



# NEWBEGINNINGS DEVOTIONAL

WEEK 1

Day 1

SALVATION

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## New Life

### 2 CORINTHIANS 5:17

*This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!*

### EPHESIANS 2:10

*For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.*

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Welcome to your new life! The Bible tells us that God gives each of us new life the moment we receive the gift of salvation that He offers through His Son, Jesus. Receiving salvation means believing that Jesus is the Son of God who came to the earth to die for our sins so that we could be forgiven and restored to relationship with God.

Deciding to follow Jesus is the best and most life changing decision you will ever make! You might even feel overwhelmed as you truly step into life with God and learn about what living life with God

*Continued*

means. Be assured that you are not alone! We all learn and grow one step at a time, as we walk out this journey day by day.

God is now at work in you; He is changing you from this inside out. Change can be intimidating, but God promises that He only changes us for the better.

We don't wake up the day after receiving salvation to a different physical life, so what does having a new life mean? It means that God gives us a fresh start—He erases all record of our past sins and mistakes. It also means that God's Spirit, the Holy Spirit, is at work inside of us. When we make the decision to believe in Jesus, the Bible says that God makes His home in our hearts and begins to transform us. You can be confident that regardless of your past, your mistakes, or even how you feel now, that God is at work inside of you creating new life.

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\*If you are in the Houston area, we would love to see you at our New Beginnings Class that happens every Sunday at 12:45pm.

\*To learn more, please go to [www.lakewoodchurch.com/newbeginnings](http://www.lakewoodchurch.com/newbeginnings)

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# New Identity

**1 JOHN 3:1**

*Look with wonder at the depth of the Father's marvelous love that he has lavished on us! He has called us and made us his very own beloved children.*

**ROMANS 8:15-16**

*So you have not received a spirit that makes you fearful slaves. Instead, you received God's Spirit when he adopted you as his own children. Now we call him, "Abba, Father." For his Spirit joins with our spirit to affirm that we are God's children.*

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In our new life, God also gives us a new identity. We are now defined by what God says about us, not by what we do or by what other people have said about us. God removes the old labels we have worn, labels like failure, unloved, divorcee, mistake, reject, addict, unwanted, and calls us His beloved sons and daughters.

Learning to live in our new identity is a process. We start by learning to think about ourselves the way that God thinks about us—the Bible calls this renewing our minds. We renew our minds as we spend time with God and study His Word. As we discover what God says about us and believe it, our actions and thoughts begin to change in response to the truth about who we were made to be.

There is no one better than God to tell us who we really are because He made us! Here are some truths about who God says you are—loved (John 3:16), chosen (Colossians 3:12), forgiven (Ephesians 1:7), free (2 Corinthians 3:17), and His child (1 John 3:1).

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# Why We Need Salvation

**1 PETER 3:18**

*Christ suffered for our sins once for all time. He never sinned, but he died for sinners to bring you safely home to God.*

**ROMANS 3:23-25**

*For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard. Yet God, in his grace, freely makes us right in his sight. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins. For God presented Jesus as the sacrifice for sin. People are made right with God when they believe that Jesus sacrificed his life, shedding his blood.*

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God sent Jesus as our Savior because the world has a problem called sin. Sin is defined as "missing the mark." All of us have missed the mark and come up short of God's perfect standards in our lives.

God is so good and so holy that He cannot be in relationship with anything corrupted by sin. Sin must be paid for in order to be erased in God's eyes, and according to the Bible, the way to pay for sin is through sacrifice.

Before Jesus came, people would offer animal sacrifices to God in order to temporarily pay for their sins. But Jesus came to offer a sacrifice that would pay for all sin, for all time. Jesus lived a life that was completely perfect, untouched by sin. Because He was perfect, He became the perfect sacrifice, accounting for the sins of the whole world.

Jesus' sacrifice made a way for us to receive the gift salvation by grace through faith.



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# We Can't Earn It

**EPHESIANS 2:8**

*For it was only through this wonderful grace that we believed in him. Nothing we did could ever earn this salvation, for it was the gracious gift from God that brought us to Christ!*

**ROMANS 3:22**

*There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.*

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One of the most unique factors of Christianity is the grace that we have received through Jesus. Religion tells people that they have to earn right standing with God; it says that acceptance by God is entirely based on our behavior.

