

Louie Giglio's "i am not but i know I AM"

Adult Sunday School Study

**Adult Sunday School Study based on Louie Giglio's
"i am not but i know I AM"**

by Joshua M. Speight

WHAT DO I CONTRIBUTE TO THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH?

The mission statement, if you will, of Louie Giglio's book reads, "That's why this book is not about you and making your story better, but about waking up to the infinitely bigger God Story happening all around you, and God's invitation to you to join Him in it. It's about looking up to see that there's a story that has been going on long before you arrived on the planet and one that will go on long after you're gone."

Discover alongside your fellow brothers and sisters the real story of life is God - I AM - the main character and true star of time and eternity.

TOPIC SCHEDULE

Session One

Divine Invitation [Mt. Horeb, Sinai Peninsula]

Session Two

BEcame [Nazareth]

Session Three

BE still [Eden]

Session Four

Embracing Smallness [Wherever You Are]

INTRODUCTION

This study guide for Louie Giglio's book is designed to lead you as the teacher toward deep discussions with your class about how all our stories interact with THE story of God. The hope is that there will be significant give and take among your class about the ideas given by Louie and through this study. More importantly, it is my hope that you will teach through your own giftedness and lead as God has called you. This guide is nothing more than what it states; a guide to lead you down a path for teaching. You as the teacher choose how you will get yourself and the class to the point that God would have you as you study *I Am Not But I Know I Am*. God's blessings to you as you teach.

Here is a basic outline of how the lessons break down:

WHAT YOU WILL NEED

In this box you will find the specific items you will need to prepare or have available before class. Also listed here will be any items that you may need to ask for from class-members.

OBJECTIVES

The lesson's objectives will be clearly defined for you as you begin.

THINK ABOUT IT

This opening session is designed to help the class come together by asking simple questions to get everyone thinking about

that day's topics. A simple question or experience will help guide the class through the experience and help make connections.

TALK ABOUT IT

The session will begin to dig deeper and start to tie connections together.

STUDY IT

In this section, the challenge will begin as scripture will be studied to apply to the connections being made. Draw connections from experiences to scripture and lead in discussion and sharing.

LIVE IT

The study comes full circle at this point, as experience and scripture are brought together, calling each person to apply what is learned to their life.

COMMIT TO IT

Each session will draw the class to commit to what has been learned in order to grow.

**A helpful word about fonts:*

Words in this font are teacher instructions, commentary, or basic help and guidelines.

WORDS IN THIS FONT ARE TO BE READ TO THE CLASS FOR DISCUSSION AND QUESTIONS.

SESSION ONE

Divine Invitation [Mt. Horeb, Sinai Peninsula]

What You Will Need:

- 1) Bible
- 2) Copies of handout
- 3) Everyone's Driver's License
- 4) Louie Giglio's book

Objective:

- *Session 1 follows along in Louie Giglio's book through the chapters, "Start Here," "Look Up," & "Divine Invitation."*
- *Lead class to an understanding of who they are within the story they find their self in today, comparing their story to God's story.*
- *Tell the story of Moses and with the class reflect on how we all receive the divine invitation to join God's story.*
- *Leave the class with the impression that God's story was told, is being told, and will be told; we are simply invited to participate - what will we our response be to God's invitation?*

Think About It:

To begin your time together as you start this session, ask for volunteers to share when they have ever felt important or vital to a task, group or person. Ask them to share what they felt like to be recognized as the main character in their own story or perhaps in someone else's story. *(For example, did anyone in the group grow up as an only child or as the youngest in the family. Those who are married, do you remember your wedding day and how everyone came to see you?)*

After a few moments discussing, ask for a few people to then share when, if ever, they have felt small. When did they realize that the world is bigger than just their own perceptions of it. *(For example, someone may remember a time when they first recall seeing how their actions can affect*

someone else, such as a time when they hit a sibling, or yelled at a parent or friend in anger.)

- What were these experiences like?
- Which experience do you prefer?
- Which experience do we often seek?

After some sharing, read or have someone read the following:

LIFE IS THE TALE OF TWO STORIES - ONE FINITE AND FRAIL, THE OTHER ETERNAL AND ENDURING. THE TINY ONE - THE STORY OF US - IS AS BRIEF AS THE BLINK OF AN EYE. YET SOMEHOW OUR INFATUATION WITH OUR OWN LITTLE STORY - AND OUR DETERMINATION TO MAKE IT AS BIG AS WE POSSIBLY CAN - BLINDS US TO THE MASSIVE GOD STORY THAT SURROUNDS US ON EVERY SIDE.¹

HOW HAS LIFE TURNED OUT FOR YOU? IS LIFE A STORY WHERE ALL ROADS, ALL CHARACTERS, ALL THAT HAPPENS - POINTS TO YOU? IS YOUR LIFE SO FOCUSED ON THE STORY OF YOU THAT YOU LIVE YOUR LIFE COMPLETELY OBLIVIOUS TO THE GRAND STORY OF THE GOD OF THE UNIVERSE THAT IS UNFOLDING ALL AROUND YOU?

WHAT IS THE STORY YOU FIND YOURSELF IN TODAY? MANY OF US CAN PLACE OUR LIVES INTO ABOUT SIX CATEGORIES OF LIVING. THE CHART YOU ARE VIEWING ATTEMPTS TO DIVIDE UP THESE AREAS OF OUR LIVES. FOR EACH OF THE AREAS, CHECK THE BOX THAT SUGGESTS WHO THE MAIN PLAYER IS IN THE STORY OF EACH LIFE AREA. THIS TABLE IS NOT TO BE SHARED WITH THE CLASS, SO BE HONEST WITH YOURSELF. TAKE A MOMENT AND REFLECT UPON HOW YOUR STORY AND GOD'S STORY INTERSECT:

¹ Louie, Giglio, *I Am Not But I Know I Am*, Multnomah Publishers: Sisters, Oregon, 2005, p. 9.

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TEACHERS, MAKE COPIES OF THE TABLE BELOW TO GIVE TO EVERYONE IN THE CLASS

Life Area	Me	God
Career/School		
Family		
Skills/Education/ Experience		
Finances		
Friends/Relationships		
Faith/Ministry		

Talk About It:

After adequate time to complete the table, share with them these thoughts:

YOU MAY OR MAY NOT BE PLEASED WITH YOUR TABLE. YOU MAY LOOK AT YOUR LIFE AND KNOW FOR SURE THAT GOD'S STORY IS MUCH BIGGER THAN YOUR STORY. BUT THEN AGAIN, SOME OF US MAY KNOW GOD YET OUR LIVES TELL A COMPLETELY DIFFERENT STORY ABOUT WHAT WE BELIEVE ABOUT GOD.

THERE ARE TWO STORIES CONSTANTLY BEING TOLD ALL AROUND US; THE STORY OF OURSELVES, AND THE STORY WE FIND OURSELVES IN. THE STRUGGLE FOR THOSE OF US WHO CALL OURSELVES FOLLOWERS OF CHRIST IS TO WAKE UP TO GOD'S INVITATION TO GOD'S STORY HAPPENING ALL AROUND YOU. IT'S ABOUT LOOKING UP TO SEE THAT THERE'S A STORY THAT HAS BEEN GOING ON LONG BEFORE YOU ARRIVED ON THE PLANET AND ONE THAT WILL GO ON LONG AFTER YOU'RE GONE. GOD IS THE CENTRAL CHARACTER OF ALL OUR STORIES.

PERHAPS THIS MAKES YOU FEEL SMALL AND INSIGNIFICANT AND UNIMPORTANT. THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY AND LOUIE GIGLIO'S BOOK IS NOT TO IMPLY THAT YOU OR I DON'T MATTER. IT IS PRECISELY THE POINT THAT WE DO MATTER TO GOD THAT WE ARE FACED WITH THIS FACT OF WHO GOD IS AND WHO WE ARE NOT. YOU ARE A CHILD OF GOD, I AM A CHILD OF GOD, AND THEREFORE YOU AND I ARE ALREADY A PART OF THE GRAND STORY OF GOD. SIMPLY BY BEING CREATED, GOD MADE YOU A CENTRAL CHARACTER IN GOD'S STORY. YOU APPEAR ON EVERY PAGE, EXISTING IN GOD'S THOUGHTS LONG BEFORE THIS WORLD WAS MADE. WHAT GOD WOULD REMIND ALL OF US IS THAT THOUGH WE MAY BE A CHARACTER, NONE OF US ARE THE STAR, FOR THE STORY ALREADY HAS A STAR, AND THE STAR IS NOT YOU OR ME.²

² Ibid, p. 13.

- Why does it matter if these two stories are straight?
- How do we make ourselves the star of God's story?
- How have you seen the story of your life succeed or fail? Has the story of your life turned out better or worse than you expected?
- Read the following from Proverbs 16:3,9 - *"Put God in charge of our work, then what you've planned will take place. We plan the way we want to live, but only God makes us able to live it."* (The Message) - How have you seen God's story bless your own story?

Study It:

I grew up in Texas and if Texas has anything, it has history. One of the intriguing facts about Texas is that almost everywhere you look, along highways and roadsides, beside churches and all sorts of random buildings, there are plaques designating a specific place or building as an historical landmark. All over the massive state, someone or some group has taken the time to remember and to name people and places from the past who are considered to be important. This has always humored me. I understand the need to remember our past for without such memory we would probably repeat it otherwise. But Texas almost has an unhealthy need to celebrate every part of its past, not just the significant parts, but the trivial and the mundane everyday parts of life from years ago. Remembering the Alamo I understand, but celebrating the place where Davy Crockett may have stopped to asked for directions while traveling on the way to the Alamo does not need a plaque, in my opinion.

But we all have this desire to leave a name for ourselves or someone else. We believe our name becomes significant as we mature, and we convince ourselves that the story we are apart of cannot be told unless we are named, unless we are remembered. The funny thing is, somewhere along the way, you would think you and I would know where our story relates to God's story. You would think that we would realize the majesty of God and smallness of our self when standing next to God.

Simply walking along the beautiful shoreline at Nags Head or seeing the majesty of the trees and forest creatures in the Appalachian Mountains should somehow help us to recognize God's story as THE story we are apart of everyday. Our name, our story is but a footnote to God's overarching narrative.

Yet our history is full of men and women and their insatiable desire to make their names long outlive their physical lives. A trip to your local cemetery will demonstrate this fact for many of us. Pay attention to the number of stones with long forgotten people whose names are etched in marble, rising far above the ground, monuments to who they once were; a forgotten symbol to their story. We are a people who strive to have our stories, our names, our fortunes, our fame, our kingdom be as large and unending as possible.

Unfortunately, for most of us, we don't realize that living our story in this manner is nothing more than an adventure in missing the point; the point of the story that envelopes each and every one of us.

How truly dumbfound most of us will be when we truly understand how small our lives are in comparison to the story of God. How different our lives would be lived if we truly understood the gifts God grants to us, gifts of life and breath and everything in between so that we would have something to contribute to the massive God-mission that has no end.³ How much some of our stories would change if we understood our divine invitation to be an important part of God's ongoing story.

We do know the story of one who lived his own story before being issued a divine invitation to join God's story. Moses, you remember, was given up at birth for adoption by his mother so that he may live. Adopted by the Egyptian Princess, he was raised as a Prince of Egypt, inheriting a life of luxury and royalty. His story was a dynamic story, until he learned his story conflicted with the stories of so many enslaved Israelites all around him in Egypt. After the slaying of one of Pharaoh's men, Moses flees Egypt, hoping to live a new story, hoping to escape the life he once know. Let's look at Moses story:

³ Ibid, p. 25.

