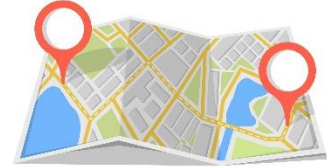


A Jesus' Shaped Vision for Life

Session 3: Creating a Roadmap

Living the vision Jesus has for your life is more than a destination – it's a journey, maybe even an adventure. Along the way, you need reminders of God's infinite love and ways to discern how to best live a Jesus' shaped life for others in each day. Spiritual practices or habits can help you to remember God's love and listen for God's guidance in the ever-changing journey of life.



Opening Questions *(select 1 or 2 questions)*

- When you travel, what is one of the essential items you want to be sure to pack?
- What destination is so familiar to you that you don't need a map to get there (your car could drive there on its own!)?
- What do you like to listen to when you are driving around or on a road trip?

In the Rearview Mirror: *You are Here on the Map*

- What is a question or insight from an earlier session that you continue to think about or wonder about (if any)? Did you try any of the take-away actions? How did it go?

Opening Prayer

Guiding Spirit, thank you for inviting us into an intentional life of faith and growth. Renew our inner strength. Root and ground us in the love that you have for each of us. Give us a mind that envisions a new path and a heart that is willing to follow. Open our ears and our hearts to listen to one another and listen to you. Amen.

What Does the Bible Say?

Mark 10: 17-22 (NRSVUE)

¹⁷ As [Jesus] was setting out on a journey, a man ran up and knelt before him and asked him, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" ¹⁸ Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. ¹⁹ You know the commandments: 'You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness.

You shall not defraud. Honor your father and mother.' " 20 He said to him, "Teacher, I have kept all these since my youth." 21 Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said, "You lack one thing; go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me." 22 When he heard this, he was shocked and went away grieving, for he had many possessions.

Think About... (*optional, depending on time*)

- What did you notice in the Bible reading? What words or phrases stood out to you?
- Before sharing tough words, the text tells us: "Jesus, looking at him, loved him..." What does this small phrase bring to the message of the text?
- If you could ask Jesus to help you identify the "one thing lacking" (like he did for the young man), what do you think it would be for you?

What Do Others Say?

Writer: Joel Vander Wal

Summers in my house growing up always meant one thing . . . our annual two-week road trip to eastern South Dakota. We would load up our 1984 wood paneled tan Dodge mini-van, with suitcases, sleeping bags, a cooler full of sandwiches and cans of pop and hit I-80 on our way west from northwest Indiana. Once we got out of range of the *Oldies Radio Station*, my parents would play books on tape that they borrowed from the library. My dad grew up on a farm outside of Brookings and his parents along with all his siblings remained in that area. My dad had our route highlighted on a giant Rand McNally Road Atlas that we could trace our fingers along as we drove through Illinois and Iowa and eventually, South Dakota.

At the beginning of each trip, I remember being filled with so much excitement and energy! I couldn't wait to see my grandparents and open whatever gift they had bought me. I loved staying up past my bedtime with my cousins watching movies on TV, or "helping" with chores around the farm like feeding the pigs or riding in the tractor to check out the corn or soy bean fields. Inevitably, boredom would set in. We would be driving through Iowa and the smell of a pig farm would hit our noses and I'd ask my dad, "Ugghh, what's that smell?"

"Joel," he would say, "that's the smell of money."

Staying on the interstates it was easy to follow the Rand McNally Road Atlas. This map was made for long road trips. But when we got closer to one of my aunts' houses, or my uncle's house or grandparents' apartment, my dad used a different map. This map was one that he had

made in his own mind. A map that he knew so well because he had driven to the houses so many times that it was as if his hands knew exactly where to steer the minivan. He didn't have to think, he didn't have to double check a map on paper. The path had been so ingrained in his mind that he simply drove to their houses.

There is a deep sense of comfort in the familiar, yet even the familiar can change forcing us to recalibrate the direction we are heading in. I remember—after my grandpa died—when my grandma started to show signs of Alzheimer's how difficult it was to bring her to the nursing home. The sadness in my dad's eyes, the blank stare in my grandma's, as she couldn't remember her own son, is burned into my memory. Sometimes life requires us to make a new roadmap.

In the story from Mark 10 the wealthy man asks Jesus for a new roadmap. He asks Jesus a simple question, "What must I do to inherit eternal life." The initial answer that Jesus gives is a roadmap the man has already followed since his youth. Did you notice that the things Jesus asks him to do have nothing to do with the future? All of them are present tense. I wonder if, inheriting eternal life, has more to do with how we choose to live today imitating the One who is Eternal, than it does with going to heaven? What if the roadmap we are called to follow in our walk of faith is more about the journey of becoming better imitators of the One who is Eternal today, than it is about the destination after we die?

Jesus recognized that this wealthy man needed a new roadmap. A way to live his life that more fully reflects the One who is Eternal. "You lack one thing," Jesus says, "go, sell what you own and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me."

Isn't it ironic that this wealthy man—who has more than he needs—is still *lacking one thing*. The roadmap he has been following has gotten him far on this journey of life. He would be considered "righteous" by all those around him—following the law since his youth. Just before this story in Mark chapter 8, Jesus shares this roadmap of discipleship: "If any want to become my followers, let them ***deny themselves*** and ***take up their cross*** and ***follow me***," (v. 34). Rather than specific commandments, Jesus shares a ***way of living life***. Like any worthwhile endeavor the adventure is found in the journey, not the destination.

What would it look like if each day you decided to live your life imitating the One who is Eternal, instead of those around you? What habits, addictions, unhealthy relationships, or symbols of wealth do you need to deny? What practices or ways of living bring you closer to God and how God wants you to live? What action of sacrificial love is God inviting you to make today for the sake of your neighbor or this world? How will you listen more closely to the voice of Jesus than to the voice of others? What might this new roadmap look like for you?

Spiritual practices or habits can help us stay on course. One spiritual practice that you might consider trying is fasting from the things that distract you from living a Jesus' shaped life. Although fasting is sometimes thought of as abstaining from food or drinks for a set period, you can also choose to fast from other things that have taken up time or space in your life. In story from Mark 10, the wealthy man was asked to fast from or deny his desire to accumulate wealth. If you find yourself in the habit of always checking your phone first thing in the morning when you wake up, maybe fast from your phone until 10 a.m. each day.

Or rather than being driven by your calendar with its various appointments, discover how the Holy Spirit is already active around you and join in on what the Spirit is doing. Set aside one day next week and pay attention to how God is moving. Allow yourself to be *interrupted by the Holy Spirit* to meet the needs of someone you encounter and be a blessing to them.

Whatever practice you choose to try this week, be intentional about creating a new road map to follow. One that becomes so familiar it is simply how you live. One that is already marked with signs along the way reminding you of Christ's love, acceptance and invitation to follow him.

Think About... (select one or more questions)

- What did you notice in the reflection? What stood out for you?
- What practices, habits or ways of living bring you closer to God and to how God wants you to live?
- What are some of the things that get in the way or pull you off course from following a Jesus' shaped roadmap? What is something you'd like to recalibrate on your current roadmap?
- What does it mean for you to be *interrupted by the Holy Spirit*? What conditions make it easier or more likely for this to happen?
- There is comfort in the familiar, and yet even the familiar can change, forcing us to recalibrate. Do you embrace change or find it difficult? How has change made an impact on your faith journey?

Road Trip Playlist – *Bless Now, O God the Journey, ELW #326*

Divine eternal lover,
you meet us on the road.
We wait for lands of promise
where milk and honey flow,
but waiting not for places,
you meet us all around.
Our covenant is written on roads,
as faith is found.

As part of the group or on your own, look at the text for this hymn and read a short reflection by Amy Maakestad. See the Road Trip Playlist Notes at the end of this guide.

- The reflection describes the excitement and energy at the start of a journey, and then the excitement wears off and tedium sets in. How do you keep your faith journey alive?
- What is one thing that God wants for your life, as you consider a Jesus' shaped vision?
- What could a new Jesus' shaped roadmap look like for you?

Take Away *(for individual or group action & reflection)*

- What you focus on and do, you become. Think about how you spend your time – what you do, what you read, what you watch, who you relate to. What is one, intentional change you can make this week, to help you focus more fully on something important and worthwhile in your life.
- As part of the group or on your own later, read and listen to the *Road Trip Playlist* at the end of this session.
- If you took the Spiritual Gift self-assessment in session 2, create a roadmap for how you might want to live into your gifts... now... within 2-3 years... and out into the future. What will help you remember this across time?
- For volunteer opportunities serving others or working with those with memory loss, look into the Incarnation Care Team on the website at:
www.incarnationmn.org/ministries/care/.
Also check out The Gathering, a ministry of Lyngblomsten, at:
www.lyngblomsten.org/community-services/caregiver-resources1/

Blessing *(share the date and location for the next gathering)*

May your days and your ways be rooted and grounded in love for yourself, for others, and for the world God created.

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Road Trip Playlist

Bless Now, O God, the Journey (ELW #326)

Bless now, O God, the journey that all your people make,
the path through noise and silence, the way of give and take.
The trail is found in desert and winds the mountain round,
then leads beside still waters, the road where faith is found.

Bless sojourners and pilgrims who share this winding way;
your hope burns through the terrors, your love sustains the day.
We yearn for holy freedom while often we are bound;
together we are seeking the road where faith is found.

Divine eternal lover, you meet us on the road.
We wait for lands of promise where milk and honey flow,
but waiting not for places, you meet us all around.
Our covenant is written on roads, as faith is found.

Text: Sylvia G. Dunstan, 1955-1993, © GIA Publications, Inc.
Tune: LLANGLOFFAN, Welsh tune, 19th century

Listen: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xTkFNew4t0M>

Search YouTube: Bless Now, O God, the Journey with Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd-Lancaster, PA

Playlist Notes

Writer: Amy Maakestad

Sylvia Dunstan, writer of this hymn, spent 13 years as a United Church of Canada parish minister and prison chaplain. Sadly, she died from liver cancer at age 38 and is remembered for her gift of writing.

Possibly Dunstan was responding to Isaiah 54:10: "For the mountains may depart and the hills be removed, but my steadfast love shall not depart from you, and my covenant of peace shall not be removed, says the Lord, who has compassion on you." The hymn text views faith

as a lifelong journey, with many twists and turns, through struggle and striving, and God is active through it all.

Each stanza ends with the phrase "faith is found." Have you had an experience that led you to find faith? When do you most notice the love of God? In silence or in song? In solitude or in community? How can music be a spiritual practice for you?