

I N N O V A T O R



INNOVATOR

LESSON 1 CREATED BY GOD

You are not an accident.

You are not a mistake.

You are not less-than or useless.

You are intelligently and lovingly designed by God, the Creator of the universe who loves you more than you can imagine and wants to use you to fulfill an incredible purpose in this world. You have been given incredible talents, resources, and influence for the purpose of reaching your family, your school, your community, and our world for Christ.

In case you didn't know it, you know you are loved by God. Not only that, but you are specifically called and gifted to accomplish His work in this world. Far too many of us as Christians fail to realize this. Instead, we think we are not good enough, talented enough, or holy enough to do anything for Christ. We think the problems of this world are someone else's problem or just too big for us—or sometimes even God—to deal with, and we just go through the motions of life: showing up to church, staying out of trouble in school, and trying to fit into the world around us as well as possible.

This passive approach to the Christian life causes serious problems. Studies show that less than 50% of Christians will ever share their faith. That means that less than 50% of Christians will ever go out and share the life-changing message of love that is the Gospel with a person who does not know Jesus. This has led to disastrous results for the spiritual state of your generation.

Several years ago, a study was done that found that only 4% of your generation would follow Christ? Whether you knew that or not, you will likely think, when you hear that low number, that this study must have been skewed, or at least that the writers are being a little overdramatic in order to draw attention to their work; however, more recently, another study was conducted, and they found that only 4% of this generation has a biblical world view. That study was not overreacting or even hypothetical; it has, in fact, become reality, because we as Christians are not rising up to be who God has called us to be.

With 96% of your generation not following Christ, you—and we as the church—have a big challenge facing us, but thankfully God has created us to be able to come up with, and implement, big solutions. This is why this study is called “Innovator”. Innovators don't just see problems, but instead see solutions. Innovators see things we do not even know we need or want yet, and come up with creative ways to meet those needs. Most importantly, innovators actually get up and do something about actually seeing those solutions come to fruition.

That is where you as a Christian can stand out. Christians all over the world, even many non-Christians, know that there is something not right with the world. The issue is that all people do is talk

and complain about it. You can actually do something about it, change the lives of your friends, and change the course of the world for generations to come.

Here's an example. Twenty years ago, two guys were playing a video game. One looked at the other and said, "Wouldn't it be great if when we had to quit playing, we could take the game with us and keep playing?" Fast forward a couple of decades later and you'll see the introduction of the Nintendo Switch. All those years ago, those guys saw a problem and came up with a solution but did nothing to actually take action and do anything about it. They clearly missed out on a huge opportunity!

Video games are trivial, and even if the Nintendo Switch was never invented, we would be completely fine. Imagine what happens, though, if you, like those guys did with their video game, follow the pattern of countless Christians before you? Meaning that you see the problem, maybe even come up with an idea to solve the problem, and do nothing about it.

You have probably heard this happen in sermons and around holiday dinners. A bunch of grown-ups griping about the world around them, and griping about young people, and at best thinking of solutions but not doing anything about it. Just because this is the norm for most Christian circles does not mean this has to be the Christian life you live.

You can bring about change.

You can be different.

You can be an innovator.

Throughout history, there are stories of human beings seeing problems and coming up with innovative solutions:

Johan Vaaler saw a stack of paper and said, "That needs to be clipped together."

Alexander Graham Bell saw that we needed new ways to communicate.

Gandhi saw that a nation needed to be freed and could do it through non-violent means.

Steve Jobs saw that the computer could be used by everyday people for creative purposes.

These are just a few of countless examples of innovators throughout history who changed the course of the world through seeing a problem, coming up with an innovative solution, and then working to see that solution come to fruition.

It is time for you to do the same thing but on a much grander scale and for a much greater purpose. Sure, you may come up within an invention, change the way we use technology, or start a political movement, but you can do it for the purpose of building God's Kingdom, which is the only thing worth devoting your time, talents and treasure too.

Hopefully, you can clearly see the problem—only 4% of your generation is choosing to follow Christ. God has created you to be part of the solution. What we need to figure out is exactly how will you fit into

God's story of redeeming and changing the world, what unique and innovative talents and ideas you will bring to the table, and what you will sacrifice to see the vision God gives you come to life. A vital first step in that process is understanding exactly who you are in case the world around you, and even those close to you, have convinced you of a lie about your identity and place in this world.

So...let's dive in.

1. YOU WERE CREATED BY GOD.

Read Psalm 139:14.

You were fearfully and wonderfully made by the Creator of the Universe. The same God who took the time to make sure the earth perfectly tilted on its axis and the exact distance we need to be from the sun so that we do not freeze to death or burn alive, is the same God who designed you.

Let that sink in for a moment.

You are not an accident.

You are not a mistake.

You are not less-than or useless.

How does that make you feel?

How would these past few months have been different if you had not only known this but lived as if you believed it?

- A. Maybe you would have sinned less because you would have known that that you are valuable and that your life isn't meaningless.
- B. Maybe you would have lived every moment with purpose out of thankfulness for how much God loves you.

If you are going to be an innovator who changes your generation for Christ, you must believe that you are created by God.

2. YOU WERE DESIGNED IN HIS IMAGE.

Read Genesis 1:27.

This is a hard concept to grasp. Look at it this way:

Think about the greatest thing in nature that you have ever seen. If you haven't been blessed to travel, what is the greatest piece of landscape photography you have seen on Instagram or YouTube?

As incredible and powerful as those images are, those parts of God's creation were not created in God's image—you and I were. This means that not only are we special to God, but also that we were created with a special role and place in God's story. Not only did God love you enough to create you—and create you uniquely—He created you in His image.

3. YOU WERE CREATED FOR A PURPOSE.

Read Jeremiah 29:11.

God could have just said, “You were created, and the creation around you is awesome, and that is enough.” But He did not; He also created us with a purpose that is unique to us and that is always best for us. Notice that it does not say that His purpose is easy, but that it is best. This means that every day we get to wake up to a new challenge that we get to find and live out each day. This means that every season and every moment are not wasted.

This means that you should never say that you're bored, because every moment can have a purpose, whether that moment is for resting as God modeled for us, for growing Spiritually, or for accomplishing great works for His Kingdom.

4. YOU CAN SEE THE WORLD THE WAY GOD SEES IT.

Read Matthew 22:34-40.