READ EXODUS 3:1-15. DISCUSS:

- **ARE YOU SURPRISED THAT GOD SEEKS SOMEONE LIKE MOSES, AN ORDINARY PERSON, TO PLAY A SIGNIFICANT ROLE IN GOD'S UNFOLDING STORY?**
- **WHAT DO YOU NOTICE ABOUT GOD'S STORY IN THIS PASSAGE? (KEY - GOD'S MIND WAS SET, THE PLAN WOULD PROCEED WITH OR WITHOUT MOSES)**
- **"YOU GO!" STRUCK FEAR INTO THE HEART OF MOSES. HOW DO YOU REACT WHEN YOU SENSE YOUR STORY AND GOD'S STORY INTERSECTING?**
- **MOSES SEARCHED FOR MANY EXCUSES, EVEN ASKING GOD TO REVEAL A NAME TO HIM BEFORE HE COULD BE ASSURED HE COULD GO. WHAT EXCUSES PREVENT OUR STORY FROM BEARING ITS PROPER PERSPECTIVE NEXT TO GOD'S STORY?**

GOD REVEALS TO MOSES THAT THE NAME HE IS TO SHARE WITH PHARAOH IS "I AM." " I AM WHO I AM. TELL THEM, I AM SENT ME TO YOU."

MOSES, ALONG WITH YOU AND I, AS WELL AS ALL HISTORIANS AND THEOLOGIANS, HAVE BEEN CONFOUNDED BY GOD'S ANSWER TO MOSES' QUESTION. HISTORICALLY WE KNOW THAT THE ANCIENT WORLD DID NOT GIVE THEIR NAMES FREELY AS WE DO, FOR TO TELL YOUR NAME WAS TO TELL OF YOUR CHARACTER, A SELF-DISCLOSURE OF THE PERSON. BY TELLING GOD'S NAME, GOD IS BEING EXTREMELY INTIMATE WITH HIS OWN CREATION IN THIS MOMENT WITH MOSES.

GOD'S NAME IS SHROUDED IN MYSTERY BECAUSE GOD IS MYSTERY, THE QUESTION CONFIRMS FOR MOSES, AND FOR US THAT INDEED ONLY GOD IS; ALL OTHERS HAVE BEEN AND SHALL BE.

GOD'S NAME IS BE. I AM = I BE

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I AM DECLARES THAT GOD IS UNCHANGING, CONSTANT, UNENDING, ALWAYS PRESENT, ALWAYS GOD; GOD IS AT THE CENTER OF GOD'S STORY. MOSES' STORY, NOR ANY ONE OF OUR STORIES CAN BE NOR WILL BE AT THE CENTER.

**GOD WAS TELLING MOSES:
I AM THE CENTER OF EVERYTHING.
I AM RUNNING THE SHOW.
I AM THE SAME EVERY DAY, FOREVER.
I AM THE OWNER OF EVERYTHING.
I AM THE LORD.
I AM THE CREATOR AND SUSTAINER OF LIFE.
I AM THE SAVIOR.
I AM MORE THAN ENOUGH.
I AM INEXHAUSTIBLE AND IMMEASURABLE.
I AM GOD.**

THE MOMENT GOD REVEALED GOD'S NAME, MOSES UNDERSTOOD HIS OWN NAME. FOR IF GOD'S NAME IS I AM, MOSES' NAME MUST BE I AM NOT.

**I AM NOT THE CENTER OF EVERYTHING.
I AM NOT IN CONTROL.
I AM NOT THE SOLUTION.
I AM NOT ALL-POWERFUL.
I AM NOT CALLING THE SHOTS.
I AM NOT THE OWNER OF ANYTHING.
I AM NOT THE LORD.**

TRY ON THIS NEW NAME, SAY TO YOURSELF, "I AM NOT." WE ALL HAVE GIVEN NAMES, BUT THE NAME GOD WOULD REMIND US OF IS THAT WE ARE ALL "I AM NOT." AND GOD'S NAME IS STILL I AM - "THIS IS MY NAME FOREVER, THE NAME BY WHICH I AM TO BE REMEMBERED FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION." (EXODUS 3:15)

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Live It:

Ask them to get into groups of three or four people. After they have formed, ask them to find their driver's license. (If they do not have a license, then a credit card or another photo ID will work; anything with an expiration date for this part)

Ask them to look at their card. Look at the date it was issued.

**ASK, "HOW HAS THEIR STORY CHANGED SINCE THAT DATE?"
SHARE WITH THEIR GROUP.**

AFTER ABOUT 60 SECONDS ASK, "LOOK AT YOUR EXPIRATION DATE ON YOUR LICENSE. HOW DO YOU HOPE YOUR STORY EVOLVES WITH GOD'S STORY BEFORE THAT DATE?" SHARE WITH THEIR GROUP.

AFTER ABOUT 60 SECONDS ASK, "LOOK AT YOUR PICTURE ON YOUR LICENSE. HOW CAN YOU BEST GIVE GOD TODAY THE LIFE AREAS THAT YOU KNOW THE PERSON IN THAT PICTURE IS HOLDING ONTO? HOW CAN YOU BEST SERVE GOD TODAY BY BEING IN GOD'S STORY?"

After time to share, ask each group to place their license face down in the middle of their group. Mix them and then each person draws a license. Ask each person to pray for the person they have drawn (can be done in their group either through spoken prayer or silently)

Commit To It:

Share this passage from Kathleen Norris' book *Amazing Grace*:

When I dared to speak, I said that my favorite passage in the chapter had always been Mark 4:27, because it speaks so eloquently of an ordinary miracle: that the farmer "should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how." That seems to apply to so much that I do, I said, commitments that I make when I have no idea what I'm getting into, and somehow they grow into something important, before I know it. My marriage, for instance, I said, and the women laughed, knowingly. It also reminded me, I told them, how mysterious are so many of the things that we take for granted. We know how to plow a field, and how to seed it. But germination and growth are hidden from us, beyond our control. All we can do is wait, and hope, and see. "Only last Saturday," a woman interrupted, "at the Lutheran fall bazaar. The place mat was real

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different. I saved mine." She drew it from her purse and unfolded it. There was a picture of a wheat field and a quote from Martin Luther: " I f y o u could understand a single grain of wheat you would die of wonder."⁴

GOD'S STORY IS BIGGER THAN OUR STORY. IT IS FULL OF WONDER, FULL OF MYSTERY, FULL OF GRACE. AS YOUR STORY INTERSECTS WITH GOD'S STORY THIS WEEK, CAN YOU ASK OF YOURSELF TO SEEK WAYS TO BE LESS THE STAR OF THE STORY AND MORE THE ONE WHO IS ASKED TO PLAY A ROLE IN THE STORY?

GOD IS BIG. WE ARE NOT. HE IS CALLING THE SHOTS, DIRECTING THE SCRIPT, AND DETERMINING THE PLOT. WE ARE NOT. AND, WHAT'S REALLY WILD IS THAT WHILE HE DOESN'T NEED ANY OF US, HE IS CHOOSING TO INCLUDE US, INVITING US INTO THE STORY THAT NEVER ENDS.

TRY TO FATHOM IT - LITTLE YOU AND ME INVITED INTO THE MASSIVE AND MYSTERIOUS STORY OF THE GREAT I AM.⁵

ARE YOU UP FOR IT?

⁴ Kathleen Norris, *Amazing Grace*, Riverhead Books, New York:1998, pp. 244-45.

⁵ Louie Giglio, *I Am Not But I Know I Am*, Multnomah Publishers: Sisters, Oregon, 2005, p. 41.

SESSION TWO
BEcame [Nazareth]

What You Will Need:

- 1) Bible
- 2) Louie Giglio's book
- 3) 2 mirrors and a flashlight
(supplied)

Objective:

- *Session 2 follows along in Louie Giglio's book through the chapters, "Light Flies," "Became," & "Big River."*
- *Guide your class to understand more about God's story and their story by examining the story of Jesus through John 1:1-14*
- *Consider how we can become a better reflector of God's light, sharing the story of God to others, and sharing less of ourselves*
- *Leave the class with the impression of our God who loves us so much God became exactly like us, taking on human form so that God's story and each of our stories would truly connect. Does this challenge us to see the smallness of our lives compared to God?*

Think About It:

As you begin this session, consider asking the group questions about their family. These questions are not intended to develop into deep conversations about each person's particular experience with their family, instead it is designed to demonstrate how much or how little each of us know about our family the more generations we are removed from one another.

- Ask, "Does anyone know the names of their grandparents?" A high percentage should be able to give a response. Allow a few moments for responses.

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- Ask, "Does anyone know the names of their great-grandparents?" Less should be able to respond. Allow for responses.
- Ask, "Does anyone know the names of their great-great-grandparents?" Probably very few if any will respond. Allow for responses. Summarize your discussion using the following points:

For most people, we know the history of our immediate family very well, yet when asked to talk of the parents of the parents of the parents of our parents...well, that is a tremendous amount of history to recall.

Whether or not these people ever really existed crosses our minds; the fact that we exist at all will always be the main part of the story for each of us. It can be hard for us to see the larger story of our families that we have been born into.

Talk About It:

HOW WE VIEW OUR LIFE IS KINDA OF LIKE HOW WE LOOK AT LIGHT. WE SEE ALL THE LIGHT THAT IS AROUND US EVERYDAY, BUT NONE OF US QUESTION WHERE IT COMES FROM OR HOW IT GOT HERE TYPICALLY; WE ONLY CARE THAT WE CAN SEE IT. GO BACK IN YOUR MINDS TO STUDYING SCIENCE IN SCHOOL, OR RECALL THOSE DAYS WHEN YOU HELP YOUR KIDS OR GRANDKIDS WITH THEIR HOMEWORK AND RECALL WITH ME THAT ALL THE LIGHT THAT WE SEE TRAVELS AT AN UNBELIEVABLY FAST RATE OF SPEED. 186,000 MILES PER SECOND ACTUALLY. WHEN WE LOOK UP AT THE SKY AT THE STARS IN OUR UNIVERSE, WE HAVE LEARNED THAT THE LIGHT WE ARE OBSERVING FROM THESE STARS IS ACTUALLY LIGHT WHICH THEY HAVE RADIATED FROM THEIR PRESENT STATE YEARS AND YEARS BEFORE. KNOWING HOW FAST LIGHT TRAVELS INDICATES JUST HOW LARGE THE UNIVERSE IS, AS IT TAKES YEARS EVEN LIGHT TRAVELING AT 186,000 MILES PER SECOND FROM A STAR ON ONE SIDE OF THE UNIVERSE TO REACH THE CORNEA OF OUR EYES IN OCTOBER OF 2007.

THE UNIVERSE GOD CREATED IS BIG. THE UNIVERSE IS GOD'S AMAZING ACHIEVEMENT WHICH WE SEE, TASTE, HEAR, SMELL, AND TOUCH EVERYDAY OF OUR LIVES. LOUIE GIGLIO WRITES ABOUT LIGHT AND GOD'S UNIVERSE IN HIS BOOK:

WE HAVE NO IDEA JUST HOW BIG THE UNIVERSE IS, BUT IT'S SO BIG WE HAVE TO USE A RULER THAT'S 5.88 TRILLION MILES LONG TO MEASURE STUFF. THE RULER IS CALLED LIGHT YEAR.

THE FARTHEST THING WE HAVE MEASURED SO FAR WITH THE HELP OF A MIGHTY TELESCOPE (ACTUALLY TWO TELESCOPES, ONE IN HAWAII AND ONE IN SPACE, COMBINING TOGETHER AND AIDED BY THE NATURAL MAGNIFICATION PROVIDED BY A MASSIVE CLUSTER OF GALAXIES) IS 13 BILLION LIGHT YEARS AWAY.

SOMEWHERE IN THE MIDST OF IT ALL IS A SPIRAL GALAXY CALLED THE MILKY WAY, WHICH IS MADE UP OF HUNDREDS OF BILLIONS OF STARS. ONE OF THOSE STARS IS OUR SUN, ROTATING AROUND THE CENTER OF THE MILKY WAY EVERY 250 MILLION YEARS.

ONE OF THE PLANETS CIRCLING OUR SUN IS PLANET EARTH.

AND TWO OF THE MORE THAN SIX BILLION PEOPLE ON THIS PLANET ARE YOU AND ME.

SPEAKING OF YOU AND ME, HERE WE SIT, READING THESE TINY PRINTED CHARACTERS ON THIS PAGE. ALONG WITH YOU AND ME, THERE ARE OVER 6 BILLION OTHER HUMANS DOTTING THIS MINUTE BALL WE CALL EARTH (OUR PLANET IS A MERE 8,000 MILES IN DIAMETER), WHICH IS ORBITING AN AVERAGE STAR IN A TINY SOLAR SYSTEM THAT'S HOVERING ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF THE MILKY WAY, ONE OF BILLIONS OF GALAXIES IN THE KNOWN UNIVERSE, THE SIZE OF WHICH EXPONENTIALLY EXPANDS OUR LATEST MEASUREMENTS EVERY TIME WE MANAGE TO BUILD A MORE POWERFUL TELESCOPE.

