.	:	5. Reflecting on our text this week (Jn. 10:1-16) can't help but focus us on the heart of Jesus for the <b>one</b> —one still needing the shepherd.  As we pause to listen to the shepherd in a few moments, let's claim His promise that His sheep hear His voice and then let's pray (Jn. 10:3): "Holy Spirit, speak to me about the <b>one</b> in my life who needs to come and follow Jesus."
6. <b>Ministry</b> gives priority to the daily walk in the light of His Word, His Son, His people	:	6. (a) Let's celebrate together the Bible verses we've actually experienced this week at work, or home, or other parts of life (b) This week, after a very disappointing experience at work, I sensed a fresh encounter with a welcoming Jesus who wanted to be with me—just like He did Zacchaeus.
7. <b>Churches</b> give emphasis to "Christ in You" as God's hope of glory (Col. 1:27)	:	7. (a) Our Pentecost Sunday celebration will remind us that our only hope of truly living and loving as Jesus is found in the Spirit's presence, prompting, and power. (b) Followers are well grounded through instruction, modeling, and training in the principle of "origin" (Jn. 3:3).
8. <b>Churches</b> engage in a leadership development approach that puts faithful disciples in key roles of church ministry. "Leaders" are NOT those who <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– DO more</li> <li>– GIVE more</li> <li>– HAVE more influence</li> <li>– BUT, who are faithful in <i>being</i> and <i>making</i> disciples</li> </ul>	:	8. (a) During our next church service we'll hear from four leadership elders/deacons as they share testimony along with one of the people they are discipling (b) During August will be our 2 Tim 2:2 emphasis as we hear stories from three generations of disciple-making elders, discipling leaders who are discipling new followers to be contagious disciple makers. It will encourage each of us as we enter the faith

# EXPRESSING Truth

## Stage Model for Expressing Truths of the Faith to Others Through Your Identity as a Christ-Follower

Principles	and	Best Practices
<p>9. <b>Churches</b> champion a “holistic” view of following Jesus as He influences family and friends, faith and work, career and church, compassion and charity.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Over-emphasizing church activities and programs “compartmentalizes” faith—and misrepresents walking as Jesus followers (Col. 2:7, Deut. 6:6).</li> </ul>	<p>9.</p>	<p>(a) Equipping marriages and families for living as Jesus followers <b>at home</b> is a priority; church helps families build adequacy in sharing truth, healing hurts, forgiving one another, and speaking gently (Eph. 4:26, 4:29, James 5:16, Eph. 4:31, Prov. 15:1)</p> <p>(b) Market/workplace/school initiatives build adequacy and strategy to live as Jesus followers where we spend much or most of our time.</p> <p>(c) Living as <b>Good Samaritans</b>, attentive to those in need across the traffic patterns of life, affirms “who I am” as His Spirit prompts me to <b>look for</b>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Aloneness</li> <li>– Needs to be met</li> <li>– Pain to be healed</li> <li>– Truth to be experienced</li> </ul> <p>(See <b>Relational First Aid</b> resource).</p>
<p>10. <b>Pastors/Leaders</b> share story often of the <i>peer</i> input into their own lives that helps provide encouragement and accountability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– None of us has “arrived”</li> <li>– All of us need mature, caring followers speaking into our lives</li> </ul>	<p>10.</p>	<p>(a) In our next service I’ll have the blessing of sharing the message alongside one of my mentors in the faith. He’ll be open with us about some of the struggles your pastor has had in being a Jesus follower—and I’ll be sharing how his faithfulness and wisdom helped me through those struggles.</p> <p>(b) During my Sabbatical time this summer, I not only want to relax, pray, and study, but also spend time with a few of my key mentors who continue to speak into my life.</p>
<p>11. <b>Pastors/Leaders</b> model contagious disciple-making in their own lives and set disciple-making as a cornerstone of church leadership</p>	<p>11.</p>	<p>(a) Pray for our men’s discipleship time this week as each of us is challenged to engage in mentoring a new friend we have been cultivating relationship with</p> <p>(b) In our church services next month we’ll hear story from several of our elders on their daily walk of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Loving God as they listen, yield, and minister His gifts and grace</li> <li>– Loving their “near ones” at home</li> <li>– Loving neighbors in their community</li> <li>– Loving others as they explore the person of Jesus</li> </ul>

## *EXPRESSING Truth*

## Stage Model for Expressing Truths of the Faith to Others Through Your Identity as a Christ-Follower

### Principles

*and*

### Best Practices

12. **Pastors/Leaders** embrace a “gather-scatter” vision as assembling together is for worship and Jesus encounters—empowering us to be sent to engage others in exploring the person of Jesus.

12. Just as Jesus prayed for and gathered His first disciples (Mark 3:13-19)—so also we gather for worship, teaching and small groups in order that we might be “with Him”—for transformation into His likeness, and then He will “send us out” just as He did His first disciples.