

SEPTEMBER 17–NOVEMBER 19



UNDENIABLE

A SERIES ON THE MISSION AND
VALUES OF FIRST FREE CHURCH

STUDY GUIDE

We want to hear from you

Whether it's questions about the study, a story about the way God is moving in your life, or thoughts on a next step you've taken, we care and we can't wait to hear about it from you.

You can reach us at info@firstfreelincoln.org.

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MISSION & VALUES STUDY GUIDE | FALL 2023

September 17–November 19

MISSION AND VALUES SERIES

For the past several years, we've been creating message study guides that coordinate with various Sunday morning sermon series. We are excited about our Fall 2023 series which focuses on our freshly updated Mission and Values. Over the past several months, these important statements have been reworked by our staff and Elders, so this will be a beneficial study with lots of new material. Hope you enjoy it!

The sermon series **Undeniable** is scheduled to run from September 17 to November 19, 2023. You can find the Sunday morning messages at our church website at firstfreelincoln.org/watch/.

SPIRITUAL FORMATION AT FIRST FREE CHURCH

As we continue to create message study guides, our desire is to create content that helps you grow spiritually. These study guides are therefore spiritual formation tools you can use to go deeper in your relationship with God.

Definition: Spiritual Formation refers to *the process of being formed into the image of Christ*. This process includes both our personal commitment to regularly/intentionally follow Jesus and our cooperation with the Spirit's ongoing work to transform our lives. It is a work of God in which we participate in as we actively seek to become more like Jesus.

As God works in your life through this sermon series, here are a few active steps you can take to pursue spiritual formation:

- 1. Pray** – Ask God to work in your life personally as you listen to the Sunday morning messages and answer the questions in this study guide. Pray specifically for those who attend First Free Church listening to this specific series. Pray that this study will move beyond contemplation of information to implementation and life transformation.
- 2. Learn** – Lean into the messages and study guide as a learning opportunity. One of the values that we'll be exploring in this series is "better together." While this study guide can be used by individuals, this tool can also be used by groups.
- 3. Take the Next Step** – If the study has revealed a practical next step, take it. If God has been working in your life as you work your way through this study, we'd love to hear about it. You can reach us at info@firstfreelincoln.org.

Disclaimer: There may be occasions when the study guide doesn't correspond with the Sunday morning messages. If you are using this guide as a group, you may find it beneficial to move to topics in the guide that correspond to the Sunday messages. You may want to listen to the sermon first and then use the study guide the following week.

MISSION

To make the presence of **Jesus** undeniable and unignorable in our lives, relationships, city, and world.

VALUES

We are better together

We welcome the mess.

We are people in process who love people in process.

We take the time.

We take the next step.

People are our priority.

We are sent.

We practice and persevere in prayer.

We are generous with all, to all.

WEEK 1: Our Mission

WEEK 2: We are better together.

WEEK 3: We welcome the mess.

WEEK 4: We are people in process who love people in process.

WEEK 5: We take the time.

WEEK 6: We take the next step.

WEEK 7: People are our priority.

WEEK 8: We are sent.

WEEK 9: We practice and persevere in prayer.

WEEK 10: We are generous with all, to all.

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MESSAGE NOTES

Note big ideas, supporting passages, and important takeaways related to spiritual formation:

SERMON WRAP-UP QUESTIONS

Immediately following the sermon, answer these questions:

What did you learn from this sermon that you consider your biggest takeaway?

What are several practical steps you could take to grow spiritually based on what you heard from the sermon?

WEEK 1: OUR MISSION

THE BIG IDEA: OUR MISSION IS TO JOIN JESUS IN HIS MISSION.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What do the following passages tell us about the mission of Jesus (Mark 10:45; Luke 4:18-19; 19:5-10; John 17:1-4; 20:19-23)? Why is it good to take these statements as a whole when explaining the overarching mission of Jesus?

2. Read and Study John 6:35-51. What does Jesus reveal about his purpose for coming? What is the Father's will that Jesus has come to do? How does the Father's will relate to people looking toward the Son in belief (v. 40)? How does knowing Jesus relate to knowing God?

3. In what ways does the Mission Statement of First Free Church bring clarity and purpose to our lives and church?

4. In what ways can we make Jesus undeniable and unignorable in our lives? In our relationships? Our city and world?

5. What are the biggest hurdles, as individuals and as a church, to living out our Mission?

TAKE YOUR NEXT STEP

- What is one step you could take to make Jesus undeniable and unignorable?