Jesus came to flip religion on its head and establish a new way of relating to God. He did the work of making us right with God. Now, our part is believing that His work was and is enough to bring us into relationship with God.

Jesus came to show us that God's love is so unlike our human love. He showed us that God's love is completely unconditional! He doesn't love us more when we do things right or love us less when we mess up. He loves us completely, all of the time. You can be confident that regardless of your past sin and mistakes, God's grace now covers you completely.

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# Who is God?

**1 JOHN 4:16**

*God is Love.*

**PSALMS 103:8**

*The Lord is compassionate and merciful, slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love.*

**ISAIAH 40:28 NLT**

*The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of all the earth. He never grows weak or weary. No one can measure the depths of his understanding.*

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As we start our journey with God it is important that we know the true nature of God. Often, people have distorted ideas about who God is from past experiences. If you were raised in a home where God was never talked about, you might think He is distant or uninvolved. If you were raised in a religious household, you might think that God harsh and angry, waiting for you to mess up. Whatever ideas you have about who God is, He wants to show you who He really is. He does this through the work of His Spirit inside us and through the Bible.

His Word tell us that He is kind, loving, compassionate, just, slow to anger, holy, righteous, faithful, eternal, merciful, and only good. It tells us that He is our loving Father (1 John 3:1), that He is always with us (John 14:16), and that He has all power (Psalms 62:11).

We say it often at Lakewood, but know that God is for you, He loves you, and He wants to be in relationship with you.

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# Who is God— the Trinity

**JOHN 1:14**

*So the Word became human[a] and made his home among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness.[b] And we have seen his glory, the glory of the Father's one and only Son.*

**JOHN 14:26**

*But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name (Jesus), will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.*

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We established that God is love, that He is the Creator of the world, and that He is Sovereign, but another important aspect of who He is, is that He is a Triune God. Triune means three, so in other words, God is three persons, completely unified.

The three beings that make up who God is—God the Father, God the Son (Jesus), and God the Holy Spirit. Each of these are unique yet totally cohesive and consistent with the other parts.

God is the ultimate ruler, our Father, and Creator. Jesus is the Son of God, who has been with God from the beginning of time, but when the time was right God sent Jesus to save us from the power of sin and to reconcile us with Himself. The Holy Spirit is how God works in the earth today. He lives inside of us, transforming us and guiding us in everyday life.

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# Water Baptism

SALVATION

**MATTHEW 28:19**

*Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.*

**1 PETER 3:21**

*And that water is a picture of baptism, which now saves you, not by removing dirt from your body, but as a **response to God** from a clean conscience. It is effective because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.*

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Now that you have received salvation, there is another step that God asks us to take—water baptism. Jesus asked everyone who would believe in Him to be water baptized as a public declaration of their faith in Him. Baptism is our response to what God has done for us, as 1 Peter 3:21 says. It is a symbolic act of what Jesus did for us. Being lowered into the water represents Jesus' death, as well as our own sinful nature that should have brought us death. Being raised out of the water represents Jesus' resurrection, and the new life we have because of Jesus.

Through Baptism, we publicly declare that we are followers of Jesus as we put action to our faith by obeying what Jesus commanded us to—be baptized in His Name.

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\*We hold weekly baptism services every Saturday night after service here at Lakewood. We also have a bi-annual church wide baptism with Pastor Joel. For more information, please email [baptism@lakewoodchurch.com](mailto:baptism@lakewoodchurch.com).

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# What is the Bible?

## Part 1

### 2 TIMOTHY 3:16

*All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right.*

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The Bible is one of the greatest gifts that God has given us. It is a source of wisdom and direction for us as we walk out our journey with Him. The Bible tells us about God's faithfulness throughout history, His promises for our lives, and His plan for the future.

From cover to cover, the Bible is God's Word recorded by various people that He chose at various times. Written across a span of 1,500 years, the Bible contains 66 books written by about 40 different authors. Only God could put together a book with a perfectly cohesive message using 40 different people, across more than a millennium.

The Bible is not just a valuable resource of instruction, but it is the foundation of our lives. Through Scripture we learn how to handle day to day situations such as how to manage our finances, how to treat our family and friends, and how to work well on our jobs. Even more important though, the Bible tells us how to build our relationship with God, and grow closer with Him.

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# What is the Bible?

