

# FIRST & BEST

DISCIPLESHIP JOURNEY SERVE GROUP GUIDE



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# Serve Group **Vision & Values**

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At StoneWater Church, we believe that groups are God's provision for you and those you do life with. Forming relationships and being connected in our church family is a gift that ensures that we are cared for, loved, encouraged, prayed for, and spurred on as believers of Jesus Christ. Being part of a group is also an incredible opportunity to be used by God in someone else's life.

Your Serve Group gathers 15 minutes before serving begins for a brief 10-12-minute meeting, ensuring everyone has a couple of minutes to get to their designated spots on time.

Each week, we will circle up around God's Word through a short devotion led by someone in your serve group, God's Spirit by praying for one another, and God's people through your time interacting and encouraging each other. As our serve groups grow, finishing on time will become a challenge, so we encourage you to continue the connection throughout the week.

As you grow more intentional with your Serve Group, you might wonder how much impact such a small amount of time can make. Be encouraged! Time and time again, we've seen that prioritizing and participating in Serve Group creates small weekly deposits that add up to something far greater than we often realize. So, buckle up and watch God work in ways only He can. You'll witness prayers answered, needs met, lives transformed, and together, we'll praise God for His faithfulness.

Thank you for being faithful in serving our church family and your fellow leaders. You are such an important part of what God is doing at StoneWater Church!



# Growing your **SERVE GROUP**

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What a privilege it is to have a front-row seat to watch God work in and through others as they experience connection in Serve Group! Remember, as you lead your group in a new direction, it may take time for everyone to catch on. Be patient, celebrate progress, pray for your group, and continue to lead with excitement.

## **GAINING MOMENTUM IN YOUR SERVE GROUP**

- **Make a personal invitation**

Share your excitement about walking through the Discipleship Journey and your expectancy for God to show up in incredible ways with every person in your group.

- **Choose a consistent space and start on time**

Your role as a Serve Group Leader is to create a space for others to gather. Arrive a few minutes early and stand in the place where you'd like your group to meet (be careful not to appear busy during this time). Starting on time, even if there is only one person there, communicates that you are ready for your people and that their time is valuable to you.

- **Model God's Word, God's Spirit, God's People every time you meet**

Prioritizing this layout will show others that you have something FOR them and will give them an opportunity to be seen and cared for during your time together. It may be tempting to want to share about logistics, but remember that our goal is to help people connect with each other. Share logistics in your weekly email or via a text before their arrival.

- **Care for each person outside of Serve Group time**

Checking in on each person once or twice a month communicates care and belonging. A simple text or phone call to follow up on a prayer request, to ask, "how can I pray for you?" or "how's it going with \_\_\_\_\_?" goes a long way in developing meaningful relationships!

**Celebrate what's happening with those in your group, your Campus Pastor and/or leadership team!**

# WELCOME TO THE DISCIPLESHIP JOURNEY

"Am I giving God my first & best, or are there areas of my life that I have not fully surrendered?"

## WHAT IS THE DISCIPLESHIP JOURNEY?

- Our Discipleship Journey aims to help us grow as mature disciples of Jesus who prioritize spiritual growth.
- Over the next two years, we will take practical steps to give God our FIRST & BEST in every area of our lives.
- All StoneWater ministries will align, and every message series will offer a clear action step to help us hear the Word and live it out, transforming our daily lives as we deepen our faith and grow in maturity as disciples of Jesus.

## WHAT IS A DISCIPLE?

A disciple is someone who follows Jesus, is being changed by Jesus, and is committed to the mission of Jesus. Our journey reflects that discipleship isn't a destination but an ongoing process that God uses throughout our lives and isn't complete until we are with Him.

## CORE TRUTHS OF THE DISCIPLESHIP JOURNEY

- God is first & best.
- God gave His first & best (Jesus).
- We worship Him as first & best.
- As an act of worship, we give Him our first & best in every part of our lives.

## WHAT ARE THE GOALS OF THE JOURNEY?

- Grow in biblical knowledge
- Deal with emotional baggage that holds us back
- Learn to walk in the Spirit
- Give God our first & best in every aspect of our lives

## MILEMARKERS ARE STOPS WE WILL MAKE ALONG OUR TWO YEAR JOURNEY →

With every mile, we will have an action step requiring us to practice what we are learning. The purpose is to become "doers" of the word and not "hearers" only. These action steps will be shared on Sunday mornings and celebrated and supported through all church ministries.

