



ST. PAUL
PEORIA

2ND QUARTER

THE BETTER JOURNAL

13 Weeks of Guided Sermon
Reflections & Questions

- **Practical steps** for applying each week's sermon teachings in your daily life.
- **Guided Note-taking** for each week's sermon
- **Reflective questions** that will challenge you to think and gain personal insights related to sermon topics.
- **Weekly Challenges** to help you apply spiritual lessons to your daily life
- **Personal growth activities** that facilitate self-discovery and spiritual development.

Week 1:
Beyond Our Bubble

Week 2:
**Understanding &
Relating to Others'
Experiences**

Week 3:
The Empathy Effect

Week 4:
Guest Speaker:
Dr. Brian Cash

Week 5:
God-Tuned Hearts

Week 6:
Self-Love Isn't Selfish

Week 7:
Real Talk

Week 8:
Living Empathy

Week 9:
Hear Fully

Week 10:
Echo Back

Week 11:
Feeling Their Story

Week 12:
Reserve Judgement

Week 13:
Gentle Responses

2ND QUARTER

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Dr. Brian Cash (Cleveland, OH)

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Prayer Meetings

2nd Wednesday of the Month (see times below)

Prayer is an important part of our spiritual journey! Join us at St. Paul on the following dates for Prayer Meeting. Prayer will also be livestreamed on our Youtube channel (@stpaulpeoria).

- April 10, 2024 at 7 p.m. (CT)
- May 8, 2024 at 7 p.m. (CT)
- June 12, 2024 at 6 p.m. (CT)

Heart Acronym

The acronym "HEART" is a simple guide for interacting with others in a kind and effective way. "Hear fully" is all about listening carefully, "Echo Back" means repeating what you've heard to show you get it, "Acknowledge Emotions" involves recognizing someone's feelings, "Reserve Judgement" encourages keeping an open mind, and "Tender Responses" is about answering gently. As we commit to being better, we want to ensure everyone feels heard and valued!



Hear Fully

Give your full attention to the speaker, using eye contact and other non-verbal cues to show engagement.



Echo Back

Reflect or paraphrase the speaker's words to ensure understanding and show you actively listening.



Acknowledge Emotions

Recognize and validate the emotions behind the speaker's words, demonstrating emotional sensitivity.



Reserve Judgement

Maintain an open, non-judgmental stance, accepting the speaker's perspective as valid.



Tender Responses

Respond with kindness and compassion, showing genuine concern and a willingness to support.



ST. PAUL
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Pt 1.

STEPS TO EMPATHY

Walking in Their Shoes

(Weeks (1-4))

[illegible]

WEEK 1:

Beyond Our Bubble: Acknowledging Others' Struggles



Share it: Based on today's message, think of one thing you can share with someone you care about.

Journal Instructions: *Read Luke 10:30-32, ask God to help you understand, and answer the following questions. End with a prayer, asking God to guide you through the day.*

Journal Questions / Prompts:

1. Ask God to help you notice when people need help nearby or around you.
2. Write down any needs you see and take a moment to pray for those people and their needs.
3. Think about what might keep you from noticing when others are struggling.

WEEK 1:

Beyond Our Bubble: Acknowledging Others' Struggles



This Week's Takeaway:

Write down one thing you want to do differently after learning this week.

Activity Suggestion:

- **For Grown-ups:** Practice quiet prayer whenever you hear about someone in need.
- **For Kids and Teens:** Ask God where people need help. Write down what you notice.

Prayer

Dear God,

Thank you for helping us see the needs of those around us. Please keep guiding us to be caring and aware.

In Jesus' name,

Amen

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WEEK 2:

Understanding and Relating to Others' Experiences



Share it: Based on today's message, think of one thing you can share with someone you care about.

Journal Instructions: *Read Luke 10:33, ask God for wisdom, and respond to these questions. End with a prayer, asking God to teach you throughout the day.*

Journal Questions / Prompts:

1. Do you think you're good at understanding how others feel? Why or why not?
2. Remember a time when someone showed you kindness. What made their kindness special to you?
3. Finish these sentences: Compassion is... Compassion looks like...

WEEK 2:

Understanding and Relating to Others' Experiences



This Week's Takeaway:

Write down one way you want to be more compassionate after learning this week.

Activity Suggestion:

- **For Grown-ups:** Practice showing kindness to someone this week.
- **For Kids and Teens:** Write down what being kind means to you.