## Part 2

**ROMANS 15:4**

*Whatever was written beforehand is meant to instruct us in how to live. The Scriptures impart to us encouragement and inspiration so that we can live in hope and endure all things.*

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If you have ever opened the Bible, you might know that it is divided into two sections—the Old Testament and the New Testament. Everything that happened in the Old Testament set the stage for Jesus to come. The New Testament tells us what happened when He did.

The Old Testament gives us the account of how God created the world, how sin came into the earth and corrupted creation. It tells us about the people God chose to bring His plans to pass, and prophecies (supernatural insights) about the Savior that God promised to send the world.

The New Testament can be summed up in one Name—Jesus. The first four books of the New Testament, called the Gospels, tell us about who Jesus was, how He lived, and why He came. The books following the Gospels are written by His followers who were living in response to everything Jesus accomplished when He was with them. The New Testament books tell us about God's plan for His church and how to live out Christianity in day to day life, in relationship with God and each other.

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\*We recommend starting to read the Gospel of John in the New Testament if you are new to the Bible. It tells all about the Good News of Jesus, and how that changes our lives.

WEEK 2

Day 3

THE BIBLE  
AND PRAYER

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# Psalms and Proverbs

Two of the most unique books in the Bible are Psalms and Proverbs. Psalms is a collection of prayers and songs written to God; Proverbs is a book of wisdom and instruction.

Many of the Psalms were written by a man named David who was the King of Israel. King David was a man after God's heart, according to Scripture, but the Psalms that he wrote tell us that he still faced trials. In the midst of the obstacles David faced, he was honest with God about his hardships. In the book of Psalms, we find encouragement and hope for our everyday lives, as we learn what it means to walk with God through pain and joy, loss and victory.

Written by the wisest man in the Bible, King Solomon, the book of Proverbs gives us practical principles for everyday life. From instructing us about relationships, to handling our finances, there is counsel in Proverbs applicable to every circumstance.

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\*As you begin reading the Bible, reading one Psalms and/or Proverbs daily can be a great source of hope and wisdom.



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# Prayer

**1 JOHN 5:14**

*And this is the confidence that we have toward God, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us.*

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One of the greatest gifts that we have received as believers is the ability to talk to God through prayer. Often, prayer is seen as a religious duty or obligation, but prayer is a privilege! We have complete access to talk to God and be confident that He hears us.

We don't have to pray eloquent prayers—there is no formula that we have to follow. We can simply talk to God like we talk to a friend. The Bible says that God is looking for people who will be truthful before Him, not people who are putting on a religious show.

The same way we spend time getting to know our friends through conversation, we get to know God through our daily communication with Him.

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# The Power of Agreement

**MATTHEW 18:20**

*For where two or three are gathered together in my name, I (Jesus) am there among them.*

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Prayer not only helps us get to know God, but the Bible tells us that through prayer God begins to change situations in our lives and in the lives of those around us. God could work independently if He wanted to, but God wants us to participate *with* Him as He works—one way we do this is through prayer.

Prayer is the act of us extending our faith towards God. Jesus said that faith even the size of a mustard seed is enough for God to work with. If you are reading this, wanting to know more about prayer, it is more than likely that you have more faith than the size of a mustard seed! Know that simple prayers offered in faith to God are powerful.

The Bible tells us that God is near in a unique way when we pray with other believers. Prayer is powerful when we pray alone, but when we are unified with others, the Bible says that God's blessing is there.

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# Where to Start— the First Fifteen

**PSALM 119:15-17**

*Bread alone will not satisfy, but true life is found in every word, which constantly goes forth from God's mouth.*

**MATTHEW 4:4**

*People do not live by bread alone, [a] but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.*

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The daily habit of spending time with God is an important part of growing with God. This is not a religious ritual that we participate in, but it's an intentional investment into our relationship with God. Just as we set time aside to spend with our friends and family to strengthen our relationships with them, as we spend time with God through reading His Word and prayer, our relationship is strengthened.

A simple way to put this into practice is by implementing something we call the First Fifteen. Set aside the first fifteen minutes of your day to read the Bible and spend time with Jesus through prayer.

Practically, this looks like finding a place without distractions like a specific room in your house, a coffee shop, even somewhere outside, where you can be with God. Begin to talk to Him like you would a friend. After you talk, wait to see if He would impress anything on your heart—this is a two-way conversation! Grab your Bible and read a chapter or two of Scripture, paying attention to anything that jumps out at you.

During this time, keep a journal of what you are praying for and what you feel God is speaking to you. It is amazing to reflect back in the future and see what God has done in your life.

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# The Power of Declarations

**PROVERBS 18:21**

*Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruits.*

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Did you know that the words you speak have power? The Bible even says that words have the power of life and death! Because words are so powerful, we should begin to change how we talk about ourselves and our circumstances. When we align our words with the truth of God's what God says, His life and peace will begin to transform our lives.

Here are a few powerful declarations to begin saying over yourself:

I am not a victim of my past, but an overcomer through Jesus.

**1 CORINTHIANS 15:57**

I am a new creation in Christ.

**2 CORINTHIANS 5:17**

I have been strategically designed and equipped for my unique purpose.

**PSALMS 139:14**

I am free from all strongholds, addictions, and bad habits that have held me back.

**2 CORINTHIANS 3:17**

I am completely loved and accepted by God.

**ROMANS 8:38-39**

We encourage you take hold of these promises and begin declaring them over yourself in faith.

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\*Write a few of these declarations on sticky notes and put them in your house, your car, and your workspace. As we constantly keep what God says about us in focus, our thoughts being to align with the truth of God's Word.

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# Taking Inventory

RELATIONSHIPS

**1 THESSALONIANS 5:11**

*Encourage each other and build each other up, just as you are already doing.*

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As Jesus was carrying out His work on the earth, He didn't do it alone. In fact, He chose a core team of 12 people, all with varying personalities and strengths, to be with Him as He ministered. If Jesus placed a high value on relationships, how much more should we!

Taking inventory of your current relationships is a great way to determine what type of relationships you need to focus on developing, and which ones you might need to separate yourself from.

Here are a few helpful questions to ask yourself while evaluating your relationships—

- Do I feel encouraged or inspired to know God more after spending time with this person?
- Do I feel weighed down with negativity or encouraged after being with this person?
- Is this a person I can trust with the things that are important to me?

After answering these questions, you probably have an idea if the relationship is worth investing your time and energy into. If it's not then you might need to step away from the relationship for a season. You do not need to completely cut off friends or family, but you sometimes need to place higher priority on different relationships in order to grow in your faith.

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\*One of the ways you can find encouraging relationships at Lakewood is through joining a Life Groups and becoming a part of a volunteer team.

Go to [www.lakewoodchurch.com/lifegroups](http://www.lakewoodchurch.com/lifegroups) for more information.

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# Relationships—Worth the Investment

**PROVERBS 27:17**

*As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.*

**ROMANS 12:5**

*In Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.*

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God created us with a need for connection through meaningful relationships. In Genesis 2:18 God gave Adam, the first man, a partner because it was not good for him to be alone. God provided for Adam's need for connection, and He does the same for us today through the community of our local church.

As you walk out life with God, one of your greatest sources of growth and encouragement will come from the people that you surround yourself with. Healthy relationships are the context in which our God given needs for love, comfort, support, understanding, and accountability are met.

In the places that you have closed off people and isolated yourself, we encourage you to begin to embrace the relationships in your life, especially those that you find at your local church. We need each other!

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# Relationship Circles

RELATIONSHIPS

**1 CORINTHIANS 12:18-19**

*But God has carefully designed each member and placed it in the body to function as he desires. A diversity is required, for if the body consisted of one single part, there wouldn't be a body at all!*

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During Jesus' time of ministry, He chose a core team of twelve people, all with varying personalities and strengths to travel with Him. If Jesus placed value on relationships, how much more should we!

There are three types of relationship circles that important for all of us to have—mentor relationships, peer relationships, and relationships with people who you can invest into. Mentors are people who can speak wisdom and encouragement into your life because they are further along in their journey than you are. Peers are those who are in the same stage of life as you. You are able to relate with your peers and offer mutual support. People who you can invest into are those who you can share wisdom and encouragement with. You get to cheer them on as they navigate seasons of life that you have already walked through.

See if you can identify these three types of relationships in your life. If you notice that you are lacking in one or more of these relationships, begin looking for people who you can develop these relationships with. As we both receive and give in relationships, we experience fulfillment, encouragement, and growth!



