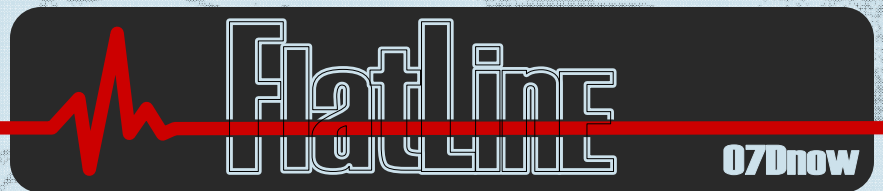


**For I have been crucified with Christ
and I no longer live, but Christ lives in
me. The life I live in the body I live by
faith in the son of God, who loved me
and gave himself for me.**

~ Galatians 2:20



Hotline

07Dnow

Welcome to Flatline. I am thrilled you are willing to step out of the comfort of life and lead a group of students! Over the next few pages I will outline the direction we would like you to take for this weekend, but first let me give you two thoughts:

My first D-now was my freshman year of college and I had a group of 6th grade boys. The first lesson was amazing and it lasted for over two hours discussing all kinds of facets of faith. I automatically thought I was a natural, the best d-now leader ever. Unfortunately the next four lessons were a total wreck, without them listening to a single word. Sitting there, I nearly cried wondering how I could have failed so miserably.

After awhile I came back to the church to visit. Stepping into the door I heard a familiar voice yell "Sean". Within moments a group of six-grade boys were huddled around me. All they could talk about was how amazing the weekend had been, how much they learned... of course they had not learned any facts from my lesson. Instead they learned I cared. Someone once told me, no matter how brilliant your lessons are no one will remember a word, but if you love them they will never forget you. This is truth.

Of course some words are remembered. As a book reader - I love everything from fiction to scholarly, I confess I have even read one of Meg's "chic-lits". Most of the time the words are quickly forgotten, jumbled with the rest of the thoughts in my messy mind. But every once in awhile I will come across a phrase that cuts to the heart of the matter. A sentence which radiates truth in such a way I could never reproduce. It is as though the words have come from the very mind of God, the creator of all truth.

I believe this truth is a gift, but I do not think it is only for the talented or wise. Instead I believe mind blowing truth is found by anyone who will take the difficult step of prayer. Willing to kneel before the Father and listen to his heartbeat. As the rhythm becomes clear, you will find a truth which surpasses understanding... a truth to share with the world.

As you go into this weekend strive to do two things. One love. Love endlessly, ceaselessly. Giving so undeservedly they will wonder if you are Christ. Second, teach what you have heard from God. This book is filled with things I have heard, but if you have not heard the same thing, forget it! Make these lessons your own! You have come to this moment in time not to regurgitate Sean, but to sound out the heartbeat of Christ.

I have to kneel before the Father, put my ear against his chest and listen, without interruption, to the heartbeat of God. Then, and only then, can I say carefully and very gently what I hear. I know now that I have to speak from eternity into time, from the lasting joy into the passing realities of our short existence in this world, from the house of love into houses of fear, from God's abode into the dwellings of human beings...I am called to enter into the inner sanctuary of my own being where God has chosen to dwell. The only way to that place is prayer, unceasing prayer.

~ Henri Nouwen, The Return of the Prodigal Son, 17-18.



Welcome

To help you grasp the focus of the weekend, here is the parent's letter we sent out. I provides a great summary. The verse for the weekend is Galatians 2:20. ~

One of the greatest misconceptions in our church is the word "believe". We have taken up verses like John 3:16, a brilliant truth of the scriptures, and told the world to believe and they will be saved. Unfortunately believe is often interpreted to mean acceptance of the facts. It loses any value of trust or commitment. Of course this was a problem even for the apostles, as James shouts, "You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder." (2:19)

Certainly Christ does not desire for us to just believe the facts. Instead, there is constant theme which runs alongside the word believe, in John chapter 3 it is the phrase "born again", which points to the theme found most often: **follow**.

