





FIRST BEGINS HERE

4	LETTER FROM PASTOR STEVE
6	LETTER FROM PASTOR CJ
8	NORTHVIEW TIMELINE
12	INSIDE NORTHVIEW
16	FAMILY MINISTRY
18	MISSIONS
20	WHAT IS THE FIRST INITIATIVE?
26	WAYS TO ENGAGE
28	THE JOURNEY OF GENEROSITY DISCIPLESHIP
30	COMMITMENT WORKSHEET
32	WEEK 1
52	WEEK 2
72	WEEK 3
94	WEEK 4
112	WEEK 5



Letter from **PASTOR STEVE**

Dear Church Family,

I believe God is calling each of us to declare Him before all things and to allow the truth of who He is to permeate all areas of our life.

When we acknowledge His lordship in our lives, we can give our first and our best, bravely trusting Him with all He has entrusted to us. We have the opportunity to link arms together and to consider ministry we've never considered before. During this season, we will also be challenged individually to lean in and to listen to God as we surrender to Him and faithfully follow His lead.

God is already challenging Sandy and me in new areas where we can put Him before all things, and we are only beginning the journey. I am excited for you to join us as we follow the Holy Spirit and move forward.

Love Ya!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Steve Poe". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Steve Poe
Senior Pastor – Northview Church



Letter from **PASTOR CJ**

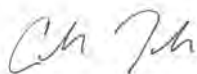
NORTHVIEW,

Throughout history, God has accomplished the impossible when his people have attempted the improbable.

That is not only the story of the Bible but that is also the legacy of our church. From the very beginning, members of Northview have faithfully given God their first and their best, and the rest is history. Northview now stands as the epitome of a miraculous movement.

Kristin and I are thrilled to be coming on board for such a time as this. There's no question what we are a part of is far bigger than the part we play. And the two of us are looking forward to taking this journey with all of you as we declare Christ before all things. I'm convinced God's favor will once again gravitate toward our generosity.

This truly is history in the making!



CJ Johnson

Senior Pastor Elect – Northview Church

NORTHVIEW TIMELINE



1985

Tommy Paino buys current Carmel Campus property on the hill.



1995

Services are held for the first time in Northview's new building on the hill.



2004

Northview becomes a nondenominational church.

1980

Tommy Paino founds Northview. He and 30 others meet for the first time in Carmel Elementary School.



1999

Steve Poe comes to Northview as the new lead pastor, with around 800 people worshipping on the weekend.



1989

First Discipleship Walk weekend held by Northview.



2006

Northview launches Brookside Community Church on the near east side of Indianapolis.



2007

Greater Lafayette Campus opens as Northview's first multisite.



2010

Open baptisms are held for the first time in the Carmel Campus auditorium, and over 250 are baptized.



2010

New Carmel Campus auditorium opens as a result of the Next Chapter Campaign launched three years earlier.



2004

Reach Beyond campaign launches with a goal to add a new children's wing, Capstone and North Beach at the Carmel Campus.



2008

Northview cancels services for our first Good Neighbor Weekend, where around 2,500 volunteers show the love of Christ to our community.





2014

Northview completes re.IMAGINE campaign goal of packing 1 million meals for Kids Against Hunger.



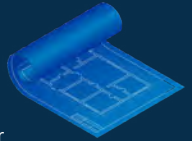
2015

Fishers Campus holds grand opening for their permanent building.



2016

Indy North Campus opens in Heritage Christian School.



2016

Plans for Anderson Campus announced.

2013

Fishers Campus opens in Hamilton Southeastern Junior High School.



2015

Westfield Campus opens in Maple Glen Elementary School.



2016

Westfield Campus breaks ground on permanent building, and Greater Lafayette Campus hosts grand opening for their permanent building.



40 YEARS!



2017

Opened first God Behind Bars Campuses at Miami and New Castle Correctional Facilities.



2019

Launched North Put Microsite.



2020

Celebrated Northview's 40th Anniversary

2021

Launched The Marion Microsite and The Porch at two campuses.



2018

Northview completed the Uncharted campaign and opens new Kokomo and Binford campuses.

2019

Northview adopts Oakbrook Church.



2021

Voted in CJ Johnson as Senior Pastor Elect.



UN CHARTED

INSIDE NORTHVIEW

SPOTLIGHT ON OUR CAMPUSES



ANDERSON

The Marion Microsite was birthed from the Anderson Campus, with the Anderson Campus crew helping to set up, host and lead worship each weekend. A church that reproduces is a mature church.



BINFORD

Young Adult Service “The Porch” launched Jan. 28, 2021, with 235 in attendance.



CARMEL

More than 600 women attended the Carmel Campus Women’s Christmas Dinner - a bigger turnout than ever before! Kristin Johnson, the wife of our Senior Pastor Elect, CJ, gave the keynote talk.



FISHERS

The Fishers Campus values their kids and students ministries. They showed it this past summer with a big elementary-age kickball game in the church’s sports field.



FLORA

Once the Flora Campus became part of Northview in the church adoption of 2019, the campus has been able to bless even more people and organizations in need in this area of Indiana.



GOD BEHIND BARS

With the launch of the first prison campus in 2017, we have grown to four prison campuses and have seen 179 baptisms and a total of 1,154 salvations in prisons!



GREATER LAFAYETTE

The Greater Lafayette Campus has empowered Ministry Associates in every department of campus life, raising up leaders to join this campus team. This campus also had the third-highest growth rate in four years.



KOKOMO

The Kokomo Campus had a successful outreach event with their 2021 Fall Festival. More than 1,000 people came with more than half who don't attend Northview! The Kokomo Campus also had the highest growth rate in four years.



MICROSITES

Northview started our first microsite in North Putnam County in 2019 with a mission to host Northview services in smaller communities. This vision continued to expand with the 2021 launch of our Marion Microsite.



ONLINE

75 countries are represented in our online viewership. We have an average of 1,450 people live-streaming on the weekends, most likely in their pajamas.



WESTFIELD

More than 104 women read through the Bible together in one year. It's awesome to see that many women from the Westfield Campus on fire for God's Word!

EVERY NUMBER HAS A NAME
EVERY NAME HAS A STORY
EVERY STORY MATTERS TO GOD



**FIRST-TIME
GUESTS**

The Kokomo Campus had the highest growth rate from 2018-2021 at 33%, while the Binford Campus came in second at 29%, followed by the Greater Lafayette Campus at 16%.



BAPTISM

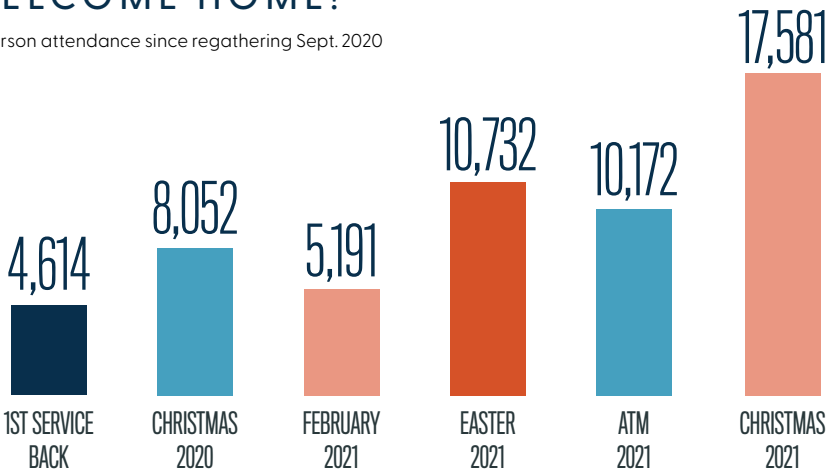
2021  409



SALVATIONS
2021

WELCOME HOME!

In-person attendance since regathering Sept. 2020

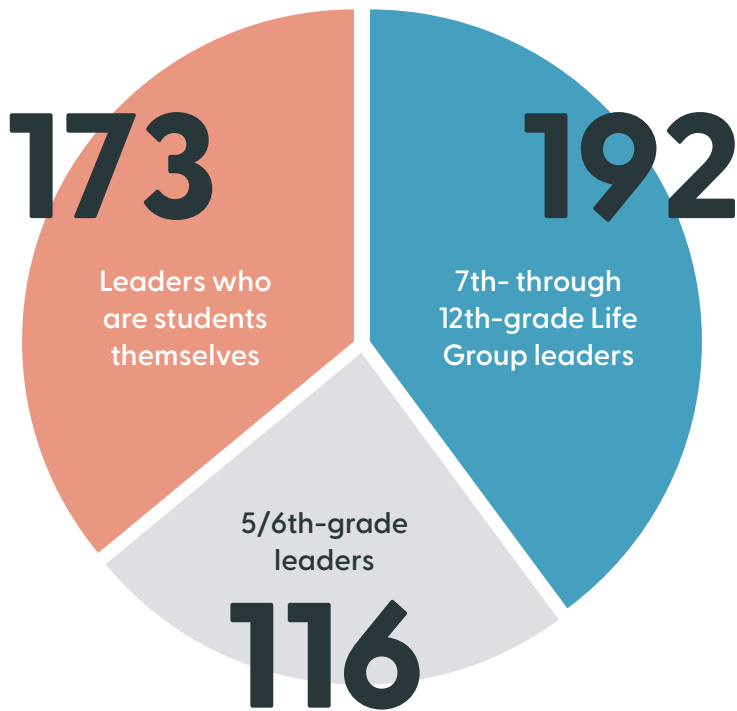


FAMILY MINISTRY

IN 2021

In Family Ministry, we believe in partnering with parents to allow for spiritual wins not only at church, but at home, too. Every week matters in the life of our kids and students, which is why we've developed a family plan to help parents make the most of each moment.

NUMBER OF VOLUNTEERS



691 NORTHVIEW KIDS VOLUNTEERS

26% OF THOSE VOLUNTEERS ARE STUDENTS

126

kids and students
baptized

1
6
6

Bibles were given to 2nd-
and 3rd-graders during
the Bible Presentation
service - parents publicly
committing to reading the
Bible with their kids

144

babies were dedicated during the Baby
Dedication service - parents publicly committing
to raising their child in a God-honoring manner

855

STUDENTS IN
LIFE GROUPS

251

STUDENTS
ACCEPTED
CHRIST



NORTHVIEW MISSIONS

IN 2021

We are a church that unapologetically cares just as much about the person who doesn't attend Northview as the person who does. We aim to show that level of care by serving people in global, urban and local communities who need a little extra help.