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A SHRINKING FEELING IS COMING OVER ME...AND I'M STARTING TO CLUE IN ON THE FACT THAT I HAVE NO IDEA HOW SMALL I REALLY AM. OR HOW BIG GOD TRULY IS.⁶

- **ASK, "IF YOU HAD TO DESCRIBE THE UNIVERSE IN THREE WORDS OR LESS, WHAT WOULD THEY BE?" (ALLOW AS MANY WHO WANT TO ANSWER TO DO SO)**
- **ASK, "IF YOU HAD TO DESCRIBE YOUR FAMILY IN THREE WORDS OF LESS, WHAT WOULD THEY BE?" (ALLOW AS MANY TO ANSWER WHO WANT TO DO SO)**
- **ASK, "IF YOU HAD TO DESCRIBE YOURSELF IN THREE WORDS OR LESS, WHAT WOULD THEY BE?" (ALLOW AS MANY TO ANSWER WHO WANT TO DO SO)**
- **ASK, "IF YOU HAD TO DESCRIBE GOD IN THREE WORDS OR LESS, WHAT WOULD THEY BE?" (ALLOW AS MANY WHO WANT TO ANSWER TO DO SO)**

SOMETIMES WE ALL STRUGGLE TO FIND WORDS FITTING TO DESCRIBE OURSELVES, YET WE ALL TEND TO LIVE IN A WAY WHICH WOULD LEAD OTHERS TO BELIEVE WE ARE CENTRAL TO THE STORY WE FIND OURSELVES IN. I WONDER IF GOD WERE TO BE ASKED SOME OF THESE SAME QUESTIONS, SUCH AS THE QUESTION TO DESCRIBE GOD'S SELF IN THREE WORDS OR LESS, PERHAPS GOD WOULD JUST POINT TO THE UNIVERSE AND SAY, "LOOK THERE. THAT IS ONE OF THE FINER EXPRESSIONS OF WHO I AM."

Study It:

As magnificent as the universe is, it is not God's only expression of God's character among all our stories. For within this universe exists the creation of both you and me, along with every other human who has ever been graced with life. We discussed this point in last week's session, that although we are small compared to

⁶ Ibid., pp. 46-47.

God, we are still children of God and as such we are valued and loved by God just as many of us prize our own children or know the love we receive from our own parents.

The reality for us is that our understanding of how big God is becomes skewed by our inability to comprehend God's consuming love for each and every one of us. Perhaps each of us needs to refresh ourselves with one man's version of just how dynamic God's love is for you and for me.

READ JOHN 1:1-14

JOHN REMINDS US IN WONDERFUL PROSE THAT GOD'S STORY BEGAN WITH GOD. "IN THE BEGINNING WAS THE WORD, AND THE WORD WAS WITH GOD, AND THE WORD WAS GOD" IS HOW THE OPENING VERSE OF JOHN'S GOSPEL READS. AT NO POINT DID GOD'S STORY BEGIN WITH YOU OR ME.

JOHN 1 IS A SPECTACULAR SUMMARY OF THE LIFE OF JESUS, IF SUCH A LIFE CAN BE SUMMED UP IN ONLY 14 SHORT VERSES OF SCRIPTURE. JOHN TELLS US THAT JESUS WAS WITH GOD FROM THE BEGINNING, THAT JESUS IS GOD, THAT JESUS IS THE ONE SENT FROM GOD TO SHINE LIGHT INTO THE DARKNESS. "IN HIM WAS LIFE, AND THAT LIFE WAS THE LIGHT OF MEN. THE LIGHT SHINES IN THE DARKNESS, BUT THE DARKNESS HAS NOT UNDERSTOOD IT."

JOHN KNEW LIGHT WHEN HE SAW IT TOO, JUST LIKE WE DO TODAY. NOW, ODDS ARE THAT JOHN DID NOT UNDERSTAND HOW FAST LIGHT MOVES OR THAT THE UNIVERSE CAN BE MEASURED IN LIGHT YEARS, BUT JOHN DID COMPREHEND THAT JESUS CAME TO LIGHT UP THE WORLD, TO REMOVE THE OVERWHELMING DARKNESS THAT EXISTED.

THE UNIVERSE IS A GRAND EXPRESSION OF WHO GOD IS, ANY OF US CAN LOOK UP TO THE STARS OR THE EARTH ALL AROUND US AND HOPEFULLY SEE THE WORK OF GOD. BUT JOHN TOOK A

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COMPLETELY DIFFERENT PATH WHEN HE WROTE HIS INTRODUCTION TO HIS GOSPEL. JOHN SAW GOD EXPRESS LOVE IN THE PERSON OF JESUS. JOHN SAW I AM.

YOU WILL RECALL FROM THE SESSION LAST SUNDAY THAT WE DISCUSSED GOD'S NAME - I AM:

**I AM = I BE
GOD'S NAME IS BE**

WITH THIS NAME OF GOD IN MIND, HEAR VERSE 14, LISTENING FOR GOD'S NAME.

“THE WORD BECAME FLESH AND MADE HIS DWELLING AMONG US. WE HAVE SEEN HIS GLORY, THE GLORY OF THE ONE AND ONLY, WHO CAME FROM THE FATHER, FULL OF GRACE AND TRUTH.”

DID YOU HEAR GOD'S NAME? BE-CAME! THE WORD, JESUS, GOD, BE-CAME FLESH AND DWELT AMONG US. GOD EXPRESSED GOD'S SELF, GOD DEMONSTRATED GOD'S LOVE FOR YOU AND FOR ME BY BECOMING EXACTLY LIKE YOU AND ME. IT IS INCREDIBLE TO UNDERSTAND, BUT TRY TO GO WITH ME FOR A MOMENT TO SEE PERHAPS AS YOU HAVE NOT THOUGHT ABOUT IT BEFORE:

LAST SESSION OUR FOCUS WAS ON MOSES AND IN HIS STORY HE ENCOUNTERED THE BURNING BUSH. AT THAT MOMENT WHEN GOD SPOKE TO MOSES WE LEARN THAT THE GROUND MOSES IS STANDING IS HOLY GROUND. ANYTIME WE ENCOUNTER GOD SUCH AS MOSES DID, THE GROUND, THE AIR, THE MOMENT; EVERYTHING BECOMES HOLY IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD. GOD ASKED MOSES TO TAKE OFF HIS SHOES BECAUSE THE GROUND WAS NOW HOLY, BECAUSE I AM, THAT IS BE, CAME TO MOSES.

WHEN JESUS CAME TO EARTH, IT WAS NO LONGER MOSES WHOM GOD WAS CHOOSING AS AN AUDIENCE. GOD CHOSE THE ENTIRE WORLD, GOD CHOSE YOU, ME, OUR GRANDPARENTS, OUR GREAT-GRANDPARENTS, AND ALL THE OTHER FOLKS THROUGHOUT ALL TIME TO PARTICIPATE WITHIN HIS HOLY STORY. AND THE MOMENT JESUS ARRIVED UPON THE EARTH AS A SMALL, SEEMINGLY INSIGNIFICANT CHILD BORN IN THE MANAGER IN A SMALL TOWN, THE ENTIRE PLANET EARTH BECAME HOLY GROUND. HOLY BECAUSE NOT ONLY DID GOD CREATE THE GROUND, BUT GOD THROUGH CHRIST JESUS WOULD WALK ON IT AND SLEEP ON IT, GOD WOULD EAT ON IT AND WORK ON IT, AND GOD WOULD DIE ON IT.

THAT IS HOW BIG THE STORY OF GOD IS! GOD CAME TO BE WITH YOU WHERE YOU EXIST! "GOD WRAPPED HIMSELF IN HUMAN FLESH AND MOVED INTO THE NEIGHBORHOOD."⁷ THAT IS WHY THIS STORY IS NEVER ABOUT YOU, BUT ABOUT GOD'S UNIMAGINABLE ABILITY TO REACH DOWN TO CREATION WITH AN ALL-CONSUMING LOVE.

"JESUS BECAME - BE CAME - SMALL SO THAT WE COULD REACH OUR HIGHEST AND FULLEST POTENTIAL IN HIM. HE CAME DOWN TO LIFT US UP OUT OF MICROSCOPIC STORIES THAT ONLY GET SWALLOWED UP IN THE GRAVE AND PLACE US IN THE RIVER OF HIS LOVE THAT LEADS US HOME. HE GAVE HIMSELF FOR US SO THAT WE COULD DIE TO SELF-FAME, SELF-GLORY, SELF-EFFORT, SELF-CENTEREDNESS, AND THE SELF-STORIES THAT ARE QUICKLY COMING TO AN END."⁸

Live It:

For this part of the session you will need the two mirrors and flashlight (supplied) to use as you talk for this demonstration.

⁷ Ibid, p. 67.

⁸ Ibid, p. 79.

HAVE YOU EVER USED A MIRROR ON A BRIGHT SUNNY DAY TO REFLECT THE LIGHT OF THE SUN? WE ARE NOT GOING TO GO OUTSIDE, BUT WE CAN REFLECT LIGHT USING THIS MIRROR AND FLASHLIGHT. (GIVE SOMEONE A MIRROR) I CAN SHINE MY LIGHT AT YOUR MIRROR AND YOU CAN REFLECT THAT LIGHT BACK TO ME. AND IF I HOLD UP MY MIRROR, THEN I CAN REFLECT THE LIGHT BACK TO YOU OR TO ANYONE ELSE IN THIS ROOM. BUT THE KEY IS THAT I HAVE TO HOLD UP MY MIRROR AND ALSO NOT ALLOW ANYTHING TO COME BETWEEN MY MIRROR AND THE LIGHT.

WE READ ABOUT A MIRROR TODAY IN JOHN'S GOSPEL WHEN HE WROTE, "THERE CAME A MAN WHO WAS SENT FROM GOD; HIS NAME WAS JOHN. HE CAME AS A WITNESS TO TESTIFY CONCERNING THAT LIGHT, SO THAT THROUGH HIM ALL MEN MIGHT BELIEVE. HE HIMSELF WAS NOT THE LIGHT; HE CAME ONLY AS A WITNESS TO THE LIGHT. THE TRUE LIGHT THAT GIVES LIGHT TO EVERY MAN WAS COMING INTO THE WORLD."

OUR STORIES REFLECT THE LIGHT OF CHRIST. WE, JUST AS JOHN, ARE NOT THE LIGHT, BUT WE ARE CALLED TO REFLECT THE LIGHT JUST AS THE MIRRORS REFLECT THE LIGHT OF THE FLASHLIGHT.

LISTEN TO PAUL INSTRUCT US ON HOW WE OUGHT TO LIVE AS HE WRITES TO THE CHURCH AT PHILLIPI.

READ PHILIPPIANS 2:5-11

- **HOW CAN YOUR ATTITUDE BE LIKE THAT OF CHRIST'?**
- **HOW CAN YOUR STORY REFLECT THE LIGHT OF CHRIST?**
- **HOW CAN YOU PREVENT THINGS FROM GETTING IN THE WAY OF YOUR REFLECTION OF CHRIST' LIGHT?**

ASK EACH PERSON TO SPEND A FEW MOMENTS (~30 SECONDS) THINKING ABOUT ANSWERS TO THESE QUESTIONS TO THEMSELVES AND THEN REFLECT BEFORE GOD IN PRAYER.

Commit To It:

Share this passage from Kathleen Norris' book *Amazing Grace*:

For me, the Incarnation is the place, if you will, where hope contends with fear. Not an antique doctrine at all, but reality - as ordinary as my everyday struggles with fears great and small, as exalted as the hope that allows me some measure of peace when I soldier on in the daily round.

I also tend to think of the Incarnation in terms of language, as a wonderful tension between the Word of God and human words, which is evident in the language describing the Annunciation. When the angel Gabriel first addresses Mary, it is in exalted, even imperial language: "Hail, thou are highly favoured, the Lord is with thee."