"I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness." (John 12:46)

The purpose of this weekend is to re-teach our students about their decision. It was not a choice on fact, but a commitment to follow Christ out of darkness into the light. A decision to let our own wills die—hence *Flatline*—as we allow the will of Christ to lead. An act of trust which will culminate—as we see when the prodigal son returns (Luke 15)—in the magnificent embrace of the Father!

For I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body I live by faith in the son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

~ Galatians 2:20

Schedule:

Friday: Lesson One: Our Decision
Lesson Two: Life Change Required!

Saturday: Breakfast
Lesson Three: Learning to Follow
Lesson Four: Blessed to Bless
Lunch
Mission Event (@church)
Dinner/Worship (@church)
Lesson Five: Commitment

Sunday: Breakfast (@church)

Times are not listed, because they are not set in stone, but we will be getting them to you soon!

As you step into the literature you will notice I left a chunk of space for you to write notes. Let this be a reminder to make these lessons your own! Add, delete, go in the direction you feel led. I am not the Word of God, but what the Spirit reveals to you is—so proclaim it!

Also, the lessons are not in order. Often you should rearrange to fit your design!

As you look this over, if the pages do not make sense email me or call and we can discuss where I was heading. If you need more information on a bible passage I have all kinds of reference material to send your way!

Focus: Getting to know the group and Our Decision

First take some time to learn who the students are, ask them silly questions like “if you could be any superhero who would you be?” Find out their passions...

What does it mean to become a Christian? Is there more beyond walking down an aisle? More than believing? ... The purpose of this weekend is to expand the students’ understanding of their relationship with Christ. It is not simply a Sunday affair or knowing the right answers; instead, it is an issue of commitment. WHO DO YOU FOLLOW? Yourself, friends, parents... or Jesus?

Text: Mark 1:14-20

The call had them leave everything, from job to family! “Few would make the radical commitment these first disciples made, and most would hope that Jesus might offer a less rigorous category of auxiliary discipleship, which would promise the same rewards while allowing one to continue the pursuit of money and success.” David Garland, Mark NIV Application Series, 84. This “auxiliary discipleship” is what this lesson, this d-now, is designed to combat!

An issue here is that it may seem crazy that these men simply left everything for someone they just met. Yet, if you read Luke you find the invitation comes in chapter 5. After Jesus has been preaching and even healed Simon’s – Peter – mother-in-law (4:38-39). Also, in that day many hoped to become the disciple of a Rabbi. Jewish boys would attend school and there were certain cutoffs, where only the best were allowed to continue. Those who made it past the final cutoff were taken as disciples by a rabbi, where they would aspire to become just like their teacher. You can catch a glimpse of this with Paul, who, as Saul, studied under Gamaliel (Act 22:3). Jesus of course did not go to the schools to find scholars, instead he found disciples off the streets (or docks). When they heard his call it was not out of the blue, they knew who Jesus was and they were willing to give up everything for the chance to follow him!

Discussion: Decision in the Baptist church

How, where, when, why? There is a very specific experience to accepting Christ in the Baptist church. Walk down the aisle, say a prayer, announce the decision. This experience is more tradition than scripture! but that does not invalidate it. Allow the students to discuss their experience (A few in the group may not have made this decision, but do not stress. Obviously, don't press them to speak, but it will be good for them to hear the testimony of others.). Ask them why we do things, like walking down the aisle, though expect many of them to be confused. Also, ask what decision they made.

Visual: Wrapped Presents

Each student will have a wrapped present. This should symbolize our decision. To simply believe would be like having the present, but not opening it—this is probably a representation of many in the church... they are walking around with the gift of salvation, still beautifully wrapped. They have never moved beyond believing to following. They have never opened the present! Invite the students to prayerfully open the present. Inside will be a hospital wrist band for the student to wear!

Further illustration could be Pandora's box, which released evil into the world leaving only hope. The story is that the box was given from the gods, but was not to be opened. Of course Pandora's curiosity could not be contained and she lifted the lid off the box, releasing every evil into the world. From greed to jealousy! In the bottom of the box lay a small item, hope. This also goes out into the world, allowing people to believe there may someday be salvation.