2,646

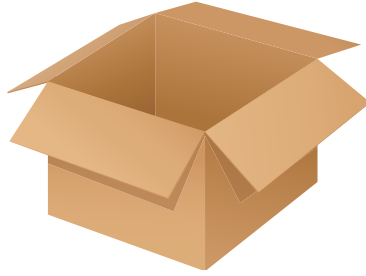
Ghanian children sponsored during our Chosen series

\$48,281

was raised for back-to-school local missions projects

3 virtual and 1 in-person GO Trips to
Uganda, Haiti and New York City

2,000



hygiene kits collected
and distributed to
12 organizations
around Indiana

4,137 HOURS OF SERVICE



What is
FIRST?



OUR PRIMARY GOAL

100% ENGAGEMENT

Our dream for FIRST is every person at Northview would acknowledge and declare Jesus is before all things in their lives. Through FIRST, we are calling everyone to think differently about how we view the possessions and resources God has entrusted to our care.

Consider Paul's message to the church: "The Son is the image of the invisible God, the first born over all creation. For in him all things were created: things in heaven and in earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things and in him all things hold together." -Colossians 1:15-17

How should we respond to such an amazing reality? Do we have unsundered areas of our life? Does our faith in Jesus need to be revitalized? Have we given our very best from the one who gave us his very life?

We want every single person to take his or her next right step in discipleship and generosity through FIRST.

OUR SECONDARY GOAL

\$77 MILLION

As we all join to put God before all things in our lives, we are trusting Him to move through each one of us to raise \$77 million over the next two years. We will invest these resources in three areas of kingdom impact.

\$38.5M BEFORE ALL THINGS IN OUR CHURCH

This covers the lifeblood of what we do every day and represents our annual two-year operating budget. We will invest in our ongoing ministries and trust God to accelerate the life-changing work He is already doing in kids, students and adults at Northview.

\$29.2M BEFORE ALL THINGS IN OUR COMMUNITIES

Valley Retreat Center (\$5.2M)

God gave us a beautiful retreat property when we adopted Oakbrook Church. Now is the time to make needed improvements so ministries like Discipleship Walk, Northview Kids and Northview Students can continue to realize life-changing experiences for years to come.

Pathways Learning Center Strategy (\$2.5M)

We will invest to make our Northview Kids spaces “Pathways-ready,” and in doing so, we will help provide ongoing income, which will offset monthly building expenses into our future.

Multisite/Microsite Campus Expansion (\$4.5M)

We believe God is calling us to trust Him to reach people in communities where there is not a church like Northview. Our vision is to plant two new multisite campuses and as many microsites as he chooses to bring our way.

The Marriage Initiative (\$1M)

God has given us a desire to see marriages not just survive but thrive in central Indiana. Through this exciting new community marriage initiative, we believe God will make Northview a community resource for building healthy relationships, and in doing so, many will come to faith in Jesus.

Debt Reduction (\$16M)

We are trusting God with the BHAG (big hairy audacious goal) of being debt-free by 2025. By intentionally and aggressively paying down our debt, we are trusting God to show up in a big way and help us realize this dream.



\$9.3M BEFORE ALL THINGS IN OUR WORLD

Global Missions (\$5M)

With our incredible World Vision sponsorship of 2,648 children in Ghana through our 2021 Chosen series, our cornerstone global work through FIRST will be ongoing investments into the Ghanaian communities where our children live by sharing the Gospel of Jesus through clean water and community development projects. Other global investments will include great Northview mission partners like IJM, One Hope, Bright Hope and Filters of Hope.

Domestic Missions (\$4.3M)

In a dark world, each of our Northview campuses has the opportunity to be a bright light for Christ by loving and serving our neighbors, and we will give each campus financial resources to make that possible in a much bigger way. In addition, we will increase our investment into our Brookside outreach by \$1.7M to help accelerate the great work God is doing.



WAYS TO ENGAGE





ENGAGE THROUGH PRAYER

Seek God wholeheartedly and ask Him to clearly lead you in knowing what a FIRST gift looks like for you. Visit northviewchurch.us/first to learn more.

ENGAGE THROUGH GIVING

Be a part of the 100% engagement by making a two-year commitment to FIRST.

ENGAGE THROUGH INFLUENCE

Use your God-given influence to encourage others to engage with FIRST and lead by attending the Advance Commitment Night on Thursday, March 10, as well as being a part of Commitment Sunday at your campus the weekend of March 19.

THE JOURNEY OF GENEROSITY



INITIAL GIVER

An Initial Giver is someone who decides to give for the first time, out of a response to God's Word about giving. This is someone who decides to give something and trust God and the leaders of the Church with this gift.



CONSISTENT GIVER

A Consistent Giver is someone who decides to give something and to give it on a consistent basis to exercise the discipline of giving as a disciple of Jesus. Often, someone who decides to make their gift an online recurring gift will be someone who is learning the behavior of consistency. Non-online givers can be consistent givers as well; it just requires more discipline.



PRIORITY GIVER

A Priority Giver is someone who understands the preeminence of Christ and He is before all things – all things were created by Him, for Him, through Him and to Him. This giver places such a significant priority on their giving that it drives their spending and their saving, as opposed to their spending and saving driving their giving.



SURRENDERED GIVER

A Surrendered Giver is someone who recognizes the power of the Gospel and is surrendered to honoring God with 100 percent of their resources as a result. A Surrendered Giver is someone who gives in a way that changes them, in a way that reflects the totality of their resources belong to God. A Surrendered Giver isn't just concerned with what they ARE giving, but is more concerned with what they're NOT giving and why, and they seek to honor God with 100 percent of what He has given them, whether that means direct monetary giving or a God-honoring use of an existing resource.




ETERNAL GIVER

An Eternal Giver is someone who is thinking about the longer tail of generosity rather than just the shorter term of month-to-month generosity or even year-to-year. An Eternal Giver makes decisions in the short term that have longer term effects as it relates to their generosity capacity. They think of what home they buy, what car they purchase, how much savings they choose to keep, all in relation to their generosity capacity. An Eternal Giver is driven by the things of eternity, putting their hope in God and not in the things of this earth.

ONE FUND

You may have been a part of a church where you were asked to give a second gift above and beyond your usual gifts to make special initiatives like new buildings and new ministries possible. Normally, you gave that gift to the Building Fund and you also continued to give offerings to the General Fund. We aren't doing that with FIRST. Instead, FIRST will be a "one-fund" initiative, which means all of our giving goes toward all of our projects. It is all one mission, so it is all one budget.

God has called Northview to one mission to connect people with God and people with people, and through FIRST, we all can join together to advance the kingdom in our church, in our communities and in our world.

\$	What I/we normally give in a year (regular giving, tithes, offerings, etc.)
+ \$	My/Our expanded annual generosity as part of the FIRST initiative
= \$	x 2 years 
	\$
+ Gifts from my/our stored resources (cash savings, stock, retirement)	\$

MY/OUR TOTAL 2-YEAR FIRST COMMITMENT

\$

April 2022 - April 2024

TWO-YEAR GIFT CHART

As you pray and discern how God would ask you to give during this time, use this gift chart as a discipleship tool. Let it be something that inspires and challenges you toward greater generosity for Christ's kingdom as we seek to declare He is FIRST, before all things.

GIFTS NEEDED	TWO-YEAR GIFT LEVEL	ANNUAL GIFT	MONTHLY GIFT	GIFT LEVEL TOTAL
1	\$5,000,000	\$2,500,000	\$208,333	\$5,000,000
2	\$2,500,000	\$1,250,000	\$104,167	\$5,000,000
4	\$1,500,000	\$750,000	\$62,500	\$6,000,000
7	\$1,000,000	\$500,000	\$41,667	\$7,000,000
10	\$500,000	\$250,000	\$20,833	\$5,000,000
15	\$250,000	\$125,000	\$10,417	\$3,750,000
25	\$150,000	\$75,000	\$6,250	\$3,750,000
40	\$100,000	\$50,000	\$4,167	\$4,000,000
55	\$75,000	\$37,500	\$3,125	\$4,125,000
80	\$65,000	\$32,500	\$2,708	\$5,200,000
95	\$50,000	\$25,000	\$2,083	\$4,750,000
105	\$35,000	\$17,500	\$1,458	\$3,675,000
150	\$25,000	\$12,500	\$1,042	\$3,750,000
250	\$15,000	\$7,500	\$625	\$3,750,000
400	\$10,000	\$5,000	\$417	\$4,000,000
450	\$7,500	\$3,750	\$313	\$3,375,000
550	\$5,000	\$2,500	\$208	\$2,750,000
MANY	\$2,500	\$1,250	\$104	\$2,125,000
TOTAL				\$77,000,000





WEEK ONE



WEEK 1

WEEK 1

LIFE GROUP STUDY

PLAY VIDEO

Play the Week 1 teaching and testimony video from northviewchurch.us/first. Share reflections from the video afterward. Pray for this testimony before you begin the rest of the lesson.

READ

Colossians 1:15-20

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

This letter to the Colossians was written to warn believers against a big heresy of this day – the heresy that conflicted the supremacy of Jesus Christ. Heretics told believers they needed something more than their relationship with Jesus to bring them to a genuine spiritual experience. The false teachers in Colossae, like the false teachers of our own day, would not deny the importance of Jesus Christ. They would give Him prominence but not preeminence. In their view, Jesus was one of many beings that came from God and through which men could reach God. It was this claim Paul spoke against in this passage.

You must remember, however, the Colossians received this letter from a man – Paul – whom they had never met. This man was in prison, and he was contradicting almost everything they were being taught from other teachers. They knew Paul had been involved in leading Epaphras (their pastor) to faith in Christ. However, the false teachers in Colossae had been causing doubts in the people's minds and discrediting Paul.

Anticipating this situation, Paul spends some time in this passage writing about himself and explaining his ministry – sharing the Gospel, suffering for these Colossians and interceding for the believers.

DISCUSS

1. Have you ever made a decision and said to your friend or to your spouse, "If I/we make this decision, some things are going to have to change..."? What was that decision, and why was it a driver of other things?
2. In light of the heresies of that day, it was important to Paul that the church know the truth about who Christ is. How did Paul describe Christ in this passage?
3. Why is it so significant that Christ is preeminent before all things?
4. What are the implications of Christ being preeminent as it relates to our generosity?
5. What about this passage changes the way you see your resources and stewardship?
6. As you think about the FIRST initiative and a generosity challenge God might have for you in this season, is there something you are putting "before all things" instead of Christ?

REFLECT

What are your thoughts and feelings as we head into this new generosity campaign? Spend time as a group in prayer for the things you just shared.





FIRST DEVO

WEEK 1



First Things First

What's this all about?

We started a whole new campaign that could quite literally change your life. That's not meant to sound dramatic, but it's true. If you're able to declare Christ before all things in your life, really submit to his full authority first before anything else, your life is going to change. That doesn't mean life is going to get easier or that all of sudden you'll end up with the perfect job.