- Memorize the Mission Statement: to make the presence of Jesus undeniable and unignorable in our lives, relationships, city, and world.

- Sign up for the Partnership Class.



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WEEK 2: WE ARE BETTER TOGETHER

THE BIG IDEA: WE ABSOLUTELY NEED EACH OTHER TO GROW IN CHRIST.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Read Hebrews 10:19-25 and answer the questions below.

1. According to Hebrews 10:25, what are some apparently forsaking/neglecting? What does the author of Hebrews suggest as an alternative? What appears to be the reasons for gathering in community and what types of communal experiences are needed to help us grow in our faith?

2. People often think of salvation as a personal, individual experience which is true, but have you considered the fact that we are saved into a community (into God's family (Eph. 2:19) or one body with many parts (1 Cor. 12:13))? How does thinking of salvation as being saved into a community of people change the way we think about living the Christian life in community with others? Consider 1 Cor. 12:12-14; 12:27 in your answer.

3. For the reasons outlined in the passages you've looked at so far, why is growing in a community of believers so important?

4. Is being involved in relationships at church a high value for you and your family during this season of life? Why or why not?

TAKE YOUR NEXT STEP

- What is one step you could take this week to be better together?
- Pray about getting connected in a Life Group.
- Study I Cor. 12:1-31. Answer the question, Why do we need each other?



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WEEK 3: WE WELCOME THE MESS

THE BIG IDEA: WE NEED TO BE HONEST WITH OURSELVES ABOUT OURSELVES.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- 1.** John Calvin once wrote, "...true and sound wisdom, consists of two parts: knowledge of God and of ourselves." In regard to the second half of that quote, Calvin was not talking about self-awareness as much as he was saying that we need to acknowledge the depth of our own messiness. Why is it important to recognize our own mess (our sins, struggles, shortcomings, and so forth)?
- 2.** How does knowing self move us toward knowing God? What is the relationship between the two parts of Calvin's quote?
- 3.** Read Romans 7:7-25. Paul describes himself as an unbeliever in vv. 7-12 and as a believer in vv. 13-25. What role does sin have in our lives as unbelievers and believers? According to this passage what does the battle with sin look like and how is it overcome in Christ?
- 4.** Read I John 1:8-10. Why is denial of sin problematic? How does an unawareness and a resistance to acknowledging our messiness hinder spiritual growth?
- 5.** Why do we like to downplay, rationalize away, or hide from our sins, struggles, and shortcomings?

TAKE YOUR NEXT STEP

- What is one step you'll take this week to confess your sin/struggles with God or a trusted friend/follower of Christ? Create some time to go where you need to go with your confession.
- No surprise here: Church is messy because people are messy. What is one way you can help other messy people around you live deeper in the grace of Christ as they grow in Christ?

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WEEK 4: WE ARE PEOPLE IN PROCESS WHO LOVE PEOPLE IN PROCESS

**THE BIG IDEA: WE ARE ALL STILL GROWING IN CHRIST;
LET'S BE LOVING AND PATIENT IN THE PROCESS.**

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. This value statement points to the process of "sanctification." What is sanctification? Discuss Coleman Ford's definition from the article 6 things every Christian needs to know about sanctification (sbts.edu, QR code below) *Note how sanctification is discussed in two different ways, positional and progressive sanctification.
2. Read the following verses 1 Cor. 1:2, 30; 6:11; Acts 20:32; Heb. 10:10, 14; 1 Pet. 1:2. What is positional sanctification (definitive sanctification) and why is it so important to understand who we are before we try to be who we are supposed to be?
3. According to Coleman, what is progressive or transformational sanctification? What does this process look like for a growing believer?
4. Why is it important to simultaneously know that God gives us a holy status (God has positionally declared who we are.) and that we are still growing in godliness (God is progressively helping us strive to be who we are.)? How is growing in Christ grounded in who we are in Christ?
5. Why is it often challenging to accept that we are people in process or that others are in process? What does this reveal about our hearts and expectations for others?

TAKE YOUR NEXT STEP

- What is one step you can take this week to remember who you are in Christ, and how you can proactively follow God's lead in areas He is asking you to become who He made you to be?
- Think practically about how you can love other people in process without neglecting real conversations with people regarding sin, struggles, shortcomings, and so forth.