The religious leaders did not like Jesus because people kept following Him, and because He kept pointing out to them that they were wrong. In this one of many efforts to discredit Jesus, they thought they could trick Him into misspeaking about the commandments—they asked Him which of the commandments was the greatest. As always, Jesus stayed cool and calm and delivered a perfect answer.

To summarize, Jesus teaches us that everything ever written and ever taught—all of life, in fact—boils down to loving God and loving people. It doesn't get much simpler, and at the same time more powerful, than that. Here are a few things that will help to explain what it means to see the world the way God sees it.

A. CHRISTIANITY ISN'T JUST ABOUT STAYING OUT OF TROUBLE.

A lot of people think that Christianity is just about staying out of trouble, obeying the rules, and waiting for Heaven. Basically, they think that life is all about loving God. After all, Jesus said, “If you love me you will obey my commandments,” and He is God. The problem with this is that there is that “little” commandment about loving your neighbor. This means that living the Christian life also means we have to get out into the world around us, fulfill our purpose and be a part of changing people's lives for Christ, so if you have ever thought Christianity was boring, maybe you are not actually living the Christian life; maybe you are just going to church, staying out of trouble and going through the motions of life.

B. THERE IS USUALLY A THIRD WAY—GOD’S WAY—TO SEE THINGS.

Christians usually fall into one of two camps. The first camp is the one mentioned in the previous point. They think the most important thing is avoiding sin, and as long as you are doing that, you are doing well and God is pleased. The other group of people thinks, “Who cares if I am partying, having sex every once-in-a-while outside of marriage, or cursing as long as I am doing good deeds?” They think life is all about loving your neighbor and that doing this masks the other stuff. But as usual, we as humans get it wrong. There is actually another way. Instead of thinking either/or, there is a both/and option: loving God AND loving your neighbor. James 1:27 tells us that pure and undefiled religion is loving widows and orphans AND keeping yourself unstained by the world. What does all this have to do with you being an innovator and changing your generation for Christ? You are going to have to see things differently. The world around you will look for simple solutions to big problems or think they are too big to solve, or often times they will want to meet a physical need without dealing with the larger spiritual need, or vice versa. But you must remember that there is usually a third way the world is not seeing, and while that way is often harder, it is the way that honors God and truly changes someone’s life.

C. YOUR INNOVATIVE PURPOSE IN GOD’S KINGDOM WILL BOIL DOWN TO LOVING GOD AND LOVING PEOPLE.

It might be hard for you to figure out exactly what God wants you to do to reach your teams, your school, and your generation for Christ. One thing that can help is to remember that Jesus said it all will boil down to loving God and loving people. So as you try to figure out how to use your time, talents and treasure to reach your generation for Christ, know that what God wants you to do is follow His commandments in the Bible (loving God) and change people’s lives for the Gospel (truly loving people).

“What is the Gospel?”, you may ask.

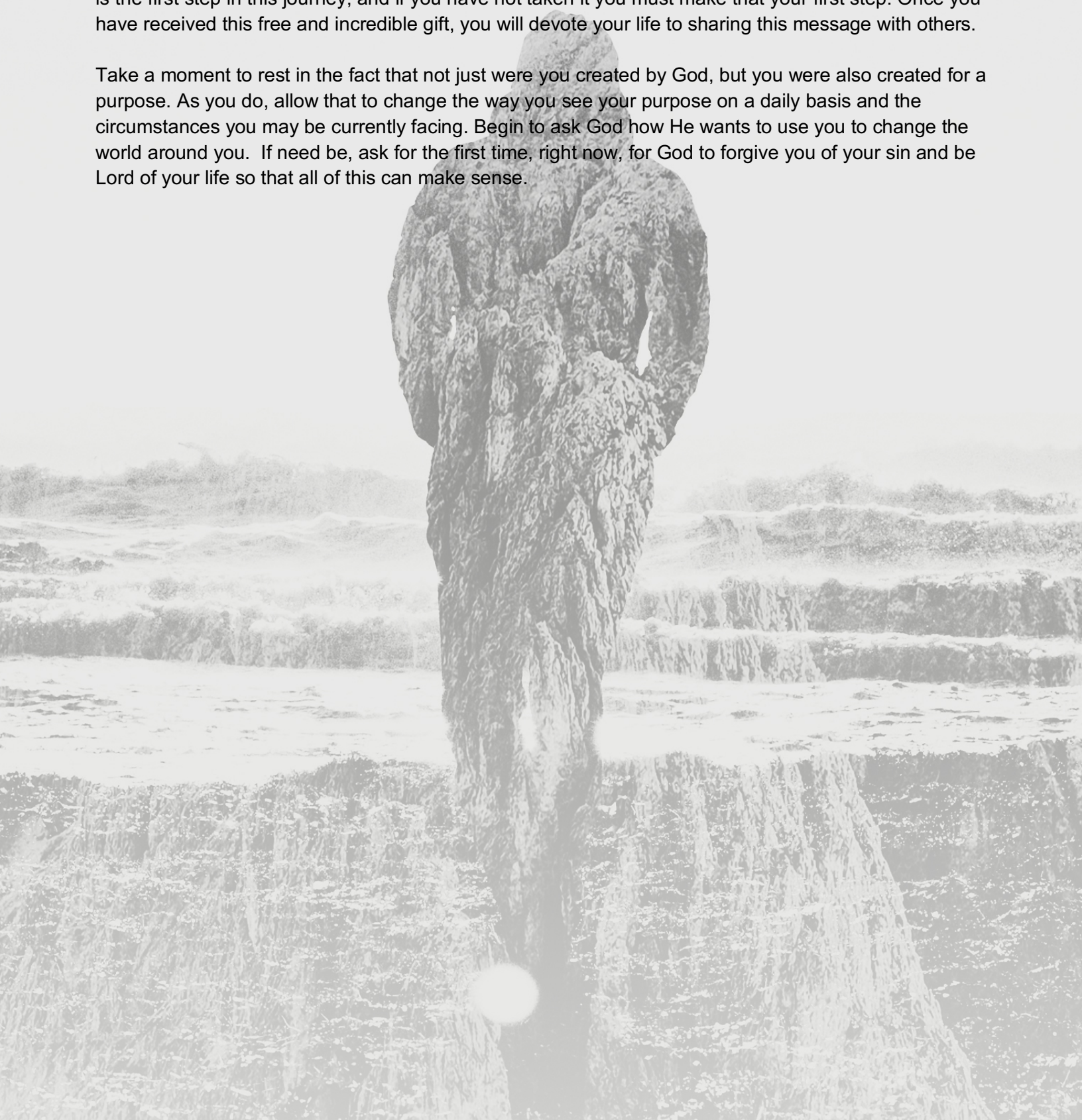
Have you ever lied? Stolen something? Wanted something someone else had? Disobeyed your parents? If you answered yes to any of these, it means you have broken God’s law. We call that sin. And guess what? All of us would have to answer yes to these questions because we all have sinned. The Bible tells us this in Romans 3:23, but it is also something we all can just admit. We are not perfect. In Romans 6:23, we see what the Bible teaches about the consequences of our sin. Romans 6:23 says the wages of sin is death. This means that because of our sin we deserve death, because God who is perfect must punish sin. God is loving, but He is also just. Imagine that someone committed a crime against your family. If that person stood before a good judge, what would that judge do? Punish them. It is the same way with God; he is a perfect and righteous judge and must punish sin.