Gabriel addresses his majestic words in an unlikely setting to an unlikely person, someone poor and powerless, extremely vulnerable in her place and time, a young peasant woman about to find herself pregnant before her wedding. But if the angel's words express the hopes of generations of Israel, Mary's response is silence. The angel spells out the wonders that are about to ensue, again in exalted terms: Mary's son will be a king whose kingdom has no end. "How can this be?" Mary exclaims, finally, and the angel says, "The power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child will be called Son of God." (author's emphasis.) Mary says very little, and she says it simply: "Here am I," and "let it be."

The angel's "therefore" seems alarmingly significant, the seed of what Christian theologians have for well over a thousand years termed the scandal of the Incarnation. It also resonates with my own life. When a place or time seems touched by God, it is an overshadowing, a sudden eclipsing of my priorities and plans. But even in terrible circumstances and calamities, in matters of life and death, if I sense that I am in the shadow of God, I find light, so much light that my vision improves dramatically. I know that holiness is near.

And it is not robed in majesty. It does not assert itself with the raw power of empire (not even the little empire of the self in which I all too often reside), but it waits in puzzlement, it hesitates. Coming from Galilee, as it were, from a place of little hope, it reveals the ordinary circumstances of my life to be full of mystery, and gospel, which means "good news."⁹

⁹ Kathleen Norris, *Amazing Grace*, Riverhead Books, New York: 1998. pp. 30-31.

Louie Giglio's "i am not but i know I AM"

Adult Sunday School Study

THE GOOD NEWS IS THAT BE-CAME. THE LIGHT OF CHRIST IS SHINING UPON OUR STORIES HOPING TO BE REFLECTED AND SHARED TO OTHERS WHO NEED TO KNOW THE GOOD NEWS. IS YOUR STORY STANDING IN THE WAY OF YOUR REFLECTING OF GOD'S NEWS THAT I AM CAME? ARE YOU READY TO REFLECT TO LIGHT THAT SHINES ON YOUR STORY INSTEAD OF TRYING TO TAKE OVER THE LIGHT? ARE YOU READY TO CHALLENGE YOURSELF THIS WEEK TO COMMIT TO LIVING AS THOUGH YOUR STORY IS SMALL AND GOD'S STORY IS BIG? THE DIVINE INVITATION IS OFFERED. THE TASK IS YOURS TO ACCEPT.

Session Three

BE still [Eden]

What You Will Need:

1. Bible

2. Louie Giglio's Book

Objective:

- Session 3 follows these chapters in Louie Giglio's book: "The Little Leader," "Be Still," "Furious Rest."
- Lead the class in a discussion of Sabbath-keeping by continuing session two's look at John the Baptizer and the story of Adam and Eve in Genesis 1 - 2:2.
- Connect Sabbath to the understanding that it helps us remember who God is and who we are not.
- Challenge one another to find a way this week to keep the Sabbath.

Think About It:

We ended session two challenging ourself to accept the divine invitation to be part of God's story. We do this by understanding who we are not and who God is. To begin your time with the class, spend a few moments asking them about their week, asking them about the challenges they faced as their story (*i am not*) intersected with the bigger story they are constantly surrounded by (*I AM*). Remind them of the message they heard during worship this past Sunday morning; that no matter where they find themselves (at work, at home, at play), wherever you and I, wherever all of us are simply being is where we are called to minister. Here are some questions to stimulate some opening conversation borrowed and inspired from the Miracles Sunday School Class discussions from session 2:

- 1. How are you becoming the change you understand God to be calling you to be within God's story?**
- 2. How, if at all, has your attitude been like that of Christ's attitude(Philippians 2:5-11) so far this week? If not, why?**
- 3. Does your life reflect the light of Christ or does it block the light from being seen by others?**
- 4. How is your ministry going?**

Talk About It:

LAST WEEK, OUR DISCUSSION ENDED BY REMEMBERING JOHN THE BAPTIZER, WHO POINTED TO JESUS CHRIST. WE OFTEN PLACE JOHN ON A PEDESTAL, AS WE DO WITH SO MANY BIBLICAL PERSONALITIES, BUT I WONDER IF WE FORGET THAT JOHN WAS JUST ANOTHER PERSON TRYING TO LIVE LIFE LIKE YOU AND ME THE BEST WAY HE KNEW HOW.

ONE THING I OFTEN NOTICE THAT SEEMS TO SKATE BY EACH OF US IS JUST HOW POPULAR JOHN WAS BEFORE HE AND JESUS HAD THEIR ENCOUNTER IN THE RIVER. JOHN WAS DOING WHAT HE BELIEVED GOD WANTED AND HE WAS QUITE GOOD AT GETTING PEOPLE'S ATTENTION. HE WAS A LONER, HE DRESSED AND ATE DIFFERENTLY THAN MOST, AND SPOKE ABOUT PEOPLE'S NEED TO STOP LIVING FOR THEIR STORY AND LIVE FOR A GREATER STORY.

HAVE YOU EVER IMAGINED FOR A MOMENT WHAT IT MUST HAVE BEEN LIKE TO BE JOHN. I AM SURE SOME HOW YOU HAVE IMAGINED AT LEAST WHAT IT IS LIKE TO BE DIFFERENT, TO BE THE ONE EVERYONE ELSE LOOKS TO IN THE ROOM. EACH OF US, EITHER AS A CHILD OR TODAY AS AN ADULT, WE OFTEN DREAM OF BEING "THAT GUY" OR "THAT GIRL" WHOM EVERYONE LISTENS TO AND FOLLOWS. WE HOPE THAT WE ARE ON TOP, WE ARE THE ONE CALLING THE SHOTS, WE ARE THE ONE WHO IS THE EXPERT IN OUR FIELD, WE ARE THE #1 WHEREVER WE FIND OURSELVES.

IN SHORT MANY OF US, IF WE ARE HONEST, DREAM OF BEING #1, WHETHER IT IS AT WORK OR AT CHURCH OR JUST NUMBER ONE AMONG FRIENDS AND FAMILY. WE HOPE WE ARE THE PERSON WHO HAS ALL THE ANSWERS, THE PERSON WHOM EVERYONE ELSE LOOKS TO NO MATTER THE SITUATION, THE PERSON WHO HAS THE MANTRA "THE BUCK STOPS HERE" SITTING ON THEIR DESK.

Louie Giglio's "i am not but i know I AM"

Adult Sunday School Study

JOHN THE BAPTIZER IN MANY WAYS WAS THIS GUY. PEOPLE FOLLOWED HIM, LISTENED TO HIM AND BELIEVED WHAT HE SAID ABOUT LIFE. HE WAS THE #1 GUY, HE WAS TOP IN HIS FIELD, HE WAS WHERE SO MANY OF US DREAM OF BEING.

YET, AS LOUIE GIGLIO POINTS OUT, HE REALIZED HIS STORY WAS NEVER ABOUT HIM. HIS STORY WAS ABOUT ACHIEVING GREATNESS, ACHIEVING RESPECT AMONG HIS PEERS, ACHIEVING THE #1 STATUS SO MANY WANTED TO GIVE HIM. HIS STORY WAS ABOUT GOD, SPECIFICALLY JESUS. WHEN JOHN IS ASKED ABOUT HIS MINISTRY, HIS ANSWER TELL US THAT HE UNDERSTANDS WHO HE IS NOT, AND WHO GOD IS:

"BUT JOHN KNEW EXACTLY WHAT (ACTUALLY WHO) THEY WERE LOOKING FOR. AND HE KNEW WHAT HE HAD COME TO DO. SO WHEN ASKED ABOUT HIS IDENTITY, WHEN GIVEN THE CHANCE TO TAKE CENTER STAGE, JOHN 'DID NOT FAIL TO CONFESS, BUT CONFESSED FREELY, 'I AM NOT THE CHRIST.'"

LATER ON, JOHN IS ASKED, "WHY THEN DO YOU BAPTIZE IF YOU ARE NOT THE CHRIST, NOR ELIJAH, NOR THE PROPHET?"

"I BAPTIZE WITH WATER," JOHN REPLIED, "BUT AMONG YOU STANDS ONE YOU DO NOT KNOW. HE IS THE ONE WHO COMES AFTER ME, THE THINGS OF WHOSE SANDALS I AM NOT WORTHY TO UNTIE." ¹⁰

JOHN TELLS THEM, AND US, HIS NAME, I AM NOT. EVEN LATER ON HIS MINISTRY, JOHN TELLS OTHERS WHO WANT TO REFUTE WHAT JESUS IS DOING THAT HE NEVER WANTS TO BE NUMBER ONE:

"A MAN CAN RECEIVE ONLY WHAT IS GIVEN HIM FROM HEAVEN. YOU YOURSELVES CAN TESTIFY THAT I SAID, 'I AM NOT THE CHRIST, BUT AM SENT AHEAD OF HIM.'"

FOR JOHN, GOD'S STORY WAS NEVER ABOUT JOHN, IT WAS ALWAYS ABOUT PREPARING THE WAY FOR JESUS. YOU MAY BE FAMILIAR WITH THE 1970'S BROADWAY MUSICAL AND MOVIE GODSPELL. THE MUSICAL, WHICH ADAPTS THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW TO A MORE CONTEMPORARY SETTING AND AUDIENCE, OPENS WITH THE BEAUTIFUL SONG, "PREPARE YE THE WAY OF THE LORD" SUNG BY THE

¹⁰ Louie Giglio, *I Am Not But I Know I Am*, Multnomah Publishers: Sisters, Oregon, 2005, p. 86.

Louie Giglio's "i am not but i know I AM"

Adult Sunday School Study

CHARACTER PORTRAYING JOHN THE BAPTIST. HE SINGS THIS DELIGHTFUL YET HAUNTING SONG OF WHAT GOD IS ABOUT TO DO AND THE CHARACTER OF JOHN IS ABLE TO PORTRAY THROUGH SONG THAT HE UNDERSTOOD THAT IT WAS NEVER ABOUT JOHN, BUT ALWAYS ABOUT GOD. "PREPARE YE THE WAY OF THE LORD," PERHAPS THAT SHOULD BE THE SONG OF THE STORY OF EACH OF OUR LIVES.

- **IS THERE EVER A TIME IN YOUR LIFE WHERE YOU UNDERSTAND THAT YOUR LIFE IS BIGGER THAN JUST YOU?**
- **HOW WOULD YOU SAY YOUR LIFE IS "PREPARING THE WAY OF THE LORD?"**
- **IF YOUR LIFE IS LIVED JUST FOR YOU, THEN WHAT IS THE POINT OF CHURCH, COMMUNITY, AND GOD?**

Study It:

One of my earliest memories growing up in the church is finally getting to go and stand in the pulpit area in the church in which I professed Christ and was baptized. The small, rural church in Texas is important to my faith development in numerous ways, but one memory that is etched in my mind forever is the ability to be in the pulpit for the very first time. It was not during a service or for any particular reason; it was just while playing around as children often do in church and end up exploring in places they can't during all the "Adult times." What I remember, besides being overwhelmed by the height of the pulpit compared to my small stature as an 8-year-old, were words imprinted on a plaque visible only to whoever stood behind the pulpit. In bold white letters on black plastic were inscribed these words:

HE MUST INCREASE AND I MUST DECREASE

At that age, the words were not too important to my faith and I really am not sure why I remember this so vividly. But the challenge given to whoever stood in that pulpit is not lost on me today. These words, which are the words John the Baptizer spoke in John 3:29-30, are

words about God's story being greater than your story or my story. For the minister who stood in the pulpit in that church, reading those words before speaking reminded them each time that before they ever uttered a word, it would never be about them no matter what they were saying or doing, for it would always be about God.

HE MUST INCREASE AND I MUST DECREASE

Given the conditions prevailing in our culture, we have the best and most effective way ever devised for gathering large and prosperous congregations. Americans lead the world in showing how to do it. There's only one thing wrong: This is not the way that we become less and Jesus becomes more. This is not the way in which our lives become available to others in antithesis of a sacrificial, 'denying yourself' congregation. A consumer church is an anti-Christ church. It's doing the right thing - gathering a congregation - but doing it in the wrong way. This is not the way to develop a contemplative life, a life in which the Jesus way and the Jesus truth are congruent, where 'kingfishers catch fire, dragonflies draw flame.'¹¹

God must become greater and I must become less. Let's move out of the story of John to see how God first demonstrated this part of God's story to each of us.