WEEK 3

Day 4

RELATIONSHIPS

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# Stepping into Forgiveness

**EPHESIANS 4:31-32**

*Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.*

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One of the greatest challenges we face in relationships is holding onto unforgiveness towards others. Maybe you have been hurt by a parent, friend, or spouse, and you feel like the hurt is too deep to forgive. Although the wounds caused by others' actions and words are very real, God is more than able to heal our hearts and bind up our places of brokenness if we will be willing to release the hurt to Him.

By holding onto anger and unforgiveness, it might seem that we are being justified, but the truth is that we are only hurting ourselves. As we allow unforgiveness and bitterness to find place in our hearts, what was an initial wound turns into a chronic issue that continually affects our life.

As we begin to walk in forgiveness, we find a freedom and joy in our relationships that we didn't know was missing. Embracing forgiveness is not for the benefit of the person who caused pain, it is for the person who experienced pain.

It is a process, often requiring us to daily chose to forgive, but God is faithful to heal us and bring justice as we trust Him. When it feels like you cannot find the strength to forgive, be encouraged that God is with you strengthening and empowering you!

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\*A prayer to release forgiveness: "Lord, I release \_\_\_\_\_ for \_\_\_\_\_. I need your strength to walk in forgiveness, and I ask that You would heal heartache and pain I have experienced. I trust You to be my Defender. In Jesus' Name, Amen."

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# Overlooking Offenses

**PROVERBS 19:11**

*Sensible people control their temper; they earn respect by overlooking wrongs.*

**HEBREWS 12:15**

*And make sure no one lives with a root of bitterness sprouting within them which will only cause trouble and poison the hearts of many.*

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No one is perfect—we have all realized this by now! We make mistakes, say things without thinking, and take thoughtless action at times. Although we are often quick to overlook our own mistakes, overlooking other's can be one of the most challenging parts of our relationships. If we can learn to continually trust God, releasing our offenses to Him, our relationships will grow stronger, deeper, and richer.

Holding onto offense allows bitterness to take root in our hearts. The Bible says that if we hold onto bitterness, unwilling to release it, it begins to poison our lives. Bitterness will taint our perspective of life, convincing us that everyone is against us. It will steal our joy, peace, and relationships if we continue to dwell on the wrongs that others have done towards us.

Don't allow one event to continue to affect your life—practice releasing offense and bitterness as soon as you recognize it in your life. As you do this, you will walk in a greater sense of peace and joy.

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\*A prayer to let go of bitterness: "Father, I release the bitterness I have been holding onto. I welcome You into the places of pain I have experienced, and ask You to heal me in the way that only you can. In Jesus' Name, Amen."

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# A Heart of Honor

**ROMANS 12:10**

*Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.*

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Honor is one of most important keys of having healthy relationships. When we begin to be intentional about honoring the people around us, we will see relationships rise to new levels.

What does honoring others look like practically?

Speaking words of life and encouragement over people is one of the most powerful ways that you can show honor. You might be waiting to honor someone until they honor you, but you can be the one to change the relationship. People will rise to the level of encouragement we give them. Look for the gifts and talents in your family, your friends, and your co-workers, and call them out. Pull out the potential in the people around you.

We also show honor to those around them by covering them. The Bible says that love covers others. We cover others by not talking about their faults or exposing their mistakes to other people. When you face challenges in your relationships choose not to allow conflict to create strife and division in your world, but chose to cover others with love as you work through whatever you may be facing.

Being a person who honors and covers others is a daily choice, but if you will begin to develop these characteristics in your life, your relationships will reach new levels.

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\*Think about your relationships and choose someone who you can be intentional about honoring. Ask God to show you how you can best honor them.

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# The Promise in Being Planted

**PSALMS 92:13**

*Those who are planted in the house of the Lord  
Shall flourish in the courts of our God.*

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The principle of being planted—of being invested in your local church—is one of the most powerful principles in the Bible. Scripture says that when we are planted, we will flourish. Through involvement in the community of our local church we grow spiritually and find fulfillment.

Being planted is not just about going to church, it is about building relationship with other believers. Through being in relationship with people who are on the same God-journey as us, we get to do life with those around us. We become family with those around us as we both give and receive support.

