

# THE WAY

## A LIFE SHAPED BY JESUS

### About this Reading Plan

Over the next six weeks, you are invited to take part in a journey called The Way - A Life Shaped by Jesus. We will learn the core beliefs and practices the gospel presents to Christ-followers. During this study, you will have three weeks of diving into the gospel beliefs: come as you are, you are forgiven, and you can change. Each of these beliefs leads us deeper in our journey of receiving and understanding the grace of Jesus.

In the final three weeks of this study, you are invited to practice the message and core beliefs of the gospel. Specifically, we will focus on three gospel practices for our lives: receiving from God, repenting to God and others, and responding in obedience to Him. The hope is that by taking time daily to invest, read, and reflect through this study, you may find a greater understanding of how these gospel beliefs can influence your life every day, and then put those beliefs into practice each day in order to have a life shaped by Jesus.

Each day's reading includes:

- › Scripture corresponding to the belief and practice that is being studied that week
- › A commentary or reflection thought for you to process the text more intentionally
- › Reflection questions or challenges to allow you to begin to internalize this study's message and apply it to your walk with Jesus

### Getting more out of this study

We hope and desire that this study will be a blessing to you. We want our church to get the most that they possibly can out of this reading and study of scripture, so we have additional opportunities and resources available to you as you dive into this study.

### Email

You can register for our weekly email with encouragements and recaps of the study from the previous week. If you would like to receive these weekly emails, simply sign up at [GraceClarksville.com/GIW](https://GraceClarksville.com/GIW)

### App

If you haven't downloaded our Grace Community Church app, search "Grace Clarksville" in your app store or use your camera and scan this QR code to download the app directly. The app offers this study digitally and has more weekly resources and encouragements.



### Group

We offer community groups for those wanting to connect in a short-term group with people at Grace to unpack and walk through this study together. To sign up and learn about our Grace in the Word group availability, go to [GraceClarksville.com/GIW](https://GraceClarksville.com/GIW) and sign up.

### Name and Contact Information

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# PRAYERS & REFLECTIONS

## Before You Read God's Word Today, Seek His Help with These 5 Prayers

1. God, give me wisdom, knowledge, and understanding.
2. God, let any knowledge I gain serve to help me love You and others more and not puff me up.
3. God, help me see something new about You I've never seen before.
4. God, correct any lies I believe about You or anything I misunderstand.
5. God, direct my steps according to Your Word.

\*\* Prayers from The Bible Recap Reading Plan by Tara-Leigh Cobble \*\*

## Tips for Approaching Scripture

- › Pray before you read (use the prayers above)
- › Read the words in proper context, taking into consideration when it was written, to whom it was written, and what was happening when it was written (a good study bible is helpful, we recommend the ESV Study Bible)
- › Look for God's character and faithfulness to His people
- › Look for themes that point to Jesus
- › Look for anything repetitive, unusual, confusing, hopeful, comforting, challenging
- › Once you are finished reading, take a few minutes to meditate on what you have read:
  - » Narrow down what you've read to just one or two main thoughts.
  - » What did I learn about God in these passages?
  - » How can I praise God for what this says about him?
  - » What did I learn about the human heart in these passages?
  - » What behavior/emotions come when I forget these things about God?
  - » What is God revealing to me today that I need to listen to?
  - » What sins do I need to confess in light of what God revealed today?
  - » What is one next step I can take in light of what I have read today?

# WEEKLY CHECKLIST

## PART ONE: GOSPEL BELIEFS

### Week One: Come As You Are

- Day 1 - Matthew 11:28-30, Hebrews 4:1-11
- Day 2 - Luke 5:27-32, Romans 3:23, Mark 2:16-17
- Day 3 - John 3:1-21, John 14:1-14, Luke 1:31-38
- Day 4 - Matthew 11:28-30, Psalm 34:18, James 4:8, Jeremiah 31:7-13
- Day 5 - Matthew 18:1-6, Mark 10:14-15, Luke 18:15-17, Hebrews 4:14-16, Matthew 11:25-27
- Day 6 - Reflection Day- Matthew 11:28-30
- Day 7 - Rest Day

