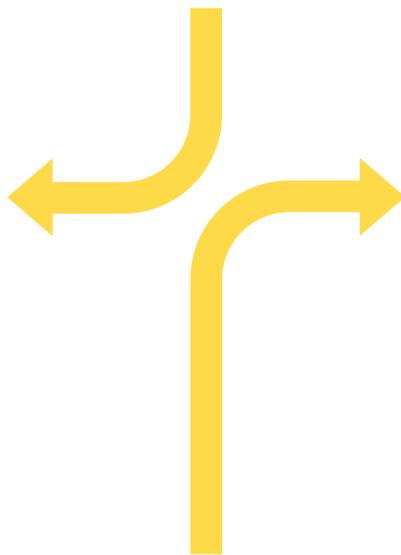


HORIZONTAL



JESUS

*How Our Relationships with Others
Affect Our Experience with God*

TONY EVANS

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ABOUT DR. TONY EVANS

Dr. Tony Evans is one of America's most respected leaders in evangelical circles. He is a pastor, a best-selling author, and a frequent speaker at Bible conferences and seminars throughout the nation.

Dr. Evans has served as the senior pastor of Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship for more than 35 years, witnessing its growth from 10 people in 1976 to more than 9,000 congregants with more than one hundred ministries.

Dr. Evans also serves as the president of The Urban Alternative, a national ministry that seeks to bring about spiritual renewal in America through the church. His daily radio broadcast, "The Alternative with Dr. Tony Evans," can be heard on nearly one thousand radio outlets throughout the United States and in more than one hundred countries.

Dr. Evans has authored more than 50 books, including *Oneness Embraced*, *The Kingdom Agenda*, *Marriage Matters*, *Kingdom Man*, *Victory in Spiritual Warfare*, *The Power of God's Names*, *God's Unlikely Path to Success*, and *Horizontal Jesus*. Dr. Evans, a former chaplain for the NFL Dallas Cowboys, is currently the chaplain for the NBA's Dallas Mavericks, a team he has served for more than 30 years.

Through his local church and national ministry, Dr. Evans has set in motion a kingdom-agenda philosophy of ministry that teaches God's comprehensive rule over every area of life, as demonstrated through the individual, family, church, and society.

Dr. Evans is married to Lois, his wife and ministry partner of more than 40 years. They are the proud parents of four—Chrystal, Priscilla, Anthony Jr., and Jonathan.



INTRODUCTION

Can what you do for others affect what God does for you?

Does that sound legalistic and demanding? Maybe it even sounds like a karma philosophy or a prosperity religion that focuses on getting things for ourselves. Surely we can't influence the heart, much less the hand, of the sovereign God of the universe.

Or maybe we can. Scripture reveals that our experience with God is connected to our interactions with one another. Not because God is up there shaking His head, wondering how to respond to prayers or how to care for His own. Nor because God doesn't know what to do; He does. And He has a plan. But the reason we can affect our vertical experience with God, based on our horizontal relationships with one another, is simply because that's how He designed it to be.

These are His rules. This is His kingdom. The impact of our interactions with others on God's interaction with us comes from Him. This is how He's designed our family makeup in the body of Christ. While His love is pure and His grace is great, how much of those blessings we're freed to access at times depends on how much of that purity and grace we allow to flow through us to others horizontally.

Over and over again, Scripture presents God's people with what I call the one-another teachings. God cares about the way we treat one another, and the one-another commands are often tied to blessings we've received from God and promises we hope He will fulfill in our lives.

We're the body of Christ. We're His hands and feet in this world. He expects us to treat one another in the same way we want others to treat us and, more important, in the same way He's already treated us. We can experience the vertical realities of joy, satisfaction, and contentment in Christ in a greater way when we follow His example by loving one another.

The vertical reality of our love relationship with God overflows into the relationships around us. In turn, these horizontal relationships spring up to produce a greater experience with our God.

So get ready. Open your heart and mind, prepare your hands and feet, not just to study but to be a horizontal Jesus to those around you.

HOW TO GET THE MOST FROM THIS STUDY

This Bible study book includes six weeks of content for group and personal study.

GROUP SESSIONS

Regardless of what day of the week your group meets, each week of content begins with the group session. Each group session uses the following format to facilitate simple yet meaningful interaction among group members, with God's Word, and with the teaching of Dr. Evans.

START This page includes questions to get the conversation started and to introduce the video segment.

