

3

THE BEST CHOICE

It's difficult to say "no." Saying "yes" feels so much better! But every "yes" comes with a cost, which means we need to think through whether we are agreeing to the best things in life.

Our "yeses" have the potential of getting in the way—if we're not careful, they can start to squeeze out things that are most important to us, including our relationships.

Relationships never go deep when we are moving too fast. Relational depth only happens slowly, including our relationship with God and our relationships with others.

This session, let's talk about the art of saying "no" so that we can say "yes" to spending unhurried time with those closest to us.

The Lord will guide you always; he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame. You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail.

Isaiah 58:11



"Every 'yes' comes with a cost, which means we need to think through whether we are agreeing to the best things in life."

A group of people are standing in a line at what appears to be a community event or a food bank. In the foreground, a man wearing a blue baseball cap and a dark jacket is looking down. Next to him is a woman with blonde hair wearing a blue and white plaid shirt and blue jeans. To her right, a man in a green shirt is looking down. In the background, there are shelves with various items, possibly food or supplies. The text "YOUR STORY" is overlaid in the top left corner.

- Is it hard for you to say “no”? Why or why not?
- Has it been a struggle to find time for key relationships in your life? What makes it difficult to spend unhurried time with close friends or family?

[illegible]

WATCH THE VIDEO

Use the space provided to record your thoughts and questions as well as the things you want to remember or follow up on. After watching the video, have someone read the discussion questions in the Hear God's Story section and start the conversation.



HEAR GOD'S STORY



READ MARK 6:31-32

Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, "Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest." So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place.

THINK ABOUT IT

- Describe the situation Jesus and the disciples found themselves in. What words capture their day? Can you identify with what they were experiencing?
- What did Jesus say "yes" to? What choice did He make to create margin, and who did He create margin with?
- What did Jesus say "no" to?



STUDY NOTES

The Bible is full of examples of how important solitude and silence was for Jesus. (For example, **Mark 1:12**, **Mark 1:35**, **Mark 3:7**, **Mark 6:46**.) Considering all the times that Jesus withdrew to be alone and pray in quiet places, it's fascinating that as His followers, we still haven't quite figured out how to embrace solitude and silence. It came so naturally to Jesus, but for most of us, it is real work to carve out time alone to pray. Let's work harder on imitating Jesus: "*Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.*" (**Luke 5:16**).