### Week Two: You Are Forgiven

- Day 1 - Romans 6:15-23, Galatians 5:16-17
- Day 2 - Isaiah 1:18-20, John 15:1-5, Hebrews 10:19-25, 1 John 1:7-9, Psalm 51
- Day 3 - Ephesians 2:8, Ephesians 1:7-8, Psalm 103:8-13
- Day 4 - Ephesians 2:1-10, 1 Peter 1:18-25, Romans 6:1-10
- Day 5- 1 John 1:8-9, Psalm 32:1-3
- Day 6 - Reflection Day- Romans 6:15-23
- Day 7 - Rest Day

### Week Three: There's Real Hope for Change

- Day 1 - Romans 12:1-2, 2 Corinthians 4:16-18, 10:3-6, Philippians 4:6-9, Ephesians 4:17-24
- Day 2 - Exodus 14:10-14, Romans 5:3-8, Romans 6:7-18, 1 Corinthians 10:12-15
- Day 3 - 2 Corinthians 5:17-21, Lamentations 3:22-24, Colossians 3:5-10
- Day 4 - Galatians 2:20-21, Ephesians 1:15-23, Ephesians 3:14-21
- Day 5 - 2 Corinthians 12:9-10, Ephesians 2:8-10, Romans 8:26-28
- Day 6 - Reflection Day- Romans 12:1-2
- Day 7 - Rest Day

# WEEKLY CHECKLIST

## PART TWO: GOSPEL PRACTICES

### **Week Four: Receiving from God**

- Day 1 - John 13:1-11
- Day 2 - 1 John 4:16-19, Romans 8:31-39, 1 Corinthians 13:4-7
- Day 3 - John 15:1-11, James 1:2-3, Romans 15:13
- Day 4 - Acts 1:6-8, Hebrews 4:14-16, 2 Corinthians 3:4-6, 2 Corinthians 4:7-9, Hebrews 13:6-8
- Day 5 - 1 Peter 5:6-11, Matthew 18:1-6, 2 Chronicles 7:14-15
- Day 6 - Reflection Day- John 13:1-11
- Day 7 - Rest Day

### **Week Five: Repenting to God and Others**

- Day 1 - Luke 15:11-32, 1 John 1:8-10, Psalm 32:5, Proverbs 28:13
- Day 2 - Luke 15:1-7, Luke 15:11-20, Hebrews 4:16, John 1:16
- Day 3 - Luke 15:20-24, Acts 3:19-20, 2 Peter 3:8-14
- Day 4 - Luke 15:11-32, Micah 6:8, Ephesians 4:31-32
- Day 5 - Luke 15:11-32, Luke 15:25-32, Ephesians 4:30-32, Colossians 3:12-15, Luke 6:27-28
- Day 6 - Reflection Day- Luke 15:11-20
- Day 7 - Rest Day

### **Week Six: Responding in Obedience**

- Day 1 - Matthew 7:24-29, Luke 6:46-49
- Day 2 - Nehemiah 9, Hebrews 12:1-15, 2 Corinthians 7:1, Philippians 2:1-18
- Day 3 - Luke 9:18-27, Titus 2:11-15
- Day 4 - Romans 2:12-13, James 1:19-25, Ephesians 2:1-10
- Day 5 - John 14:15-26
- Day 6 - Reflection Day- Matthew 7:24-29
- Day 7 - Rest Day