READ GENESIS 1-2:2 (The first creation account)

THE CREATION STORY IS A BEAUTIFUL STORY ABOUT GOD. AS YOU READ THROUGH THESE FIRST WORDS OF SCRIPTURE, DID YOU PAY ATTENTION TO HOW MANY TIMES THE WORD GOD APPEARED. RIGHT

¹¹ Eugene H. Peterson, quoted in *Christian Century*, 11/29/03

Louie Giglio's "i am not but i know I AM"

Adult Sunday School Study

AWAY, GENESIS SETS THE TONE BY TELLING US THE STORY BEGINS WITH GOD, NOT US, AND THE STORY WILL ALWAYS BE ABOUT GOD, NOT US.

A LOT OF ATTENTION COULD BE FOCUSED ON THIS LENGTHY PASSAGE, BUT FOR THE SAKE OF TODAY'S DISCUSSION, WE ARE REFLECTING ON GOD'S CREATION OF HUMANITY, ADAM AND EVE, AND SPECIFICALLY THE SEVENTH DAY. GIGLIO'S BOOK POINTS OUT THAT ADAM AND EVE ASSUREDLY WERE CONFUSED WHEN THEY WOKE UP TO THEIR FIRST FULL DAY ON PLANET EARTH IN EDEN. BEFORE WE GET TO EDEN, THOUGH, LET'S PUT THIS STORY INTO OUR STORY FOR A MOMENT.

MOST IF NOT ALL OF US HAVE EXPERIENCED A FIRST JOB OR A FIRST DAY AT SCHOOL. GO BACK TO THAT MEMORY FOR YOU. WHEN YOU ARRIVED ON THAT FIRST DAY, I AM SURE THAT YOU CAME WITH ANXIETY, EXCITEMENT, AND FEAR; ALL SORTS OF FEELINGS, BUT MOST OF ALL YOU MIGHT SAY YOU CAME FULL OF ENERGY, READY TO GO AND BEGIN A FULL DAYS WORTH OF NEW ACTIVITIES. PERHAPS FOR YOU "TYPE A" PERSONALITIES, YOU BROUGHT WITH YOU A CHECKLIST OF THINGS YOU WERE GOING TO ACCOMPLISH BEFORE YOUR HISTORIC FIRST DAY ENDED. IMAGINE, IF YOU WILL, THAT ON THIS FIRST DAY YOU ARRIVE AND BEFORE YOU EVEN WALK INTO YOUR OFFICE OR CLASSROOM, YOUR BOSS OR TEACHER STOPS YOU AND SAYS, "SLOW DOWN HOT SHOT, COME INTO MY OFFICE FOR A MOMENT." YOU WALK INTO THE OFFICE AND YOU SEE THAT NO ONE IS DOING ANY WORK, NO COMPUTERS ARE ON, NO PHONE CALLS ARE BEING ANSWERED, NO LIGHTS ARE EVEN ON IN THE OTHER OFFICES. THE PLACE IS UTTERLY AND COMPLETELY STILL, EXCEPT FOR YOU AND THE OTHER IN THE ROOM. YOU SIT DOWN AND YOU HEAR SAID TO YOU:

"WELCOME TO YOUR VERY FIRST DAY! I AM SO EXCITED YOU ARE HERE. YOU ARE THE FINAL PIECE TO THIS PUZZLE I HAVE BEEN WORKING ON AND NOW WE ARE COMPLETE. IN HONOR OF THIS HISTORIC DAY, WE ARE NOT GOING TO DO ANYTHING BUT CELEBRATE WHAT HAS BEEN ACCOMPLISHED. WE ARE GOING TO HONOR WHAT HAS BEEN DONE SO THAT WE CAN KNOW WHERE WE NEED TO GO. THIS IS A LITTLE POLICY I ENACT AND ASK EVERYONE TO FOLLOW SO NONE OF US WILL EVER FORGET THAT THIS PLACE IS BIGGER THAN YOU. I WANT TO MAKE SURE THAT 1/7TH OF YOUR WEEK, JUST A SIMPLE PERCENTAGE OF YOUR TIME HERE IS PROPERLY FOCUSED IS GIVEN TO THIS PLACE FOR REST,

REMEMBRANCE AND CELEBRATION. TODAY IS YOUR FIRST DAY AND TODAY WE DO NOT WORK; WE HONOR!"

OBVIOUSLY, THIS WOULD NEVER HAPPEN TO ANY OF US AT A NEW JOB AS TOO OFTEN WE ARE REQUIRED TO HIT THE GROUND RUNNING, GIVING 169 HOURS IN 168 HOUR WEEK.

BUT ESSENTIALLY THIS IS WHAT ADAM AND EVE FACED THAT FIRST DAY IN EDEN. READY AND WILLING TO GO ABOUT THE WORK AHEAD OF THEM IN THE GARDEN, READY TO SOAK IN ALL THE NEWNESS AROUND THEM THEY ARE SURPRISED WHEN GOD INFORMS THEM THAT TODAY, THE SEVENTH DAY OF CREATION IN THE STORY, IS A DAY OF REST, SABBATH.

"I'M NOT GOING TO WORK TODAY," GOD CONTINUED, "AND I DON'T WANT YOU TO EITHER. CREATION IS COMPLETE. THE UNIVERSE IS FINISHED. EVERY STAR AND EACH GRAIN OF SAND IS IN PLACE. THE JOB IS DONE. SO LET'S JUST PAUSE AND DRINK IT ALL IN. LET'S STOP AND CONSIDER WHAT I HAVE ACCOMPLISHED. TODAY, WE CELEBRATE ALL THAT I HAVE MADE. THAT MEANS NO WORK TODAY, MY FRIENDS. TODAY IS A DAY OF REST!"¹²

JUST AS WE CAN'T IMAGINE SOMEONE ASKING US NOT TO WORK ON OUR FIRST DAY ON A NEW JOB, EQUALLY WE CAN IMAGINE HOW ADAM AND EVE FELT WHEN GOD SAID REST ON THEIR FIRST DAY IN CREATION. BUT THE REST WAS NOT FOR THEM!

YOU SEE, THAT IS WHAT IS SO UNIQUE ABOUT SABBATH. WE HAVE MADE SABBATH ABOUT US, AND THIS CREATION STORY REMINDS US THAT CREATION, EDEN, SABBATH, ALL THAT SURROUNDS US; IT IS NEVER ABOUT US - IT IS ABOUT GOD.

GOD WANTED ADAM AND EVE, EVERY LIVING HUMAN BEING TO TAKE ONE DAY OUT OF EVERY SEVEN TO REMEMBER WHO GOD IS. SETTING ASIDE A DAY SEPARATE FROM ALL THE OTHERS. A DAY THAT IS DIFFERENT AND UNIQUE WITH ITS SIMILARITIES POINTING TO THE GOD WHO CREATED ALL THE DAYS. SABBATH IS ABOUT REMEMBERING THAT IT IS GOD WHO CREATES, AND NOT US. SABBATH IS ABOUT REMEMBERING THAT LIFE DOES NOT DEPENDS ON US AND OUR EFFORTS ALONE, BUT THE WONDERFUL GRACE AND LOVE OF CREATOR GOD.

YET, THE REALIST IN ME THINKS THAT ADAM AND EVE'S REACTION PERHAPS WAS SIMILAR TO HOW WE REACT TO THIS COMMAND. PERHAPS THEY IGNORED IT AS WELL. PERHAPS THEY

¹² Ibid, p. 98.

LIVED IN THE EXCUSES INSTEAD OF FOLLOWING THE WAY OF GOD. NO ONE KNOWS FOR SURE.

HERE IS WHAT SABBATH REMINDS US OF WITHIN OUR STORIES. IT REMINDS US THAT GOD IS GOD. IT REMINDS US THAT WE DO NOT CONTROL THE UNIVERSE, THE WORLD, OUR COMMUNITIES, OR EVEN OUR OWN LIVES. AS MUCH AS WE THINK WE ARE IN CONTROL, WE ARE NOT. SABBATH IS OUR ABILITY TO ADMIT THIS FACT TO GOD EVERY WEEK. SABBATH IS NOT ABOUT OUR TAKING A REST AND MAKING SURE WE ARE READY FOR ANOTHER MARATHON WEEK. SABBATH IS ABOUT MAKING SURE GOD IS PROPERLY PRIORITIZED AT HOME, AT WORK, AT CHURCH, IN ALL ASPECTS OF OUR LIVES. SABBATH POINTS OUT TO US WHERE WE ARE FAILING TO SAY, "I AM NOT, BUT I KNOW I AM."

OFTEN, I BELIEVE WE FORGET THAT SABBATH IS SOMETIMES AN INCONVENIENCE TO HOW WE GO ABOUT LIVING OUR LIVES. BY INCONVENIENCE I MEAN THAT WE MUST MENTALLY, EMOTIONALLY, AND PHYSICALLY PREPARE OURSELVES TO REMEMBER WHO GOD IS FOR ONE DAY EACH WEEK OF OUR LIVES BY REMINDING OURSELVES WHO WE ARE NOT.

PERHAPS THAT MEANS WE WORK TO GET OUR SHOPPING DONE BEFORE SABBATH, OR WE CHALLENGE OURSELVES TO FINISH OUR WORK IN A TIMELY FASHION, OR WE BALANCE OUR LIVES DURING THE WEEK BETWEEN WORK, REST AND PLAY SO THAT SABBATH CAN BE PROPERLY OBSERVED.

AND AS A FAMILY WITH OUR SPOUSES AND OUR CHILDREN AND GRANDCHILDREN, WE WORK TO OBSERVE SABBATH SO THAT ALL ENTRUSTED TO OUR CARE LEARN WHAT SABBATH-KEEPING MEANS, THAT AS CHRISTIANS WE ARE CALLED TO FOLLOW GOD'S COMMAND UPON OUR LIVES. WE ARE CALLED TO REMEMBER THAT BEING SALT AND LIGHT SOMETIMES MEANS MAKING CHOICES FOR GOD AND CHOICES AGAINST CULTURE THAT WOULD REQUIRE US TO GIVE UP OUR SABBATH-KEEPING. STRANGE THAT SOME OF US WOULD RATHER REMEMBER THE SABBATH AS LONG AS IT IS MANDATED TO US BY A

GOVERNMENT WHO WOULD REQUIRE IT OF US. IS IT NOT ENOUGH THAT OUR GOD ASK IT OF US?

REMEMBER THE SABBATH DAY, TO KEEP IT HOLY. SIX DAYS YOU SHALL LABOR; AND DO ALL YOUR WORK, BUT THE SEVENTH DAY IS A SABBATH TO THE LORD YOUR GOD. ON IT YOU SHALL NOT DO ANY WORK, YOU, OR YOUR SON, OR YOUR DAUGHTER, YOUR MALE SERVANT, OR YOUR FEMALE SERVANT, OR YOUR LIVESTOCK, OR THE SOJOURNER WHO IS WITHIN YOUR GATES. FOR IN SIX DAYS THE LORD MADE HEAVEN AND EARTH, THE SEA, AND ALL THIS IS IN THEM, AND RESTED THE SEVENTH DAY. THEREFORE THE LORD BLESSED THE SABBATH DAY AND MADE IT HOLY....

...SABBATH REST IS ABOUT A STATE OF MIND, A DEEP-SEATED BELIEF THAT GOD IS THE CREATOR AND SUSTAINER OF ALL THINGS - AN ACKNOWLEDGMENT THAT HE IS SUFFICIENT AND THAT HE CAN BE TRUSTED. BECAUSE ONE OF THE SYMPTOMS OF SIN IS SHORT-TERM MEMORY LOSS, WE QUICKLY FORGET THAT HE SET IN MOTION THE ENTIRE UNIVERSE BEFORE WE ARRIVED ON THE SCENE.¹³

SABBATH IS HOLY, SABBATH IS "SET APART." WE AS FOLLOWERS OF CHRIST ARE CALLED TO BE HOLY, WE ARE CALLED TO BE "SET APART." REALIZING THAT GOD'S STORY IS OUR STORY ALLOWS US TO BEGIN TRULY KEEPING SABBATH.