ARTICLE LINK

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WEEK 5: WE TAKE THE TIME

THE BIG IDEA: WE MUST REMEMBER THAT LIFE TRANSFORMATION TAKE TIME.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Read Philippians 1:6 and 2:12-13. How do these passages point to the process of sanctification?

2. According to the passages above, who is the main driver of our sanctification? What role does God play in our growing in Christ and what role do we play?

3. Why is spiritual growth a life-time endeavor, often a very slow process for many? Why do we have to remember this for ourselves and for others?

4. Why do we tend to be impatient with our own spiritual growth and the spiritual growth of others? Do you find yourself frustrated by how slow some people grow in Christ? Why?

5. Scan Romans 14:1-23 and see if Paul's counsel offers any practical insight on how to grow together in Christ, especially those who are in a different place in their faith?

TAKE YOUR NEXT STEP

- What are practical ways you can show someone else that you love them as they grow in Christ?

- What relationships or ministries would allow you to grow with other people in process? Visit firstfreelincoln.org and check out the various opportunities to grow as a person in process.



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WEEK 6: WE TAKE THE NEXT STEP

THE BIG IDEA: WE DON'T STAY IN ONE PLACE SPIRITUALLY; WE FOLLOW GOD'S LEAD AND MOVE FORWARD.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- 1.** Read the following passages (Psalm 1:1; Micah 6:8; Gal.5:16; Col. 2:6; I Pet. 2:21; I John 2:3-6). Why or how is walking with God a beautiful metaphor to describe our ongoing and active relationship with God?

- 2.** In the previous value we referred to the quote, "it's ok to not be ok, but not ok to stay that way." In regard to the latter half of this phrase, why is it not ok to stay "not ok"? What does God desire for us in terms of moving forward toward healing, restoration, forgiveness, etc.? Review I John 1:5-10; 2:28-29; 3:7-10.

- 3.** Paul David Tripp says, "Our sanctification really is a death and life process." What he means is that we are to let God progressively kill off sin in our lives (mortification) and to embrace our new life in Christ. Read Gal. 5:16-24; Col. 3:1-17. What does God want to put to death in our lives and what does he want us to pursue in terms of our new life in Christ?

- 4.** Spend extended time in prayer and conversation with other growing believers. Where does God want to kill off sin in your life and where does God want you to pursue the life He wants for you?

- 5.** How might God be using you in a relationship to—with their invitation and permission—help someone walk with God? Go there in faith and love, offering hope and help.

TAKE YOUR NEXT STEP

- Take the next step, in following God's prompting to kill off areas of your life that are unfruitful and unhealthy. Remember this process doesn't happen overnight.

- If you are struggling with an addiction, consider our Care and Counseling ministry for the support and love you need. We have caring people ready to help you.



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WEEK 7: PEOPLE ARE OUR PRIORITY

THE BIG IDEA: WHEN WE GENUINELY CARE ABOUT PEOPLE, WE CARE FOR THEM PERSONALLY AND PRACTICALLY.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- 1.** One of the best known interactions between Jesus and a person is recorded in John 4. Read John 4:1-42. In what ways did Jesus prioritize and care for the woman at the well? Do a little side study on why this interaction was socially not normal.
- 2.** How does Jesus model genuine care and conversation with people he was ministering to? What might we learn from that? Provide examples, if some come to mind.
- 3.** Ponder the words of 1 Thes. 2:1-12. Describe the ministry of these followers of Christ. How were the people in this ministry cared for? What can we learn from their experience and ministry posture?
- 4.** If you think about your ministry in the church and outside the church (family, neighbors, work, activities, etc.), would others say that you are known to be someone who is like a nursing mother to her children, working tirelessly to encourage, comfort, and implore others to live worthy of God? Why or why not? If not, what prevents you from being that?
- 5.** We can't be the person described above to everyone, but we can to some. Who are your people that you want to be that to? If they don't know it, tell them and talk to them about how you can take the next step to be that person.
- 6.** In what ways can the church prioritize people in practical ways? How can we keep people our focus when planning programs and working on projects?

TAKE YOUR NEXT STEP

- What are a few practical ways that you can prioritize a relationship this week, even amid busyness and projects? Start with your family and friends and then move on to other relationships.
- Has your heart for people diminished in recent times? Pray through that. Ask God for a renewed heart to love people personally and practically. Ask God for opportunities.

