

THEME SUMMARY



Theme:

“Turning around, Jesus saw them following and asked, ‘What do you want?’”
John 1:38a

Key Thought:

If Jesus asked you today, “What do you really want?” what would you say? Often people respond with requests for things such as health, finances, relationships, or daily provisions (job, home, car, etc.). The thing is, these things are powerless to give us what we really need or want. We are so distracted by what our culture tells us will make us happy, secure, and fulfilled that we totally lose sight of the deeper, more life-affirming needs we have.

Perhaps that is why Jesus would use rabbinical teaching techniques to get us to stop, pause, think, and reflect. One of the ways he did that was to teach with parables or imagery. Only those who took time to seriously consider what he meant by the story would receive the blessing. Another way Jesus used is to ask people questions to make them think deeper. One of my favorite questions he asks often (and the one that will be the foundation of our focus this week) is, “What do you really want?” or “What do you want me to do for you?” Obviously, he knew the blind wanted sight, the cripple to walk, the demon possessed to be set free, etc. But I have often wondered if Jesus used this question so much because he wanted the person or people to think deeper—to go beyond the obvious physical need to a deeper spiritual need.

That is what we are going to do this week. This material is designed to encourage the participants to stop and look deep inside to the most important, innate needs human beings have and consider what they really want. They will explore needs that can’t be met by a healthy bank balance, possession, fame, or power. By being aware of the deepest, most heart-felt and important needs, the participants will be free to go to the one who is able to give them exactly what they need to live a joy-filled, victorious life.

The Gospel as reflected in the Theme:

The good news of the gospel is that Jesus Christ, the sinless Son of God, paid our sin debt on the cross so that when we accept him as Savior, we are declared forgiven and righteous before God. We are promised his abiding presence and the empowerment of his Spirit, and assured of eternal life. There really is no greater “good news” than that! Having Christ as Savior and Lord not only frees us from the burden of sin and makes our eternity with him sure and certain, but it also impacts our lives in innumerable ways every day and in every way. Unfortunately, we are often too busy, too self-focused, too distracted to notice.

Our culture puts so much emphasis on achieving and doing, that we often lose sight of what we really need or want. We do want good health, financial security, protection for loved ones, healthy relationships, and more. These are good desires, but if we were to allow ourselves to stop and look deep inside, we would discover there are more profound, life-altering needs we have lost sight of.

Jesus loves us so much he longs to give us more than bare necessities. Of course, he wants to feed people, cure their diseases, restore life, and give them peace from the torment of demon possession. Jesus intimately knows our human condition. Not only was he there when we were created, but he also took on this human body and lived in it. He knows that in addition to the physical, we need to be loved and accepted. We need to feel that we have worth and significance. We need to be set free from lies, temptations, and deception of the evil one. We need hope for the future

and the knowledge that we are making a difference.

During this week, we are going to be exploring the gospel good news that Jesus Christ meets the most basic and powerful needs we have—needs we haven't even thought about—needs that are so powerful they determine our actions and how we think about ourselves and others. The really, really good news of the gospel is that Jesus is not only able to perfectly and powerfully meet all those needs, but also, he longs to do just that. All we must do is to acknowledge the need, come to him with open arms, and He will fill the deepest want or need we could ever have.

May this week of SERVE have such a powerful impact on your life that you leave here filled with the sure knowledge that you are a person of great worth and significance who is loved and accepted by Jesus Christ, that you are free of the attacks of Satan so that you can go home with the assurance that you will make a difference now and for the rest of your life.

SESSION OUTLINE

Session 1: What do you really want?

- **Session Focus:** Participants will be asked to consider what they actually want out of life and will be encouraged to go confidently and boldly into God's presence to ask for what we want because Jesus has paved the way.
- **Key Passage:** Hebrews 4:15-16
- **Small Group Discussion:** Groups will have an opportunity to explore some of the gifts God longs to give them and be encouraged to claim the promise of at least one of those gifts during the week.

Session 2: What do you really want? Worth.