Psalms 92:13 paints a picture of someone being planted or rooted when they invest themselves into the house of God, the local church. If you have ever seen a tree trying to withstand the forces of a hurricane, you know how important it is for the tree to have a strong root system. The tree might shake, it might bend, but because it has a strong support system it does not fall. This same principle applies to us as believers—if we want to live lives of strength and victory, even in times of adversity, we must cultivate faith based, supportive relationships around us.

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\*One of the ways you can find encouraging relationships at Lakewood is through joining a LifeGroup and/or becoming a part of a volunteer team.

Go to [www.lakewoodchurch.com/lifegroups](http://www.lakewoodchurch.com/lifegroups) for more information about our LifeGroups and [www.lakewoodchurch.com/connect](http://www.lakewoodchurch.com/connect) for information about our volunteer teams.

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# Lakewood's History

**LUKE 4:18-19**

*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, and he has anointed me to be hope[c] for the poor, freedom for the brokenhearted, and new eyes[d] for the blind, and to preach to prisoners, 'You are set free!' I have come to share the message of Jubilee, for the time of God's great acceptance has begun.*

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The doors of Lakewood Church first opened on Mother's Day of 1959, led by Pastor John Osteen. The vision of Lakewood was to minister the hope of freedom, healing, love, and deliverance that Jesus offers to the world. Lakewood's first home was an abandoned feed store that seated 90 people. Nearly ten years later, people from all over Houston began to be drawn to Pastor John Osteen's ministry.

Pastor John's faithfulness to the small things that God asked him to do produced big results. Lakewood became one of the most diverse congregations in Houston. Lakewood also began a thriving television and radio ministry that was able to reach people in some of the most obscure areas in the world with the Gospel.

When Pastor John went to be with the Lord in 1999, Pastor Joel felt the call to step up as senior pastor. Lakewood continued to see growth and opportunity, eventually moving into the former Compaq Center in Houston.

The impact that Lakewood has today did not happen by chance—it has been built on the sacrifices of countless individuals who have dedicated their lives to serving and surrendering their lives to Jesus. Today, thousands of volunteers show up faithfully every week to set the stage for people to encounter the love of God. This is the Lakewood legacy: following Jesus to love and lift people.

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# Hope

**JEREMIAH 29:11**

*For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord. "Plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you a future and a hope.*

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Lakewood's foundation has always been the hope that is found in the message of the Gospel. The hope that Jesus offers to everyone is not a distant hope, but it is something we can anchor our lives to right now.

We believe that one of the most effective ways to minister the hope of Christ is to serve others, locally and globally, in practical ways. Our monthly Nights of Hope are one of the ways that we get to take the Gospel to cities all over America. We see thousands of people receive Christ at each event. Through these events we get to connect hundreds of people into the local churches in their area.

Other ways that we get to share the message of hope are through our television broadcast and SiriusXM radio station. The television broadcast reaches nearly 100 nations around the world and over 20 million people each month. The stories we hear of God moving in people's lives through the broadcast are truly amazing.

But the loudest message of hope is spoken through our lives. You are now a carrier of Hope because Jesus lives inside of you. As you walk out your day to day life, you have the opportunity to spread hope through your words and interactions with others. You have the ability to reach people who no one else can with the message of hope!

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# Generosity

**PROVERBS 11:25**

*The generous will prosper; those who refresh others will themselves be refreshed.*

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Generosity is one of the most important values of Lakewood. As a church, we make it our goal to be generous with our time, talents, and treasure.

Generosity with time often looks like taking time to listen to a friend who is going through a hard time, or like sacrificing a Saturday to serve. Being generous with your talent may be serving in a specific area that you are gifted in. Being generous with treasure most often looks like giving the tithe, which is the first ten percent of income. Scripture says that if we give our tithe to God, we can be confident that we will receive back something far greater than what we gave.

One of the primary ways we meet this call to generosity is through Mission trips. Our men's ministry, women's ministry, young adults, and youth all have the opportunity to travel to different countries and serve in villages, hospitals, and orphanages. Some of the recent trips have taken place in Haiti, Belize, and India.

Dr. Paul Osteen also facilitates medical mission trips, during which he and others are able to relieve long term missionaries who serve in remote areas of the world. Some of the recent trips have taken place in Iraq, Zambia, and Kenya.