WATCH This page includes key points from Dr. Evans's teaching, along with blanks for taking notes as participants watch the video.

RESPOND This page includes questions and statements that guide the group to respond to Dr. Evans's video teaching and to relevant Bible passages.

PERSONAL STUDY

Each week provides five days of Bible study and learning activities for individual engagement between group sessions. The personal study revisits stories, Scriptures, and themes Dr. Evans introduced in the videos so that participants can understand and apply them on a personal level. The days are numbered 1–5 to provide personal reading and activities for each day of the week, leaving two days off to worship with your church family and to meet as a small group. If your group meets on the same day as your worship gathering, use the extra day to reflect on what God is teaching you and to practice putting the biblical principles into action.

TIPS FOR LEADING A SMALL GROUP

PRAYERFULLY PREPARE

Prepare for each meeting by—

REVIEWING the weekly material and group questions ahead of time;

PRAYING for each person in the group.

Ask the Holy Spirit to work through you and the group discussion as you point to Jesus each week through God's Word.

MINIMIZE DISTRACTIONS

Create a comfortable environment. If group members are uncomfortable, they'll be distracted and therefore not engaged in the group experience. Plan ahead by taking into consideration—

SEATING;

TEMPERATURE;

LIGHTING;

FOOD OR DRINK;

SURROUNDING NOISE;

GENERAL CLEANLINESS

(put away pets if meeting in a home).

At best, thoughtfulness and hospitality show guests and group members they're welcome and valued in whatever environment you choose to gather. At worst, people may never notice your effort, but they're also not distracted. Do everything in your ability to help people focus on what's most important: connecting with God, with the Bible, and with one another.

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INCLUDE OTHERS

Your goal is to foster a community in which people are welcome just as they are but encouraged to grow spiritually. Always be aware of opportunities to—

INCLUDE any people who visit the group;

INVITE new people to join your group.

An inexpensive way to make first-time guests feel welcome or to invite someone to get involved is to give them their own copies of this Bible study book.

ENCOURAGE DISCUSSION

A good small-group experience has the following characteristics.

EVERYONE PARTICIPATES. Encourage everyone to ask questions, share responses, or read aloud.

NO ONE DOMINATES—NOT EVEN THE LEADER. Be sure that your time speaking as a leader takes up less than half of your time together as a group. Politely guide discussion if anyone dominates.

NOBODY IS RUSHED THROUGH QUESTIONS. Don't feel that a moment of silence is a bad thing. People often need time to think about their responses to questions they've just heard or to gain courage to share what God is stirring in their hearts.

INPUT IS AFFIRMED AND FOLLOWED UP. Make sure you point out something true or helpful in a response. Don't just move on. Build community with follow-up questions, asking how other people have experienced similar things or how a truth has shaped their understanding of God and the Scripture you're studying. People are less likely to speak up if they fear that you don't actually want to hear their answers or that you're looking for only a certain answer.

GOD AND HIS WORD ARE CENTRAL. Opinions and experiences can be helpful, but God has given us the truth. Trust Scripture to be the authority and God's Spirit to work in people's lives. You can't change anyone, but God can. Continually point people to the Word and to active steps of faith.

KEEP CONNECTING

Think of ways to connect with group members during the week. Participation during the group session is always improved when members spend time connecting with one another outside the group sessions. The more people are comfortable with and involved in one another's lives, the more they'll look forward to being together. When people move beyond being friendly to truly being friends who form a community, they come to each session eager to engage instead of merely attending.

Encourage group members with thoughts, commitments, or questions from the session by connecting through—

**EMAILS;
TEXTS;
SOCIAL MEDIA.**

When possible, build deeper friendships by planning or spontaneously inviting group members to join you outside your regularly scheduled group time for—

**MEALS;
FUN ACTIVITIES;
PROJECTS AROUND YOUR HOME, CHURCH, OR COMMUNITY.**

Week 1

THE THEOLOGY OF IT



Welcome to session 1 of Horizontal Jesus. Begin by taking a few minutes to be sure everyone knows one another, especially if this is your first time meeting as a group.

When have you experienced a problem or misunderstanding due to a bad connection?

When have you had an experience when something didn't work or flow the way it should due to a problem with clogs or connections?

Many of us may not realize that our lives are clogged up; in other words, we aren't making the right connections that bring about a difference in other people's lives, according to God's design. His plan is to work not just in us but also through us, as individuals and as a group.