GO BACK TO MOSES FOR A MOMENT, FOR IT WAS MOSES WHO FIRST HEARD THESE WORDS ABOUT SABBATH AS A COMMANDMENT. MOSES REALIZED THAT KEEPING SABBATH ALONG WITH THE OTHER NINE COMMANDMENTS WERE NEVER INTENDED TO BE KEPT BY HIS OWN STRENGTH. THE COMMANDMENTS WERE TO BE KEPT THROUGH GOD, GOD WHO IS HOLY WILL WORK THROUGH US TO HELP US BE "SET APART."

HOW MANY OF US CAN KEEP THAT LIST OF TEN RULES GIVEN TO MOSES?

¹³ Ibid, pp. 102-103.

Live It:

HERE IS OUR HOPE:

NONE OF US WERE INTENDED TO DO ANYTHING ON OUR OWN!

THE MYSTERY OF GOD'S STORY IS SUMMED UP BY PAUL IN COLOSSIANS 1:27 (THE MESSAGE):

THE MYSTERY IN A NUTSHELL IS JUST THIS: CHRIST IS IN YOU, SO THEREFORE YOU CAN LOOK FORWARD TO SHARING IN GOD'S GLORY. IT'S THAT SIMPLE. THAT IS THE SUBSTANCE OF OUR MESSAGE.

IT IS NOT CHRIST AND YOU, IT IS CHRIST IN YOU. SABBATH IS ABOUT THE REALIZATION THAT CHRIST IS THE ONLY ONE CAPABLE OF DOING ANYTHING ETERNAL IN AND THROUGH ME. CHRIST IS THE ONLY ONE CAPABLE OF DOING ANYTHING ETERNAL IN AND THROUGH YOU.

KEEPING THE SABBATH AND KEEPING IT HOLY IS HOW THE BODY OF CHRIST, WHICH IS THE CHURCH, SAYS TO THE WORLD, "WE ARE THE EARTHLY FORM OF CHRIST'S LORDSHIP." KEEPING THE SABBATH IS THE VOICE IN THE WILDERNESS THAT CRIES OUT, "PREPARE YE THE WAY OF THE LORD."

- **HOW ARE YOU KEEPING SABBATH IN YOUR LIFE?**
- **WHAT CHALLENGES YOU TO MAKE SABBATH MORE ABOUT YOU AND LESS ABOUT GOD? WHAT WAYS CAN YOU ALLOW GOD TO SEEK THE OPPOSITE IN YOUR STORY?**
- **"HE MUST INCREASE AND I MUST DECREASE" - WHAT EMOTIONS OR THOUGHTS, IF ANY, DO THESE WORDS STIR UP INSIDE OF YOU?**
- **WHAT IS YOUR VISION OF CHRIST' CHURCH FOLLOWING THIS COMMAND TO KEEP THE SABBATH? WHAT WOULD TRUE SABBATH-KEEPING LOOK LIKE?**
 - **HOW DO WE GET THERE?**

Commit To It:

BE STILL, AND KNOW THAT I AM GOD.

Sabbath calls you and me to be still before God. For this Commit To It section, read or tell them about Chick-fil-A. (You will find Giglio's story about Chick-fil-A beginning the last paragraph on page 116 and read all the way through page 118.) After reading or telling about Chick-fil-A, share these thoughts:

TRUETT CATHY (THE FOUNDER OF CHICK-FIL-A) GIVES US AN IDEA OF WHAT FURIOUS REST OR SABBATH KEEPING CAN LOOK LIKE FOR ALL OF US. IT IS ABOUT SHUTTING DOWN OUR STORIES AND PUTTING GOD'S STORY IN PROPER PERSPECTIVE DESPITE WHAT THE WORLD MAY THINK ABOUT OUR ACTIONS. CHICK-FIL-A IN MANY WAYS MODELS WHAT THE CHURCH SHOULD BE MODELING FOR THE WORLD.

GOD EXPECTS THE SABBATH TO BE SET ASIDE AS HOLY. NOT FOR YOU. NOT FOR ME. BUT FOR GOD. TO REMEMBER WHO GOD IS. AND WHO WE ARE NOT. SHALL WE THIS WEEK REMEMBER GOD BY KEEPING SABBATH IN OUR LIVES?

AS WE END OUR TIME TOGETHER, LET US COVENANT TOGETHER TO FIND ONE WAY EACH OF US WILL STRIVE THROUGH THE POWER OF CHRIST TO KEEP THE SABBATH HOLY UNTIL WE MEET AGAIN THIS TIME NEXT WEEK.

Discuss your covenant and then after accepting your challenge, end your time in prayer. (You may choose to share the following poem, "This Is The Church of My Dreams" as a benediction)

This is the church of my dreams.

The church of the warm heart and the open mind.

and the always adventurous spirit.

This is the church of my dreams.

The church that cares, that heals hurt lives,

that comforts old people and challenges youth
with the gospel for their world.

This is the church of my dreams.

The church that knows no division

of culture or class or race.

no frontiers, geographical or social,

the church that inquires as well as affirms,

that looks forward as well as backward.

This is the church of my dreams.

The church of the Master, the church of the people,

the high church, the broad church,

the low church: high as the call of Christ,

low as the humblest human.

This is the church of my dreams.

A working church, a worshipping church,

a winsome church, that interprets

truth in light of the Truth.

This is the church of my dreams.

A church that inspires courage for this life

and hopes for the life to come,

a church of all good people,

and a church for people not yet good.¹⁴

¹⁴ Findley Edge, *The People of God*

Session Four
Embracing Smallness [Wherever You Are]

What You Will Need:

- 1. Bible**
- 2. Louie Giglio's Book**
- 3. Poster of the I AM Statements (optional)**

Objective:

- Session 4 concludes our series and Louie Giglio's book, finishing with the chapters "*Embracing Smallness*" and "*You Can Trust Him.*"
- This last session tries to connect our knowledge of who God is with the reality of our stories
- Examine the end of John the Baptist' story and determine how we can embrace smallness no matter where we are

Think About It:

Begin by asking how everyone did with keeping Sabbath this past week. After discussion, begin this session by helping the group remember times when they have been challenged by particularly hard times. The purpose of this opening exercise is to get everyone thinking about their own life and all the challenges (no matter how big or small) each of us have faced and overcome. In these first few moments and with these first few questions, the hope is that all will see that encouragement from one another and from God is what moves us towards seeing how the hard times in our stories help us struggle together.

TAKE A SURVEY OF THE CLASS USING THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

- 1. HOW MANY BROKEN BONES HAVE YOU HAD?**
- 2. HOW MANY SERIOUS ILLNESSES HAVE YOU HAD?**
- 3. WHO IS BETTER IN A CRISIS? YOU OR YOU SPOUSE, RELATIVE OR FRIEND?**
- 4. WHAT WAS THE FIRST SERIOUS CRISIS (SERIOUS OR FUNNY) YOU FACED IN YOUR FAMILY?**

5. HOW HAS GOING THROUGH A TRYING TIME HELPED YOU BE ABLE TO ENCOURAGE SOMEONE ELSE?

AFTER DISCUSSING THESE QUESTIONS, SPEND A FEW MOMENTS TALKING ABOUT HOW HAVE SOME BEEN ENCOURAGED BY OTHERS DURING A CRISIS, AND THEN ASK HOW SOME HAVE ENCOURAGED OTHERS BECAUSE OF A CRISIS THEY HAVE HAD TO ENDURE.

SHARE THESE WORDS FROM PAUL IN 2 CORINTHIANS 1:3-7:

ALL PRAISE TO THE GOD AND FATHER OF OUR MASTER, JESUS THE MESSIAH! FATHER OF ALL MERCY! GOD OF ALL HEALING COUNSEL! HE COMES ALONGSIDE US WHEN WE GO THROUGH HARD TIMES, AND BEFORE YOU KNOW IT, HE BRINGS US ALONGSIDE SOMEONE ELSE WHO IS GOING THROUGH HARD TIMES SO THAT WE CAN BE THERE FOR THAT PERSON JUST AS GOD WAS THERE FOR US. WE HAVE PLENTY OF HARD TIMES THAT COME FROM FOLLOWING THE MESSIAH, BUT NO MORE SO THAN THE GOOD TIMES OF HIS HEALING COMFORT—WE GET A FULL MEASURE OF THAT, TOO.

WHEN WE SUFFER FOR JESUS, IT WORKS OUT FOR YOUR HEALING AND SALVATION. IF WE ARE TREATED WELL, GIVEN A HELPING HAND AND ENCOURAGING WORD, THAT ALSO WORKS TO YOUR BENEFIT, SPURRING YOU ON, FACE FORWARD, UNFLINCHING. YOUR HARD TIMES ARE ALSO OUR HARD TIMES. WHEN WE SEE THAT YOU'RE JUST AS WILLING TO ENDURE THE HARD TIMES AS TO ENJOY THE GOOD TIMES, WE KNOW YOU'RE GOING TO MAKE IT, NO DOUBT ABOUT IT. (THE MESSAGE)

Talk About It:

HARD TIMES ARE EVENTS NONE OF US WANT TO REALLY DISCUSS, LET ALONE ENDURE. YET, AFTER LAST WEEK'S DISCUSSION ABOUT SABBATH AND GIVING GOD A PROPER PART OF OUR WEEK FOR REMEMBRANCE OF WHO GOD IS, AND WHO WE ARE NOT, AT SOME POINT WE ARE CONFRONTED WITH THE QUESTION OF WHAT DO WE DO WITH SABBATH, WHAT DO WE DO WITH OUR FAITH, WHAT DO WE DO WITH GOD WHEN WE ENCOUNTER THE TRULY SOUL-SHATTERING, LIFE-ALTERING, UNFORGETTABLE CRISIS MOMENTS THAT OCCUR THROUGHOUT ALL OF HUMANITY.

HOW DO WE CELEBRATE OUR SMALLNESS IN THE MOMENTS WHEN GOD SEEMS SO BIG YET SO FAR AWAY?

A LOT OF THIS STUDY IS FOCUSED ON THE IDEA THAT WE MUST EMBRACE THE IDEA THAT GOD IS THE ONLY **I AM**, WHILE WE CONTINUE TO BEAR THE NAME **I AM NOT**. BUT AS MANY OF US HAVE LEARNED THROUGH OUR LIFE EXPERIENCES, WORDS ARE CHEAP; IT IS OUR ACTIONS THAT PROVE WHO WE ARE. OUR CHARACTER IS MORE OFTEN THAN NOT DEFINED BY WHAT WE DO AND LESS BY WHAT WE SAY.

THIS CONCLUSION TO OUR FOUR WEEK STUDY IS A FINAL WORD ON HOW WE ARE TO DAILY BEAR THE NAME GOD HAS GIVEN TO US. WE ARE TO DAILY SACRIFICE, THAT IS WE ARE TO DAILY GIVE OVER TO GOD WHAT WE WANT SO DESPERATELY TO BE IN OUR CONTROL --> OUR VERY LIVES.

LOUIE GIGLIO SUMS UP THIS DAILY SACRIFICE IN ONE WORD:

HUMILITY

HE WRITES THAT HUMILITY CAN BE DESCRIBED AS "SEEING GOD AS HE IS."¹⁵ HUMILITY IS OFTEN LOST ON US CULTURALLY AS IT IS SEEN AS A WEAKNESS, A FLAW AMONG US, A SIGN THAT WE ARE NOT ABLE TO BE ALL THAT WE ARE CAPABLE OF BEING WITHIN THIS WORLD. IS THAT HOW WE AS CHRISTIANS ARE TO VIEW HUMILITY?

WHAT IS HUMILITY? SPEND A FEW MOMENTS DISCUSSING THIS QUESTION.

Humility is often confused with saying you're not much of a bridge player when you know perfectly well you are. Conscious or otherwise, this kind of humility is a form of gamesmanship.

If you really aren't much of a bridge player, you're apt to be rather proud of yourself for admitting it so humbly. This kind of humility is a form of low comedy.

