



The Star

Shining for Jesus

“If Jesus came in the flesh today, I wonder if we would accuse him of being un-American.”

In this beautiful country, we have certain ways of doing things around here. Not everyone, but many would say:

- Work hard during the week to play on the weekend.
- Smile when you walk by but don't invade someone's personal space.
- Stop on over at the house sometime but please call ahead and let me know your coming.
- Always pick the shortest line but never cut in.
- And Christmas is a very, very, very, very big deal!

It is just the way it is.

I hope Jesus would never be anti-American. He loves all people and came as a baby to offer salvation to all people.

Yet I wonder if Jesus would be un-American in how he celebrates Christmas.

Would Jesus celebrate his own birthday the way most of us do? Would he take on all the responsibilities, expectations and traditions of the season? Would he make the list and check it twice?

Let's reclaim this wonderful day! Let's take Christmas back and celebrate with Jesus the way it was celebrated on the very first Christmas where gifts were given, God was worshipped and the good news was proclaimed.

Let me welcome you to...

Bringing Christmas Home...
Making Room In My Heart For Jesus.

Instructional Page

1. The experience guide is to be used in partnership with the items in your bag and the DVD or video link. If you do not have the DVD, please go to www.nlf-online.church and follow the links for Bringing Christmas Home.
2. Go at your own pace. This is designed to be flexible and it will hopefully spark good conversation.
3. Be honest and vulnerable. You are most likely with people you trust. You do not have to be a spiritual giant to participate or even to lead the discussions.
4. Try new things. Participate. If something is uncomfortable, push through it. That is a good thing.
5. There are activities and questions that will relate to everyone, to all ages. Spend whatever time needed on each part.
6. Completion of the experience is not the goal. Spread this time out if needed. But give it your best.
7. Start with the DVD or Link.



Jesus **GREW** in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and all the people.

- Luke 2:52

LIKE JESUS

It probably is important that we remember that even Jesus had to “grow up.” Jesus the baby and Jesus the man are two very different things. In order to move from the Manger to the Cross, many changes needed to happen. Notice the ways Jesus grew:

1. Knowledge
2. Strength
3. Relationships

God’s maturing work is freely given so we too will grow up in our likeness of him. Christ was the very image of God, the God-man. May we faithfully follow Jesus’s example by growing up more and more into his likeness.

Why was it important that Jesus grew in these 3 ways?

How should your life be structured so that you may grow in these 3 areas just as Jesus did?

*And now, just as you accepted Christ Jesus as your Lord, you must continue to follow him. **Let your roots grow down into him**, and let your lives be built on him. Then your faith will grow strong in the truth you were taught, and you will overflow with thankfulness. (Colossians 2:6-7)*

Praise God that Jesus came to save sinners and conquer death forever! He also came that we may grow up into the image in which we were first created, God’s image. Here, Paul paints a picture of how our growth must continue beyond our saving moment. He draws our eyes to the ground, declaring that our faith is further developed; it is built, with an ever-strengthening foundation.

How are your roots? Are they deepening? Withering?

For our faith to grow, the seed (we are the seeds) must find its way into nutrient-rich soil. Take a moment and reflect on your surroundings...your home, friends, place of work, school etc...

Read Mathew 13:1-9

What type of soil are you planted in?

Grab the blank notecard, find a few crayons and/or some colored pencils and draw the type of soil you find yourself in today.



Explain your picture.

Seeds That Grow

Simply put: You can't change you! Only through encountering Jesus can we change.

Romans 8:26 - And the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness.

Romans 8:28 - And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

Think of a few of the things/experiences that God allows in our lives to "work for our good."

Ex – Problems, disappointment, discipline, seeing a friend in need etc...

Grab a seed from the bag and share a thought of an experience that God is using for you to grow.

Deeper Thoughts for Adults

Amy Carmichael once penned these thoughts: Sometimes when we read the words of those who have been more than conquerors, we feel almost despondent. I feel that I shall never be like that. But they won through step by step, by little bits of wills, little denials of self, little inward victories of faithfulness in very little things. They became what they are. No one sees these little hidden steps. They only see the accomplishment, but even so, those small steps were taken. There is no sudden triumph no [instant] spiritual maturity. That is the work of the moment.

"Human beings grow by striving, working, stretching; and in a sense, human nature needs problems more than solutions. Why are not all prayers answered magically and instantly? Why must every convert travel the same tedious path of spiritual discipline? Because persistent prayer, and fasting, and study, and meditation are designed primarily for our sakes, not for God's. Kierkegaard said that Christians reminded him of schoolboys who want to look up the answers to their math problems in the back of the book rather than work them through...We yearn for shortcuts. But shortcuts usually lead away from growth, not toward it. 'Faith like Job's cannot be shaken because it is the result of having been shaken.'"