Before we learn what Dr. Evans has to teach us about being a horizontal Jesus to others, would somebody pray for our time together, asking the Lord to open our hearts and minds to His Word as we begin this study?

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WATCH

Complete this viewer guide as you watch the video for session 1.

Our _____ connection with the Lord is expressed in our _____ relationships with one another.

When God knows He can flow _____ you, He's much more interested in flowing _____ you.

God wants His nature to permeate His children so that we touch _____ in the same way we want God to touch _____.

How you bless _____ positions you for how God blesses you.

If you have a need, you must plant a _____.

The *it* in Luke 6:38 is an *it* of _____, not an *it* of money or an *it* of me.

The reason God emphasizes giving is to remove _____.

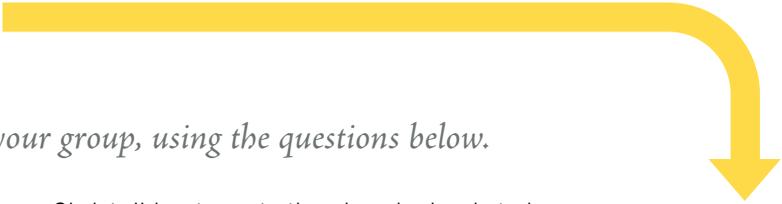
The principle is: give to _____, and you get, not give to get. Give to minister.

Horizontal Jesus has to do with our relationship with Christ connecting and manifesting itself in our _____ with others.

Whenever you go to God to do something for you, tell Him how it will be a _____ to somebody else.

Everybody can minister to _____.

RESPOND



Discuss the video with your group, using the questions below.

Dr. Evans said, “The Lord Jesus Christ did not create the church simply to be a classroom for instruction or merely a theater for religious performance, but he meant it to be a community for spiritual connection.” What did he mean?

Genesis 1:12 describes a seed reproducing after its kind. When Dr. Evans said, “The need is in the seed,” how did he apply this natural reality to our spiritual lives?

Have a volunteer read Luke 6:38. How did Dr. Evans say this verse is often misused or abused? How is it rightly understood as the theology of *it*?

Explain why one of the following Bible stories is most encouraging as an example of planting seeds and the theology of *it*.

- The widow feeding Elijah (see 1 Kings 17:9-24)
- Hannah committing her baby (see 1 Sam. 1:11-28)
- Job praying for his friends (see Job 42:10)
- The boy giving his lunch to Jesus (see John 6:5-13)
- Paul’s needs being met (see Phil. 4:15-19)

Read Acts 20:35. How have you experienced the truth of Jesus’ words?

How would you summarize the meaning of the phrase *horizontal Jesus*?

What did Dr. Evans mean when he contrasted cul-de-sac and conduit Christians?

On a scale of 1 to 10, 1 designating a cul-de-sac Christian and 10 designating a conduit Christian, how would you currently describe your life?

What will you do this week to move toward being a conduit Christian?

Read week 1 and complete the activities before the next group session.

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IMAGINE for a moment that you're standing in a candy store with two of your kids—one of those big candy stores with row upon row and bin upon bin containing all kinds of mouthwatering, tasty treats. Both of your kids want some candy, but to simplify things, you fill up one large bag with some of their favorites and then hand it to your older child, your son. You let him know that he needs to share the candy with his younger sister whenever she wants any. There's only one bag, but the candy inside is intended for them both. Your son isn't the owner; he's the steward.

However, in time you notice that your son is hoarding all the candy, only grudgingly giving a piece to his sister when she cries. What will you do? When the candy runs out, will you go back to the store and buy another bag to give to your son again? Or will you make other arrangements this time?

Conversely, what if your son had done something different altogether? What if after you got home, he began to share the contents of the bag not only with his little sister but also with other kids in your neighborhood? Each face lit up with joy as your son generously handed out piece after piece of candy. What would you do this time when the candy bag ran out? Would you go back to the store and give candy to your son again? Would you even consider giving him more this time since he brought so much happiness to so many people?

Many of us as parents would likely give more candy to the child who distributed it to others. And many of us wouldn't trust the child who hoarded the bag of candy with more. It's not that our love for our child would have changed. But our child's experience of that love, demonstrated in this case through blessing and provision, would have been diminished as a result of his behavior.