True humility doesn't consist of thinking ill of yourself but of not thinking of yourself much differently from the way you'd be apt to think of anybody else. It is the capacity for being no more and no less pleased when you play your own hand well than when your opponents do. - Frederick Buechner

¹⁵ Louie Giglio, *I Am Not But I Know I Am*, Multnomah Publishers: Sisters, Oregon, 2005, p. 129

Louie Giglio's "i am not but i know I AM"

Adult Sunday School Study

- **CAN YOU RECALL THE LAST TIME YOU SPENT FIVE MINUTES LOOKING UP AT THE SKY?**
- **WHAT WERE YOU THINKING WHILE YOU GAZED ACROSS THE CREATION ABOVE YOUR HEAD?**
- **HOW DID YOU FEEL ABOUT YOUR OWN LIFE AS YOU LOOKED AT THE VAST EXPANSE OVER YOUR HEAD?**

ONE OF THINGS I ENJOY DOING IS EXPLORING OLDER CHURCHES, PARTICULARLY GREAT CATHEDRALS AND THEIR ARCHITECTURE. RECENTLY, I HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO VISIT DUKE CHAPEL ON THE CAMPUS OF DUKE UNIVERSITY IN DURHAM, NORTH CAROLINA. IF YOU HAVE EVER VISITED DUKE, YOU KNOW THAT THE CHAPEL IS CENTRAL TO THE CAMPUS AND IS A BEAUTIFUL BUILDING, WITH ALL OF IT'S GOTHIC FEATURES AND GRAND SPIRES. WALKING UP TO IT AND THEN INSIDE IT, ONE CANNOT HELP BUT HAVE THEIR EYES DRAWN UPWARD - TOWARDS THE HEAVENS - AN ARROW TO GOD ALMOST, POINTING THE WAY TO GOD AND TOWARDS CREATION. DUKE CHAPEL IS JUST AS BEAUTIFUL INSIDE AS WELL, WITH MARVELOUS STAINED GLASS WINDOWS DEPICTING NUMEROUS BIBLICAL SCENES, A MASSIVE PIPE-ORGAN IN THE REAR OF THE CHURCH, AS WELL AS ELEGANTLY CARVED WOOD COLUMNS AND PEWS THROUGHOUT. THE CEILING IN THE SANCTUARY DRAWS YOUR EYES UPWARDS AS WELL, AS YOU GAZE UPON THE AMAZING WORK ABOVE YOUR HEAD. IT IS TRULY A SIGHT TO BEHELD.

THE EXPERIENCE AT DUKE IS AN EXERCISE IN HUMILITY. THE SMALLNESS OF YOURSELF IS UNDENIABLE IN A MASSIVE BUILDING LIKE DUKE CHAPEL. WHAT I ENJOY ABOUT CHURCHES LIKE THE ONE AT DUKE IS THAT IT CAPTURES WHAT LOUIE GIGLIO IS TRYING TO HELP EACH OF US UNDERSTAND; GOD IS ABSOLUTELY AND ETERNALLY LARGER THAN WE WILL EVER BE.

SOMETIMES, PERHAPS, WE NEED TO JUST LOOK UP AND REMEMBER THE HUGENESS OF GOD, AND THE SMALLNESS OF OURSELVES. SOMETIMES WE WOULD DO WELL TO REMEMBER THAT GOD'S ACTIONS, AS WELL AS GOD'S WORDS, DEFINE EXACTLY WHO GOD IS: I AM.

**HOW DOES LOOKING UP HELP ME WITH THE
CRISIS' OF TODAY?**

Louie Giglio's "i am not but i know I AM"

Adult Sunday School Study

LOOKING UP AT THE MYSTERY OF GOD, ALLOWING OUR EYES TO DRAW TOWARDS GOD, AND AWAY FROM OURSELVES; IT ALLOWS GOD TO COME INTO FOCUS AND MOVES OUR LIVES INTO THE BACKGROUND.

WHEN WE REMEMBER THAT MILLIONS OF LIVES EXISTED BEFORE US, COUNTLESS NUMBERS WHO NEVER KNEW US, YET GOD KNEW EVERY SINGLE LAST ONE OF THEM - WE REALIZE WHO GOD IS AND WHO WE ARE NOT. HUMILITY, WITH OR WITHOUT A CRISIS MOMENT, IS REALLY ABOUT GIVING TO GOD OUR STORY, SO THAT WE CAN BEGIN TO SEE THE STORY. IT IS THE DAILY EXPRESSION OF GOD'S CHARACTER IN AND THROUGH OUR VERY LIVES.

LAST WEEK WE UNDERSTOOD GOD TO CALL US TO REMEMBER THE SABBATH. NOW, IN ORDER TO HUMBLE OURSELVES, WE MUST DAILY LIVE OUR LIVES AS EXPRESSIONS OF WHO GOD IS, AND WHO WE ARE NOT. BUT HOW?

READ COLOSSIANS 3:17

PAUL IS SUGGESTING THAT LIVING FOR GOD'S GLORY IS NOT SO MUCH ABOUT WHAT YOU DO AS IT IS ABOUT DOING WHATEVER YOU DO IN SUCH A WAY THAT IT REFLECTS JESUS CHRIST TO THOSE AROUND YOU AND ULTIMATELY POINTS PEOPLE TO HIM. IN OTHER WORDS, YOU DON'T HAVE A BETTER CHANCE OF GLORIFYING GOD BY BEING A PREACHER THAN YOU DO BY BEING A BOND TRADER, OR BY BEING A MISSIONARY VERSES BEING A MOTHER. YOU DON'T GET MORE CREDIT IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD FOR BEING A SONGWRITER THAN YOU DO FOR BEING A STUDENT.¹⁶

- **WHEN IS THE LAST TIME, IF EVER, YOU DIED TO YOURSELF FOR THE SAKE OF GOD?**
- **WHY IS HUMILITY SUCH A HARD TASK FOR MANY OF US?**
- **HOW DO WE SEEK HUMILITY EVEN IN THE CRISIS MOMENTS OF LIFE?**
- **HOW DO WE KNOW WHEN WE HAVE FALLEN BACK INTO OUR STORY (INSTEAD OF ALLOWING OUR STORY TO BE A PART OF GOD'S STORY)?**

**LESS OF ME
AND MORE OF GOD!**

¹⁶ Ibid, p.133.

Louie Giglio's "i am not but i know I AM"

Adult Sunday School Study

WHEN I LIVE LIKE I AM PRIVILEGED, I HAVE LOST THE PLOT...

WHEN I AM DEMANDING, I HAVE LOST THE PLOT...

WHEN I ACT POMPOUS, I HAVE LOST THE PLOT...

WHEN I CRUMBLE UNDER THE PRESSURE, I HAVE LOST THE PLOT...

WHEN I START PROTECTING, I HAVE LOST THE PLOT...

WHEN I CRAVE THE SPOTLIGHT MYSELF, I HAVE LOST THE PLOT...

WHEN I FAIL TO CELEBRATE THE SUCCESSES OF OTHERS WHO ARE
LIVING FOR HIS FAME, I HAVE LOST THE PLOT...

WHEN I DWELL ON FEELINGS OF BEING UNLOVED, UNNOTICED, OR
INSIGNIFICANT, I HAVE LOST THE PLOT...

ALL OF THESE PRIVILEGED, DEMANDING, ARROGANT, FRAZZLED, TURF-
PROTECTING, GLORY-STEALING, SELF-LOATHING MOMENTS ARE
NOTHING MORE THAN A CLARION CALL ALERTING US TO THE FACT
THAT IT'S TIME TO DIE AGAIN, REMINDERS THAT THE LIFE OF SMALLNESS
REQUIRES A VIGILANT WATCH AND A CONSTANT WILLINGNESS TO
STRIKE THE FATAL BLOW IN THE HEART OF ME.

*but to die to self is to gain on an unfathomable scale - a daily funeral
that is nothing more than the doorway to a life filled with the
matchless **WONDER OF ALL THAT HE IS.**¹⁷*

DOES LOOKING UP SOLVE YOUR CURRENT CRISIS? NO, YOUR
PROBLEMS WILL PROBABLY STILL BE AROUND ONCE YOUR GAZE COMES
BACK DOWN TO EARTH. BUT SOMEHOW, LOOKING UP REASSURES ALL OF
US THAT WE ARE NOT ALONE, DESPITE OUR SMALLNESS. GOD IS STILL
I AM, AND AS LONG AS GOD IS GOD, OUR LIFE WILL CONTINUE TO BE
PART OF GOD'S STORY, NO MATTER WHAT CRISIS WE COME ACROSS. CAN
WE STRIVE TO SEE GOD IN ALL SITUATIONS? CAN WE SEEK

¹⁷ Ibid, p. 135.

Louie Giglio's "i am not but i know I AM"

Adult Sunday School Study

ENCOURAGEMENT AND UNITY IN OUR SMALLNESS? CAN WE ALLOW GOD TO WORK AMONG US WHEREVER WE ARE?

Study It:

SO IN THESE PAST FOUR WEEKS, WE HAVE DISCOVERED WHO GOD IS (I AM) AND WHO WE ARE (I AM NOT). WE KNOW OUR NAME, WE KNOW OUR PLACE, WE KNOW THE GREATNESS OF GOD, AND WE KNOW THE SMALLNESS OF OURSELVES WHEN COMPARED TO GOD'S GREATNESS. WE KNOW THAT THERE ARE TWO STORIES ALWAYS AT PLAY WHEN IT COMES TO OUR LIVES; GOD'S STORY AND OUR STORY. WE KNOW THAT GOD WOULD HAVE US GIVE HIM OUR COMPLETE STORY SO THAT OUR STORY AND GOD'S STORY COULD BE ONE. WHAT WE REALIZE AFTER FOUR WEEKS IS, APPARENTLY, WE KNOW QUITE A BIT.

BUT WHAT DOES IT ALL MEAN?

FOR MANY OF US, KNOWING WHO GOD IS DOES NOT MEAN WE NECESSARILY TRUST GOD, AT LEAST NOT ENOUGH TO GIVE GOD OUR ENTIRE STORY. TRUST IS DIFFICULT TO GIVE TO ANYONE OUTSIDE OF OURSELVES, ESPECIALLY TO GOD. HOW DO WE KNOW THAT THIS GOD WHO IS I AM IS TO BE TRUSTED, THAT GOD'S STORY WILL TAKE CARE OF ALL OF THE I AM NOT STORIES OF CREATION. WHAT ARE WE LEFT TO DO?

BEFORE TRYING TO QUESTION HOW WE ARE TO TRUST GOD WITH OUR STORY, LET'S LOOK AT OUR OWN LIVES. EACH OF US HAVE PARENT'S THAT BIRTHED US INTO THIS WORLD. IF OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THEM WAS A HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP, THEN YOU MAY REMEMBER THAT YOUR TRUST AND LOVE FOR THEM DID NOT COME ABOUT BECAUSE YOU KNEW THEM TO BE BIGGER AND STRONGER THAN YOU. IT CAME ABOUT BECAUSE OF HOW YOUR PARENTS DEMONSTRATED THEIR CHARACTER THROUGH THEIR ACTIONS TOWARD YOU. WHEN THEY FED YOU, WHEN THEY BATHED YOU, WHEN THEY COMFORTED YOU, WHEN THEY NURTURED YOU, WHEN THEY SHOWED UP WHEN YOU NEEDED THEM THE MOST, WHEN THEY STAYED UP LATE WAITING FOR YOU TO RETURN HOME, WHEN THEY PICKED YOU UP DESPITE THE PLACES YOU KNEW YOU WEREN'T SUPPOSED TO BE, WHEN THEY LOVED YOU NO MATTER YOUR FLAWS OR SHORTCOMINGS;

YOUR LOVE AND TRUST FOR YOUR PARENTS DEVELOPED AS YOU LEARNED THEIR TRUE CHARACTER.

THE SAME IS TRUE ABOUT GOD. GOD'S CHARACTER IS REVEALED TO ALL OF US OVER TIME. GOD'S CREATION IS A TESTAMENT TO WHO GOD IS AND HOW GOD WILL LOVE EACH US THROUGH ALL GOOD TIMES AND BAD TIMES.