## MILEMARKERS



**Freedom**

**Idols**

**Relationships**

**Spirit**

**Truth**

**&**

**Be Loving**

**Eternal Perspective**

**Serving Others**

**Transforming Community**



STONEWATER  
CHURCH

# NOT OF THIS WORLD

## KINGDOM CITIZEN

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September 14

**“But our citizenship is in Heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ.”**

**Philippians 3:20**

What does it mean to be a citizen of the Kingdom of Heaven? Is it something we earn through good deeds? Is it a family inheritance? Does religious background? No, citizenship in God’s Kingdom comes through a transformed life — when we put our faith in Jesus Christ. By His grace, we are welcomed as His children and given a new identity.

As citizens of Heaven, our loyalty belongs first and foremost to God. We recognize that we live with dual citizenship: one in here on earth and another in God’s eternal Kingdom. Our lives should reflect that higher calling.

Kingdom citizens live in obedience to God’s will, aligning their values with His and actively participating in His work on earth. That means sharing the gospel, making disciples, praying for God’s will to be done, and living in faithful obedience. We are called to be people of integrity — faithful in our promises, pure in our motives, disciplined in our thought life, and quick to forgive.

Evidence of Kingdom citizenship shows up in transformation. Our hearts and minds begin to shift away from worldly priorities and toward God’s values: justice, mercy, humility, and love. We live with hope, looking forward to Heaven, but we also bring glimpses of His Kingdom into the world now through how we love and serve.

This is more than religion. It is a way of life. We are actively participating in God’s mission and demonstrating His love to a world in need.

## Discussion & Prayer

When people look at your life, would they see your loyalty more to the world or to God’s Kingdom? What’s one way you can let God shape your heart and serve others this week?

**Father, thank You for making me a citizen of Your Kingdom through Jesus Christ. Help me to live with Heaven’s values here on earth — faithful, obedient, and full of love. Transform my heart and mind to reflect Your character, and let my life point others toward You. Help me to live for you, carrying the hope of Your Kingdom into the world. Amen.**



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CHURCH

September 21

# NOT OF THIS WORLD

## HEAVEN'S REWARD NOT EARTH'S APPLAUSE

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**"Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men." Colossians 3:23 (NIV)**

We live in a world obsessed with recognition, status, and applause. Success is measured by how many people notice, how much money we make, or how impressive our resume appears. But Paul's words remind us that our true audience is not the world around us—it is the Lord above us.

When Paul says, "work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men," he is calling believers to an eternal perspective. If we belong to Christ, our motivation must flow from heaven, not from earthly rewards. Living with this mindset is the essence of being "not of this world."

- It frees us from striving for human approval.
- It guards us against discouragement when no one notices our faithfulness.
- It calls us to excellence, because we're serving the King of Kings, not a passing trend or a fickle boss.

Every task—whether it feels significant or small—becomes sacred when offered to Christ. Folding laundry, sending emails, helping a neighbor, or leading a meeting can all be acts of worship when our eyes are on Him.

## Discussion & Prayer

When people look at your life, would they see your loyalty more to the world or to God's Kingdom? What's one way you can let God shape your heart and serve others this week?

**Father, thank You for making me a citizen of Your Kingdom through Jesus Christ. Help me to live with Heaven's values here on earth — faithful, obedient, and full of love. Transform my heart and mind to reflect Your character, and let my life point others toward You. Help me to live for you, carrying the hope of Your Kingdom into the world. Amen.**



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# NOT OF THIS WORLD

## TREASURE THAT LASTS

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September 28

**“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal.” Matthew 6:19**

Think for a moment about the things we often call treasures. Money, success, popularity, and possessions all come to mind. Our world constantly pushes us to chase after more. But Jesus reminds us in this verse that anything we accumulate here on earth is temporary. It can wear out, be stolen, or simply fade away.

Now, it's important to see that those things aren't necessarily bad. Many of them are good gifts. The problem comes when those treasures take center stage in our lives. When that happens, they start to take over our focus instead of being things we use to honor God.

Everything we have is a gift from Him. We're not the owners; we're the stewards. God has entrusted us with resources, time, and talents, and He calls us to use them for His purposes—not just to build up our own lives here on earth.

Here's the reality: bank accounts fluctuate. Things break. Trends change. Careers shift. But Jesus remains. When everything else fades, He's still there. So the real question is: What am I treasuring most? Are my affections set on things of earth or on things of Heaven? Am I living for the kingdom of God, or getting distracted by the temporary?

Take a moment today to reset your heart. Let Jesus lead you toward what lasts: loving others, growing in faith, living with purpose, and seeking His kingdom first. Because when our treasure is in Him, it can never be taken away.