The fact is your life might get harder. Priorities will need to change, and you will likely get stretched out of your comfort zone. So, you need to ask yourself: *Do I really want to put Christ first, or do I want to keep living the way I am?*

The simple truth is Jesus didn't save you to have an easy life; He saved you so He could bring you to life. And when Jesus brings you to life, He brings the fullest life you can imagine.

The journey you're starting right now is not about being a "better Christian." **It's entirely about loving Jesus more.**

If that's what you're looking to make, you'll want to start by identifying the areas in life that are keeping you from this change.

Oftentimes in our lives when we need to make a change (take health, for example), we need to start by identifying the problem areas. If you're looking to drop some pounds, nutrition is a great place to start, because what you put in your body affects your entire body.

The same principle works in our faith. If you really want to live a life where Jesus is first, you need to figure out what is currently taking His place. It's not always an issue of sinful behavior that keeps us from putting Jesus first; sometimes it's just misplaced priorities.

ENGAGE

- 1 What was the first thing you thought about today (after thinking about going back to sleep)?
- 2 List the areas of your life that get the most attention. (The areas where you intentionally use your time, energy, resources; the things you're reading articles or books about; etc.)
- 3 What are the things that keep you from connecting with Jesus on a regular basis?

Take a few minutes and read Colossians 1:15-20. Take this time to engage with Paul's words; read it as many times as you need to before moving on.

In the verses you just read, Paul makes it painstakingly clear that ALL THINGS in creation were made by Christ for Christ, and because of that he is over all things and deserves to be first before all things.

What consumes your heart?

Day one of this week you spent time identifying areas where you have misplaced priorities. Today, we're going to explore why.

You, like everyone else, were created uniquely by God (Psalm 139: 13-16), and that goes beyond your eye color, your height or the amount of hair you currently have. It plays out even in your areas of passion. And those areas of passion are often the things that take priority in your life. They prompt you to watch video after video on YouTube or chase experience after experience. And that's ok; God created you to have interests and passions not everyone else has. This was part of His plan to make you stand out from everyone else.

For the Apostle Paul, this played out in the way that he dedicated his life to serving God. Paul had a passion for God, and it was that passion that led him to persecute Christians prior to his own experience with Jesus (Acts 9). It wasn't until Paul truly submitted his life and his passions to Christ that he was able to be used by Christ to build the body of Christ. Paul's passion for God consumed his heart to the point that he saw no other way to live his life without giving everything he had to serve God.

The problem comes when we put these passions in front of the One who wired us for them.

It's not always our passions that drive us though; sometimes it's duty or responsibility. Again, there is nothing wrong with prioritizing your family or working diligently. On the contrary, scripture has a lot to say about the importance of both of those. It makes it clear we're supposed to care for our families and also work hard.

But again, the problem comes when we put our duties or responsibilities ahead of the One who has entrusted them to us.

But why do we do this?

Why do we have such a hard time actually seeing Christ first in all these things?

The simple answer – we focus on what’s in front of us.

We focus on our kids because they’re incredibly important, and they’re right in front of us.

We focus on our careers because we want to achieve what has been asked of us.

We focus on our passions because they make us feel alive.

These priorities are gifts, but they are only good when they come under the supremacy of Christ.

Perhaps what we need is a better lens through which to see the things that are right in front of us.

Read Colossians 1:15-17



ENGAGE

In the verses you just read, Paul poetically conveys the truth that Christ existed before all things, and He was actively creating everything. This includes your own faith. Let that truth sink in; He initiated your faith long before you knew of Him.

1 Look back at your list from day one. Why do you give so much time and attention to the areas you listed?

2 What difference does it make to view your list in light in this passage? (What does it look like for your priorities to come under the authority of Christ?)

3 Use two of your priorities from day one to work through the exercise on the next page:

Priority	When it's Not Surrendered	When it's Surrendered
Advancing in your career	Overworking, needing recognition in the workplace, cutting corners to please your supervisors, failures are devastating, perfectionism	Using leadership opportunities and gifting to reflect Christ in the workplace, bring out the best in others, teachable, boundaries

4

What is one thing you can do today to start surrendering these priorities to Jesus' Lordship?

Love

There are few words that stir as many emotions as the word “love.” And despite the fact that this word is so evocative, it gets thrown around in such a way that we sometimes lose the understanding of what it means to love something or someone. We hear and use the word so often that in some settings it has lost the weight of its real meaning.

We use the same word to convey how we feel about a spouse, children, friends, dogs and tacos.

Using love as flippantly as we do is bound to muddle our understanding of the word. The true depth of love is only felt within action.

When we turn to scripture to understand what love actually means, things start to get clearer. Even though there are multiple words used for “love” in the New Testament (one for romantic love, one for brotherly love/friendship and one for unconditional love), all of them require action. That’s because the actions (or inactions) that accompany our words show the depth of meaning or the weight contained within those words. This is why John 3:16 is the most memorized verse in all the Bible, because it shows that God really loves His creation enough to back His words up with the greatest demonstration of love the world will ever know.

Over the last few days you’ve identified what has been taking priority in your life; today, you’re going to do something about that. If you’re ready to make the necessary changes to put Christ first in all things, it’s going to require more than just saying it. It’s going to require more than making the decision and telling someone about it. You’re going to have to back it up with your actions.

Remember, this is not about making a decision to “be a better Christian.” This is about a personal conviction to love Jesus more. And the actions that accompany our words of affection for Christ will show others the depth of our love for Christ and the level of our faith in him.

Read Colossians 1:18-22

ENGAGE

In the verses you read, Paul shows the fullness of God dwelled in Christ, and because the absolute fullness dwelled within Him, He was able to accomplish what He did “through his blood, shed on the cross (NIV).” Paul brilliantly shows us the action that accompanied the declaration of God’s love for us by sending His son. Then he takes it one step further to help us understand what our position was before Christ’s death and resurrection and what our position is after.

- 1** God demonstrated His love to us through Christ’s sacrifice. Choose a priority from day two’s exercise. What would it look like to demonstrate your love to God through this priority?
- 2** In verse 22, Paul describes our standing before God as reconciled, holy, without blemish, and free from accusation - all because of what Jesus accomplished for us. Knowing this is a result of God’s love in action, reflect on which word means the most to you and why.
- 3** What personal challenges do you face as you try to love God through your priorities?

Our Response

On Day Three, you reflected on the truth that love requires action from the one who makes the declaration. The other side of that coin is that it also requires a response from the person to whom the declaration was made. When someone tells you they love you, you are faced with two choices: 1) receive and reciprocate that love back to them, or 2) deflect that love and depart.

We see this all throughout the Bible. From the very beginning of creation God has been declaring his love for his creation and especially for those he made in his own image. And all throughout the Old Testament we see how God's chosen people respond to his declarations of love. Regardless of their choice, God continued to make his affection known to them.

Fast forward a few thousand years and you're faced with the same choice. When you look at your actions, have you chosen to receive and reciprocate God's love back to him or have you chosen to deflect and depart?

In Paul's eyes, the clearest response to God's declaration of love through Christ: total surrender to the ways of Christ and submission to his plans for you.

The temptation when reading that there's only one proper response to the Gospel is to think that the response looks the same for every person. But you've been given a unique story within a unique context. When our passions, our careers and our responsibilities are brought under God, He uses those things to advance his kingdom and love others well.

So, becoming a servant of Christ does not mean disregarding the people and the responsibilities God has placed in your life, but rather striving to live your life the way Christ did by reflecting his love into a broken and hurting world by modeling the character of Christ in every area of your life.

Read Colossians 1:22-23

ENGAGE

1 Paul received and reciprocated the love of God, and, in doing so, he viewed himself as a servant to the Gospel. What does it look like to be a servant of the Gospel in:

- Your home

- Your work/school

- Your neighborhood

- Your church

2 Look back to Day One of this week. Have you seen any growth in your thoughts and priorities? How do you feel about the changes or lack thereof?

3 How do you feel about the changes or lack thereof?

Intro to the Weekend

You've spent a lot of time this week reflecting on why Christ should be put first in every area of life and what it looks like for you to respond in love to Him. Read Paul's words about what putting Christ first in all areas looked like for him.

Below are three different translations of Colossians 1:24-29; read through the passage slowly in each translation following the instructions below.

Before you read: Spend a few moments in prayer asking God to meet with you and speak to you.

As you read: Be attentive to what stirs in you as you read Paul's words and mark the words or phrases that jump out at you.

After you read: Spend a few more moments in conversation with God about what you just read.

New International Version

²⁴Now I rejoice in what I am suffering for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's affections, for the sake of his body, which is the church. ²⁵I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness—²⁶the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the Lord's people. ²⁷To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

²⁸He is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ. ²⁹To this end I strenuously contend with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me.

The Message

²⁴⁻²⁵ I want you to know how glad I am that it's me sitting here in this jail and not you. There's a lot of suffering to be entered into in this world—the kind of suffering Christ takes on. I welcome the chance to take my share in the church's part of that suffering. When I became a servant in this church, I experienced this suffering as a sheer gift, God's way of helping me serve you, laying out the whole truth.

²⁶⁻²⁹ This mystery has been kept in the dark for a long time, but now it's out in the open. God wanted everyone, not just Jews, to know this rich and glorious secret inside and out, regardless of their background, regardless of their religious standing. 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. We preach Christ, warning people not to add to the Message. We teach in a spirit of profound common sense so that we can bring each person to maturity. To be mature is to be basic. Christ! No more, no less. That's what I'm working so hard at day after day, year after year, doing my best with the energy God so generously gives me.

The New Testament for Everyone

²⁴ Right now I'm having a celebration – a celebration of my sufferings, which are for your benefit! And I'm steadily completing, in my own flesh, what is presently lacking in the king's afflictions on behalf of his body, which is the church. ²⁵ I became the church's servant, according to the terms laid down by God when he gave me my commission on your behalf, the commission to fulfill God's word.

²⁶ This word declares the mystery that was kept secret from past ages and generations, but now has been revealed to God's holy people. ²⁷ God's intention was to make known to them just what rich glory this mystery contains, out there among the nations. And this is the key: the king, living within you as the hope of glory!

²⁸ He is the one we are proclaiming. We are instructing everybody and teaching everybody in every kind of wisdom, so that we can present everybody grown up, complete, in the king. ²⁹ That's what I am working for, struggling with all his energy which is powerfully at work within me.



A photograph of a musician performing on stage. The musician is in the foreground, wearing a patterned shirt and dark pants, playing an acoustic guitar and singing into a microphone. In the background, other band members are visible, including a woman playing a guitar and another person. The stage is lit with blue and white spotlights, creating a dramatic atmosphere. A white horizontal bar is overlaid across the middle of the image, containing the text "WEEK TWO".