We have a Father in heaven who has a very big family. His love for us is secure. He will always be our dad. But our experience of His love—whether through blessing, provision, presence, or any number of other benefits—will oftentimes depend on the way we honor Him through the way we treat the others He loves as well.

“Give, and it will be given to you” (Luke 6:38). Hoard, and you may miss out on much of what God desires to give you.

DAY 1

THE VERTICAL AND THE HORIZONTAL

My son Jonathan once played football for the NFL's San Diego Chargers. When he was with this team, my wife and I often flew out to attend the games. San Diego is a beautiful city with ideal weather year-round. We always enjoyed our stay there.

At a church in San Diego stands a unique statue. It hadn't been designed as a unique statue. In fact, it had originally been carved to resemble any one of thousands of statues of Jesus that dot the landscape of our world. There was nothing unusual about this statue until some vandals decided to make a statement by breaking off Christ's arms and hands.

Make a statement they did. I'm just not sure it's the statement they'd intended. When the pastor of the church saw the vandalized Jesus without hands, he decided to leave it that way and to erect a sign at the base that read, "I have no hands but yours."

Why do you think the pastor put those words at the base of the statue?

In what way are we to be the hands and feet of Jesus on earth?

The two greatest commandments given to us in Scripture were spoken by Jesus:

"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength." The second is this, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

MARK 12:30-31

Found within both of these commands are all the laws that governed humanity leading up to the coming of Christ. Keep these two sincerely, and you'll keep them all. These two greatest commands address both our vertical relationship with God

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(“Love the Lord your God,” v. 30) and our horizontal relationships with others (“Love your neighbor,” v. 31). As our love for God flows upward, connecting with His love for us flowing downward, it’s to manifest itself in our love for others, flowing horizontally. **The vertical and the horizontal are intricately intertwined.**

Teresa of Ávila was a 16th-century nun who wrote about the visible demonstration of these spiritual truths in her poem “Christ Has No Body.” It reads:

Christ has no body but yours,
No hands, no feet on earth but yours,
Yours are the eyes with which he looks
Compassion on this world,
Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good,
Yours are the hands, with which he blesses all the world.
Yours are the hands, yours are the feet,
Yours are the eyes, you are his body.
Christ has no body now but yours,
No hands, no feet on earth but yours,
Yours are the eyes with which he looks
compassion on this world.
Christ has no body now on earth but yours.¹

The primary purpose of our lives is to glorify God by reflecting Him and His love to those around us. We’re to do that through our words, actions, and intentions.

Read Romans 10:14-15. What do we learn from this passage about being Christ’s feet?

Read Ephesians 2:10. List some of the good works that God may have prepared for you to do.

Read 1 Corinthians 6:20. Who owns you?

As children of God, none of us are owners of what we've been given. That includes ourselves. We don't own our time, talents, and treasures. They all belong to God. We're just His stewards of these resources. We've been bought at a high price, the shed blood of Jesus Christ (see 1 Cor. 6:20). That's why our number one goal is to glorify God with what He's given to us.

Just like the kid in the candy store who wouldn't give candy to his sister, when we fail to use the time, talents, and treasures the Lord has given to us for the benefit of our greater Christian family, we aren't removing ourselves from this family, but we're limiting the full expression of our experience of God within that family.

What's your reaction to the idea that your experience in God's family is limited or enhanced by the way you use what He's given you to help others?

List three tangible ways you can glorify God with your time, talents, and treasures this week.

1.

2.

3.

God is a loving Father. His heart is burdened when one of His children neglects the needs of another one of His children. He's bestowed on each of us different gifts of His grace, whether finances, skills, relational acumen, health, wisdom, or compassion. He didn't give us these gifts just for ourselves. Rather, they're to be a conduit by which the blessings we vertically receive from Him horizontally flow to others. Although His love is pure and His grace is great, our experience of those

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vertical blessings depends on how much of Him we allow to flow through us into our horizontal relationships with other people.

Why does God want you to play a part in meeting the needs of others?

Read Mark 10:28-30. What does Jesus say about what we give, compared to what He gives?

What are the benefits of living your life as the hands and feet of Jesus?

If you've never made the connection between giving to others and receiving from God, let this truth sink in. Your horizontal relationships with others can increase the flow of a greater experience in your vertical relationship with God.

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, forgive me when I've failed to be the hands and feet of Jesus Christ in my life to those around me. I want to use the time, talents, and treasures You've entrusted to me in order to bless others. I pray that You'll give me the wisdom and insight to do that well.

1. Teresa of Ávila, "Christ Has No Body" [online], 26 April 2015 [cited 27 April 2015]. Available from the Internet: www.journeywithjesus.net.

DAY 2

A COMMUNITY OF CONNECTION

The church wasn't established only as a place of instruction. Neither was it created to be a theater for public performances. In fact, the early Christian churches didn't even meet in buildings. They met in homes. God established the church as a family of believers—the body of Christ. It's a community for spiritual connection where people connect with God vertically and connect with others horizontally.

Read Matthew 12:49-50. How did Jesus identify membership in His family?

How does Jesus' definition of *family* encourage and/or convict you?

What can you do to help your church and small group feel more like a family?

The church is the place where our vertical connection with God is expressed through our horizontal connections with others. This doesn't happen just within the four walls of a church building. This happens within the global church that's the body of Christ. The church is people. Not programs. Not songs. Not sermons.

A recent trend shows that people who don't go to church on Sunday might watch a sermon online, be encouraged through 140-word inspirational statements on Twitter, or listen to a podcast and worship songs and call it church. But church was never created to be a funnel simply for teaching, singing, or inspiration. Rather, it's a gathering of like-minded believers who do life together while experiencing God together.

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The writer of Hebrews made the following comments about family life among the community of God's people:

Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.

HEBREWS 10:23-25

In your own words, what are some reasons for believers to gather together?

What excuses do you most often make for not being actively involved in and committed to a church family?

What's missing in a person's life when he or she views church as a program or an event instead of a community?

Church isn't a place, nor is it a day. The Christian life isn't to be lived compartmentalized like a job or a hobby. When you say amen to God on Sunday but then forget about Him and His people the rest of the week, you've chosen religion over relationships. You've chosen a checklist over a connection.

Read Matthew 23:23. What did Jesus say about the teachers of religious law?

According to this verse, how did Jesus feel about religious checklists?

Read James 1:27. How does the Bible define *true religion* in terms of earthly relationships?

A woman had a husband who kept a list containing 25 duties he wanted her to do in order to be a good wife. Every day he took out the list and checked off the tasks she'd completed. Cooking—check. Cleaning—check. Taking care of the kids—check. At the end of the day, he let her know her score—23 out of 25, 21 out of 25, and so forth.

This woman was miserable because she didn't marry to be tied to a checklist. Not that the things she did as a wife weren't important. They were important, and they were necessary. But she had higher hopes for her marriage relationship.

After a number of years, the husband died. The woman felt a weight lifted from her shoulders because she'd been performing for years. She'd been doing her duty and hating every minute. Two years later this same woman fell in love with a new man—a man who had no lists. He told her that all he wanted to do was to love her. He wanted her to wake up in the morning knowing he loved her. In the middle of the day, he wanted to be able to call and remind her that he loved her. Before they went to sleep at night, he wanted to reassure her that he loved her. He wanted his love for her to be her every waking thought each day. He wanted her to know his love, not his lists.

One day while cleaning the house, the woman opened a drawer and saw a piece of paper. It was the first husband's list. She began to laugh when she realized that in her new marriage she was effortlessly performing everything written on the list. Everything she'd hated doing as a requirement by the first husband, she was willingly doing for the second husband—and enjoying it. All the second husband had was love, but that became her motivation to give.

Like a loving husband, God desires a relationship of love and loyalty with His people, not one of rule keeping. The prophet Hosea revealed God's heart with the following words:

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I delight in loyalty rather than sacrifice,
And in the knowledge of God
rather than burnt offerings.

HOSEA 6:6

How can the motivation for loyalty be different from the motivation for sacrifice?

Read Mark 12:30-31. Using the terms *vertical relationship* and *horizontal relationships*, summarize Jesus' description of the Christian life.

What does today's study reveal about God's desire for the church?

God created the church to be an environment where healthy spiritual family relationships flourish and authentic Christianity is lived out. It's to be a community where real people in real relationships meet real needs in real ways.

PRAYER: Loving Heavenly Father, thank You for Your gift of community. Thank You for establishing a family for me to be a part of. Help me use all You've entrusted to me for the betterment of others in Jesus' name. I pray that You'll likewise encourage and strengthen me through relationships with others in Your body.

DAY 3 THE *IT* FACTOR

Take a moment to think about going to a grocery store. Inside the store are a myriad of items, from fresh fruit to juice to crackers, cereal, and much more. Now think about where each of these items came from. Did the apples come from a different place than the mangoes? Did the boxes of cereal come from a different place than the salmon? Did the decorative items near the checkout station come from a different place than the cheese?

The answer to all of those questions is no. Because even though they may have been grown, manufactured, caught, or shipped from a different location, they all came from the same place. They all originated from the same source: God.

It's easy to forget that God is the source of all things and to begin looking at the channels and avenues He uses as the actual sources of His blessings. But these are just resources, not the source, just as your job isn't really your source. A job is important, but it's merely a channel through which God provides you the income you need to live and pay your bills.

If your job were actually your source, you'd lose everything if you lost it. But God has a million ways of providing you with what you need. The beautiful thing about recognizing God as your source is that no other person or thing can own or control you. That's why God calls us to fully depend on Him as our only source. He can switch secondary resources on a dime, or He can shift the method He uses to provide what you need, but He remains your source.

When you look to something other than God as your source, how does its priority shift in your time and attention?

Because God is your source of all things—emotional, relational, financial, physical, and more—how important is it to apply His principles to your life? In what ways do you do that already? In what ways can you improve?

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Because God is our source for all things, He's the One we should look to for anything we need. In Luke 6:38 Jesus outlined for us a formula for accessing His Father's provision:

Give, and it will be given to you. They will pour into your lap a good measure—pressed down, shaken together, and running over. For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return.

LUKE 6:38

From this verse I've identified what I call the theology of *it*. The theology of *it* is based on a principle that God established at creation.

Read Genesis 1:12. How do plants and trees produce?

When you plant a pear seed, you get a pear tree. When you plant an apple seed, you get an apple tree. You'll never plant a watermelon seed and grow a squash. This is true simply because God established replication to occur after each seed's own kind. Whatever you plant is what you'll get back.

In Luke 6:38 Jesus broadened this creation principle into a principle for life. Jesus said, "It will be given to you," and "it will be measured to you." By this principle the thing you give is also the thing you'll receive. If you have a need, make sure you sow a seed in the life of someone else who has a need in the same area as your own personal need. Don't ask God to meet your need without planting the seed in someone else's life. God longs to meet your many needs, and in Luke 6:38 He gave you wisdom for one way this can be done.

What need(s) do you have in your life right now?

How can you help someone else with a similar need?

The Theology of *It*

You may remember the story in the video about a farmer who wanted to have a good crop. He prayed and asked God to give him a good crop. He walked his land and tilled it so that it could produce a good crop. He even irrigated the land regularly. But this farmer never planted a single seed. Do you think he was going to get a good crop? No, because God requires that seeds be planted in order to have a good crop. Why? Because it's the principle of replication. Life is produced through what's sown. This is also called the law of the harvest.

Read 2 Corinthians 9:6-10. These verses describe God's law for giving and getting, sowing and reaping. How does this teaching apply to our spiritual lives?

Have you ever experienced God's returning to you what you gave to someone else?

Luke 6:38 places before us an exciting and rewarding opportunity. Based on this principle, you can get very specific with God. If you're facing a financial need, look around you and see how you can help someone else financially. Do you have an emotional need for comfort? Then see how you can comfort someone else. In this passage we discover a powerful tool for receiving the grace of God on a greater, more tangible level. The provision of your need is actually in the seed you plant in another person's life. In tomorrow's lesson we'll look at some biblical examples of this principle.

PRAYER: Dear Lord, thank You for providing me with the avenue through which I can not only help someone else meet a need but also seek You in a tangible way to meet this need in my life too. Open my eyes to those around me and use me to minister to others in Your name.

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DAY 4 THE FEET OF FAITH

Today let's start by personalizing an illustration introduced in the video.

One day a man was lost in a desert without water when he saw an old makeshift structure. He knew he couldn't make it much longer, so he got to the covering as fast as his worn-out legs could carry him. To his surprise, inside he found a jar of water that looked pure. This jar sat on the floor next to a pump.

Filled with relief, the man walked over to the jar to quench his overwhelming thirst. As he reached down to pick up the jar of water, however, he noticed a sign that read, "Use this water to prime the pump. When you've gotten as much water as you need, refill the jar and leave it for the next person who passes this way."