## Discussion & Prayer

- What is one “treasure” of this world that you might be holding on to too tightly?
- What would it look like for you to steward that treasure instead of letting it control me?

**Lord, help me set my heart on what truly lasts. Teach me to treasure what You treasure, and to release the things that distract me from You. May my life reflect Your priorities and not the world's. Amen.**



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# NOT OF THIS WORLD

## FOREVER IN MIND

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October 5

**‘Store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust don’t destroy, and thieves can’t break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.’”**

Matthew 6:19 is a warning against chasing after things of this world, but also an invitation to something far greater: a lasting treasure the kind that can’t be stolen, broken, or lost. Jesus calls us to invest in what’s eternal. But what does that actually look like in everyday life?

It looks like: loving people who are hard to love, giving generously without expecting anything in return or spending intentional time with God even in the middle of chaos. It also looks like doing the right thing when no one else is watching.

These are the kinds of “deposits” we make into the Kingdom of Heaven. They may not look impressive here on earth, but they carry eternal weight. Treasures in heaven don’t rise and fall like the stock market or gas prices. They don’t rot, rust, or ever go out of style. And best of all, they draw us closer to the heart of God. When we treasure the things of Heaven, our hearts naturally follow and we begin to experience the promises of God here on earth.

That’s why Jesus cared so much about where our treasure is. It reveals what and who we truly love.

So today, ask yourself: “Am I building a life with an eternal perspective? Or am I settling for things that won’t last?”

Jesus invites us to live with forever in mind. Let’s take Him up on it today!

## Discussion & Prayer

- What’s one way I can invest in “treasures in heaven” this week?
- What’s something I’ve been holding onto that might be distracting me from eternity?

**Jesus, help me fix my eyes on what matters most. Teach me to invest in things that last: Your kingdom, Your people, and Your purposes. Redirect my heart from what’s temporary, and help me find joy in building a life that honors You forever. Amen.**



# NOT OF THIS WORLD

## LIVING BEYOND WILLPOWER

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October 12

**May grace and peace be multiplied to you through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. His divine power has given us everything required for life and godliness through the knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. By these he has given us very great and precious promises, so that through them you may share in the divine nature, escaping the corruption that is in the world because of evil desire. 2 Peter 1:3-4**

Ever feel discouraged, knowing the kind of life you want to live but struggling to actually get there? Maybe it's keeping your words kind, getting your habits on track, or breaking free from something that keeps pulling you down. We've all been there. It's easy to think, "Well, this isn't so bad compared to other things," or to believe the enemy's lie that says we'll never really change. But God has so much more for us than staying stuck.

In 2 Peter, we're reminded of two of God's greatest gifts: grace and peace. Imagine a life shaped not by constant struggle or disappointment, but by His grace carrying you and His peace guiding you. Here's the good news: the very same power that spoke creation into being, the same power that raised Christ from the dead, is available to us through our relationship with Him. That means we don't have to rely on willpower, quick fixes, or the next self-help trend to live as a Kingdom Citizen today.

Instead, we can lean into the knowledge of God through His Word, prayer, and community with His people. As we do, the Holy Spirit empowers us to live the life we were created for—a life of freedom, joy, peace, and Kingdom purpose.

So don't lose heart. You are not powerless. Through Christ, you already have everything you need to keep moving forward—not just surviving, but truly living for His Kingdom.

## Discussion & Prayer

What's one area of my life where I've been relying on my own willpower instead of God's power?

**Lord, thank You for giving me everything I need to live a life of godliness, freedom and hope through Your Spirit. Help me to lean on Your strength, not my own, and to live a life filled with Your grace, peace, and Kingdom purpose. Teach me to trust You in the areas where I feel weak, and remind me that Your power is greater than anything I face. Amen.**

# NOT OF THIS WORLD

## EMPOWERED IN CHRIST

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October 19

**The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him. Future Glory. For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.**

When adversity strikes, our natural response is to look for answers, to try to control the situation, or to find the quickest way to fix the problem. But are we really willing to trust that God uses trials and suffering to shape us? That through them He is developing perseverance, character, and hope within us?

When we say we want to be more like Christ, or to know Him more deeply, are we prepared to glorify Him even in the struggle? Living for the Kingdom today means praising God not only for the good gifts He's given, but also trusting that He is working on our behalf in the hard moments. He's working all things for our good, growing us to be more like Him, and teaching us to rely on His provision and faithfulness when life doesn't go the way we planned.

Kingdom living here on earth also means allowing God—and the community He places around us—to help us find peace, joy, and comfort when things don't turn out the way we hoped. When the prayer isn't answered in the way we expected.