Prayer

Dear God,

God, help us listen and understand what others go through. Guide us to be kind and caring in our words and actions.

In Jesus' name,

Amen

[illegible]

WEEK 3:

The Empathy Effect: Turning Compassion into Service



Share it: Based on today's message, think of one thing you can share with someone you care about.

Journal Instructions: *Read Luke 10:34-35, ask God to lead you, and answer the questions below. End with a prayer, asking God to teach you today.*

Journal Questions / Prompts:

1. Think about when someone's help made a big difference in your life. How did their kindness affect you?
2. How can you show care and kindness at home, school, or work?
3. What do you think God wants you to do when you see someone who needs help?

WEEK 3:

The Empathy Effect: Turning Compassion into Service



This Week's Takeaway:

Write down one way you want to show more kindness after this week's lesson.

Activity Suggestion:

- **For Grown-ups:** Volunteer or do something helpful for someone in your community.
- **For Kids and Teens:** Talk to your family about ways you can help someone in need.

Prayer

Dear God,

Help us turn our caring into action. Guide us to be active in helping others and making things better.

In Jesus' name,

Amen

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Pt 2.

LOVE IN ACTION

Living Out the Greatest Commandment

(Weeks (5-8))

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WEEK 5:

God-Tuned Hearts: Shaping a World of Empathy



Share it: Based on today's message, think of one thing you can share with someone you care about.

Journal Instructions: Read Mark 12:30-31, ask God to guide you, and answer the following questions. End with a prayer, asking God to teach you through the day.

Journal Questions / Prompts:

1. How do you show your love for God?
2. How does your relationship with God affect how you treat others?
3. How can you show God's love to your family, friends, or coworkers?

WEEK 5:

God-Tuned Hearts: Shaping a World of Empathy



This Week's Takeaway:

Write down one thing you want to do differently after learning this week.

Activity Suggestion:

- **For Grown-ups:** Spend 5 minutes in prayer, asking God to deepen your connection with Him and increase your empathy towards others.
- **For Kids and Teens:** Write or text someone a message telling them God loves them.

Prayer

Dear God,

Thank you for loving and caring for us daily. Help us strengthen our bond with you to better understand and care for those around us. Guide us to show genuine love and understanding to others.

In Jesus' name,

Amen

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WEEK 6:

Self-Love Isn't Selfish: It's Key to Understanding Others



Share it: Based on today's message, think of one thing you can share with someone you care about.

Journal Instructions: *Read Mark 12:30-31, ask God to guide you, and answer the following questions. End with a prayer, asking God to teach you through the day.*

Journal Questions / Prompts:

1. How can you be kinder to yourself?
2. How can you build a positive relationship with yourself, recognizing your feelings and experiences?
3. Think about a time you struggled to understand someone else's feelings. How might practicing self-love have helped in that situation?

WEEK 6:

Self-Love Isn't Selfish: It's Key to Understanding Others



This Week's Takeaway:

Write down one thing you want to apply from this week's learning.

Activity Suggestion:

- **For Grown-ups:** Write down a daily affirmation of kindness and compassion to repeat.
- **For Kids and Teens:** Use an emotions chart to identify your feelings this week.

Prayer

Dear God,

Help us love ourselves as you love us, acknowledging our own value and worth. Guide us in understanding others through self-compassion and kindness.

In Jesus' name,

Amen

[illegible]

WEEK 7:

Real Talk: Authentic Conversations in a Digital Age



Share it: Based on today's message, think of one thing you can share with someone you care about.

Journal Instructions: *Read Mark 12:30-31, ask God to guide you, and answer the following questions. End with a prayer, asking God to teach you throughout the day.*

Journal Questions / Prompts:

1. Do you feel more connected and understood in face-to-face or digital conversations? Why?
2. How can you prioritize listening and meaningful dialogue in your online and offline interactions?
3. What do you hope to receive from others in conversations? What do you aim to give?

WEEK 7:

Real Talk: Authentic Conversations in a Digital Age



This Week's Takeaway:

Write down one thing you want to apply from this week's learning.

Activity Suggestion:

- **For Grown-ups:** Plan intentional face-to-face conversations with loved ones, focusing on listening and connection.
- **For Kids and Teens:** Play a game with a family member or friend and ask one question to get to know them better.