We also have many local opportunities to serve. In light of the devastation of Hurricane Harvey, Lakewood has continued to partner

*Continued*



with Samaritan's Purse in relief efforts. Over 40 homes have been rebuilt and over a million dollars has been donated to support those who have been affected.

Other local outreaches include visiting local schools, volunteering at food banks, and doing neighborhood outreaches. There is an opportunity to serve wherever you might be interested.

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# Generations

**PSALMS 145:4**

*One generation commends your works to another; they tell of your mighty acts.*

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At Lakewood, we know that every season of life holds great significance. There is a need for people across generations, backgrounds, and cultures to participate in the church body.

We are passionate about intentionally bridging any gaps that might exist between generations. Primarily, we do this through our serving opportunities. On any weekend, you will see volunteers ranging from elementary school age up to seniors (65+) serving alongside each other. We believe that every season holds great significance, and we want each person to embrace that significance at whatever age and whatever stage of life find they themselves in.

Just as the Bible talks about, it so important that we have the example of what it looks like to walk faithfully with the Lord over time, such as we have in the lives of those who are seasoned in the faith. We also need the passion and energy of those who are young, both in age and in faith, to bring a sense of vitality to our local body of believers. The kingdom of God is strictly inclusive, welcoming all generations to play a part—we want to reflect this here at Lakewood.

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# Excellence

**DANIEL 6:3**

*Then this Daniel became distinguished above all the other high officials and satraps, because an excellent spirit was in him. And the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom.*

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At Lakewood, one of our key values that has shaped our culture is excellence. As believers, we believe that we are called to live, work, and create with a higher standard. In the Bible, we read that Daniel, a man who worked for a king, had a spirit of excellence, which propelled him to greater status and promotion. He was distinguished because of his character.

One of the main aspects of excellence is integrity. Simply, living with authenticity and honesty in every area of our lives. Does this mean that we have to be perfect? Not at all! It means that we give our best in every area, and when we do mess up, we don't try to hide it or sweep our mistakes under the rug. We fully embrace God's grace and strength as we move forward, learning and growing.

As we begin to grasp the grace and love that God has shown us, we can't help but respond with a thankful heart—wanting to passionately give Him back the best of ourselves we have to offer. Practically, this looks like not cutting corners on your job, but doing your best even if it goes unnoticed. It looks like not gossiping about your friends behind their back even though they might never know. It looks like going the extra mile, being attentive to details, and finishing a job fully.

Through these simple acts, we bring honor to God and set ourselves apart as people who are unwilling to compromise regardless of the culture around us.

WEEK 4

Day 6

THE BEST IS  
YET TO COME

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# Discovering Your Strength

**EPHESIANS 2:10**

*For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.*

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God has created us each uniquely, with purpose, gifts, and talents, that are special to us individuals. The Bible says that God gave us these gifts so that we can walk in the purpose that God prepared for us before we were even born! Not only did God create us for something special, but He has also equipped us with everything that we need.

Another word to describe our gifts and talents is the word 'strength.' Each of us have many things that we are good at, and discovering our strengths can help us discover our purpose.

One of several ways to discover your strengths is through the Gallup® CliftonStrengths Test.

As we learn our strengths – our gifts and the things we are good at – we can learn to develop them as we work to fulfill the special things God has called us to do.

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\*If you're in the Houston area, we sell the Strengthsfinder Book in our Lakewood Bookstore.

WEEK 4

Day 7

THE BEST IS  
YET TO COME

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# The Best is Yet to Come

**EPHESIANS 3:20**

*Never doubt God's mighty power to work in you and accomplish all this. He will achieve infinitely more than your greatest request, your most unbelievable dream, and exceed your wildest imagination! He will outdo them all, for his miraculous power constantly energizes you.*

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Today, we simply want to tell you how proud we are of your decision to step into a relationship with Jesus. It is one decision that we can promise you will never regret. Let Him be the foundation on which you build your life. You will discover purpose, peace, and freedom that surpasses everything you've known yet.

Pastor Joel offers this challenge every week—attend Lakewood faithfully for one year and your life will never be the same because of what God is going to do in your heart and mind. Consistency is key, come as often as you can. Plant yourself in the house.

We are here for you every step of the way! We are so excited to see all that God is already doing and all that He will do in your life as you follow Him.

Welcome to the Lakewood Family, the best is yet to come!