When does this happen? While there are earthly consequences for sin, one day we will stand before God and give an account for our lives, and God will ask us why He should allow us into His kingdom, Heaven. What will you tell Him? You might say He should allow you into Heaven because you were a good person or did nice things, but here is the problem: our sin separates us from God, and that separation is like the Grand Canyon. Nothing we can do on our own can get us to God, and if we try to do it on our own, the path leads to death. But here is the cool thing, and we find it right in Romans 6:23:

The gift of God is eternal life. God loved us so much that He sent His only Son to die for us. Jesus lived a perfect life, meaning He never sinned, and then He took on our sin and died in our place and rose from the dead. All of this so that we can be forgiven, be part of God's family, have eternal life, and do incredible works for God in the world around us. The incredible thing is, we know that since Jesus rose from the dead, not even death can stop us if we live for Him.

All you have to do is believe this and ask God to forgive you of your sins and be Lord of your life. That is the first step in this journey, and if you have not taken it you must make that your first step. Once you have received this free and incredible gift, you will devote your life to sharing this message with others.

Take a moment to rest in the fact that not just were you created by God, but you were also created for a purpose. As you do, allow that to change the way you see your purpose on a daily basis and the circumstances you may be currently facing. Begin to ask God how He wants to use you to change the world around you. If need be, ask for the first time, right now, for God to forgive you of your sin and be Lord of your life so that all of this can make sense.



LESSON 1

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What impact does the fact that you are created by God have on you?
2. What impact would it have on your friends if they heard that message?
3. What do you think your purpose might be right now in this season of life?
4. What does it mean to you to see the world the way God sees it?
5. What are some ways you can love your neighbor in your community?

++++++

LESSON 2

UNIQUELY GIFTED

Does anyone have any weird or hidden talents? (Give time for students to share and/or perform if possible).

Whether you realize it or not, we all have hidden talents and unique gifts. Not gifts like rubbing your belly while patting your head or flipping back your eyelids; but unique gifts that God has given you that can and will be used for His Kingdom, and while your abilities and gifts may be similar to someone around you, your calling and influence are uniquely yours.

No offense, but it's a good thing that everyone is not like you. This is not meant to be mean; it is instead a statement of love. God has designed each of us for a unique purpose and given us unique skills and influence in order to reach people for Christ.

Your discovering these unique gifts will be a huge step in realizing exactly how you can reach the world around you in passionate and innovative ways. Let's take a moment to try to identify what your gifts may be and how you can use those gifts and your influence to change the world.

Read Ephesians 4:11-16.

1. YOU HAVE BEEN GIFTED BY GOD.

I know this seems redundant, but many of you don't think you can do anything for the Kingdom because you feel like you don't have enough talents or education or fit some description of what a leader looks like to the world. However, you each have been given a unique gift in order to reach people for Christ. Paul lists some here, but this is not an exhaustive list.

You may be an artist with pencils or paints, a photographer, or a videographer who creates incredible visual compositions that draw people to the Gospel; people who would not have been interested otherwise.

You might be into coding and create an app or website that reaches people for the Gospel and helps them grow in and share their faith.

You might be gifted in, and passionate about, entrepreneurship and create an organization that transforms your campus or maybe even the world.

You may just have an incredible heart for compassion and a high level of patience and just able to sit and listen to people's hurts and needs.

Regardless of whether your gift is mentioned above or not, please do not put how God can use you into a box or think that because you are not gifted like someone else you can't do anything. God wants to use you in the way that He created you, and not the way He created someone else.

The list in scripture also does not mean that you will not fill some of these roles just because that is not your gifted area. For example, your gift may not be teaching, which simply means you're not the best teacher, but it doesn't mean that you might not lead or teach a Bible study some time. Your gift might not be evangelism, so it may not be a comfortable thing for you to do, but that does not mean you do not have to share the Gospel.

2. YOU ARE GIFTED FOR THE PURPOSE OF BUILDING DISCIPLES.

In verse 11 we see that we are gifted, and then in verse 12 we see for what purpose. Whatever you do, it is for the purpose of sharing the Gospel, then helping people grow in their faith and connect to the church. This is what it means to build disciples as Jesus modeled for us and commanded us to do. So, as you decide what your gifts are and how God wants to use them, know that the purpose will boil down not to being about you but about bringing people to Jesus.

3. YOU ARE GIFTED TO GROW AND UNIFY THE CHURCH.

No matter what stage of life you are in or how old you are, you can grow the local church. While we will talk later about ways that you being an innovator for the Kingdom of God will mean you going beyond the walls of the church, your end goal will be getting people connected back to a loving community in the local church. The other beautiful thing is that you will have the opportunity to unify the church.

We live in a divided world, and this divisiveness has invaded, and sometimes been led by, the church. Oftentimes, this is because Christians are not actually living out their faith and loving the lost world around them. I don't know about you, but I'm tired of it. The great thing is, though, that we have been called and gifted to do something about it. As you go out and love people and reach them for Christ, you can re-open the eyes of the church to what really matters and unify them around the work of reaching people for Christ.

Please know that this may not happen immediately; in fact, at first your main opposition may come from Christians within the church. This is because as you begin to live out your faith, people in the church are forced to deal with the fact that they are not, and this makes people uncomfortable. Over time this will change, and you will not only be able to transform the lost world around you, but also the body of Christ.