WEEK TWO

WEEK 2

LIFE GROUP STUDY

PLAY VIDEO

Play the Week 2 teaching and testimony video from northviewchurch.us/first. Share reflections from the video afterward. Pray for this testimony before you begin the rest of the lesson.

READ

Colossians 1:24-29

DISCUSS

1. Joyful sacrifice means giving up something you love for something you love even more. When is a time you did this and what motivated you?
2. God calls us to steward every area of our life, including our time, resources, and relationships. How could you arrange your life in such a way that you are intentionally stewarding what God has given you?
3. What can we learn from Paul about dealing with suffering?
4. The FIRST initiative is all about discipleship and becoming more like Jesus. What can we learn about discipleship from Paul's example with the Colossians?

5. What is the goal of discipleship? How has your discipleship affected your generosity?

6. Read Colossians 1:28-29 again. What do you think it means to strenuously contend in discipleship?

REFLECT

Paul makes it clear that the suffering he endured was his sacrifice to fulfill the commission of God's Word. What might God be asking you to sacrifice in this FIRST journey?

Spend time as a group praying for the humility and courage to sacrifice what he is placing on your heart.

A young woman with dark curly hair and a nose ring is smiling and holding a large, hand-drawn sign. The sign is made of cardboard and has the words "ACCEPTED IN CHRIST" on the top line, "FOUND" on the second line, and "COMMUNITY" on the third line. She is wearing a grey hoodie over a white t-shirt and camouflage-patterned pants. The background is a solid blue color.

ACCEPTED
IN CHRIST
FOUND
COMMUNITY



FIRST DEVO

WEEK 2

What Does It Cost?

Focal Points

Let's check in from where we started last week. What was the first thing you thought of when you woke up today? What was the last thing you thought about before you fell asleep last night?

As you begin week 2 of this campaign, we need to make something clear. Acknowledging Christ first in your life is not always easy; in fact, it will often be difficult to put Him first.

Why?

Because the very moment you choose to follow Christ you are choosing to live your life differently. Not only does the Christian life differ from culture, it often opposes it. This happens in a number of ways, but at its most basic level it means shifting your focus from self-first to Jesus-first.

Think about it this way: You've certainly seen and probably taken some bad pictures throughout your life. Pictures where in the moment you think, "This is perfect!" Only to look at it afterward and realize the focus was on the wrong thing.

This is why focal points are so vitally important. Whether it's in photography or any other visual art, if the focal point is wrong, it can quickly ruin the viewer's experience. This is because intentional focal points bring clarity.

Choosing to put Christ first in all things means choosing to make Jesus the focal point of your life. But the world we live in constantly throws distractions at us to take our focus off Jesus. That is why intentionally living a Jesus-focused life is so difficult. Here's the encouraging thing: The more you make Jesus your focal point, the more clarity He will bring to your life. The things that matter to Jesus will start to matter to you more and more.

This is where Paul lived his life. This is why Paul was able to endure such hardship throughout his ministry. He understood living a Jesus-first life meant shifting his focus from "me first" to "me last" putting Jesus and others ahead of himself (Philippians 2:3-4).

ENGAGE

1 Read Colossians 1:24-29 from the end of last week. As you look at the words and phrases you marked, what stands out to you about them?

Spend some time right now talking with God about them and what He wants to tell you through them.

Opportunity Costs

Today you're going to make countless decisions, and every one of those decisions will come at a cost. It may not be a financial cost, and it may be an insignificant decision, but it's true every single decision you make has a cost.

That cost is an opportunity cost. For example, choosing tacos for lunch means not choosing something else. While this may seem trivial when it comes to lunch, opportunity cost has a massive implication when you think about your walk with Christ. This is why focal points are so important, because as they bring clarity to life they also bring clarity to our choices.

As you discovered yesterday, the moment you chose to follow Christ meant your focus needed to shift. Choosing to shift your focus from your own desires to Christ's desires for you will require sacrifice.

It may mean sacrificing a particular vacation or specific house in order to live within your means. It may mean sacrificing events to create space for rest in your life. It may mean sacrificing a promotion that would require too many nights away from home. The list could go on and on, but the truth stands: Living a Jesus-first life means making the sometimes-hard choices and sacrificing what you desire in order to live under the supremacy of Christ.

When Paul wrote the words in Colossians 1:24-29, he understood this principle. He knew choosing to be a servant of Christ meant forfeiting his own desires. That is why he was able to write, "Now I rejoice in what I am suffering for you...for the sake of [Christ's] body, which is the church. I have become its servant... (Colossians 1:24-25a)."

For Paul, relinquishing his desires and his control over his life was absolutely worth the cost of declaring Christ first in his life.

ENGAGE

In Luke 14 Jesus cautions us to count the cost of following Him. In this passage He uses fairly common examples to illustrate the opportunity cost involved with choosing to be his disciple. Read Luke 14:25-33 and answer the following ENGAGE.

1 In light of what Jesus said in these verses, what is the cost you have paid to follow Jesus?

2 How has it been worth it?

3 What opportunities are you actively or passively choosing to put ahead of Christ?

The Heart of Sacrifice

In the passage you read on Day Two, Jesus speaks very clearly about the opportunity cost of being His disciple. He essentially says, “Love me more than anything else or don’t bother.” That’s a drastic statement, and while there may be a bit of hyperbole in it, we see this dedication in action throughout the New Testament. This is why Paul wrote in the letter to the Philippians, “For me, to live is Christ, to die is gain (Philippians 1:21).” He understood the cost of following Jesus; He knew preaching the Gospel in the first century would bring physical pain and suffering. While knowing that, He still chose to make the sacrifice of Himself for the sake of Christ. This begs the question: **What’s at the heart of sacrifice?**

The word sacrifice gets used a lot today, and there are images that come to mind every time we hear it. We think of Olympic athletes who make sacrifices to become the best in the world at their sport; we think of people who sacrifice stable careers to create something new from scratch. As a culture we love these stories. We love hearing about someone sacrificing comfort to achieve something great. These stories are stories that inspire and drive us to achieve. But these stories only give us a glimpse of what sacrifice really is.

True sacrifice, on the other hand, is the kind of sacrifice that puts others first. Think of military personnel, first responders and countless other unsung heroes across the world. This is the kind of sacrifice we see modeled in scripture. But that doesn’t answer the question about the basis of sacrifice. If sacrifice is giving up something you value for the sake of something you deem more valuable or worthy, *then the heart of sacrifice must be trust*. Trust in your evaluations that the desired outcome is far more valuable than whatever you choose to sacrifice. In Paul’s case, it was to trust Jesus really was who He said He was. It was trust that building up God’s kingdom was worth the physical, mental and emotional pain he would suffer to play his part.

While biblical sacrifice may not require danger or imprisonment for you, it will always lead to building up the body of Christ by serving others. You can’t practice biblical – Christ-like – sacrifice without this being the result.

ENGAGE

In Philippians 3:4-7, Paul gives his credentials for having a reason to boast. He could boast about his heritage, his education, his zeal and his adherence to Jewish law. But, he makes it clear none of that is worth anything in relation to knowing and submitting to Christ. Read Colossians 2:1-5 and respond to the following prompts.

- 1 Who in your life have you seen consistently model a biblical understanding of sacrifice?
- 2 Why is that kind of sacrifice so attractive?
- 3 When you look back over the course of your life, when have you had to make a significant sacrifice for another person?
- 4 God is frequently inviting us to sacrifice for the sake of the kingdom. What is something you could sacrifice to put others first?

Put it on the Altar

On Day Three of this week, you discovered biblical sacrifice is preceded by trust. You also learned biblical sacrifice will always result in the building up of the body of Christ through serving others. As great as all of that sounds, it's not something that comes easily. Sacrifice by nature involves pain and struggle. That pain comes in the form of sacrificing ambition or setting aside longheld dreams in order to build up the church. That struggle comes from relinquishing the illusion of control we hold so tightly to thinking that we are the masters of our fate. Putting these sacrifices on the altar is no small feat. It takes equal amounts of intentionality to put them there and not pick them back up. It takes steadfastness to turn away from dreams you've had for decades. Most of all, it takes faithfulness to follow Christ obediently.

Making the necessary sacrifices to love Jesus more means that once you let go of control of your life you give control entirely over to Christ. But as you read on Day One of this week, choosing to really follow Christ will often put you in uncomfortable scenarios. Scenarios where you need to stand for what is right according to God and scripture, not the shifting philosophies of culture or going out of your way to serve someone in desperate need that others choose not to see.

¹And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him. ²Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect. - Romans 12:1-2 (NLT)

This is the point of living a sacrificial life, to be transformed by the work of the Holy Spirit in such a way that every aspect of your life is an act of worship to God. This type of sacrificial lifestyle only comes through faithfulness and trust that God does have your best at heart, despite what your circumstance may tell you.

From the very beginning of this journey the point has not been to be a better Christian, it is to love Jesus more. The more you love Jesus the more you will be transformed by his power. And transformation in Christ will always lead to a life of sacrifice.

While loving Jesus more does in fact lead to a life of sacrifice for the kingdom and the service of others, Jesus doesn't expect you to go from zero to all-in immediately. When you look at his interactions with people in scripture, He often moves at the pace they need. And despite the fact that we have a rather fast-paced culture, he understands sustainable change and growth come incrementally.

ACTION

On day three of this week you identified a sacrifice you can make to build the church and serve others. Today you're going to put that into action.

Here are some examples of action steps to take:

If you're choosing to sacrifice a vacation or major purchase for the purpose of the kingdom, consider transferring that money to a "generosity account." This is an account where you save money strictly to bless others/give away. If you're giving up overly packed schedules to be generous with your time, put specific and repeated times on your calendar when you will go serve and invite others to come with you.



On Day Three you identified something you could sacrifice to put others first. What changes will you make today to live this out?

We are more likely to follow through with a commitment when we tell someone about it. Choose the person you want to ask to hold you accountable. When will you tell them about the changes you're going to make?

Intro to the Weekend

You've spent a lot of time this week reflecting on the importance of focusing on Christ rather than the world around you and also what it really means to sacrifice for the sake of Christ's kingdom. Today you're going to spend your time reading about what focus and sacrifice can lead to when you live as if Christ is first in all things.

Below are two different translations of Colossians 2:8-3:5; read through the passage slowly in each translation following the instructions below.

Before you read: Spend a few moments in prayer asking God to meet with you and speak to you.

As you read: Be attentive to what stirs in you as you read Paul's words and mark the words or phrases that jump out at you.

After you read: Spend a few more moments in conversation with God about what you just read.