# **GOSPEL BELIEFS**

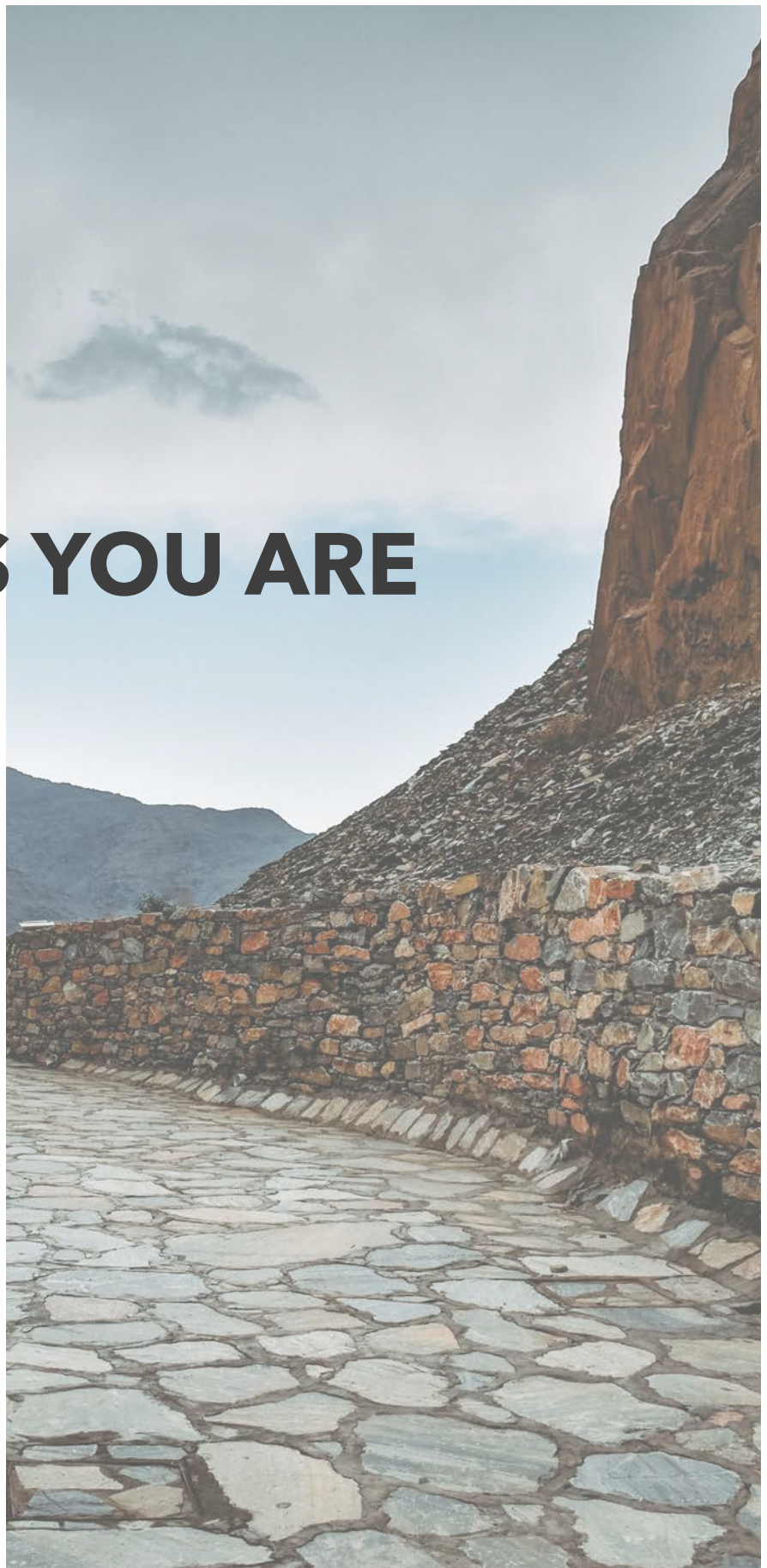
## PART 1





# COME AS YOU ARE

WEEK 1





**"Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light."**

**-Matthew 11:28-30**

# DAY 1 - MONDAY

MATTHEW 11:28-30, HEBREWS 4:1-11

## Reflection:

Do you wrestle with this promise of rest that Jesus offers in Matthew 11? Why or why not?

Today slowly read through each phrase of Matthew 11:28-30 and ask God to reveal ways you can trust and live more fully into this offer of true soul rest.

## Are You Tired and Weary?

There are seasons, likely long seasons, where we come to Jesus weary, tired, and carrying heavy burdens. Jesus says in Matthew 11,

*Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light.*

This sounds beautiful, but the reality is that we struggle to believe Jesus' words here are true and possible for us. Most of the time, we don't slow down long enough for Him to give us true soul rest, or we don't realize that taking him up on this offer of rest is much easier than striving in our own strength. Jesus' invitation to come to Him weary and burdened is not just for physical rest but for a deeper soul rest which is what we all really need the most. And yet, his offer of an "easy yoke" doesn't always make sense to us... because a yoke is historically a tool for work, used to harness oxen together to plow a field. How is a yoke "easy and light" if it requires work? Another meaning of this word, "yoke," in Jesus' day, was a common term used for a rabbi's teachings. What Jesus is offering is to let Him help us carry the load, and He is saying that His teachings show us the way to a life of freedom. He offers us a new way of life, but we often miss it.