4. YOU ARE GIFTED TO LOVE PEOPLE.

This may already be clear, but just a reminder that all of life boils down to loving God and loving people, and as Christians we must use our gifts for this purpose. As you think about what it means to love someone, I want you to realize that it means to love the whole person, meaning the physical, emotional and spiritual needs that they have. A huge part of loving someone is sharing the Gospel. In fact, if we are not sharing the Gospel with lost people, we can't say that we truly love them. However, if they are hungry and all we do is share the Gospel, the Gospel will not mean much to them and they will question our motives. Truly loving someone means meeting their needs—all of them. So, begin to think; how can

your unique gifts be used to minister to the whole person? Who might you need to partner with or what kind of support might you need to love the whole person? What sort of emotional and physical needs are around you?

5. THE GIFTS YOU USE MAY CHANGE OR GROW OVER THE SEASONS OF YOUR LIFE.

As you grow and the seasons of your life change (you go to college, you get married, etc.), your gifts and the way you use them may change. For example, a guy in college traveled around leading worship. But as he got older and started to think about getting married and having kids, he realized that traveling wasn't the best thing anymore. Now, he did not stop reaching people for Christ; instead, God revealed other gifts and developed new passions inside of him so he could continue working for the Kingdom.

Just because right now you play football and have used that influence for the Gospel does not mean you will play in the NFL someday. It also doesn't mean that because you don't make the NFL you can't make a difference for Christ anymore. Instead, you have to realize that in every season God has given you gifts and influence, and you must identify those and use them for His glory even if that means you have to make some changes over time.

As we close, please focus in on verse 14. Don't think any of this will be easy; there will be times when you'll struggle with the temptation to sin or just to quit. But if you continue to find community in the local church, in relationships that give you support and accountability, and grow in your faith through prayer and studying God's word, you'll be able to stand firm in those tests and not be tossed to and fro. Please know that you will never "arrive" while on this earth; you'll never be able to say that your relationship with God is as good as it's going to get. You must continue to grow spiritually.

You also must grow in your gifts. Yes, they are God given and He will strengthen us to use them in supernatural ways we never imagined, but you must be faithful and diligent to develop what God has given you through study and practice.

Finally, and maybe most importantly, you must stay focused. The biggest temptation in your generation is to get distracted. You have so many opportunities in front of you, you want things to happen so instantaneously, and you have so many new causes in front of you every few seconds, it's easy to not stay with something for very long.

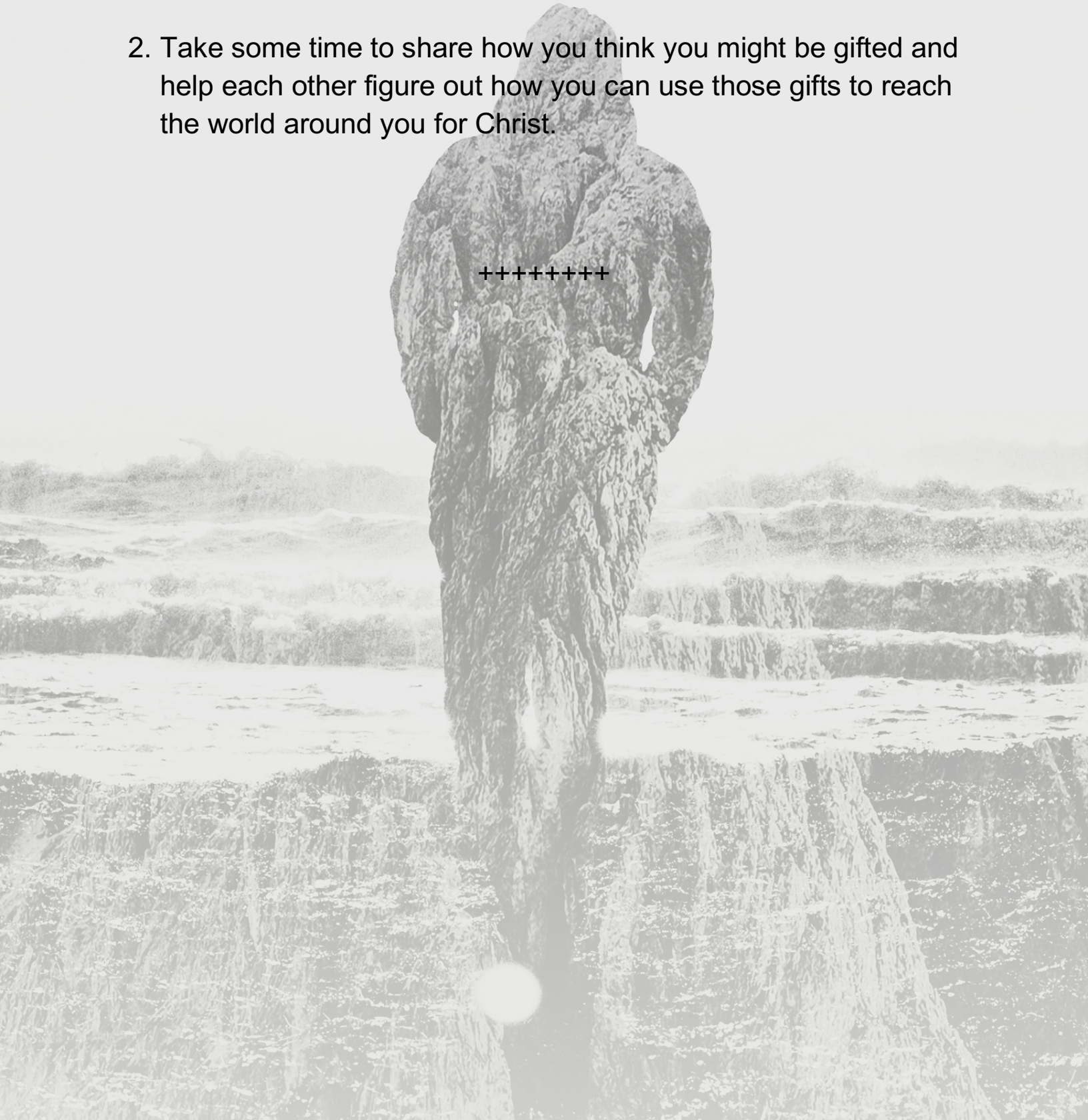
My closing challenge to you is to stay focused on the mission God has for you until it's complete. Life change doesn't happen overnight. Life change won't be easy. You will face a lot of distractions and temptations along the way. But know that fulfilling God's calling on your life and seeing the work to completion is worth it, and the only thing worth devoting your life to.