This man suddenly found himself on the horns of a dilemma. He was so thirsty that he was close to dehydration. What if he followed the directions on the sign and used the jar of water to prime the pump, but there was no water in the well? What if he poured out all the water he held in his hand but got nothing in return? Was that worth the risk even to try? The man had to decide whether to fill himself now or pour out what he had and take the chance that there was much more water deep down. The man made the choice to prime the pump. It was a good choice, because the water flowed freely. He drank to his delight and collected enough water to take him on his journey. Before he left, he filled the jar and placed it next to the note. Under the words of the note, he wrote, "Trust me. It works!"

Giving to others in our horizontal relationships is a method of priming the pump of God's vertical blessings in our lives. You have a choice. You can take the small amount of blessing God has given you and consume it for yourself. Or you can use it to prime something that holds much more potential. The choice hinges on whether you believe God's Word that if you give, it will be given to you (see Luke 6:38). Oh, and trust me. It works.

Imagine you were the man in the desert. How would you have responded to that note? Would you have consumed the water or primed the pump? Why?

The apostle Paul encouraged the church family in Galatia with the following words:

Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due
time we will reap if we do not grow weary.

GALATIANS 6:9

**When have you grown weary of doing the right thing?
What causes you to grow weary?**

**What does God's Word promise those who persevere
in planting good seed?**

A widow in Zarephath was down to her last meal. She lived in a day and location of economic uncertainty. There were no government handouts. There was probably very little by way of charity. All she had to feed herself and her son was a little bit of flour and an even smaller amount of oil. Even so, this is the woman God instructed to feed the prophet Elijah.

**Read 1 Kings 17:8-16. What thoughts might have been
going through the widow's mind when Elijah asked her
for her last bit of flour and oil?**

Elijah came to the widow and asked her to make a bread cake for him and to give him some water. In an act of extreme faith, she did just that, even though her resources were low. She gave Elijah the thing she and her son needed the most—food. In return, Elijah told her that her jar of flour wouldn't run out and her oil wouldn't cease until rain returned to the land.

The widow got back the very thing she'd given away—food. Just as God had promised, her jar of flour and her oil didn't run out, giving her household plenty to eat until the rains returned to water the earth (see 1 Kings 17:8-16). It took

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faith for this widow to give away her last bit of food, just as it takes faith for you to give something you need to someone else. But remember, faith is much more than words. Faith always involves actions; it involves your feet. That's why we've been instructed to "walk by faith" (2 Cor. 5:7), not just to talk by faith.

Have you ever been in a situation when God asked you to give away something you had very little of? How did you respond?

Have you reaped a harvest from the seed you planted? If so, describe the blessing you experienced. If not yet, how are you encouraged by the biblical examples of reaping "in due time" (Gal. 6:9)?

Hannah was a woman who couldn't get pregnant, although she'd tried for years. In biblical culture barrenness was akin to a curse in many ways. As a result, Hannah was often depressed and mocked by others. One year when Hannah went to the temple, she employed the theology of *it*. She prayed:

O Lord of hosts, if You will indeed look on the affliction of Your maidservant and remember me, and not forget Your maidservant, but will give Your maidservant a son, then I will give him to the Lord all the days of his life.

1 SAMUEL 1:11

So when God gave Hannah a son the very next year, she kept her promise and gave him back to God.

But the story doesn't there. After Hannah gave her son to God, God gave Hannah a "pressed down, shaken together, and running over" (Luke 6:38) return on the investment of her son.

Read 1 Samuel 2:21. What did God give Hannah for giving Him her son?

Who among your family and friends has effectively modeled the theology of *it*? Share some examples.

In what way do the biblical accounts of the widow and Hannah show how our horizontal relationships with others relate to our vertical relationship with God?

If you've been hesitant to give yourself—your time, talents, and treasures—to others in the past, take a moment to pray and ask God to fill you with the faith you need to live out the theology of *it*. Ask Him to bring people and situations into your life that bring opportunities for you not only to give horizontally but also to receive vertically as a result. I can't wait for you to experience all God has in store for you when you choose a life of faith.

PRAYER: Lord, I praise You for teaching us and encouraging us through Your Word to love, serve, give to, honor, and connect with one another while also reaching out to the world. Make me a visible demonstration of Your heart, reflecting Jesus to those around me.

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DAY 5 GIVE TO GIVE

This week we've looked at how our horizontal relationships with others can affect the experience of our vertical relationship with God. We looked at the church as a community of connection and the differences between religion and relationships. Then we explored the theology of *it*, a biblical principle that shows how specific needs are addressed in our own lives when we give to others in a way that meets similar needs in theirs. Yesterday we met individuals in Scripture who lived out the theology of *it*, such as the widow of Zarephath and Hannah.

Today we'll wrap up the week with one more example. Job was a man who literally lost everything—his financial assets, his physical health, even his family. But in due time he received a tremendous outpouring of God's blessing. The end of the story includes this amazing verse:

The LORD restored the fortunes of Job when
he prayed for his friends, and the LORD
increased all that Job had twofold.

JOB 42:10

What was Job doing when God restored his fortunes?

The suffering Job endured wasn't a consequence for bad or selfish pride (as his friends and wife assumed), but the blessing he received would be a reward for his selfless humility. At the beginning of the story, Job was clearly identified as a man of integrity with right relationships vertically and horizontally. He'd grown weary in the midst of his hardship, and the community around him hadn't encouraged him in his time of need, so he called out in frustrated accusation against God. Job had repented of his recent frustration with God and his inward focus on himself; he turned his attention outward, both vertically toward the Lord and horizontally toward the needs of his friends.

Read Job 42:1-6. How would you summarize Job's prayer?

The Theology of *It*

A humble heart before the Lord, as Job demonstrated in Job 42:6, is a prerequisite for living your life as a horizontal Jesus to others. That's because humility is an antidote to pride, and pride is at the root of selfishness. The theology of *it* isn't the same as prosperity theology, which teaches to give in order to get. The theology of *it*, in contrast, is rooted in the heart, a right heart before God. You give in order to *give*. You give to minister to someone else, yet as you give, God gives back to you. This principle is all about the heart, the motivation behind your giving.

How is it possible for two people to perform the same action, one motivated by the overflow of a grateful heart and one by a selfish pride?

Read Jeremiah 17:10. What does this verse say about the intentions of our hearts?

What does Jeremiah 17:10 say about the connection between our horizontal and vertical relationships?

In counseling sessions I often tell people that whatever they need, they should find a way to give it to someone else. In 2 Corinthians we read:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

2 CORINTHIANS 1:3-4

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God comforts you so that you can comfort others in need. God's grace flows vertically into your life, and then you share it horizontally with others. When God sees that He can use you to minister to others, He doesn't hesitate to minister even more to you.

People's lives aren't going to be touched by sermons alone. Neither will Bible studies solve everyone's needs. These things are foundational means of spiritual growth, but sometimes people need to see you minister to them as the hands and feet of Jesus. You and I are called and equipped to be the hands and feet of Jesus in this world.

When has someone served as the hands and feet of Jesus in your life?

As we start to wrap up, I want to share one of my favorite verses with you. It reads:

My God will supply all your needs according
to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

PHILIPPIANS 4:19

It's a great verse and a comforting thought. But did you realize that in the verses leading up to this clarion promise, Paul outlined what the Philippian church had been doing for him?

Read Philippians 4:15-18. What had Paul's friends given to him?

What's the relationship of verse 19 to the previous verses?

The Theology of *It*

The Philippian believers had sent a gift “more than once” (v. 16) for his needs, and Paul was “amply supplied” (v. 18) by what they’d given. Paul acknowledged that just as they’d supplied his need, God would supply all their needs from His infinite riches in Jesus. It was the theology of *it* coming full circle.

How can Philippians 4:19 be misunderstood or distorted when taken out of context? In other words, what’s this verse not promising?

Understood in its context, what does this verse promise?

God’s provision in your life knows no lack. He can supply all your needs. In addition, He’s given you several one-another teachings in Scripture to show you concrete ways you can visibly manifest His presence to others by meeting their needs. We’ll explore those fascinating passages in the coming weeks.

When you live out Philippians 4:16-18, then verse 19 is yours to claim as well. Being a horizontal Jesus to those around you—the hands and feet of Christ—will position you to experience the vertical flow of God’s presence and provision in your life.

How can you be the hands and feet of Jesus in someone’s life this week?

PRAYER: Lord Jesus, I’m Your hands and feet. Don’t let me waste what You’ve given me—what You’ve called me to do with my life. I want to represent You wherever I go by meeting the needs of the people around me. I trust that as I meet their needs, my loving Heavenly Father will likewise meet mine.