Prayer

Dear God,

Thank you for genuine relationships and meaningful conversations. Please help us prioritize real-life interactions and active listening to deepen our empathy and connection with others.

In Jesus' name,

Amen

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WEEK 8:

Living Empathy: Beyond Hashtags to Heartfelt Actions



Share it: Based on today's message, think of one thing you can share with someone you care about.

Journal Instructions: *Read Mark 12:30-31, ask God to guide you, and answer the following questions. End with a prayer, asking God to teach you through the day.*

Journal Questions / Prompts:

1. When do you find it easiest to show empathy to others?
2. List two ways you can show empathy through your actions this week and ask God for help.
3. Write down ways you believe God shows his love and concern for you.

WEEK 8:

Living Empathy: Beyond Hashtags to Heartfelt Actions



This Week's Takeaway:

Write down one thing you want to apply from this week's learning.

Activity Suggestion:

- **For Grown-ups:** Keep track of moments of empathy, thanking God for them.
- **For Kids and Teens:** Organize a service project with friends or classmates to help someone in need.

Prayer

Dear God,

Help us live out empathy and compassion every day. Guide us in turning our caring intentions into meaningful actions that make a difference in others' lives.

In Jesus' name,

Amen



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Pt 3.

HEART TO HEART

Building Emotional Bridges

(Weeks (9-13))

Heart Acronym

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Hear Fully

Give your full attention to the speaker, using eye contact and other non-verbal cues to show engagement.



Echo Back

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Acknowledge Emotions

Recognize and validate the emotions behind the speaker's words, demonstrating emotional sensitivity.



Reserve Judgement

Maintain an open, non-judgmental stance, accepting the speaker's perspective as valid.



Tender Responses

Respond with kindness and compassion, showing genuine concern and a willingness to support.

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WEEK 9:

Hear Fully: The Art of Engaged Listening



Share it: Based on today's message, think of one thing you can share with a family member, friend, or coworker.

Journal Instructions: *Read James 1:19, ask the Holy Spirit to guide you, then answer the following questions. End with a prayer asking God to teach you throughout the day.*

Journal Questions / Prompts:

1. How do you know if someone is listening to you?
2. How can you practice giving full attention to others when they speak?
3. Think about a time you struggled to listen attentively. What distractions or obstacles got in the way?

WEEK 9:

Hear Fully: The Art of Engaged Listening



This Week's Takeaway:

Write down one thing you want to apply from this week's learning.

Activity Suggestion:

- **For Grown-ups:** Practice active listening in your conversations this week, focusing on giving full attention without interruption.
- **For Kids and Teens:** Listen closely to someone you know and observe their words, expressions, and feelings. What did you learn?

Prayer

Dear God,

Help us to be quick to listen and slow to speak, as your Word instructs.
Guide us in the art of engaged listening so we can understand others deeply
and show them your love through our attentive presence.

In Jesus' name,

Amen

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WEEK 10:

Echo Back: Reflective Listening Skills



Share it: Based on today's message, think of one thing you can share with a family member, friend, or coworker.

Journal Instructions: *Read Proverbs 18:13, invite the Holy Spirit to guide you, and then respond to the following questions. End with a prayer asking God to teach you throughout the day.*

Journal Questions / Prompts:

1. Recall a recent conversation where you practiced reflective listening. Did paraphrasing the speaker's words improve understanding and connection?
2. How can you use echo-back techniques to show others you value their words and perspectives in everyday conversations?
3. Think about when you felt truly heard because someone echoed your thoughts or feelings. How did it make you feel, and how can you do the same for others?

WEEK 10:

Echo Back: Reflective Listening Skills



This Week's Takeaway:

Write down one thing you want to apply from this week's learning.

Activity Suggestion:

- **For Grown-ups:** Practice reflective listening with a friend or family member this week, intentionally paraphrasing their words to show understanding and empathy.
- **For Kids and Teens:** Engage in role-playing, where you practice echo-back techniques. Keep track of when you echo back and when you don't.

Prayer

Dear God,

Help us be attentive listeners who value and understand others' words.
Guide us in practicing reflective listening to deepen connections and relationships.

In Jesus' name,

Amen

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WEEK 11:

Feeling their Story: Acknowledging Emotions



Share it: Based on today's message, think of one thing you can share with a family member, friend, or coworker.