LESSON 2

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Which gifts listed by Paul do you think you might have? Which scare you the most? Why?
2. Take some time to share how you think you might be gifted and help each other figure out how you can use those gifts to reach the world around you for Christ.

++++++



LESSON 3

EMPOWERED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

There must be something special about garages. Just look at this list of companies that were started in garages:

1. Amazon
2. Microsoft
3. Disney
4. Apple
5. Google
6. Harley Davidson
7. Hewlett-Packard
8. Mattel
9. Dell
10. Nike

Not only did these companies start in garages, but many were started by people who dropped out of, or never attended, college. They did not let what the world would see as humble circumstances or possible limitations stop them, and they all changed the world in some way.

What I want you to realize right now is that it doesn't necessarily take special people or a special building in order to do something great; God can use you anywhere and anytime regardless of where you come from or regardless of your circumstances. Why? Well, because He is God. You can do something great because you have a supernatural power living inside of you that will take your gifts and multiply them beyond your wildest dreams. Basically, you don't have to do this in your own power.

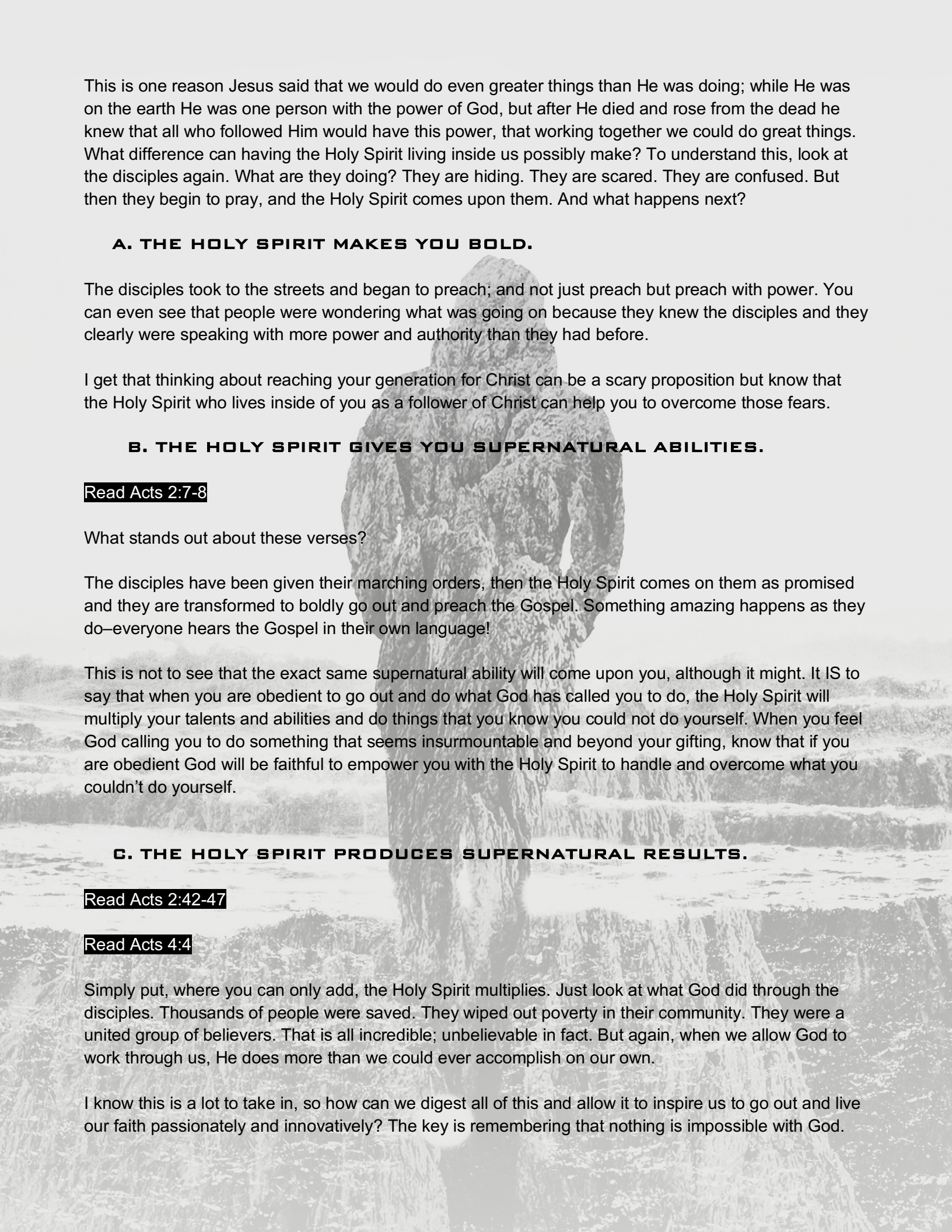
To better understand this, we're going to look at the book of Acts. As the book opens, the disciples were hiding in a room. Jesus had died and risen from the dead and they were trying to figure out what to do next. They had no special religious training or education; they simply had met and followed Jesus. Sound familiar? This is similar to many of us. Growing the Kingdom of God was in their hands and they were awaiting their marching orders. As they were discussing it, Jesus appeared to them as He had several times before and told them what they were to do and how they were to do it.

Read Acts 1:8.

Their purpose was to spread the Gospel to the ends of the earth. This is basically what we've been talking about over the past couple of lessons, but notice what step comes first:

1. WHEN YOU COME TO CHRIST YOU GET THE HOLY SPIRIT.

What is the Holy Spirit? The Holy Spirit is the power of God living inside you. When you come to Christ you immediately receive this power, which means you are immediately equipped to do great things for God.



This is one reason Jesus said that we would do even greater things than He was doing; while He was on the earth He was one person with the power of God, but after He died and rose from the dead he knew that all who followed Him would have this power, that working together we could do great things. What difference can having the Holy Spirit living inside us possibly make? To understand this, look at the disciples again. What are they doing? They are hiding. They are scared. They are confused. But then they begin to pray, and the Holy Spirit comes upon them. And what happens next?