The Message

⁸⁻¹⁰ Watch out for people who try to dazzle you with big words and intellectual double-talk. They want to drag you off into endless arguments that never amount to anything. They spread their ideas through the empty traditions of human beings and the empty superstitions of spirit beings. But that's not the way of Christ. Everything of God gets expressed in him, so you can see and hear him clearly. You don't need a telescope, a microscope, or a horoscope to realize the fullness of Christ, and the emptiness of the universe without him. When you come to him, that fullness comes together for you, too. His power extends over everything.

¹¹⁻¹⁵ Entering into this fullness is not something you figure out or achieve. It's not a matter of being circumcised or keeping a long list of laws. No, you're already in—insiders—not through some secretive initiation rite but rather through what Christ has already gone through for you, destroying the power of sin. If it's an initiation ritual you're after, you've already been through it by submitting to baptism. Going under the water was a burial of your old life; coming up out of it was a resurrection, God raising you from the dead as he did Christ. When you were stuck in your old sin-dead life, you were incapable of responding to God. God brought you alive—right along with Christ! Think of it! All sins forgiven, the slate wiped clean, that old arrest warrant canceled and nailed to Christ's cross. He stripped all the spiritual tyrants in the universe of their sham authority at the Cross and marched them naked through the streets.

¹⁶⁻¹⁷ So don't put up with anyone pressuring you in details of diet, worship services, or holy days. All those things are mere shadows cast before what was to come; the substance is Christ.

¹⁸⁻¹⁹ Don't tolerate people who try to run your life, ordering you to bow and scrape, insisting that you join their obsession with angels and that you seek out visions. They're a lot of hot air, that's all they are. They're completely out of touch with the source of life, Christ, who puts us together in one piece, whose very breath and blood flow through us. He is the Head and we are the body. We can grow up healthy in God only as he nourishes us.

²⁰⁻²³ So, then, if with Christ you've put all that puffed-up and childish religion behind you, why do you let yourselves be bullied by it? "Don't touch this! Don't taste that! Don't go near this!" Do you think things that are here today and gone tomorrow are worth that kind of attention? Such things sound impressive if said in a deep enough voice. They even give the illusion of being pious and humble and austere. But they're just another way of showing off, making yourselves look important.

^{3:1-2} So if you're serious about living this new resurrection life with Christ, act like it. Pursue the things over which Christ presides. Don't shuffle along, eyes to the ground, absorbed with the things right in front of you. Look up, and be alert to what is going on around Christ—that's where the action is. See things from his perspective.

³⁻⁴ Your old life is dead. Your new life, which is your real life—even though invisible to spectators—is with Christ in God. He is your life. When Christ (your real life, remember) shows up again on this earth, you'll show up, too—the real you, the glorious you. Meanwhile, be content with obscurity, like Christ.

⁵ And that means killing off everything connected with that way of death: sexual promiscuity, impurity, lust, doing whatever you feel like whenever you feel like it, and grabbing whatever attracts your fancy. That's a life shaped by things and feelings instead of by God.

The New Testament for Everyone

⁸ Watch out that nobody uses philosophy and hollow trickery to take you captive! These are in line with human tradition, and with the 'elements of the world' – not the king. ⁹ In him, you see, all the full measure of divinity has taken up bodily residence. ¹⁰ What's more, you are fulfilled in him, since he's the head of all rule and authority.

¹¹ In him, indeed, you were circumcised with a special, new type of circumcision. It isn't something that human hands can do. It is the king's version of circumcision, and it happens when you put off the 'body of flesh': ¹² when you're buried with him in baptism, and indeed also raised with him, through faith in the power of the God who raised him from the dead.

¹³ In the same way, though you were dead in legal offences, and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive together with Jesus, forgiving us all our offences. ¹⁴ He blotted out the handwriting that was against us, opposing us with its legal demands. He took it right out of the way, by nailing it to the cross. ¹⁵ He stripped the rulers and authorities of their armour, and displayed them contemptuously to public view, celebrating his triumph over them in him.

¹⁶ So don't let anyone pass judgment on you in a question of food or drink, or in the matter of festivals, new moons or sabbaths. ¹⁷ These things are a shadow cast by the coming reality – and the body that casts the shadow belongs to the king! ¹⁸ Don't let anyone rule you out of order by trying to force you into a kind of fake humility, or into worshipping angels. Such people will go on and on about visions they've had; they get puffed up without good reason by merely human thinking, ¹⁹ and they don't keep hold of the Head. It's from him that the whole body grows with the growth God gives it, as it's nourished and held together by its various ligaments and joints.

²⁰ If you died with the king, coming out from the rule of the 'worldly elements', what's the point of laying down laws as though your life was still merely worldly? ²¹ 'Don't handle! Don't taste! Don't touch!' ²² Rules like that all have to do with things that disappear as you use them. They are the sort of regulations and teachings that mere humans invent. ²³ They may give an appearance of wisdom, since they promote a do-it-yourself religion, a kind of humility, and severe treatment of the body. But they are of no use when it comes to dealing with physical self-indulgence.

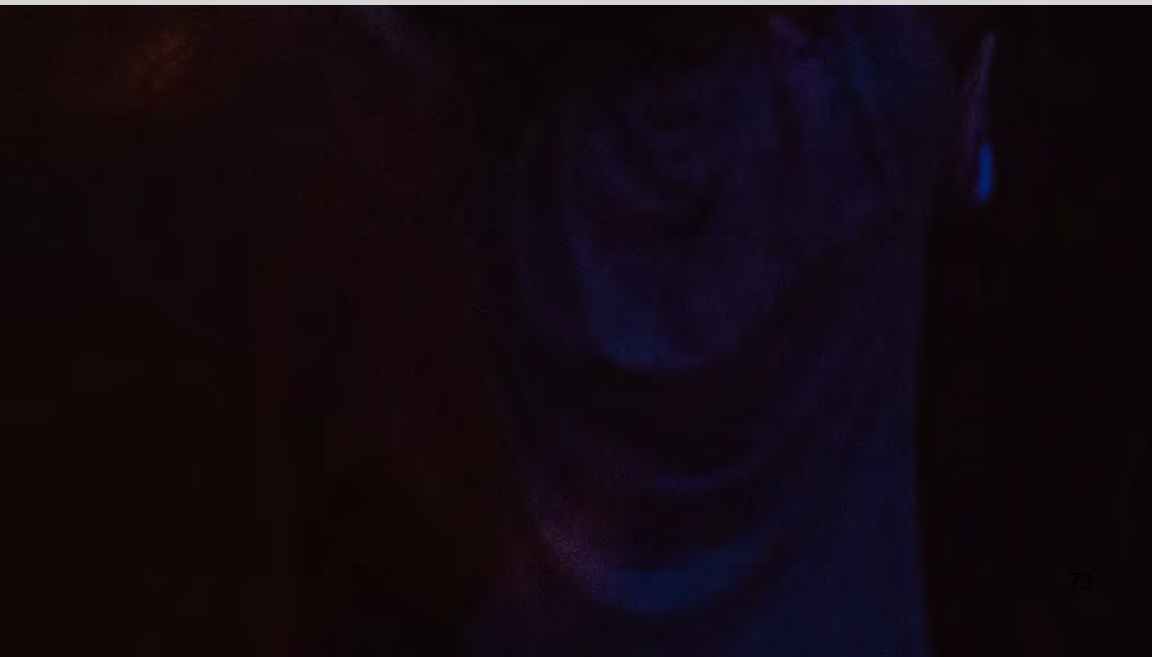
³¹ So if you were raised to life with the king, search for the things that are above, where the king is seated at God's right hand! ² Think about the things that are above, not the things that belong on the earth. ³ Don't you see: you died, and your life has been hidden with the king, in God! ⁴ When the king is revealed (and he is your life, remember), then you too will be revealed with him in glory.

⁵ So, then, you must kill off the parts of you that belong on the earth: illicit sexual behavior, uncleanness, passion, evil desire and greed (which is a form of idolatry).





WEEK THREE



WEEK 3

WEEK 3

LIFE GROUP STUDY

PLAY VIDEO

Play the Week 3 teaching and testimony video from northviewchurch.us/first. Share reflections from the video afterward. Pray for this testimony before you begin the rest of the lesson.

READ

Colossians 2:8 – 3:5

DISCUSS

1. What is something you are “all in” on, as in fully committed to? How is your life shaped because you are “all in” on that thing?
2. A goal of the FIRST initiative is for us to put Jesus first in our lives. What changes have you made over the last few weeks to pursue this?
3. Have you ever felt stagnant in your faith? What consequences have you seen in those seasons?

4. “But now we have been released from the law, for we died to it and are no longer captive to its power. Now we can serve God, not in the old way of obeying the letter of the law, but in the new way of living in the Spirit.” (Romans 7:6, NLT). What does it mean to be released from the law? How are you “free to serve in the new way” as it relates to generosity?

5. How does the world keep us from exhibiting reckless generosity for Christ? How can we fight against that in our FIRST commitments? How can we use our FIRST commitments to fight against those tactics?

REFLECT

Is there anything in your life you would consider an “indulgence of the flesh” that you may be falsely believing is “no big deal” because of a legalistic act you use to combat against it? Be as honest as you can.





FIRST DEVO

WEEK 3



From Death to Fullness

The Progression

As we've done before, let's work on our mindfulness. What was the first thing you thought of when you woke up today? Or, what was the last thing you thought about before you fell asleep last night?

Read Colossians 2:8-3:5.

Much of last week was spent reflecting upon sacrifice and what this could look like in our lives. You may recall that trust is the bedrock of sacrifice. A sacrifice cannot be forced -- that's called coercion -- it has to be willingly given. I'm sure you can think of times in your life where someone asked you to "sacrifice" for them, but you were never actually given a choice. That's not a sacrifice. Sacrifice has to be chosen, and it can only be chosen when trust is present. And so, we have to ask ourselves, is God trustworthy?

It can be really easy to look at the Christian life and think: This looks like a lot of loss. Do the gains really compare to all that is given up?

Have you felt this tension before? The act of living so counter-culturally means you'll be rubbing up against cultural norms all the time. Decisions you make will frequently be questioned, scorned or laughed at. Daily, God calls us to take up our cross and follow Him; this command literally means to die to self. And we're called to this daily! And so, again we ask, is God trustworthy?

Is the life He promises really worth it? How can so much sacrifice lead to so much life?

God makes lots of promises to us in this week's passage from Colossians. We'll see a progression where **sacrifice leads us from death to life to freedom to fullness**. The promise we'll be building up to is that of fullness. As you read in verse 10, the life of a Christian is a life that leads to fullness. This is a promise that we can cling to, because no matter how many times we ask, the answer will always be yes, God is trustworthy.

ENGAGE

1 Going off of your first reading of this passage, how do you think sacrifice leads to fullness?

2 Have you ever questioned God's trustworthiness? What usually leads you to these moments?

Death to Life

Read Colossians 2:8-15.