- Phillip Yancy

What moments in your life have caused you to grow like Jesus did?

In order to grow we need (common list):

1. To eat—The Bible

Share a few favorite Bible verses.

Are there any verses you could all memorize together?

2. To breathe—Prayer

Write a few prayers for the Christmas season on the lines below.

3. Good spiritual hygiene—Confession

Write a confession on the flash paper in your bag and burn it. Use caution and monitor children. 😊

4. A caring family—Fellowship

Who are the Christian friends helping you?

What help do you still need from others?



5. Protection—Armor of God

Read Ephesians 6:10-18.

What part of the armor do you have?

For fun, search in Google, “I Am A Seed,” by David Crowder.

Listen to the song 😊

Prayers:

Take out your scroll and write down in what ways is Jesus desiring you to grow like him?



WITH JESUS

*How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify your conscience from dead works to **serve** the living God. (Hebrews 9:14 SRV)*

Jesus was led by the Spirit of God and followed His promptings to serve, love, and help others. No task was ever beneath Jesus, and no person was ever unworthy. This is the example we are to follow.

Read John 13:1-17

Group Activity

In the bag you will find a small washcloth. Take a small bowl, fill it with warm water, grab a towel for drying and wash one other person’s feet with the washcloth provided.

Give each person an opportunity to do the same for another. Now talk about your experience.

Did everyone participate? Why or why not?

Did you laugh?

Was it weird to actually wash their feet? Why?

How did it feel to wash someone’s feet?

How did it feel to have someone wash your feet?

When Jesus finished washing their feet, he told his disciples to do the same for others. In saying this, Jesus meant so much more than literally washing dirty feet.

Individual Activity - Find a scrap piece of paper and write down a few ideas of how you can serve a family member and a friend this Christmas season.

Finish this section by answering in your scroll, “In what ways is Jesus inviting you to serve with him?”



FOR JESUS

In the same way, you should be a light for other people. Live so that they will see the good things you do and will praise your Father in heaven. (Matthew 5:16 NCV)

During Christmas, we celebrate Jesus, the true light, who has come into this world. When we receive from the Lord it is always meant (1) for us and (2) for others. We are not just the tools by which God’s blessings are gifted to the world. Likewise, we are not simply collectors of God’s goodness. We are designed to be receivers and givers. While receiving from God, we give God to those around us.

What is the difference between a pond and river?

It’s pretty simple, isn’t it? A pond collects all the nutrients. A river on the other hand uses the nutrients, as well as passing them on. We are called to be a river, not a pond!

Take a candle and light it. Try to do so in a dark room.

What does the light let you do?

How does the light impact others?



Read Matthew 5:14-16.

YOU are a city on a hill. People see you – they are watching you – and YOU can be a light to share with others the incredible gift we have in Jesus.

Take a few moments speaking about how others have shared Jesus with you and how that has influenced you.

Finish this section by answering in your scroll, “In what ways is Jesus calling you to share for him?”



TO JESUS

*And 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. - (Romans 12:1 NLT)*

Quick question:

Why does Paul (author of Romans) have to plead with his readers to give their bodies to God?

It is as if he truly recognizes that this request is one that may take some convincing. I am usually willing to give God part of me....parts of my dreams, some of my activities, a few of my plans and portions of my possessions.

Yet, God asks for our bodies; the one thing that I am so easily convinced is truly mine. My body belongs to me.

Uh oh! If God wants my entire body, is there anything that I can keep from him? Can there be anything that is just mine? Nope.

No wonder Paul pleads with them. We all need encouragement and help with this.

Is there any part of your life that you hold tightly within your hands and have not given over to God?

Go grab something that is very important to you...favorite toy, piggy bank, electronic, picture of a friend etc...

Share why it is important to you...

Is it something that is more important to you than Jesus?



The Bible outlines three types of people in Ephesians:

1. Takers – Those that only take (Thieves).
2. Getters – Those that give in order to get.
3. Givers – Those that give without any thought and expectations of getting something in return or how the gift should be used.

This Christmas season, which type of person are you?

Instead of saying what you want this year, share something that you might give.

What are you willing to give to Jesus this year?

In your bag you will find an envelope in which you can give, if you are led by Jesus to do so, your **Christmas Gift to Christ 2017**. You will be able to give this gift to Jesus during the pm Christmas Eve Service.

On your scrolls complete the last question, “In what ways is Jesus asking you to give to him?”

Other Thoughts:

