

Meet the Goodpeople

Study Guide

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MEET THE GOODPEOPLE
STUDY GUIDE

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Chapter One

STAY CLOSE TO THE POWER

Digging In

Real Change

The author claims prayer is the precursor to change.

Have you seen prayer change things in your life? In your family? In your church? If so, how?

Where in your life do you need a new work of God's grace?

- A hard place in your marriage
- The same problem in your workplace you had a year ago
- Bitterness in your heart over a betrayal
- A clear sense of direction
- Lingering sadness over the loss of someone or something you loved
- Fearfulness about your future
- Complacency in your relationship with God

Is it possible that God is setting you apart to pray about this issue?

If John Wesley was right and every new victory is the effect of a new prayer, what new prayer do you need to pray to gain the victory you seek? Write it down here:

Ask God to reveal at least two other people to pray this prayer with you every day for the next thirty days, and watch God work.

New Eyes

Is there anyone in your life right now you are looking past?

- Your elderly neighbor
- The kid who's always getting in trouble at school
- The coworker who irritates you
- The person at the store of a different race or economic status
- Your family member that everybody else has given up on

What would change if you could see them the way Jesus does—with new eyes?

How would you feel toward them? How would you treat them differently?

Power

E. M. Bounds said, “Prayer is not preparation for the battle. Prayer is the battle.”

Prayer releases the power of God to gain the victory. Of the four ways to release more of God’s power—(1) preach on prayer, (2) teach people to pray, (3) mobilize people to pray, and (4) pray—which one do you need to incorporate into your life, the life of your group, or the life of your church?

Who do you need to talk to about this? When?

Pray

What obstacles or temptations are interfering with your time alone with God (examples: kids' schedules, work responsibilities, distractions, compulsive busyness, lack of motivation, unconfessed sin, fear of change)?

Who do you know who can help you identify and work through these obstacles or temptations? If no one comes to mind, who do you know who knows someone? When will you set a time to talk to someone who can help you get moving spiritually?

Prayer

Lord, you know where I am most stuck and where I need a new work of grace in my heart. Give me a heart transplant. Help me to set aside time alone with you to hear your voice and follow your leading for my life.

Hiding God's Word in My Heart

I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.

—Ezekiel 36:26 (NIV)

Chapter Two

ON THE GO

Digging In

The GO! Principle

In speaking to his lay preachers, John Wesley said, “You have nothing to do but to save souls. Therefore spend and be spent in this work. And go always, not only to those who want you, but to those who want you most” (The ‘*Large*’ Minutes, 1753–63, in *The Methodist Societies: The Minutes of Conference*, ed. Henry D. Rack, vol. 10 of *The Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley* [Nashville: Abingdon, 2011], 854).

Where is Jesus leading you to “be more vile” and leave your comfort zone to go where the people are? How you can meet people where they are in each of these areas?

geographically

emotionally

relationally

financially

physically

spiritually

Place on the screen of your mind three people in your life who have not yet decided to follow Christ and don’t go to church. Using the “Rainer Scale,” identify the spiritual receptivity of these three people from U1 to U5, and ask God what you could do to help each one take a step closer to Christ. After you have spent some time in

prayer and reflection, go to the table below and record what God has revealed to you for each person.

Rainer Scale

U5: Highly antagonistic and even hostile to the gospel

U4: Resistant to the gospel, but with no antagonistic attitude

U3: Neutral, with no clear signs of interest, yet may be open to discussion

U2: Receptive to the gospel and church

U1: Highly receptive to hearing and believing the good news

Person	Rainer Scale Score	Ideas God Revealed to Help Person Take a Step Closer to Christ
1.		
2.		
3.		

Harvest Hands

Do you see the harvest of pre-Christian people as plentiful or puny? What is the prevailing attitude in your group or church? What could you do to expand your view of the harvest?

Here are some faith-sharing questions that could expand your horizon:

- Are you daily praying by name for people in your life to receive Christ?

Pray for your FRANKs—Friends, Relatives, Associates, Neighbors, and Kids

List their names in the corresponding columns below:

Friends	Relatives	Associates	Neighbors	Kids

- Are you praying for opportunities to share your faith?
- Have you shared your faith with anyone this week?
- Have you invited someone who's spiritually searching to go to a game, go shopping, come to your small group, or come with you to church in the past month? In the past six months? In the past year? Since 1980?

Prayer

Lord, give me a heart that breaks with compassion when I encounter people who don't know you, and give me a desire to meet them where they are.

Hiding God's Word in My Heart

The size of the harvest is bigger than you can imagine, but there are few workers. Therefore, plead with the Lord of the harvest to send out workers for his harvest.

—Jesus, Matthew 9:37-38 (CEB)

Chapter Three

PLAIN TALK

Digging In

Lead with Deeds

The best way to overcome spiritual skepticism is to show the good news before we say it. Name two ways you can lead with your deeds in each of the following areas:

at home

at school

at work

in your neighborhood

in your community

Are there a few friends, family members, or people in your small group or class who could join you in pulling off a kindness caper? What useful gift could you give away or encouraging note could you send or small deed could you do to show God's love in a practical way this week?

Keep It Simple

Ever been on the outside of an inside joke? Name a time when you didn't understand what someone was saying. How did you feel? Lonely? Left out? Like you didn't belong? How might non-Christians feel when they don't understand the words and phrases Christians use?

To connect with people outside the faith, Christian words have to be decoded.

For instance:

sin = deep selfishness

grace = God's unearned and undeserved love for us

repentance = Making a U-turn toward God

faith = trusting God instead of yourself

salvation = accepting God's acceptance of us

What other words should be included in this list?

Invite into a Conversation

Think of the people in your relational circles: neighbors, coworkers, classmates, extended family, friends in the community, acquaintances with similar interests or hobbies, and so on. Who could you invite out to eat to get to know better? Is there an individual, couple, or family who would come over for a barbeque? Maybe you could throw a party and introduce some of your non-Christian friends to some of your Christian friends. Amazing spiritual things happen when people are invited into a conversation.

Select an activity you enjoy and chose individuals from your FRANK list who you can invite to that activity.

ACTIVITY:

Friends:

Relatives:

Associates:

Neighbors:

Kids:

Prayer

Lord, teach me how to listen and talk to people in a way they can understand, and give me opportunities to enter into conversations that change lives.

Hiding God's Word in My Heart

The large crowd listened to [Jesus] with delight.

—Mark 12:37b (CEB)

Chapter Four

TUNE INTO THEIR HEARTS

Digging In

Target Group

Well-known church consultant Lyle Schaller was fond of asking church leaders at the beginning of a consultation, “What year is it here?” Every church lives in some era. What year is it in your church?

How can you tell?

Write down common worship practices in your church:

What is the music genre?

How is the message delivered? Lecture? Drama? Multimedia?

Interview style?

Are everyday words used more often than "religious" terms?

Based solely on your answers, what year is it in your church?

If your mission is to make new and deeper disciples of Jesus Christ, what group of nonchurched people are you trying to reach? Some possibilities are: bikers, Spanish speakers, "hard-living" people, families with special needs children, tattooed people, the highly affluent, addicted people, minimum-wage workers, families affected by divorce, and many others.

Does your group or church's worship style match the culture of the nonchurched people you are trying to reach? Are there portions of your worship style that are relevant to those you want to reach? If so, what?

What specific things could you and your church leadership do to help your church become more relevant to the nonchurched people in your community that God is leading you to reach?

Indigenous Faith

The indigenous principle claims that people connect most easily with the gospel when it comes through their native culture. Does that ring true to you? Why or why not?

Have you ever run across “Judaizers” who communicated (in one way or another), “You have to become like us before you can become Christian”? If so, how did you receive that message? How was it received by nonchurched people in the community? Has that attitude affected the life of your group or church over time?

Does offering the same message at different times in multiple worship styles seem excessive or brilliant? Why?

What is the next step to help people in your group, class, or church connect with the nonchurched people God is calling you to reach in your community?

Prayer

Lord Jesus, give me eyes to see those times when I have told people they have to become like me before they can become your follower.

Hiding God's Word in My Heart

We believe that we and they are saved in the same way, by the grace of the Lord Jesus.

—Acts 15:11 (CEB)

Chapter Five

DO LIFE TOGETHER

Digging In

A New Picture

What's the first image that pops into your mind when someone says the word *church*?

How would your life change if your primary picture of "church" became a small group of people trying to figure out what it means to live like Jesus this week?

How would your church change if it adopted this picture of "church"?

The Missing Piece

Do you find yourself trying to fill the void in your life by taking "sips" of online connection?

Do you have a small group that serves as a safe place where you can pull down the mask and be real? If not, what is stopping you from joining a group or creating a new one?

Does your church offer a number of safe places for people to celebrate successes, share struggles, and confess sin? Would someone like Kathy in Gordon MacDonald's AA experience find a place where she could tell her story?

Closing the Gap

Have you ever felt like you were educated well beyond the level of your obedience?

Why does large group worship, by itself, create an ever-widening gap between what people know and what they actually do?

Does your church have a process of discipleship to involve nonchurched people, lead them to faith, and grow them into mature followers of Christ? Is it widely known and practiced in the congregation? Can you draw it out on a piece of paper and explain it to others?

The early class meetings produced changed lives. They helped people internalize the message so it could be lived out. What might a changed life look like today?

Nine Signs of Life Change

- Are persons more loving? Less rushed?
- Do they have deeper compassion for the poor and those who are suffering?
- Are they less angry and more grateful to God?
- Do they exhibit more of the fruit of the Spirit described in Galatians 5:22-23?

- Are their relationships better with their parents, their spouse, their kids, their friends, their coworkers, their classmates, their neighbors?
- Are they more open to racial reconciliation?
- Do they laugh more?
- Do they forgive more easily?
- If you had not seen them for a year, would there be an obvious difference in their lives?

Do these questions bring anyone to mind?

Have you noticed the love of Christ making changes in your own life over the past year? Are there any areas mentioned above that are currently a struggle for you? How might a spiritual friend, your small group, or your class help you with these changes?

Prayer

Lord Jesus, you know how lonely this life can be. Help me find a few other people who can become a safe place for me. Use them to close the gap in my life and show me who I really am in you.

Hiding God's Word in My Heart

Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people.. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

—Acts 2:46-47 (NIV)

Chapter Six

GET EVERYONE IN THE GAME

Digging In

Shell Fish

Has there ever been a time when you were a little shell fish?

Have you ever seen someone have a selfishness eruption? Where was it? What was the cause? How did it affect the people around that person? How did it affect the person who erupted?

What does selfishness do to community? What does it do to you?

Saved to Serve

Have you ever wondered why you were on this earth?

Name a time when you tried to create your own purpose. Did it work?

The Apostle Paul says, “By grace you have been saved through faith . . . For we are . . . created in Christ Jesus for good works” (Eph 2:8, 10 NRSV).

Can you name a time when it “clicked,” when you knew you had been saved *from* your selfishness and saved *for* serving others? If so, describe what happened.

The Power of Everyone

Have you ever thought of yourself as a priest? (You can stop laughing now.)

Do you agree with the idea that every follower of Christ is a minister of Christ? Why or why not? In what way does scripture support your position?

What qualifies a person for ministry? Has it ever felt like there was a glass ceiling of professional requirements that kept you from serving others?

Getting Everyone in the Game

Name a time when your faith grew because you served others.

Have you taken a spiritual gifts inventory? If not and you're interested, there's an inventory at this site: "Spiritual Gifts Assessment," The United Methodist Church, <http://www.umc.org/what-we-believe/spiritual-gifts-online-assessment>.

Can you name your spiritual gift or gifts?

How are you currently using your spiritual gifts to serve in the church and serve those in need beyond the church?

If you are not using your spiritual gifts in your church right now, what serving opportunities match your spiritual gifts?

Prayer

Lord, use me.

Hiding God's Word in My Heart

*For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared
beforehand to be our way of life.*

—Ephesians 2:10 (NRSV)

Chapter Seven

GO GLOBAL

Digging In

World Vision

What does the phrase *the world is my parish* mean today?

Some claim church leaders have unconsciously inverted Wesley's famous phrase into *the parish is my world*.

Which phrase is more representative of your faith? Of your group or class? Of your church?

A Whole New World

If a pop star has 20 percent more Twitter followers than the president of the United States, does that affect the balance of power in our world? Why or why not?

Can you name a recent example of how social media gave a person or a group a voice who otherwise would not have been heard?

A Social Revolution

Has there been a time when you've expressed your voice on some form of social media? If so, what was it about—politics, religion, society, race, injustice, or some other area? If not, why not?

Doorways to the World

If the printing press was the tool of mass communication in Wesley's day, does it make sense to use social media to communicate the gospel today? What are the advantages of using social media over the printing press? What are the drawbacks? Who will most likely be reached through social media?

Have you ever been involved in a social media discussion that touched on faith? If so, how did the participants respond? Were there conflicting views? How did it make you feel?

Have you ever shared a personal story involving faith on some form of social media? If not, what might be holding you back?

The United Methodist Church of the Resurrection uses Facebook as an inviting tool. They develop sixty-second video promos for their sermon series, post them on the pastor's and the church's Facebook pages, and ask Resurrection attenders to repost the video on their own pages. The goal is to set things loose virally. How could you use the social media networks of the people in your group or church to spread the word?

Perhaps the most extensive Christian outreach tool to date is the YouVersion Bible app. Introduced in 2008, it is a free Bible application that can be downloaded on a phone, tablet, or computer. In July 2015, YouVersion was available in 1,092 versions and 780 languages. It had been downloaded approximately 184 million times. It is an ad-free Bible funded by LifeChurch.tv and other donors. The app offers over eight hundred Bible reading plans. To download it, go to www.bible.com.

With YouVersion, the Bible is with you wherever you go. Who else in your life would benefit from using this incredible tool?

Prayer

Lord Jesus, help me be willing to lose control for the sake of those in this world who don't know you yet.

Hiding God's Word in My Heart

No one has greater love than to give up one's life for one's friends.

—Jesus, John 15:13 (CEB)