There is something incredible and supernatural about a person being raised from the dead. The body has an amazing ability to fight for life when it's still living, but take away the beating heart and breath-filled lungs and the body is powerless. A person who is dead is completely at the mercy of external forces (a defibrillator, nurse, coffin) for any changes to befall it. Death removes every sense of control, ability and will.

And so it is with the spiritual death that we are all tied to by our sin-wrecked existence. The fall of man didn't bring bad behavior into the picture, it brought in an awful new reality: spiritual deadness. And just like a physically dead body has no ability to resurrect itself, the spiritually dead person is powerless to breathe life into him/herself.

But don't we try?

We spend our lives thinking we'll be able to fill that massive space between death and life. *My good behavior surely makes me more worthy of God's forgiveness. My generous giving has certainly earned me God's love.* But here's the problem: a salvation based on our behavior is no salvation at all, for it completely eliminates the need.

When we wrap our minds around the reality of what our God has done for us, what his enormous love has accomplished for us, then we will see just how much our lives are tied to that gift. Our resources, talents, influence and relationships are enveloped in the beauty of our resurrected life. And this will begin to shift something inside of us. A slow, arduous, relentless shift will begin as the loving grace of God makes its way into every area of your life -- your home, your work, your finances, your recreation. You will start to view all of it in light of God's great mercy. And you won't be able to help but surrender these areas to God because you'll realize he didn't just add a fresh coat of paint to these things, he added life.

“But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions -- it is by grace you have been saved.” - Ephesians 2:4-5

ENGAGE

- 1** Consider the priorities you've spent the last few weeks reflecting on. How has your relationship with Christ brought life to those things?
- 2** Put simply, we try to control our lives because we don't trust God. What in your life still feels hard to surrender to Christ? How could letting go of control actually lead to life?
- 3** Reflect on how God has changed the way you think about, experience and live out your priorities. What more could he want to do in you and for you through the continued surrender of those?

Life to Freedom

Read Colossians 2:16-23.

In our life, we will receive a never-ending parade of messages telling us we need this or that to be happy, healthy and thriving. We are told *this* product, *that* ideology, *their* adventure is what's missing from our lives. Just get yourself one of these and suddenly you won't feel so empty, uncertain, fearful or unhappy. Unfortunately, some of these messages have come from the church. That's what we read the church in Colossians was facing as Paul wrote his letter, and it's what many of us have also heard throughout our lives. *Do this, and you'll be saved. Mess up here, and God won't accept you anymore. God is only pleased when you are saying these prayers, abstaining from these foods and participating in these church functions.*

But Jesus came to remove the burdens of our world, not to make them heavier. The trouble is, we get so caught up in what we need in order to be content that we find ourselves in an endless cycle of striving and yet never being satisfied. In Christ, we are freed not just from sin's power but from striving for all the world tells us we need to be happy. And we are freed from the fear that we're less than, unaccepted or bad for stepping off that cycle.

The Gospel frees us to actually experience contentment and satisfaction in the kingdom of God, and to break away from striving for significance, purpose and happiness. How we spend our time, money and energy is no longer driven by the need for significance and acceptance, but by a love for God that compels us to honor Him with all that we have and in all that we do.

"In modern Western society, freedom means autonomy. We dangerously believe freedom means, 'I can do anything I want.' But scripture authors never describe freedom this way, they describe it like this: Something used to have a hold of me, but a better power released me from it and now that better power has a hold of me." -Steve Cuss, *Managing Leadership Anxiety*

We are now able to spend our lives for the glory of God and the good of others, freed from the burden of never having or being enough.



———— ENGAGE ————

1 In your life, what have you chased after thinking it will satisfy you, only to learn it was just a part of the never-ending cycle?

2 How does a kingdom perspective (acknowledging God above all things) lead to freedom?

3 Reflect on the things you often feel burdened by. God wants to take the weight of that burden from you and give you rest and contentment instead. Choose one or two that come to mind and work through the chart on the next page to help you live in the freedom God offers.

<p>My worldly burden says...</p>	<p>My God says...</p>	<p>Walking in freedom looks like...</p>
<p>My worth is tied to my appearance, so I will spend more money than I'd like to on clothes, shoes, products and accessories.</p>	<p>There is intrinsic value in me that dives deep beneath the surface because God not only created me in his image, but laid down his life for me (Gen. 1:27, 1 Cor. 7:23).</p>	<p>Intentionally skipping the latest fashion trend, posting fewer selfies, and trusting that my value doesn't decrease when I do this.</p>

Freedom to Fullness

Read Colossians 3:1-5.

“Grace isn’t opposed to effort, but to earning,” said Dallas Willard. We’ve gotten it into our heads that grace and works are enemies. We think the gift of grace means we can throw our works out the window because, by golly, I am saved by grace alone! And yet, when we read scripture, we see God not only prepared us to do good work, but He wants to see that good work develop in us for our whole life until Christ returns (Eph. 2:10, Phil. 1:6).

As we’ve chewed on this passage in Colossians, we’ve seen a very real shift happens in us when we put God first and live within his kingdom. We’ve seen God breathe life into the things that were once dead and empty. We’ve experienced Him free us from the burdens that the world loves to place on us. And yet, there’s more: a fullness in Christ yet to be obtained.

Just as a surrender took place when you first took Christ at his word and entered the family of God, a daily surrender to his love and lordship will now be necessary to walk through life as a disciple of Christ. Some days that surrender will feel like joy incarnate, and other days that surrender feels like the hardest decision you’ve ever made. And yet, the promise: surrender that leads to fullness.

And what makes this surrender so challenging at times (and especially at the beginning)? It involves death. A death of the old self. The old self that cared more about gain than giving must be put to death. The old self that withheld love in conflict instead of extending forgiveness and love. The old self that lied, cheated, cut corners, flattered, gossiped and resented without much thought. It’s the old self that we’re very familiar with that we’re called to lay down.

“Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer every part of yourself to him as an instrument of righteousness. For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not

under the law, but under grace.” -Romans 6:13-14 (emphasis added)

Why do we do this? True freedom (or fullness) comes in forging a new path and moving into a new reality. A path, forged long ago by Christ himself, bringing all who would follow it into a new reality which claims that life is found when we come to the end of ourselves.

And so, “set your mind on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden in Christ. (v. 2, 3)”

———— ENGAGE ————

1 Consider your day-to-day life. Where is it not reflecting Christ? Why do you think that is?

2 With this new awareness, what do you need to put to death in order for Christ's life to be reflected in yours?

3 In the space below, write a prayer of surrender. Ask God for the faith to put your old self to death today and to be filled by the fullness of Christ. Over the next seven days, begin your day praying this prayer. Perhaps you can put it on your mirror, phone background or fridge as a daily reminder.



Intro to the Weekend

Throughout this week, you have seen a beautiful progression a Christian is taken on by the power of the Gospel: death to life to freedom to fullness. One promise that makes the Gospel so wonderful is there is always more. More grace, more depth, more freedom, more of God. Seek more. We are recipients of a good and full life through Christ Jesus our Lord.

Below are three different translations of Colossians 3:16-24; read through the passage slowly in each translation following the instructions below.

Before you read: Spend a few moments in prayer asking God to meet with you and speak to you.

As you read: Be attentive to what stirs in you as you read Paul's words and mark the words or phrases that jump out at you.

After you read: Spend a few more moments in conversation with God about what you just read.

New International Version

¹⁶ Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. ¹⁷ And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. ¹⁸ Wives, submit yourselves to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. ¹⁹ Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them. ²⁰ Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. ²¹ Fathers,[a] do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged. ²² Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to curry their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord. ²³ Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, ²⁴ since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.

The Message

¹⁵⁻¹⁷ Let the peace of Christ keep you in tune with each other, in step with each other. None of this going off and doing your own thing. And cultivate thankfulness. Let the Word of Christ—the Message—have the run of the house. Give it plenty of room in your lives. Instruct and direct one another using good common sense. And sing, sing your hearts out to God! Let every detail in your lives—words, actions, whatever—be done in the name of the Master, Jesus, thanking God the Father every step of the way.

¹⁸⁻²¹ Wives, understand and support your husbands by submitting to them in ways that honor the Master. Husbands, go all out in love for your wives. Don't take advantage of them. Children, do what your parents tell you. This delights the Master no end. Parents, don't come down too hard on your children or you'll crush their spirits.

²²⁻²⁴ Servants, do what you're told by your earthly masters. And don't just do the minimum that will get you by. Do your best. Work from the heart for your real Master, for God, confident that you'll get paid in full when you come into your inheritance. Keep in mind always that the ultimate Master you're serving is Christ. The sullen servant who does shoddy work will be held responsible. Being a follower of Jesus doesn't cover up bad work.

The New Testament for Everyone

¹⁶ Let the king's word dwell richly among you, as you teach and exhort one another in all wisdom, singing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs to God with grateful hearts. ¹⁷ And whatever you do, in word or action, do everything in the name of the master, Jesus, giving thanks through him to God the father.

¹⁸ Now a word for wives: you should be subject to your husbands. This is appropriate in the Lord. ¹⁹ And for husbands: you should treat your wives with love, and not be bitter with them. ²⁰ And for children: obey your parents in everything; this pleases the Lord. ²¹ And for fathers: don't provoke your children to anger, otherwise they might lose heart.

²² A word, too, for slaves: obey your earthly masters in everything. Don't do it simply out of show, to curry favour with human beings, but wholeheartedly, because you fear the master. ²³ Whatever you do, give it your very best, as if you were working for the master and not for human beings. ²⁴ After all, you know that you're going to receive the true inheritance from the master as your reward! It is the master, the king, that you are serving.



4



A photograph of a crowd of people in a dark setting, likely a concert or event. Many people have their hands raised in the air. A white horizontal banner is overlaid across the middle of the image, containing the text "WEEK FOUR" in a bold, dark blue font.

WEEK FOUR

WEEK 4

WEEK 4

LIFE GROUP STUDY

PLAY VIDEO

Play the Week 4 teaching and testimony video from northviewchurch.us/first. Share reflections from the video afterward. Pray for this testimony before you begin the rest of the lesson.

READ

Colossians 3:12-24

DISCUSS

1. Would you say you struggle with people-pleasing, or would you say you struggle with not caring enough about the considerations of others?
2. How have you seen this play out in your generosity with others (community involvement, serving at church, giving of your resources, etc.)?
3. Why does Paul put such an emphasis on our earthly relationships and what do they reveal about our relationship with Christ?

4. Because we were created to be in community, Paul gives guidance for how to exhibit Christ in every relationship. Read aloud Col. 3:23-24. What are the benefits of putting Christ first in every relationship and not working for the approval of “human masters”?