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WEEK 8: WE ARE SENT

THE BIG IDEA: AS GOD SENDS THE SON (AND THE SPIRIT), SO HE SENDS THE CHURCH INTO THE WORLD.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Read Matthew 28:19-20. This is probably one of the most well-known passages in the Bible. What does this text teach us about being sent? What are we sent to do?
2. Practically speaking, how do we do what the passage exhorts us to do?
3. Read 2 Cor. 2:1-17. Describe the ministry of Paul. What was he doing? In the midst of this passage, Paul refers to himself as being the aroma of Christ, smelling bad to some and good to others. What was he talking about? What does the metaphor of smell have to do with being sent? Check out 2 Cor. 5:11-21 as well.
4. How might we be the aroma of Christ in our relationships with others, especially to those who don't know Christ?
5. How does knowing that people have different reactions to the aroma of Christ help us process people's reactions to the person of Christ?
6. Is it possible to be the aroma of Christ in deeds only? How about words only? Think about what it might mean to be the aroma of Christ in both words and deeds?

TAKE YOUR NEXT STEP

- What is one step you can take in being sent into the world to be the aroma of Christ? How can you be the aroma of Christ to your family, your friend network, place of employment?
- Ever consider being involved in a local service project or participating in a mission trip? Check out some of the opportunities available to you at First Free Church.



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WEEK 9: WE PRACTICE AND PERSEVERE IN PRAYER

THE BIG IDEA: PRAYER IS A BIG PART OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE; DO IT OFTEN, ENJOYING THE PRESENCE OF GOD.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Read Matt. 6:5-15 and Luke 11:1-13. In general, what do you learn about prayer through these passages?
2. Now more specifically, look closely at the model of prayer that Jesus presented in Matthew 6:9-15. How does the prayer progress revealing a helpful way for us to pray? Use your own words to modernize this prayer while still following the order Jesus gave us.
3. In what ways does the Lord's prayer help us go deeper in our relationship with God (our dependence on and worship of) and our relationship with others (praying for practical needs and loving people the way we are supposed to)?
4. Read 1 Thes. 5:16-18. What does it mean to pray without ceasing? What doesn't it mean?
5. Do you ever feel like you are praying, but it doesn't feel like someone is on the other end? What can we do to remember that prayer is fundamentally about enjoying the presence of God and trusting in God's gracious provision?
6. People often talk about developing a prayer life or the habit of prayer. Why should we be careful about approaching prayer as just a habit or thing we do? What is potentially missing in this perspective?

TAKE YOUR NEXT STEP

- Start small—spend a few minutes with God today. Ask someone to pray for you or with you.
- Consider a study of prayer using this article on the Doctrine of Prayer as a launch pad.



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WEEK 10: WE ARE GENEROUS WITH ALL, TO ALL

THE BIG IDEA: GENEROSITY IS ONE OF THE HALLMARKS OF A FOLLOWER OF JESUS AND ITS APPLICATION IS WIDE.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Begin this study by thinking through and listing all the ways God has been generous toward you. Reflect on Eph. 1:14. Praise God for his generosity toward you in Christ.
2. Why is God's generosity toward us the foundation of our generosity toward others? Consider I John 3:16 in your answer, "This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters."
3. Read the following passages (Prov. 22:9; Matt. 5:42; Luke 6:38; Eph. 4:28; I Tim. 6:18; Heb. 3:16; I John 3:17). What do we learn about generosity from these passages? Who are we to be generous to and with what?
4. Read Luke 12:13-34. How are our hearts connected to our possessions, for good or bad? How are our hearts in competition for the comfort of God and the comfort of stuff?
5. How do 2 Cor. 9:1-15, and Acts 2:44-45 give us a proper perspective on being generous in the church and toward the church?
6. In the quietness of your own heart, listening to the stirrings of the Spirit, name ways you desire to be more generous to those in need and in the church. Think through the various relational circles you engage in (family, friends, social groups, church, organizations, etc.).

TAKE YOUR NEXT STEP

- What is one way that you can show tangible generosity toward someone this week? Think of someone in need and bless them.
- Do you need to thank someone for their generosity toward you? Drop them a quick note.
- Consider being generous with your time by serving in the church or by supporting the ministry of the church.



SERVE LINK



GIVE LINK

THANK YOU FOR JOINING US FOR THIS STUDY!

We'd love to hear from you! If you have any lingering questions related to our Mission and Values, or if there's something that has been on your heart as you've studied these topics with us, we'd love to know. Send us an email: [**info@firstfreelincoln.org**](mailto:info@firstfreelincoln.org)