In his commentary on Matthew, Frederick Dale Bruner says, "Jesus realizes that the most restful gift he can give the tired is a new way to carry life, a fresh way to bear responsibilities.... instead of offering escape, Jesus offers equipment. Jesus means that obedience to his Sermon on the Mount [his yoke] will develop in us a balance and a "way" of carrying life that will give more rest than the way we have been living."

Eugene Peterson in *The Message* paraphrases Matthew 11:28-30 like this,

*Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly.*

This is an invitation—for all the tired, weary, stressed out, burned out, never enough time in the day ones of us out here. Jesus' invitation is to take up his yoke—to travel through life with Him by our side, walking with Him every step of the way, learning from him how to shoulder the weight of life, knowing that we are not carrying it alone. He can carry it for us! This takes some intentionality on our part though; we have to lay down the hurried pressures of the world's demands and seek the slower intentional pace of Jesus. It will not happen by accident; we have to be ruthless in our attempt to fight for the pace of Jesus. It will require us to resist the urge to strive in our strength and slow down to let Him fill us with His soul rest. As Dallas Willard says, "Hurry is the enemy of spiritual life in our day...you must ruthlessly eliminate hurry from your life."

If you want a deeper dive into this topic, check out *The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry* by John Mark Comer



# DAY 2 - TUESDAY

LUKE 5:27-32, ROMANS 3:23, MARK 2:16-17

## Reflection:

Why do you think it is essential to understand that we are sinners?

What does it mean to you that Jesus cares for us, sinners, to come as we are?

How do you think you can begin to invite Jesus into the hidden parts of your life?

## Friend of Sinners

There are so many things to be afraid of in this life. Dying, heights, snakes, flying, enclosed spaces, or, worst of all: speaking in public. Personally, I fear spiders more than just about anything else in this life. Whatever we might think of personally when we think of scary things, there's one thing we all share deep down. We all share a fear so great we don't like to think about it and certainly won't talk about it in everyday conversation. That fear, of course, is the fear of being seen.

We all fear being truly seen. With no filters, no well-crafted polite version of ourselves, no hidden parts or thoughts. We fear being seen for who we are: frauds, judgmental, conceited, proud, selfish, self-serving, deceptive, broken. We work our entire lives to bury, hide, and deny that version of ourselves, but the truth is: that is who we are, but it's not who we have to be, and it's not who Christ sees us as.

In Luke 5 and Mark 2, we see Jesus eating with Matthew (Levi), a tax collector and sinner. We read that He ate with him and other sinners. Jesus was taking time to share a table with people that were seen, and exposed, for who they were more than most. Jesus took time to eat with them because He saw more in them than their sin. He saw His children. He saw His work being done through them because they were willing to invite Him in and come as they truly are to Him.

The Pharisees saw Jesus eating with this kind of crowd and scoffed at Him, and with venom in their words, gave Jesus the title of "Friend of Sinners." This insult is one of the most beautiful and grace-filled characteristics of Jesus. It's a reminder that He cares about us. He cares about who we are because He sees us for who we are more than anyone else possibly can. Jesus sees us through the lens of who we are now and who we can be through a relationship with Him. Jesus sees us, wants to be with us, and offers to make us more than who we try so hard not to let anyone else see. Jesus sees our mess but chooses us. The fact that Jesus is a friend to sinners should encourage us to go to Him like we never have before. We have nothing to hide or fear by coming to Him as we are because He sees us for who we are and still loves us.

*"Jesus calls us friends, not because of who we are or what we have done, but because of who He is. He is the friend of all people, and he invites us into friendship with him." -Rich Wilkerson Jr. Friend of Sinners*

# DAY 3 - WEDNESDAY

JOHN 3:1-21, JOHN 14:1-14, LUKE 1:31-38

## Reflection:

Have you been taught not to question God? Why?