A. THE HOLY SPIRIT MAKES YOU BOLD.

The disciples took to the streets and began to preach; and not just preach but preach with power. You can even see that people were wondering what was going on because they knew the disciples and they clearly were speaking with more power and authority than they had before.

I get that thinking about reaching your generation for Christ can be a scary proposition but know that the Holy Spirit who lives inside of you as a follower of Christ can help you to overcome those fears.

B. THE HOLY SPIRIT GIVES YOU SUPERNATURAL ABILITIES.

Read Acts 2:7-8

What stands out about these verses?

The disciples have been given their marching orders, then the Holy Spirit comes on them as promised and they are transformed to boldly go out and preach the Gospel. Something amazing happens as they do—everyone hears the Gospel in their own language!

This is not to see that the exact same supernatural ability will come upon you, although it might. It IS to say that when you are obedient to go out and do what God has called you to do, the Holy Spirit will multiply your talents and abilities and do things that you know you could not do yourself. When you feel God calling you to do something that seems insurmountable and beyond your gifting, know that if you are obedient God will be faithful to empower you with the Holy Spirit to handle and overcome what you couldn't do yourself.

C. THE HOLY SPIRIT PRODUCES SUPERNATURAL RESULTS.

Read Acts 2:42-47

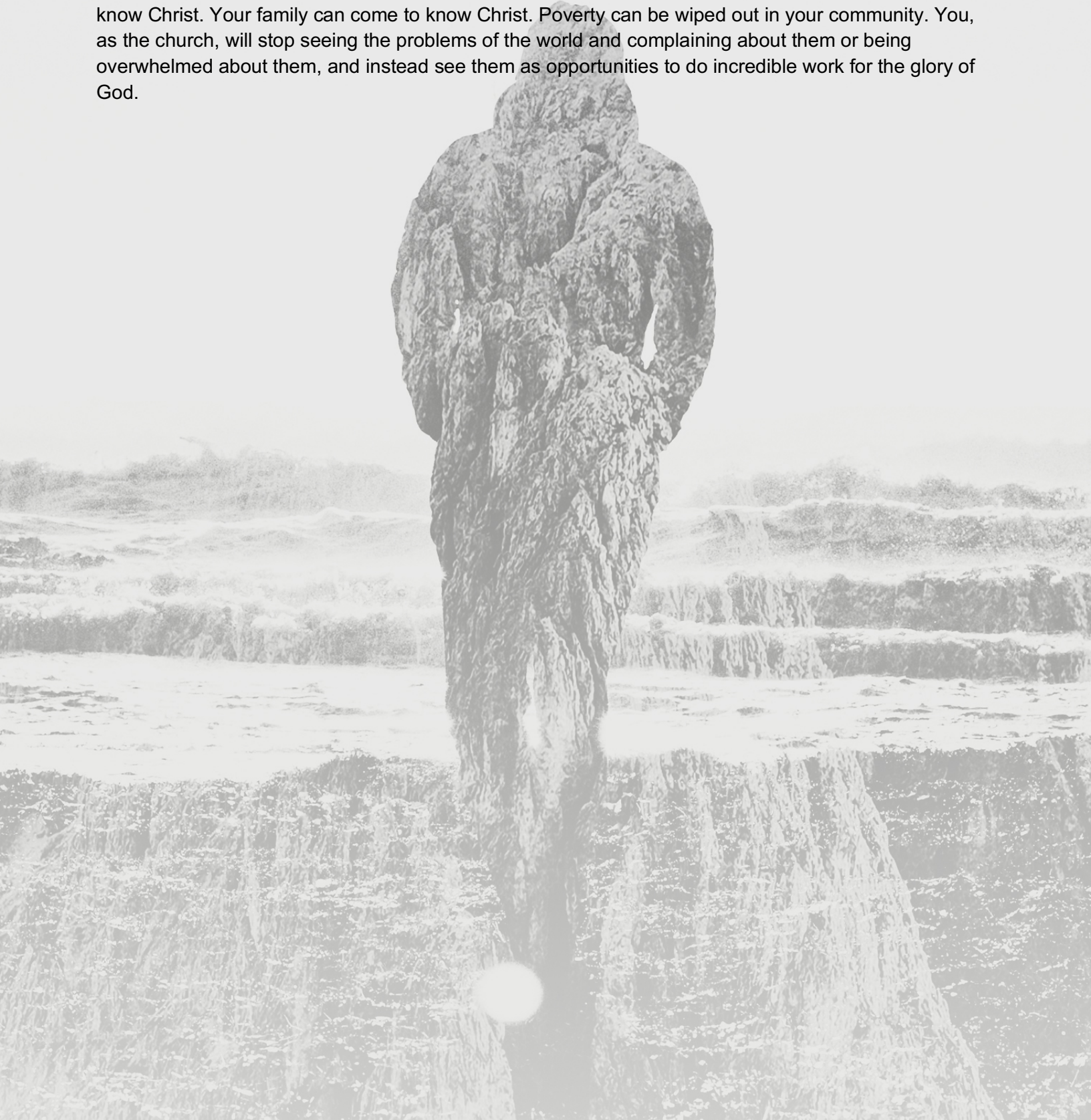
Read Acts 4:4

Simply put, where you can only add, the Holy Spirit multiplies. Just look at what God did through the disciples. Thousands of people were saved. They wiped out poverty in their community. They were a united group of believers. That is all incredible; unbelievable in fact. But again, when we allow God to work through us, He does more than we could ever accomplish on our own.

I know this is a lot to take in, so how can we digest all of this and allow it to inspire us to go out and live our faith passionately and innovatively? The key is remembering that nothing is impossible with God.

We will explore this idea more in-depth in our last lesson, but as you look at the brokenness in your family, the large amounts of poverty in your community, and the overwhelming amount of lost people in your school and our world, this should not scare you. This should not defeat you. Instead, it should motivate you to see an opportunity instead of a problem.

God is not done with the world yet; He wants to change it for His glory. If this was not the case, He would have already removed us from it. Even better, God wants to use us to do His world-changing work in your generation. If you are obedient, focused, bold, and faithful, your entire school can come to know Christ. Your family can come to know Christ. Poverty can be wiped out in your community. You, as the church, will stop seeing the problems of the world and complaining about them or being overwhelmed about them, and instead see them as opportunities to do incredible work for the glory of God.




LESSON 3

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

If you feel there are things your group needs to discuss, do so.

