

Forgiven, Fearless, & Free

Navigating the River of Life: Salvation to Sanctification

Week 2 Study: Finding Your Way in the River of Life Forgiven to Walk in the Spirit

Washing in the water.

It's time to step into another spiritual discipline as we continue walking in the River of Life.

This week is a call to **Show Up!** Be attentive to God's presence. Include Him in your day, like you would a friend.

Jesus considered the disciples His friends.

*I'm no longer calling you servants because servants don't understand what their master is thinking and planning. No, **I've named you friends** because I've let you in on everything I've heard from the Father.*

John 15:15 MSG (emphasis added)

The same is true for us.

Think about your best friend, the one you have the closest relationship with. How did your friendship begin? Why has it lasted so long? What makes this person your best friend?

How might you build your friendship with Jesus?

Forming a friendship with Jesus is much like forming earthly friendships. It takes time, energy, and discipline. Make a daily date with Jesus to **show up** and meet with Him.

Set a time each day. Start with 5-10 minutes. Begin by giving thanks. Listen for how Jesus wants to build friendship with you.

Look for the prompts in each section of the week's study for an opportunity to **Show up!** and be with God.



Finding Your Way in the River of Life

Approach your time in Scripture as a time to meet with Jesus.

Show up!

Friends spend time together. No matter how you feel or your mood. Just show up. Be present to yourself. Be present to God.

Present means “now existing or in progress” (Merriam-Webster’s Dictionary). For the next few minutes offer your presence as a gift to God. When thoughts draw you away from being present to His Word, give yourself a bit of grace and return to the here and now. Showing up takes practice and God is faithful to accept the gift of presence we bring.



Wading in the Word.

Wading is not just walking. It is walking through something that brings resistance. It takes more time, more intention, more strength. Consider this picture of walking in water as you approach God’s Word. Let go of your normal walking pace and enter the living water of God’s Word as if you’re wading.

Choose one of the Scripture passages below:

Colossians 1:9-14

Hebrews 2:9-18

First, read as if you are walking. Get a sense of what God is saying in the verses like dipping your toes in to feel the water’s temperature.

What does it tell you about your walk with God? about walking in the Spirit?

Now read the passage again. Only this time slowly as if you are wading in knee deep water.

Do you notice resistance in yourself as you read a phrase or word?

What questions come to mind?

What overall emotion do you feel?

Finding Your Way in the River of Life

Turn the above answers into prayer. Tell God how you are feeling. Ask the questions. Be honest about your resistance.

Read the passage one more time. Maybe choose a different translation. Ask God to speak to you through His Word. Watch or listen for words or phrases that float to the surface of the passage. Pause and spend time in the phrase or word.

Consider journaling what this wading experience spoke to your heart.



Show up!

Friends talk to each other. They share their hearts, their frustrations, their desires. Good friends don't hide things for fear of being judged. Best friends ask the most difficult of questions or point out something you might not see. Communication between friends is essential. Without it there is no friendship.

Jesus wants to be our closest friend. The one we call when things get tough, when we are angry, or filled with joy. While the church calls talking to God prayer there is no magic formula or required vocabulary. Neither your accent or your grammar matters. Prayer begins with showing up just as you are and talking to God.

Before moving deeper into the study, talk to God about your life today. Share with Him where you are in your story, where you see yourself, and how you feel about it.



Remember your story.

Eugene Peterson translates **John 3:16-17** in the Message like this:

*This is how much God loved the world: He gave his Son, his one and only Son. And this is why: so that no one need be destroyed; **by believing in him, anyone can have a whole and lasting life.** God didn't go to all the trouble of sending his Son merely to point an accusing finger, telling the world how bad it was. He came to help, to put the world right again. (emphasis added)*

Let's return to the imagery of the scale and the understanding of the Greek word *axios* which is translated as worthy. Recall Peterson's explanation of living worthy.

Finding Your Way in the River of Life

When our walking and God's calling are in balance, we are whole...

When we remember our story as a measurement of worthiness according to our previous understanding of the word, it is dangerous ground. It is easy to get caught up in the places we failed or messed up. We label ourselves *unworthy*. Neon signs point accusing fingers at our sin, and the grave clothes of shame, regret, and guilt squeeze tight. Our feet get stuck in the quicksand of *would've, should've, could've*.

What would it look like to remember your spiritual journey without those neon signs? Not with excuses or reasons why you messed up -- no blaming, no self-justification -- but through the lens of grace. What if you could see it according to your development? Like the many times a child falls when learning to walk.

Scripture promises *in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose* (Romans 8:28 NIV). All means *all*. Every single thing works for our good to bring us in balance to live a whole life.

Take a look at your grave clothes. The ones you wrote in the first week of study. Choose the ones the enemy uses to accuse you -- the ones that bring shame, regret, guilt. These three emotions can tie us up in our walk of faith. Now place them in God's Light. Look at them through the lens of grace and wholeness. Allow God to reframe them as a means of bringing you to this present place.

What good has God worked through your failure and mess ups?

Is it possible without them you would not be where you are today?

How might letting go of the shame, regret, and guilt return balance to the scales?

God gave His one and only Son to help put your world right again. All that is required of us is to believe. He is faithful to do the rest.

Is it time to allow God to remove your strips of shame, regret, and guilt? What freedom might you experience in this process?

Show up!

Friends listen. By nature we are not good listeners. Listening takes time, energy, and sacrifice of our own desire to make ourselves heard. An uncomfortable silence we are not sure what to do with often accompanies listening. We are prone to fill our lives with noise to avoid the quiet. Yet, this is where we hear God's voice. In the quiet.

One of the most asked questions we get is "How do you hear God? What does God sound like?" While we have our own personal testimony and ways we hear God, we both understand it takes showing up and practice. God has grown our desire for silence and time spent listening, resulting in better communication with Him and confidence in knowing His voice from all the rest.

As you show up today to discover God's story, first spend a few minutes of your time in silence. Listen to the world around you... listen to your thoughts... listen for God's still small voice in the middle of it all...



Discover God's story.

The Scripture reading today is the story of Jesus calling Simon Peter after he denied Him during His trial. As you read, consider the definition of walking worthy to God's call in light of His forgiveness and grace.

Read John 21:15-22

What do you hear Jesus calling Simon Peter to do?

What do you hear in Simon Peter's answers?

Where do you hear or see Jesus's love in this encounter?

Finding Your Way in the River of Life

Place yourself in this story. Hear Jesus ask you:

_____, *daughter of _____, do you love Me?*

What stirs in your heart as you hear Jesus say your name and ask about your love for Him?

How do you see yourself reacting?

Answer Him...

Listen for the call He gives you...

For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, so that we should walk in them.

Ephesians 2:10 MEV