5. What is a past decision you’ve made that is impacting your generosity today?

6. Next weekend will be the last message in the FIRST series, which means its commitment weekend. What specifically might be holding you back from truly declaring Jesus is first in your generosity and in your life and how can you surrender it to God?

REFLECT

Share with the group how they can pray for you as you prepare to make your FIRST commitment. Spend time intentionally praying together about how your group will engage the with this campaign, and also for 100% engagement from the Northview family. Pray God would be honored, glorified, and praised as a result of our commitments and in declaring Jesus is first!





FIRST DEVO

WEEK 4

The Christian Home

Jesus FIRST in My Relationships

In Week One, we examined our priorities and challenged you to set aside the first 15 minutes of your day to spend time with the Lord.

- Have you been disciplined in making this your first priority?
- If not, will you recommit to making time with the Lord your first priority for the next three weeks?
- Have you noticed any changes in your life as you've started each day in the Word?

In Week Three, we looked at what it means to live in the fullness of Christ's freedom. We've been challenged to live a life **all in** for Jesus - surrendering our time, talents and treasures to advance his kingdom.

This week, we will look at the Christian home. When you declare Christ first in your life, everything begins to look more like Jesus - your marriage, your singleness, your parenting, your obedience to your parents, your work life, your home life, everything. There is no area of your life where the impact of putting Jesus first is not evident. Take a few minutes to read **Colossians 3:12-24**. Take your time and highlight or write down anything that sticks out to you.

Paul begins verse 12 with a list of characteristics to put on now that you have made Christ first: compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, patience, forgiveness, love, peace and thankfulness. He instructs believers to do *everything* in the name of the Lord Jesus. And with this in mind, he gives instructions for the Christian home.

Paul urges us to do everything in the name of the Lord and that whatever we do is *for the Lord and not for men*. As God's chosen ones, our relationships should reflect generosity, and you can be sure that if you're living a life of generosity then you are leaving a powerful legacy.

ENGAGE

1 Look at verses 12-14. What is one characteristic the Lord is bringing to your attention?

2 How would seeing more of this characteristic impact your relationships?

ACTION

Now that you have identified you need to see more

in your life, ask the Lord to grow you in this area by giving you opportunities to practice it this week. And then be mindful of those opportunities.

Refine Me

Relationships are refining. They just are. There is no way around it as believers.

Refinement is the process of improving something by removing impurities and unwanted materials. (Sounds a lot like putting off the old and putting on the new, yes?) When sinful people (you and I) enter into relationships, there's bound to be messiness. The old self loves to be inserted into the center of everything:

- If you were angry, it was because someone...
- If you relapsed in your addiction, it was because someone...
- If you lied, it was because someone...
- If you didn't follow through on a commitment, it was because someone...

We often look to others as the cause of our pain, disappointment and unhappiness. But what if in the midst of the brokenness, we asked God to refine us. Instead of focusing on what you wish your loved one would change, what if you focused on asking God to change something in you?

If we have put on the new self, then we will allow the Lord to use our relationships to refine us. It's important to note, Paul is not instructing us to stay in abusive relationships. People who exhibit godly character will not abuse. Knowing that, Paul takes great care to outline the godly characteristics we are to put on before he addresses guidelines for relationships. So, with compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, patience, forgiveness, love, peace and thankfulness at the front of our minds, let's dive in.

Read Colossians 3:18-22.

ENGAGE

- 1 How does the context of verses 12-17 affect the way you read and respond to verses 18-22?

- 2 Do any of these instructions for Christian households seem especially difficult to you? Why is that?

- 3 Work through the following exercise using the characteristic you chose on Day One of this week:

Godly characteristic	Relationship	How this relationship would look different
Meekness/Gentleness	Parent	Offering gentle answers when ...

My Inheritance

Day Two of this week may have been difficult to work through if there are relationships in your life where you experience disappointment and pain. It doesn't come naturally to respond with generosity and a Christ-first attitude when we feel wronged. But there is hope and encouragement for believers who live generously without any expectations in return.

Read Colossians 3:23-24

"Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ."

How freeing to know that everything I do, everything, is for the Lord, not for men:

- Showing compassion to someone who has made poor life choices that brought about their broken circumstances
- Showing kindness to a customer who has been extremely rude
- Choosing a humble response to your boss whom you often disagree with
- Forgiving someone who hasn't asked for your forgiveness
- Loving someone who has been cold and distant

And not only is it for the Lord, but He is also storing up the work I do in His name as my inheritance and reward because he is a generous God. He embodies the ultimate act of generosity in his gift of salvation through Christ's work on the cross. He withholds no good thing from us even though we deserve a life separated from God for eternity. We bring nothing, yet he generously offers us everything. This radically, generous, unconditional love should motivate how we love others.

ACTION

Christ being first in our relationships is a daily choice of surrender, and some days may feel harder than others, but be confident that everything you do can be done for the Lord.

Recognizing Christ first in your home and relationships might look like...

- Going to marriage counseling
- Opening your home to single moms or refugees
- Eliminating extracurricular commitments that are putting a strain on your family
- Responding in humility and grace when someone snaps at you

What are three relationships where you can choose to put Christ first this week and how will you do that?

Relationship	Attribute needed	Your action	Potential outcome
Children	Patience	Start morning routine earlier	My children can obey knowing they can trust me

Legacy

All week long we've looked at relationships through the lens of Jesus first. Each day is an opportunity to build a legacy for God's kingdom or for your little earthly kingdom. You're storing up for an eternal inheritance, and part of that inheritance is the legacy you leave for Christ.

Perhaps, when we think about legacy, we think too narrowly of only our immediate family, but you have the opportunity to leave a legacy in every area of your life – community, workplace, school, church and beyond. Consider Corrie Ten Boom's story.

Corrie didn't ever marry or have children. Her father died nine days after Nazi imprisonment in South Holland, and her sister died six months after arriving at Ravensbrück concentration camp. And yet Corrie chose forgiveness because Christ forgave first. She traveled the world – including through Germany – to share about God's forgiveness. And it was in Germany where she met one of the guards from Ravensbrück and extended a hearty “with all my heart!” when the guard asked for Corrie's forgiveness.

Her legacy impacted thousands of people for God's kingdom. Because she lived a Christ first before all things life. Christ first before all things. She was surrendered to Christ. She was living in the fullness Christ offers, and because of that, she lived a generous life out of the abundant overflow of Christ-first in her life.

In every stage of life, you are leaving a legacy. Whether you're moving to a new place, or changing schools, or starting a new job, or just moving into a new season of life – you are leaving a legacy. So, are you leaving a legacy of generosity? Putting Christ first in all things will lead to a life of generosity.

Read 1 Timothy 6:17-19.

— ENGAGE —

1 When you think of someone who has left a legacy of generosity, who is that person? How did they model generosity?

2 What are you intentionally doing right now to ensure that your children or those you influence are learning values of generosity?

3 Looking at your life, what legacy are you currently working toward?

Intro to the Weekend

This week we spent time examining our relationships. Everything we do, including our response in every relationship, is done in the name of the Lord. In Week Two, we focused on sacrifice. In Week Three, we focused on moving from death to life to freedom, to the full and abundant life God has for you. Keep praying those prayers of surrender. Continue asking the Lord what it is that he wants to refine in you. As we head into the weekend, celebrate all that God has done in your heart in the last four weeks and pray He will continue moving you to action. Below are three different translations of Colossians 4:2-5. Read through the passage slowly in each translation following the instructions below.

Before you read: Spend a few moments in prayer asking God to meet with you and speak to you.

As you read: Be attentive to what stirs in you as you read Paul's words and mark the words or phrases that jump out at you.

After you read: Spend a few more moments in conversation with God about what you just read.

New Testament for Everyone

² Devote yourselves to prayer; keep alert in it, with thanksgiving. ³ While you're about it, pray for us, too, that God will open in front of us a door for the word, so that we may speak of the mystery of the king – which is why I'm here in chains. ⁴ Pray that I may speak clearly about it. That's what I am duty-bound to do. ⁵ Behave wisely towards outsiders; buy up every opportunity.

The Message

²⁻⁴ Pray diligently. Stay alert, with your eyes wide open in gratitude. Don't forget to pray for us, that God will open doors for telling the mystery of Christ, even while I'm locked up in this jail. Pray that every time I open my mouth I'll be able to make Christ plain as day to them. ⁵⁻⁶ Use your heads as you live and work among outsiders. Don't miss a trick. Make the most of every opportunity. Be gracious in your speech. The goal is to bring out the best in others in a conversation, not put them down, not cut them out.

ESV

² Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving. ³ At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison— ⁴ that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak. ⁵ Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time.



OH CHRIST
LET HIS PRAY



WEEK FIVE

WEEK 5





FIRST DEVO

WEEK 5

Pray
& Act

Final Word

Here we are, in the final week of the FIRST series and the final chapter of Colossians. As you've read Paul's words and reflected on how they apply to your life today, have you noticed Paul's theme in this letter?

God is first in all of creation and in Him all things hold together. He went first for us in salvation and through Him all things are reconciled. As Christ followers we should live in such a way that it's obvious to others that we see Christ as first before all things in our life.

We've spent the last four weeks discovering what it looks like to acknowledge God first in our priorities, our choices, our sacrifices, and our relationships and homes. The good news is God's acceptance isn't based on how right we get it, how much we achieve or how generous we are. God's acceptance and love are offered as a free gift to all who will receive it.

Now is the time to pray and act. Creating space to allow God to take His rightful place in all areas of your life.

ACTION

Read Paul's final instructions in Colossians 4:2-6.

1. Write down your observations of this passage. What words or phrases stand out to you?
2. Reread the passage, but this time turn it into a personalized prayer.

(Example) God, I want to devote myself to prayer being both watchful and thankful. I pray you open doors for myself and other Christians to have opportunities to share our faith, to clearly proclaim your glory, knowing others risk persecution to follow you. Help me to be wise in the way I treat others, making the most of every opportunity to show how loving you are. Let my words and actions today be full of grace. Amen.

Reprioritizing

Many people are devoted to a sports team, a public figure, a celebrity or a cause. We can be a devoted friend, partner, employee and parent. These are not bad things, but there are so many things in life we devote our time, energy and resources to that we become stretched thin. You might feel like you're spinning plates running back and forth giving each plate another spin so none of them crash to the floor.

Some of our plates are made of glass, and some are made of plastic. It's our responsibility to determine which plates need our devotion above the others, which plates will break if dropped and which we will be able to pick back up again. If you feel like you're running back and forth between countless plates, it may be time to reprioritize. No one can wholeheartedly serve one thing and live for something else.

Matthew 6:24 says, "Nobody can serve two masters. Otherwise, they will either hate the first and love the second, or be devoted to the first and despise the second. You can't serve both God and wealth."