If there is time, take a moment to list the needs in your community and the schools, hurts in families, things the students feel God wants them to do, etc. Then take time to cry out to God, asking for the Holy Spirit to empower you and move in a supernatural way.

+++++

A large, dark, textured rock formation stands prominently on a rocky shore. The rock is shaped like a person with their arms raised in a gesture of praise or prayer. The background shows a body of water with waves breaking against a rocky coastline under a bright sky.

LESSON 4

THE “SAME OLD, SAME OLD” IS NOT WORKING

This is what we've been building toward. This is when we nail down concrete next steps that you as a community need to take in order to transform the world around you in innovative way, and this is when we start to finally really dig into what it means to be an innovator.

The definition of an innovator is “a person who introduces new methods, ideas, or products.” Usually, this is done in order to solve a problem of some kind. Whether that problem is important or not is sometimes up for debate, but it's still a problem.

Go back to the beginning of our study. Do you remember what percentage of your generation is following Christ? The correct answer is 4%. Just in case you don't believe the studies, run the math on your community. The answer may differ slightly, but it will be close.

How many Christians ever share their faith? Less than 50%.

How many Christians do you know who have talked poorly or complained about a group of people or the state of our world? How many have actually gone out and done something about it?

Chances are, the answer to question #1 is greater than the answer to question #2.

Not only do we have a generation that is lost, we also have a church that is not doing anything about it. What is worse, often they clearly see the issues and don't do anything about them.

Maybe worst of all, as we (the church) work to reach the world for Christ and bring people to Him, often what we are doing is not working; instead of changing the way we do things, we just point fingers at the media or other parts of our world.

All of these things are a big problem.

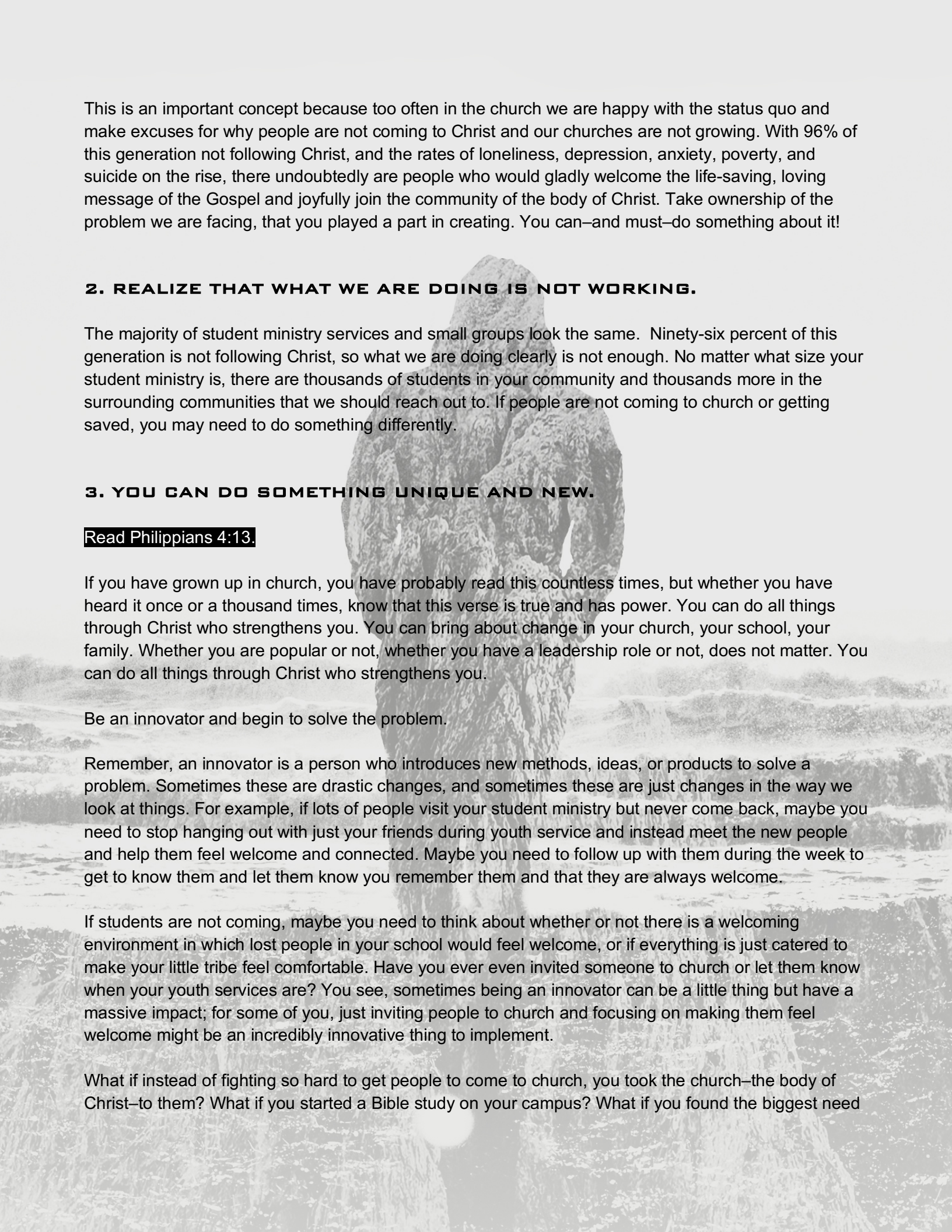
You need to be an innovator. You need to come up with new and creative ways to use your God-given gifts and abilities to reach the world around you for Christ. He has given you the power and the means to do this.

How do we go about this?

1. TAKE OWNERSHIP OF THE PROBLEM.

Read Matthew 9:37-38.

What we are facing is not new. Jesus taught that there were many people to be reached, just not a lot of people going out to do the work. As you see a lost and broken world around you, take a moment to be broken over the fact that this is partially your fault; if your friends are lost, part of the reason is likely that you have not shown them love or lived like Jesus in front of them.

A person wearing a dark hoodie and jeans stands on a rocky, uneven shore. They are looking out towards a vast, calm ocean under a bright, hazy sky. The person's back is to the camera, and their hands are in their pockets. The rocks are dark and jagged, contrasting with the light-colored sand and the blue of the water.