Minute by minute, hour by hour, day by day, we get to live as citizens of Heaven here and now: unoffended, secure in our identity in Christ, and determined to honor Him in every circumstance, decision, and conversation that comes our way.

So don't wait for Heaven to live with a Kingdom mindset. Let's start today. And in every season, whether in joy or in hardship, let's lift our praise to Jesus anyway.

## Discussion & Prayer

How can I live as a citizen of God's Kingdom today—even in the middle of challenges or unanswered prayers?

**Lord, thank You that Your Kingdom is here and now, not just in the future. Help us to trust You in every circumstance and to see trials as opportunities to grow closer to You. Give us hearts that praise You in the joy and in the hardship, and let our lives reflect the hope, peace, and strength we have in Christ. Amen.**



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October 26

# NOT OF THIS WORLD

## SURRENDERED

**Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature [reborn and renewed by the Holy Spirit]; the old things have passed away. Behold, new things have come . 2 Corinthians 5:17**

We can learn so much from the heroes of our faith. Many traded comfort and safety for sacrifice and hardship, yet their lives bore eternal fruit. Take Abraham, for example. He was far from perfect, but his life was marked by complete and immediate obedience.

After years of waiting for a son, God gave him Isaac. Then, in a heart-wrenching test, God asked Abraham to sacrifice the very son he had prayed for. It wasn't about the sacrifice itself. God wanted to see Abraham's heart. Was God still first? Abraham's obedience showed that he feared and trusted God above all. Because of this, Isaac was returned to him.

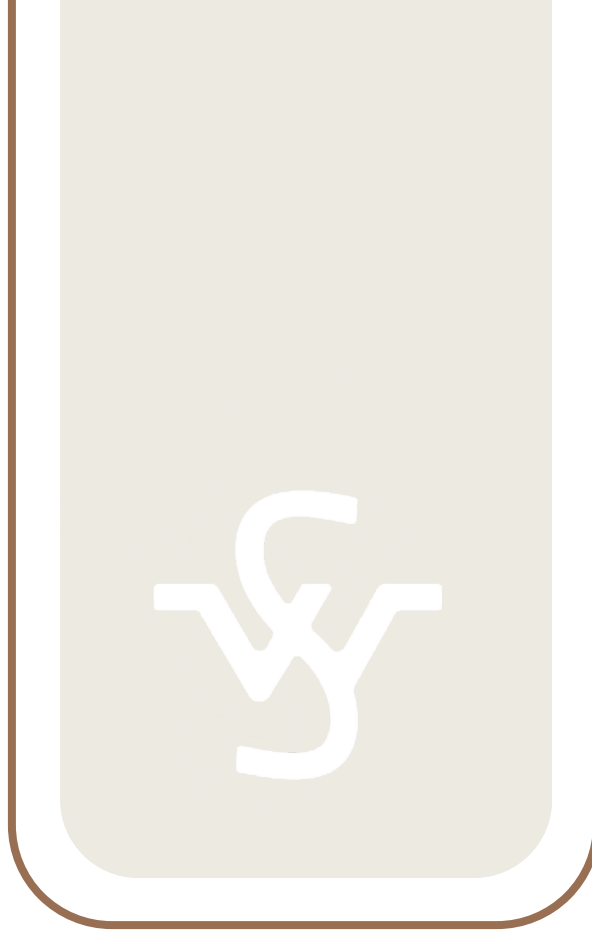
This is a powerful lesson: sometimes the very good things we long for: dreams, ambitions, relationships, ministries, can start to take God's place. These become our "Isaacs." God may ask us to lay them on the altar. When we surrender them, we give Him the chance to purify our motives. If our hearts are right, God can return them to us. If not, He may take them — not to punish, but to perfect His greater plan in our lives.

So let's live with open hands and surrendered hearts, always ready to say, "Yes, Lord," no matter the cost. Let's live lives worthy of the calling we've received — not in our own strength, but through Christ in us, the hope of glory.

## Discussion & Prayer

Think about the new identity and life you have been given in Jesus. Is there any other Identity or "label" that you put on yourself that is more important than "Child of God"?

**Heavenly Father, Thank You for the gift of new life through Jesus Christ. Thank You for making me a new creation, for shifting my heart and mind from the things of this world to the eternal hope I have in You. Help me never to forget that I am made in Your image, called to reflect Your glory, and chosen to live set apart for Your purposes. Help me to lay down my most cherished possessions on your altar for your glory. Amen!**



**Let's celebrate all that God is doing  
in and through your Serve Group!**

**Submit Celebration Stories Here**