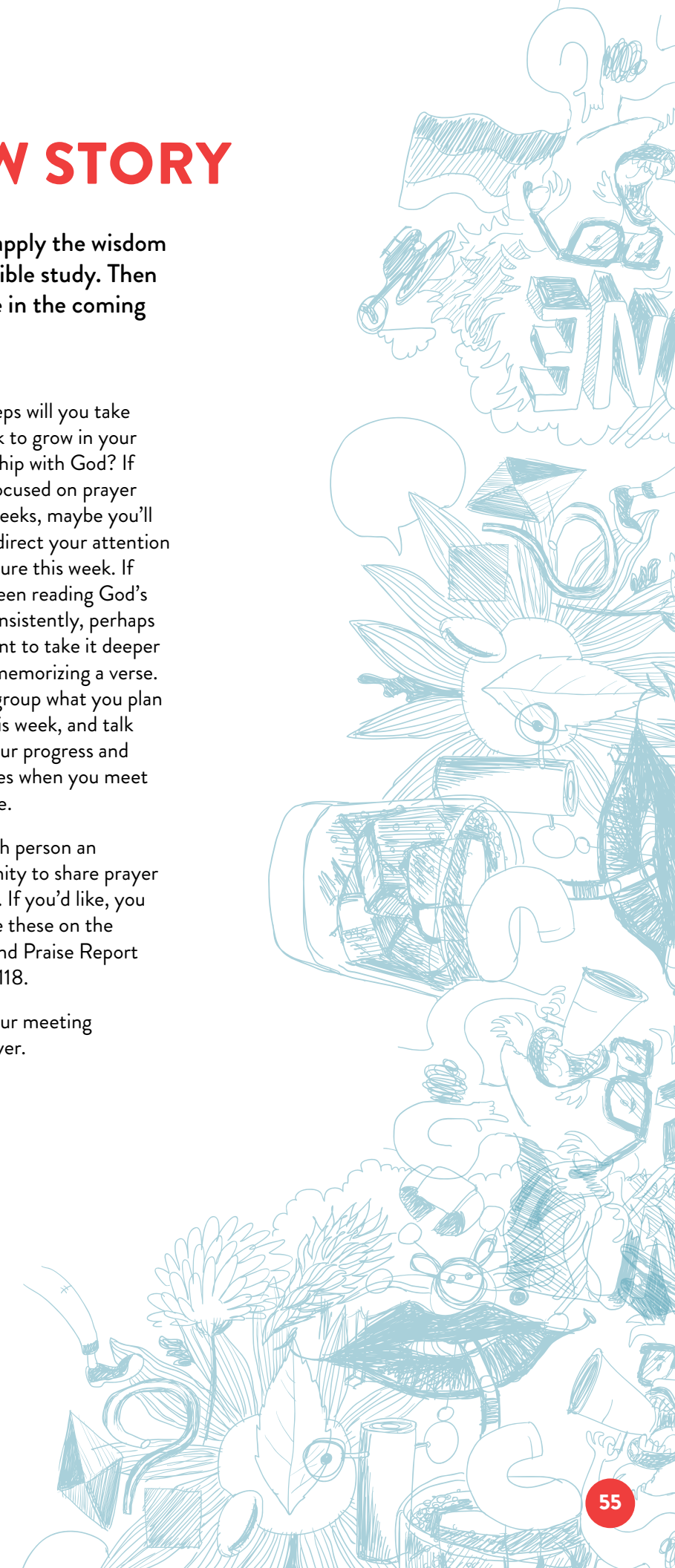




CREATE A NEW STORY

In this section, talk about how you will apply the wisdom you've learned from the teaching and Bible study. Then think about practical steps you can take in the coming week to live out what you've learned.

- Jeff shared how relationships never go deep when we are moving too quickly. Can you identify with that? Describe a relationship that greatly benefited from spending a significant amount of unhurried time—like going on a trip, rooming together, or something else.
- Jesus made time for His closest friends and His relationship with God the Father. What relationships in your life do you most need to make time for?
- How easy is it for you to find time to spend with God? When do you tend to connect with Him most?
- Have you set up any traditions, rules, or rhythms to help you slow down and spend time with those close to you?
- What steps will you take this week to grow in your relationship with God? If you've focused on prayer in past weeks, maybe you'll want to direct your attention to Scripture this week. If you've been reading God's Word consistently, perhaps you'll want to take it deeper and try memorizing a verse. Tell the group what you plan to try this week, and talk about your progress and challenges when you meet next time.
- Give each person an opportunity to share prayer requests. If you'd like, you can write these on the Prayer and Praise Report on page 118.
- Close your meeting with prayer.



FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY



READ JUDGES 7:1-8

Early in the morning, Jerub-Baal (that is, Gideon) and all his men camped at the spring of Harod. The camp of Midian was north of them in the valley near the hill of Moreh. The Lord said to Gideon, "You have too many men. I cannot deliver Midian into their hands, or Israel would boast against me, 'My own strength has saved me.' Now announce to the army, 'Anyone who trembles with fear may turn back and leave Mount Gilead.'" So twenty-two thousand men left, while ten thousand remained. But the Lord said to Gideon, "There are still too many men. Take them down to the water, and I will thin them out for you there. If I say, 'This one shall go with you,' he shall go; but if I say, 'This one shall not go with you,' he shall not go." So Gideon took the men down to the water. There the Lord told him, "Separate those who lap the water with their tongues as a dog laps from those who kneel down to drink." Three hundred of them drank from cupped hands, lapping like dogs. All the rest got down on their knees to drink. The Lord said to Gideon, "With the three hundred men that lapped I will save you and give the Midianites into your hands. Let all the others go home." So Gideon sent the rest of the Israelites home but kept the three hundred, who took over the provisions and trumpets of the others.

- What does this story teach you about making good choices?
- Do you have enough faith to trust in God's guidance?
- Why was God concerned about the Israelites boasting?
- Do you find God encouraging in this passage? Why or why not?

READ DEUTERONOMY 14:2

...for you are a people holy to the Lord your God. Out of all the peoples on the face of the earth, the Lord has chosen you to be his treasured possession.

- What does it mean to be God's holy people?
- What is the significance of being the Lord's treasured possession?
- What is your job as God's treasured possession?

DAILY DEVOTIONS

DAY

1

1 THESSALONIANS 5:16-18

Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

REFLECT

Take some time to check on your heart. Are you making time to pray? Are you giving thanks to God? Are you rejoicing in God?

DAY

2

PSALM 111:10

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; all who follow his precepts have good understanding. To him belongs eternal praise.

REFLECT

Re-write this verse in your own words and meditate on it.

DAY

3

PSALM 39:6

Surely everyone goes around like a mere phantom; in vain they rush about, heaping up wealth without knowing whose it will finally be.

REFLECT

How do you live your life for the Lord? Be specific.

DAY

4

PROVERBS 16:2

All a person's ways seem pure to them, but motives are weighed by the Lord.

REFLECT

Always search your heart and make sure your motives are honoring God.

DAY

5

ECCLESIASTES 3:1

There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens.

REFLECT

What do you need to prioritize during this season of life? Who do you need to spend time with? And what do you need to cut out?

DAY

6

REFLECT

Use the following space to reflect on what you learned this week and what God is saying to you.