Journal Instructions: *Read Romans 12:15, ask the Holy Spirit to guide you, and then respond to the following questions. End with a prayer asking God to teach you throughout the day.*

Journal Questions / Prompts:

1. Recall a time when someone acknowledged and validated your emotions. How did it impact your sense of connection and understanding?
2. How can you practice acknowledging and validating others' emotions in your conversations and interactions?
3. Think about a recent situation where you struggled to understand someone's emotions. Why did you find it challenging?

WEEK 11:

Feeling their Story: Acknowledging Emotions



This Week's Takeaway:

Write down one thing you want to apply from this week's learning.

Activity Suggestion:

- **For Grown-ups:** Practice emotional sensitivity by actively listening to someone's story and acknowledging their emotions without judgment.
- **For Kids and Teens:** Role-play different emotions and guess how others might feel. Reflect on the importance of acknowledging emotions.

Prayer

Dear God,

Help us empathize with others by recognizing and validating their emotions.
Guide us to foster deeper connections and understanding through emotional sensitivity.

In Jesus' name,

Amen

[illegible]

WEEK 12:

Reserve Judgment: Opening the Mind



Share it: Based on today's message, think of one thing you can share with a family member, friend, or coworker.

Journal Instructions: *Read Matthew 7:1-2, invite the Holy Spirit to guide you, then respond to the following questions. End with a prayer asking God to teach you throughout the day.*

Journal Questions / Prompts:

1. Reflect on a time when you felt judged or misunderstood. Did it make you want to share your thoughts and feelings?
2. How can you develop a mindset of openness and acceptance towards others, even when their perspectives differ?
3. Think about a recent situation where you were tempted to pass judgment on someone. How might reserving judgment and seeking to understand have changed things?

WEEK 12:

Reserve Judgment: Opening the Mind



This Week's Takeaway:

Write down one thing you want to apply from this week's learning.

Activity Suggestion:

- **For Grown-ups:** Practice suspending judgment in conversations this week, focusing on listening with empathy and understanding.
- **For Kids and Teens:** Engage in role-playing where you share different viewpoints and practice acceptance and empathy towards each other.

Prayer

Dear God,

Help us keep our minds open and free from judgment to better understand and empathize with others. Teach us to accept different perspectives with grace and love.

In Jesus' name,

Amen

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WEEK 13:

Gentle Responses: Compassion in Communication



Share it: Based on today's message, think of one thing you can share with a family member, friend, or coworker.

Journal Instructions: *Read Colossians 3:12, invite the Holy Spirit to guide you, then respond to the following questions. End with a prayer asking God to teach you throughout the day.*

Journal Questions / Prompts:

1. Reflect on a time when someone responded to you with kindness and compassion. How did it affect your feelings and the outcome?
2. How can you cultivate a gentle response in communicating with others, even in challenging situations?
3. Think about a recent conversation where you could have responded more tenderly. How might approaching it with compassion have changed things?

WEEK 13:

Gentle Responses: Compassion in Communication



This Week's Takeaway:

Write down one thing you want to apply from this week's learning.

Activity Suggestion:

- **For Grown-ups:** Practice responding with kindness and compassion in your interactions this week, showing genuine concern and support.
- **For Kids and Teens:** Role-play scenarios where you practice responding to others with gentleness and compassion, focusing on empathy and understanding.

Prayer

Dear God,

Help us to clothe ourselves with compassion and respond to others with kindness and gentleness. Teach us to communicate in ways that reflect your love and concern for all.

In Jesus' name,

Amen

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

End of Quarter: Reflection and Sharing

Provide one example of how you have practiced the listening skills of this unit.

- **H: Hearing fully** outlines the importance of being present in conversation with others. Reflect on a time where you worked to be fully present with someone.
- **E: Echo back.** Summarizing or repeated the speakers words back to them shows you are actively listening. Think of a time when “echoing back” helped clarify misunderstandings or strengthen communication.
- **A: Acknowledging emotions** involves validating the emotions behind the speaker’s words, demonstrating emotional sensitivity.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

- **R: Reserve Judgment.** This allows for a safe space where open communication can flourish. Can you think of a time when you maintained an open and non-judgmental stance when listening to others?

- **T: Tender Response.** In what ways have you responded with kindness and compassion to the needs and emotions of others?

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LIVE AND LOVE LIKE JESUS.



Sunday Worship

Sundays at 10 AM (cst)

Livestream: www.youtube.com/stpaulpeoria

Contact



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