Christ didn't come to scrap the things that are important to us but to bring each of those under his love and leadership. He's inviting you to reprioritize so you can experience life abundantly. How do we take the areas of importance and reprioritize them to honor God?

We've talked. We've reflected. And we've come to the point in any growth journey where a decision needs to be made: Will you begin to apply what you've learned? Will your actions and decisions now start to reflect the life that you've spent so much time envisioning?

The life where Christ is first above all things.

ENGAGE

- 1** Look back at the list of priorities you created on Day One of Week One. Rewrite that list below, and add any priorities that have come to mind since. Which of these are glass and which are plastic?

- 2** Seeing which areas hold the most weight in your life, how can you be more intentional to honor God with those?

Get Moving

A legacy that benefits people and honors God isn't just going to happen. It requires living under the supremacy of Christ. It requires making the most of every opportunity.

We worship because Christ is supreme before all things. (*Colossians 1:15-17*)

We trust because Christ sacrificed for us first. (*Colossians 1:21-22*)

We sacrifice because that leads to fullness of life. (*Colossians 2:9-12*)

We love others because it is Christ we serve first. (*Colossians 3:16-24*)

And finally, we act so that others may know Christ and share in his goodness.

Two ways Paul highlights this in Colossians is by serving in your context and making the most of every opportunity. We often feel limited by our season of life, thinking once I make it to this stage then I'll have more of what I need to serve God and others. Sometimes what we see as a barrier is really meant to be an opportunity, but because our focus gets pulled away from God's purpose, we miss it. Paul's challenge is to look at your life with a new perspective.

As much as Paul had done to advance the kingdom, he was always on the lookout for what God wanted to do next. He took God's mission on as his own and felt the burden that there is always the one -- the one who is far from God, wandering in the wilderness, needing life and forgiveness.

We all have an opportunity to intentionally invest exactly where we are. God doesn't wait for us to get the promotion, house, spouse, degree before he uses us. So, why are we waiting? Make the most of every moment where God has you today. Don't wait to start living your kingdom purpose.

ENGAGE

1

What kingdom purpose is God inviting you to step into?

2

What does it look like for your day-to-day life to live purposefully for God's mission?

Living on Mission

Inviting someone to church is one piece of evangelism. But it's one small piece. Living a missional life looks like:

- Knowing my purpose
- Living it everyday
- So others can see, hear and experience Christ

Paul never stopped actively seeking a chance to spread the Gospel. Every encounter mattered to him. Even after being thrown in jail and bound by chains, he didn't quit. While in chains, he ministered to those around him, some of which were the people persecuting him for his faith. In jail, he had limitations of what he could do. But, instead of focusing on what he lost, he shifted his focus to encouraging the churches, teaching others how to share their faith and ministering to the prison guards.

Some of us are eager to serve but terrified of sharing God's love through our words. This way of living is "good" by the world's standards, but it is not on mission. Others love to talk about God and share his word, but their actions are inconsistent and hypocritical. We are called to live in word and deed for the glory of God and good of others.

So, ask yourself, do my actions and my speech display Christ to those around me?

From Week One Day One, we've emphasized this 5-week journey you're on is not about being a better Christian. It is about loving Jesus more. When you commit to loving Jesus more, the more you'll start to look and sound like Jesus, and the natural outflow of your love for God will be to love others. These two cannot be separated. That's what Jesus is getting at when he gave us the two greatest commandments:

- Love God with all your heart, soul and mind. (*Matthew 22:37*)
- Love your neighbor as yourself. (*Matthew 22:38*)

Since Christ has called us to love others in the same way that he loves us, selflessly and sacrificially, it is not enough for us to just simply say we love others. When we commit to loving God & loving others - the way Paul shows us throughout his writings - everything we do has the potential to invite others into an encounter with Christ. To experience Christ.

ACTION

Take a moment to reflect on a missed opportunity to share the Gospel or your faith story with someone. Write down what you remember about the moment.

- What were you feeling, any fears or uncertainties?
- Did you feel God prompting you or did you not see it as an opportunity until afterward?
- If you could go back in time, is there anything that you would do differently?

Intro into a New Rhythm

Paul understood time has a way of getting away from us, so it's important we make every moment matter. As long as we have breath, we have a purpose and mission. In Colossians 4:6, he leaves us with instructions for our days ahead.

When you speak, make sure it's always full of grace, and well flavored with salt! That way you'll know how to give each person an appropriate answer.

We use salt to preserve food and as a flavor enhancer. Salt's value lies in its effect on its surroundings, the impact it makes. In the same way God wants to use you, your words and actions to impact those around you. He has created you to be a positive impact. As followers of Christ, you are called to be different and to live a righteous life.

Like some of life journeys go, you come to the end only to realize you're just getting started. The same is true for the FIRST series; while we're at the end of the five-week experience, in many ways we're just getting started. During Week Four, you had an opportunity to make a commitment to your life reflecting that God is first before all things, and now the new rhythm starts as you live out your generous commitment. So, let's take a moment to look back and plan for living a new rhythm.

ACTION

Spend time praising God and celebrating the work He has been doing in your life. Take your time flipping back through the past days and write down where you've since God at work. What are some of the prayers you've seen answered? How have you been surprised by God? What situations are you still praying for God to reveal himself in? What are the things you wanted to work on but haven't started?

Before you close the book on today's devotional, write down how you'll continue to put God before all things. Be realistic, make a plan that suits you, maybe challenges you a bit. Answer the question, "How am I going to continue to be mindful of the things I've learned in the past several weeks?"

Set some reminders in your calendar (6 weeks, 6 months, a year) as check in points to see if you're still on mission, how God has been faithful to you, and see your personal growth.



FIRST FAQS

If I am committing to FIRST, how does this change my giving to missions, generosity and other special offerings?

During this two-year period, every contribution to God through Northview is a contribution to our FIRST initiative. Every aspect of the ministry vision God is calling us toward for the next two years will be funded through the FIRST. There will not be separate funds. Every gift made will go into the same fund and will be our FIRST giving. Therefore, every weekend becomes a time to celebrate and contribute toward what God is doing in us and through us to help connect people with God and connect people with people.

What are you asking me to do?

First and foremost, we are asking that you pray and seek God's leading on what He's asking of you. Prepare your heart to hear Him, and then listen to what He says. Engage in a Life Group during this season if you haven't already been in one. Engage in personal reflection with God in this FIRST book. Talk with your spouse, your family or others about what this commitment will mean for this next exciting season in your life.

We are asking you make a sacrificial commitment to Gospel-centered generosity, whatever it is that God leads you to do. Follow His leading. Finally, we ask you prepare to be amazed. We serve an awesome God, and He is going to move in huge ways. We anticipate an unprecedented impact from our collective FIRST commitments something only God can do. Please mark your calendar for Commitment Weekend, March 19/20, 2022, and prepare to experience a life-changing worship service that will forever be remembered as a defining moment for our church and for your own faith.

Are there additional ways besides cash that I can give more toward FIRST?

Be creative as you explore ways you and your family can give toward FIRST. You might have some stocks, property or other items of that nature. Or you may have some stored resources God has blessed you with in the past that He just might be calling you to release during this time. Please let us know if you need assistance with facilitating gifts of property or stock, and we would be happy to help you with that. Contact Beth Anderson at beth.anderson@northviewchurch.us to make a gift of this type.

How long is my commitment?

We are asking that everyone make a two-year commitment, which is 24 months. The fulfillment period for your commitment will begin with our First Big Give on the weekend of April 9/10, 2022, and it will culminate in April 2024.

What if I don't have a job right now? What does that mean for my FIRST commitment?

FIRST is about your total, radical, sacrificial generosity to God's mission at Northview. We believe God calls us to action in times of hardship just as much as He does in times of abundance, and that looks different for every person. But FIRST is about a heart-change, one that is only accomplished by surrendering our lives completely over to God in this area of giving. So that may mean you are being challenged to sell things, pick up odd jobs or even to trust God in faith by making a commitment that you don't quite know how to fulfill right now, but that you believe God will provide for as you seek for ways to sacrifice and work toward that commitment. We would like for 100 percent of us to be a part of FIRST so that we can all be supporting, loving, encouraging and praying for one another through this spiritually stretching season at Northview.

What if I am seriously in debt right now? Am I still supposed to give?

If you are someone currently seeking to make payments to pay off debt right now, we commend you for making progress on that. And you should continue to do so. We would be happy to help you in this journey and/or to recommend a budgeting class that might minister to you. Being in debt does not, however, make someone "excused" from giving. Giving isn't about what God wants from you; rather, it's about what God wants for you. It should be our joy and privilege to give at all times. Please contact us if you need assistance with this or if you would like to speak with a budgeting counselor, and we would be honored to help.

What if I have never even given to Northview before?

FIRST was created specifically with you in mind. FIRST is a "one-fund" generosity initiative, meaning it is different from the traditional capital campaign where you are called to give an extra gift above and beyond

your normal giving, thus creating TWO STEPS for people who aren't yet giving. FIRST is a call to sacrificial, Gospel-centered generosity for absolutely everyone at Northview. If you have never given before, this is your chance to get in the game with a committed sacrifice. We really hope you will.

What if I am new around here?

FIRST is about the vision for our church and our personal discipleship in giving as followers of Jesus. We believe the local church is one of the most compelling missions to give toward, and we would really love for you to make Northview your home and join us in FIRST. If you are ready for it, this is a perfect time for you to put a stake in the ground and make this your church. We need you on the team!

What if I haven't been baptized yet?

Great question. People take different spiritual steps at different times. Some people begin praying before they begin attending church. Others begin going to a Life Group before they begin talking to God in prayer. Giving is another spiritual step, and it comes at different times for different people. One thing is for sure, however, just like other spiritual disciplines, giving draws us closer to God. And God is calling ALL of us to give. Matthew 6:19 says, "Where your treasure is, there your heart is also." Whether or not you have taken the spiritual step of baptism, we would encourage you to still join us in this FIRST initiative. We firmly believe it will draw you closer to God and, hopefully, to a place where you are ready to make the decision to become baptized and to surrender your life to the Lordship of Christ.

How is eliminating church debt a part of our last campaign (Uncharted) as well as FIRST?

Our debt BHAG (Big Hairy Audacious Goal) is to be debt-free by 2025. If God enables us to realize this goal, it will serve as a financial tipping-point, accelerating our ability to expand our gospel reach to communities in desperate need of a church like Northview. To date, our leadership has viewed serviceable debt as a tool to help grow our influence and impact. It has allowed us to aggressively keep the mission moving forward. With Uncharted, we had a goal of eliminating \$15M of debt and realized a reduction of \$18M. Can you say yay God?! With FIRST, our goal for reducing debt is \$16M.



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