Is there a difference between doubt and curiosity? What do you think the difference might be?

Sit with these stories you read today and process how Jesus responds to those who come to Him with their questions.

## Come to Him with Curiosity

In today's reading in John 3, we meet Nicodemus, a Jewish religious leader of the day known as a Pharisee. He believes that God has sent Jesus to teach them, but he comes to Jesus with questions. This Pharisee had heard God's Word but did not recognize the person of Jesus standing before him. Nicodemus must have walked away confused and conflicted. Yet, after Nicodemus personally met with Jesus, something in him changed. He is curious about Jesus, and that curiosity leads him to a deeper understanding of who Jesus is and why He came. Often in our faith journey, we come to Jesus with our questions, and if we seek Him for answers, He can lead us into a deeper relationship with Him. We see this same posture in John 14 as Philip and Thomas come to Jesus with their questions. As they lean into their questions, Jesus reveals more answers to them.

Sometimes we are afraid to question things of faith, but we can come to Him with our curiosity. Author Lore Ferguson Wilbert says in her book, *A Curious Faith*, "When we pretend to have all the answers, we're not telling the truth." The truth is we are often confused and we definitely don't have all the answers, no matter how hard we try to figure things out on our own. Even with the help of the internet and well-meaning friends, we often come up short. Seeking answers from God's Word and asking for the help of the Spirit are key elements in growing our faith in Him. He wants us to come to him with all our questions. My honesty before him was all he wanted all along. He didn't want my blind trust or my white-knuckled attempts to clean myself up for him. He wanted me, all of me, all my history, all my brokenness, all my fears and anxieties and angers."

We can bring all our doubts, fears, and brokenness to Him because He will welcome us with open arms and take us deeper into a relationship with Him where we can find the answers we seek. Sometimes, we still won't fully understand what God is up to, but we can trust that His ways are better than ours. We can lean into our questions, like Mary when she asks the angel in Luke 1, "But how can this be?" Even after the questions, God's plan might still be a mystery to us, but may we come away with the assurance that Mary had when she said, "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word."

*"Curiosity will free you to live in the mystery of God's love." - Seth Haines*

# DAY 4 - THURSDAY

MATTHEW 11:28-30, PSALM 34:18, JAMES 4:8, JEREMIAH 31:7-13

## Reflection:

How can seeing Jesus as gentle and lowly change how you see Him in your times of suffering?

Why is isolation such a dangerous response to suffering?

How can you begin to come to Jesus and share with Him in your suffering in broken-hearted seasons?

## Never Alone

*Where the Red Fern Grows* by Wilson Rawls is easily one of the saddest books I've ever read. It has all the makings of a tragedy. A young boy who raises two hound dog pups named Old Dan and Little Ann during the Great Depression in the Ozark Mountains. The dogs are this boy's life. He raises them, loves them, cares for them, and they love each other. To make a tragic story short, Old Dan dies defending the boy from a mountain lion. Then not long after, Little Ann dies alone on Old Dan's grave. She dies of a broken heart.

Truly this is the epitome of sad stories. It's a story I'll never read again, and it's one I certainly don't like to think about. It's one that many of us have lived through, not necessarily the loss of a good dog friend, but the pain and deep emotional hurt of a broken heart. One thing is certain in this life; there will be suffering. There are times, days, weeks, months, even long seasons when we suffer, where things don't go our way. There are difficult seasons where we experience hurt, betrayal, emotional turmoil, and loss of a relationship or loved one. In times of suffering and brokenheartedness, we tend to pull away and dwell in our pain. We often isolate ourselves and feel alone when we experience suffering because every person's pain is unique and uniquely felt.

The glorious truth of the gospel and God's Word is that we are never alone. Jesus reminds us that He is gentle and lowly, meaning He is with us. In our deepest hurts and sorrows, He is there, and although we may uniquely feel our suffering and sorrow, Jesus is uniquely present with us in the middle of it. We may feel alone, but we never have to because Jesus is always with us. Dane Ortlund points this out in his book *Gentle & Lowly* when he writes, "In our pain, Jesus is pained; in our suffering, he feels the suffering as his own even though it isn't-not that his invincible divinity is threatened, but in the sense that his heart is feelingly drawn into our distress...His is a love that cannot be held back when he sees his people in pain."