- **Devotions:** After exploring God's word to see what He says about how valuable they are, participants will be given the opportunity to listen to God speak to them through Ephesians 1:7 and to spend time in prayer, talking back to God.
- **Session Focus:** The evil one tries to fill our minds with lies about our lack of worth, but God's word assures us we are temples of the Holy Spirit. We belong to God! We were bought with a price! And we have the ability to bring glory to him!
- **Key Passage:** Matthew 10:29-32
- **Small Group Discussion:** As participants, consider the powerful truth of Ephesians 3:20, they will be encouraged to live beyond their limits because God is able and willing to do more than they can ask or imagine by his power that is within them.

Session 3: What do you really want? Freedom

- **Devotions:** The evil one doesn't want us free, so he tries to oppress us in a number of ways until we feel defeated and burdened. Participants will look at scriptures that help them recognize how the evil one works and more importantly how they can find freedom and victory by Christ's power.
- **Session Focus:** The focus of the session will be all the ways Jesus sets us free to live victoriously and powerfully for him. He frees us from the power of sin, death, and hell. He never leaves our side and empowers us in all situations. He frees us from carrying our burdens alone. He is the truth, and he sets us free!

- **Key Passage:** John 8:32-36
- **Small Group Discussion:** Small groups will have an opportunity to talk about the armor they have as they fight for spiritual freedom as found in Ephesians 6:10-18. They will talk about each part of the armor of God as well as the power of prayer.

Session 4: What do you really want? Hope

- **Devotions:** Into this world that is rife with so many hopeless situations, comes the powerful blessing of Romans 15:13 that we will be able to overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Participants will use scripture verses to answer the question, “Why should I have hope?”
- **Session Focus:** The session will explore ways we can receive God’s hope when we are discouraged as well as ideas for practical ways to share God’s hope with others who need it.
- **Key Passage:** 1 Peter 1:3-9 and Mark 2:1-12
- **Small Group Discussion:** Discussion in small groups will center around Romans 5:3-5 as the groups talk about how to find hope even in times of suffering. They will also talk about the importance of perseverance and of allowing times of suffering to help them develop Godly character.

Session 5: What do you really want? Love and acceptance

- **Devotions:** Using John 13:1 as a foundational verse, participants will be encouraged to think about all the ways Christ showed the full extent of His love in those last hours of His life. They will also have an opportunity to listen to God speak of his love through Romans 5:8 and other Bible verses.
- **Session Focus:** This session will further explore God’s love for us as participants are encouraged to consider the unconditional, sacrificial, and eternal nature of God’s love.
- **Key Passage:** Isaiah 54:10 and Romans 8:31-38
- **Small Group Discussion:** In both morning devotions (on their own) and the session focused on God’s love for us (in small groups), participants will have an opportunity to explore practical ways they can love God back.

Session 6: What do you really want? Significance

- **Devotions:** In a world that is constantly telling us that we are not enough, God speaks loudly through Ephesians 2:10 to assure us that he empowers us to live a life of great significance.
- **Session Focus:** The session will focus on four ways Christ calls us to live a life of significance: as a new creation, as ministers of reconciliation, as ambassadors, and as his righteousness.
- **Key Passage:** 2 Corinthians 5:17-21
- **Small Group Discussion:** As participants respond to the call to live a life of significance, they will have an opportunity to discuss how they can more effectively develop the fruit of the Spirit as well as identify and develop the spiritual gifts God has given them.

Session 7: What do you really want? To make a difference

- **Devotions:** In John 14:12-14, Jesus promises we will be able to do what he has been doing and will be able to do even greater things than he has done. What we need to do is to ask for the power of the Spirit he has given us to empower us. Participants will be asked to consider what God might be calling them to do.
- **Session Focus:** Apart from the Holy Spirit empowering us and Christ calling us, we can do nothing, but in him, we can do all things...not because we are able, but because God is able. God will make all grace abound, and then we will have all we need at all times for all things and consequently we will abound in every good work.
- **Key Passage:** 2 Corinthians 9:8 and 2 Corinthians 9:12-15
- **Small Group Discussion:** This last small group time will emphasize that God has called them to make a difference, not just in the city where they spent SERVE, but also in their homes, schools, and cities. Participants will be encouraged to think of specific and practical ways they can do this.