This is an important concept because too often in the church we are happy with the status quo and make excuses for why people are not coming to Christ and our churches are not growing. With 96% of this generation not following Christ, and the rates of loneliness, depression, anxiety, poverty, and suicide on the rise, there undoubtedly are people who would gladly welcome the life-saving, loving message of the Gospel and joyfully join the community of the body of Christ. Take ownership of the problem we are facing, that you played a part in creating. You can—and must—do something about it!

2. REALIZE THAT WHAT WE ARE DOING IS NOT WORKING.

The majority of student ministry services and small groups look the same. Ninety-six percent of this generation is not following Christ, so what we are doing clearly is not enough. No matter what size your student ministry is, there are thousands of students in your community and thousands more in the surrounding communities that we should reach out to. If people are not coming to church or getting saved, you may need to do something differently.

3. YOU CAN DO SOMETHING UNIQUE AND NEW.

Read Philippians 4:13.

If you have grown up in church, you have probably read this countless times, but whether you have heard it once or a thousand times, know that this verse is true and has power. You can do all things through Christ who strengthens you. You can bring about change in your church, your school, your family. Whether you are popular or not, whether you have a leadership role or not, does not matter. You can do all things through Christ who strengthens you.

Be an innovator and begin to solve the problem.

Remember, an innovator is a person who introduces new methods, ideas, or products to solve a problem. Sometimes these are drastic changes, and sometimes these are just changes in the way we look at things. For example, if lots of people visit your student ministry but never come back, maybe you need to stop hanging out with just your friends during youth service and instead meet the new people and help them feel welcome and connected. Maybe you need to follow up with them during the week to get to know them and let them know you remember them and that they are always welcome.

If students are not coming, maybe you need to think about whether or not there is a welcoming environment in which lost people in your school would feel welcome, or if everything is just catered to make your little tribe feel comfortable. Have you ever even invited someone to church or let them know when your youth services are? You see, sometimes being an innovator can be a little thing but have a massive impact; for some of you, just inviting people to church and focusing on making them feel welcome might be an incredibly innovative thing to implement.

What if instead of fighting so hard to get people to come to church, you took the church—the body of Christ—to them? What if you started a Bible study on your campus? What if you found the biggest need

students face (hunger, loneliness, academic struggles, etc.) and found ways to meet those needs and show people God's love? What if you started sharing the Gospel on your campus?

Take it a step further. What if you were gifted in creativity and created graphics or videos to share with your fellow students that teach them about God? Guess what—students might not sit still if you're talking to them, but they will watch a video.

What if you were gifted in cooking and made treats for students and teachers? You might be meeting not only a physical need, but possibly an emotional one as well, all the while building relationships and influence so that you can share the Gospel.

Some of you are just naturally gifted at people and events. What if you started a game night of some kind to keep students out of trouble and build relationships?

What if those of you who are gifted in music or athletics stopped just trying to be the best you could be and started trying to bring others along with you to help them grow? As your relationships and influence blossom, you get opportunities to show people that God loves them and has a plan of salvation for them.

Maybe you could start a business that employs students who need a job to support their families and helps them gain knowledge and experience.

What if you were an innovator?

By now you know that you are created by God for a purpose. You know that you have been gifted to reach people for Christ and grow God's kingdom. You know there are plenty of people to reach. Why not put all that together and actually try something new in the power of the Holy Spirit to reach the world around you instead of settling for the "same-old same-old"? Why couldn't thousands of people come to know Christ? Why couldn't poverty be wiped out in your community? It can—and it will—happen if you will be obedient and do what God has called you to do and not only see a problem, but also do something about it?

Now let's take it a step farther.

What if you shared what you created with the world via social media? This could simply mean sharing videos directly to people who are lost. Imagine the generational impact you could have. You have the time and the tools at your disposal to do just that.

4. SMALL STEPS ARE BIG STEPS.

You need to dream big but know that sometimes small steps are actually big ones. If just one life changed, that would be huge. If you just made one change at church and actually started inviting people and welcoming them and more people got plugged in, that would be incredible. Dream big but don't miss the small changes that may need to take place along the way, and don't get defeated if you don't see the huge results you think you should, or if they don't come as quickly as you would like. Never lose sight of the greater vision of what might be possible.

5. NOTHING IS GUARANTEED.

Think about the cost of not taking action.

Back in the old days, we used to go to a store to rent videos. There were some small local chains, but the big one was called Blockbuster. Then came a company called Netflix; they would deliver DVDs you wanted to watch right to your house. Other copycats arose and no one thought much of it. Even when Netflix started offering digital streaming, people thought that it would be a nice idea and a nice niche, but no one would ever stop going to the video store. But guess what—we did. We stopped going to the video store and started streaming. Then the unthinkable happened; the company that had been around for decades and provided the entertainment for so many family movie nights over the years went out of business.

It was shocking, but there was an important lesson to be learned—just because you have been around for a while does not mean that anything is guaranteed. Countries all over Europe where the church held great influence now barely even have a footprint. As far as being a vibrant catalyst for life-change, those days are long gone.

As the church, we have become comfortable because we just assume that we will always be here, things will work out, and lives will somehow be changed. But that is not necessarily the case; we are already down to 4% and look at the effect that has had on our society. What happens in the next generation if we don't do something radically different?

Last thing: You are without excuse. All of the knowledge of the world is at your fingertips. You have more time and resources than any generation before you. You can connect with anyone in the world at any moment. Because of the constant bombardment on all sides with information and social media, you are more aware of the issues facing the world around you and the needs that exist than any generation before you.

And now you know who you are in Christ, what you have been created for, and have an idea of what is possible.

Whatever it takes, whatever you need to learn and create, or whoever you may need to connect with, you can and must do it. The eternal fate of those around you rides on it. The future of the church depends on it. There is nothing else that could be more fulfilling to devote your life to.

Be an innovator, but not just any innovator—be an innovator for the kingdom of God.

LESSON 4

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Take time to plan specifically how the students will be innovators and impact the world around them. Below are some questions to help guide the discussion. We encourage you to have the students put something on paper with specific goals and timelines as much as possible.

1. What are your gifts?
2. What are some problems/needs in your church? Your school? Your community? Our world?
3. How could these gifts be used to reach people for Christ in your school? In your community? All over the world?
4. Who in this room do you think you could/need to partner with?
5. What are some things you need to learn or groundwork you need to lay to start doing what God has called you to do?
6. What will be some challenges?
7. What are some specific steps you will take from identifying your gifts to actually having your plan implemented?

++++++