We are never alone. In our broken-hearted, isolated, suffering seasons, Jesus is as present as in our high-spirit, full-of-joy, easy-going days. Jesus is a relationship so near to us that He reigns in our very souls. His dwelling in our souls is why we can come to Him just as we are in our broken-hearted suffering seasons. He is gentle and lowly with us, sympathizing with our suffering and leading us to hope and peace that only He can deliver.

# DAY 5 - FRIDAY

MATTHEW 18:1-6, MARK 10:14-15, LUKE 18:15-17,  
HEBREWS 4:14-16, MATTHEW 11:25-27

## Reflection:

What would it look like for you to approach God with boldness & expectancy, courageous joy, innocent curiosity, humility, and an eagerness to grow?

## Come Like A Child

You may have heard the phrase “faith like a child” or “childlike faith,” but the Bible never uses these exact phrases. What Jesus actually says in Matthew 18:2 is that we must “become as little children” in order to enter the kingdom of God. The context surrounding Jesus’ statement is the disciples’ question, “Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?”. In response, Jesus said, “whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.” In these passages, Jesus isn’t talking about faith. In fact, He doesn’t mention faith at all. So, as the disciples focus on who is the greatest in God’s Kingdom, Jesus offers a new perspective: those who willingly take the lowest position are the greatest in the kingdom of God.

There is something essential about having a childlike perspective if you want to enter the kingdom of heaven. As adults, the world’s brokenness can tend to make us jaded and bitter. We are likely to think we can meet our needs independently. We are prone to believe that we have all the answers. As adults, we hold grudges, harbor fears, refuse to forgive, lose hope, & resist change. So what does it mean to enter the kingdom like a child?

1. **Come Bold & Expectant** - unafraid to ask for help. Think about how a child comes to their parents in a time of need; they come boldly and expectant with the hope that the parents will meet their needs. Hebrews 4:16 says, “Come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy and find grace to help us when we need it most.”
2. **Come with Courageous Joy** - undistracted by the fears & cares of the world. Children dare to take risks without fear, and experience delight and joy in the smallest details of life. A child often responds to a gift with authentic gratitude and joy.
3. **Innocent Curiosity** - untainted by the ways of the world. Children come with a pure, innocent curiosity about things. Being “child-like” doesn’t mean we are to be immature or uneducated about our faith, nor does it mean that we have to trust blindly. In fact, it is quite the opposite; it requires us to ask questions to help build & strengthen our trust in Him as we grow.
4. **Humbly** - aware of our weaknesses and need for direction. Children are aware of where they need help and aren’t afraid to request those needs be met by their parents. We become like children when we submit to the direction and authority of the Lord.
5. **Eager to Grow** - aware they don’t have all the answers. God wants us to come to Him and His Word so that we might learn, grow, and mature in our faith. Matthew 11:25, Jesus says, “thank you for hiding these things from those who think themselves wise and clever, and for revealing them to the childlike.”

In Mark 10, Jesus says, “Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.” How can you become more like a child as you approach the Lord?

# DAY 6 - SATURDAY (REFLECTION DAY)

MATTHEW 18:28-30

## Reflection Notes and Questions:

This week we took time to study and understand the vital gospel belief that we are invited to come to God as we are. The beautiful truth and message of the gospel is that we can come to God as broken, sinful, confused, and lost people. He draws near to us in our brokenness. His love is for us and the belief and soul-impacting power of that love change us to walk in His love and forgiveness daily. Dane Ortlund points to this truth: *"He wants us to draw strength from his love, but the only ones qualified to do that are sinners in need of undeserved love. And he doesn't just want us to be forgiven. He wants us."*

As we wrap up week 1 of this study, reflect on what it means to come to Jesus as you are, and follow these reflection practices below:

- › Write down what you learned about who God is this week.
- › What did you learn this week that you want to apply to your walk with Christ?
- › How can you continue to come to God as you are daily?

# DAY 7 - SUNDAY

REST DAY

Use today to rest, pray, and catch up on any of this week's reading you missed. Use today as a rest and preparation for your heart towards next week's time with God in this study.