GOD IS NOT ONLY BIG ENOUGH TO MAKE THE UNIVERSE; HE HAS CREATED A UNIVERSE THAT IS BREATHTAKINGLY BEAUTIFUL, INTRICATELY ORDERED, SCIENTIFICALLY DEPENDABLE, THE STUFF OF ARCHITECTURAL GENIUS. THE UNIVERSE ITSELF DECLARES TO US THAT GOD IS BEAUTY PERSONIFIED, THAT HE IS ORGANIZED AND DETAIL-ORIENTED, THAT HE IS RELIABLE AND TRUSTWORTHY, THAT HE IS GENIUS DEFINED. IT'S NOT JUST THAT GOD MADE THE WORLD THAT CAUSES US TO TRUST HIM - IT'S THE KIND OF WORLD HE MADE.¹⁸

LET'S GO BACK TO THE STORY OF JOHN THE BAPTIST, SPECIFICALLY, THE END OF THE STORY FOR JOHN.

READ MATTHEW 14:1-12

JOHN'S CRISIS MOMENT CAME IN THE FORM OF AN ARREST AND IMPRISONMENT, AND EVENTUALLY HIS DEATH. BUT BEFORE HIS DEATH AND WHILE HE WAS SITTING IN JAIL, I IMAGINE JOHN TO HAVE WONDERED WHERE WAS JESUS. WHERE WAS THIS MESSIAH HE HAD PREPARED THE WAY FOR? WHERE WAS THE ONE WHOM HE WAS UNWORTHY TO UNTIE THE SANDALS OF, WHY WAS HE DESTINED TO SIT IN HEROD'S JAIL AND DIE AN AWFUL DEATH.

IN LUKE 7:20-22, WE GET AN IDEA OF WHAT MAY HAVE BEEN GOING THROUGH JOHN'S HEAD, "ARE YOU THE ONE WHO WAS TO COME, OR SHOULD WE EXPECT SOMEONE ELSE?"

MAYBE THERE WAS EVEN MORE TO JOHN'S QUESTION HE SENT TO BE ASKED OF JESUS, SUCH AS, "WHERE ARE YOU, WHY DON'T YOU COME AND HELP ME LIKE ALL THE STORIES OF SO MANY OTHERS WHOM I HAVE HEARD YOU HELP? WHY ARE YOU LETTING MY BE STUCK HERE WITH HEROD?" ESSENTIALLY JOHN IS ASKING:

WHERE IS GOD?

¹⁸ Ibid, p. 140.

Louie Giglio's "i am not but i know I AM"

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THE MOMENTS OF CRISIS THAT COME UP IN OUR LIVES, LIKE JOHN'S IMPRISONMENT, CAN LEAD US TO QUESTION WHERE IS GOD IN THE MIDST OF OUR STRUGGLE. IS GOD WHO HE REALLY SAYS HE IS, AND IF SO, WHY DOESN'T HE HELP? IF GOD LOVES ME, WHY DO I FEEL SO UNLOVED AND SO ALONE? IF GOD BELIEVES IN ME, WHY DON'T I BELIEVE IN MYSELF? IF GOD IS FOR ME, WHY DO I FEEL LIKE EVERYTHING IS AGAINST ME?

THE REPLY JESUS SENDS TO JOHN IS A GUIDE FOR ALL OF US AS TO HOW WE CAN KNOW GOD IS EXACTLY WHO HE SAYS HE IS. IN THE LUKE 7 PASSAGE JESUS REPLIES, "THE BLIND RECEIVE SIGHT, THE LAME WALK, THOSE WHO HAVE LEPROSY ARE CURED, THE DEAF HEAR, THE DEAD ARE RAISED, AND THE GOOD NEWS IS PREACHED TO THE POOR." IN MANY WAYS, JESUS WAS SAYING TO JOHN, LOOK BEYOND YOURSELF, LOOK AROUND - GOD IS OCCURRING, GOD IS MOVING. REMOVE THE BLINDERS THAT PREVENT YOU FROM SEEING THE GREATNESS OF GOD.

STILL, WE ARE LEFT WITH THE END OF THE STORY FOR JOHN, AS HE SUFFERS A GRUESOME DEATH AT THE HANDS OF HEROD AND HIS STEPDAUGHTER. ONE READS THIS STORY AND COULD WONDER IF GOD DOESN'T COME THROUGH FOR THIS "ONE FROM THE WILDERNESS WHO PREPARES THE WAY FOR THE ONE TO COME," THEN WILL GOD COME THROUGH FOR YOU OR ME.

THE CHALLENGE FOR US IS TO REMEMBER OUR NAME (I AM NOT), AND AS SUCH WE HAVE A PERSPECTIVE THAT IS MUCH DIFFERENT THAN I AM. IT IS UP TO EACH OF US TO REMEMBER THAT THE MYSTERY OF GOD IS A PART OF GOD'S STORY. WHERE WE BEGIN TO SEE THAT MYSTERY UNRAVEL, WHERE ALL OF OUR STORIES CONVERGE AND TRUST BEGINS TO UNITE INTO THE GRACIOUS AND HOLY STORY OF GOD'S IS AT THE CROSS OF JESUS.

WHILE WE VIEW DEATHS LIKE THE DEATH OF JOHN AS A SENSELESS AND EVIL ACT, AN ACT THAT PERHAPS WE WOULD EXPECT GOD TO INTERVENE AND STOP, WE MUST NOT FORGET THAT I AM CAME TO EARTH IN THE FORM OF JESUS AND TOOK ON A GREATER EVIL AND FAR MORE SENSELESS ACT THAN THAT OF JOHN'S DEATH WHEN JESUS WAS MURDERED UPON THE CROSS. AND GOD STOOD BY AND LET THIS HAPPEN AS WELL.

AT THE CROSS IS WHERE ALL OF GOD'S LOVE, ALL OF GOD'S CHARACTER, ALL OF WHAT GOD HOPES FOR ALL OF OUR STORIES IS

REVEALED. WE TRUST GOD AND WE KNOW GOD IS I AM BECAUSE OF THE ACTIONS THAT OCCURRED AT THE CROSS. FOR IT WAS AT THE CROSS THAT GOD ACCEPTED THE VERY WORST THAT WE COULD OFFER TO HIM; OUR PRIDE, OUR IGNORANCE, OUR FAILURES, OUR COMPLACENCY, OUR SELFISHNESS - GOD ACCEPTED EVERY HORRIBLE AND VILE THING WE COULD OFFER TO HIM ON THE ALTER KNOWN AS THE CROSS AND IT WAS THERE IN HUMAN FORM AS THE SON OF GOD THAT GOD TOOK THE WORST, HE TOOK THE CRISIS OF CREATION, AND GOD LOVES US - GOD LOVES EVERY I AM NOT!

CHRIST REVEALS TO US HOW MUCH GOD LOVES US, HOW MUCH GOD WILL DO FOR YOU AND ME AND THAT GOD TRULY DOES HAVE YOUR INTERESTS AND MY INTERESTS IN MIND. GOD DOES THE MOST THAT GOD CAN DO, DESPITE ALL THAT WE DO TO GET IN THE WAY OF GOD'S GLORY AND TO BECOME THE STAR OF THE STORY.

"NOW YOU UNDERSTAND WHY I CAN SO CONFIDENTLY URGE YOU TO EXCHANGE THE STARRING ROLE IN YOUR SMALL STORY FOR A SUPPORTING ROLE IN GOD'S EPIC ADVENTURE. IT'S TIME FOR YOU AND ME TO LIVE AS THOSE WHO CAN NEVER BE THE SAME BECAUSE WE HAVE ENCOUNTERED BOTH THE GREAT POWER AND THE GREAT LOVE OF I AM."¹⁹

NONE OF US CAN ENCOUNTER GOD AND BE THE SAME. THE CHALLENGE IS TO ALLOW YOUR STORY TO TAKE A BACK-SEAT TO GOD'S STORY. CAN YOU SEEK I AM WHEN YOU ARE SEARCHING AND WONDERING THROUGHOUT YOUR LIFE? CAN YOU STILL FIND GOD WHEN YOU COME TO THE HONEST REALIZATION THAT YOU ARE NOT GOD? CAN YOU BE A PART OF THE STORY AND NOT THE STORY?

Live It:

FOR EVERY CRY, THERE IS ONE ANSWER:

¹⁹ Ibid, p. 143.

Louie Giglio's "i am not but i know I AM"

Adult Sunday School Study

I NEED HELP.

I AM.

I NEED HOPE.

I AM.

WHO COULD POSSIBLY BE SMART ENOUGH TO FIGURE THIS OUT?

I AM.

WHAT WORKS?

I AM.

WHAT LASTS?

I AM.

WHAT'S THE LATEST THING?

I AM.

WHAT'S THE HIPPEST THING?

I AM.

I NEED A FRESH START.

I AM.

I NEED A BIGGER STORY.

I AM.

MY VISION IS BIGGER THAN MY RESOURCES.

I AM.

NOTHING'S REAL ANYMORE.

I AM.

WHO CAN I TRUST?

I AM.

I'M NOT SURE WHO'S ON MY TEAM.

I AM.

Louie Giglio's "i am not but i know I AM"

Adult Sunday School Study

NOBODY'S LISTENING TO ME.

I AM.

I DON'T HAVE A PRAYER.

I AM.

MY MARRIAGE IS SINKING AND I DON'T KNOW WHERE TO TURN.

I AM.

I CAN'T HOLD ON.

I AM.

MY KIDS DESERVE MORE.

I AM.

I'M POURING INTO OTHERS, WHO'S POURING INTO ME?

I AM.

IF WE FAIL, WHO WILL GET THE JOB DONE?

I AM.

I'M NOT SURE WHY I'M HERE.

I AM.

I'VE GIVEN ALL I CAN GIVE AND IT'S NOT ENOUGH.

I AM.

I'M TIRED.

I AM.

I QUIT!

I AM.

I CAN'T!

I AM.

I NEED A DRINK.

I AM.

Louie Giglio's "i am not but i know I AM"

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I NEED A FIX.

I AM.

I NEED A LOVER.

I AM.

SOMEBODY JUST HOLD ME.

I AM.

Perhaps make a poster of the preceding I AM statements for the class

Commit To It:

The concluding activity for this session is a group prayer based upon the above litany. As the teacher, introduce the idea by reminding the group that our challenge this entire month has been to remember that God is bigger than we will ever become, and our task is embrace our smallness in light of God's greatness.

Enter a time of prayer, and during this time of prayer encourage each person to offer simple, one sentence prayers about the struggles within their own stories. They may be similar to the sentences on the preceding two pages. Allow people the opportunity to share before one another and God in trust and in a spirit of being in the presence of I AM.

When a sentence is offered, the entire group will respond in litany with the words, "I AM." Do this response after every sentence prayer that is offered, using these words as a reminder that God is the creator, restorer, and hope for all of our stories - no matter the crisis or celebration we are in the midst of at the moment.

You may find that designating someone to begin this prayer time and then choosing someone to end this prayer time after an acceptable period is allowed for others to respond is an appropriate way to proceed. Or you may simply go around the room in a circle encouraging

Louie Giglio's "i am not but i know I AM"

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one another to pray. Be sensitive to those who may choose not to pray out-loud.

After your time of prayer, leave the group with these words by Louie Giglio:

AND WHAT DOES THIS GREAT I AM SAY OF HIMSELF? HE SAYS TO YOU AND ME: "I M THE WAY, I AM THE TRUTH, AND I AM THE LIFE. I AM THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE. I AM SAVIOR. I AM JESUS - THE SOLUTION, THE RESTORER, THE BUILDER, THE ANSWER, THE WISE ONE, THE COMING ONE, THE MIGHTY ONE. I AM THE LORD AND THERE IS NO OTHER. I AM GOD AND THERE IS NONE BESIDES ME. I AM THE FIRST AND THE LAST. I AM ALPHA AND OMEGA. I AM THE BEGINNING AND THE END. I AM THE LORD, THAT IS MY NAME, AND I WILL NOT GIVE MY GLORY TO ANOTHER, OR ANY OF MY PRAISE TO IDOLS. I AM THAT I AM, AND THAT IS MY NAME - MY MEMORIAL NAME TO EVERY SINGLE GENERATION."²⁰

²⁰ Ibid, p. 147.