Of course we know this hope has been answered, Jesus has come to fix the problem of sin. To use the illustration of a box, Christ has brought a new box. One which contains salvation... one which must be opened!

MAKE SURE TO HAVE EACH STUDENT KEEP HIS/HER WRAPPING PAPER!!! It will be used in the next lesson.

Focus: Life Change Required!

As a chance to review the last lesson and to transition into this lesson, discuss the life of a fish; focusing on the caught fish. To become a fisher of men you must first be caught. What is the experience of a caught fish? From hooks, to struggle, to a new existence... one where the fish can literally not live! In the same way, we are caught to live a new life, in a new existence, one where we can no longer live!

Yet to die to Christ does not mean suicide! Instead our wills must die, so the will of Christ will reign! As the verse for the weekend declares, "...I no longer live, but Christ lives in me..." Galatians 2:20.

Text: Mark 8:34-38

A crucial point on the cross is the stigma attached to the execution. Only the lowest of criminals would be crucified; it was illegal to crucify a Roman citizen. The Jews reinterpreted the scripture, "anyone who is hung on a tree is under the curse of God" (Deuteronomy 21:22-3) so that it referred to crucifixion! Those who passed by the crucified would heap insults. To be crucified was to be rejected by society! So it is interesting how Christ commands us to take up our cross... an action that will lead us to be rejected by society!

Randomly a person died of asphyxiation on the cross – just like a fish out of water (forgive me for taking the illustration to far!).

Discussion: Baptism

Give the group a chance to discuss their own baptism. The pastor's words communicate the symbolism of our baptism: "buried with Christ" as you are dunked, "risen to walk in new life" as you come out of the water! Check out Romans 6:3-7 (this whole chapter is fantastic).

A cool visual may be to have a bowl on the table in the middle of the group. It should be filled with "baptismal water". This may spur discussion or allow you the chance to note how the water isn't special but common. Of course it is Christ's style to meet us in everyday life!

Visual: Rewrapping the Present

Have each student attempt to rewrap their present. Allow them to use tape or scissors. Obviously the packages will not look the same, but this is the point! Still you could give a prize to whomever's is the best. The point is that after we have made the decision to follow Christ our lives can never look the same! Transformation is required!

Focus: Learning to Follow

Hard of hearing? All of us have had the experience of shouting to an older person, only to have them think we are saying something completely different (“Grandpa pass the salt” to which he responds “It sure is the government’s fault!”). Yet, all of us have lost the ability to hear the Father. This is the work of sin in the world, which has confused us of the truth.

A great movie picture of this is *Lady in the Water*! I know it got lambasted by the critics, but read Wounded Healer by Henri Nouwen, then watch this movie. Move past the effects to the characters... there is salvation!

We must relearn to hear the Father and this will come first through scripture reading, then through prayer. A crucial first step is imagining the bible, picturing the words, placing yourself in the pages. We should come into the book and take a seat among the characters (on taking a seat check out the activity below).

Text: 1 Kings 19:1-18

Elijah is on the run after the great victory of Mt. Carmel (1 Kings 18:20-40). He has fled to the barren wilderness, where there is nothing on which he can survive. He even wishes to die! Yet, an angel meets him with food. Then comes the fireworks, followed by “a gentle whisper” (NIV). “The precise meaning of the phrase is difficult... The familiar KJV rendering, “a still small voice”, suggests a sound that is soft and intimate. More recent opinion suggests no voice, no sound, by an eerie silence laden with a sense of holiness.” (Brueggemann, Smyth and Helwys 1&2 Kings, 236). Yet do not miss the command is to go back, which will work as the introduction to the next lesson.

Activity: Finding the Chair

This may be a good opening game! Choose three from the group. One person will be blindfolded. The other two will use their voices to lead the “blind” person. The blind person will be trying to sit in a chair which you have set in the middle of the room. The two people will give commands to the person (left, right, forward back), taking turns. The key is one will give correct directions, the other will give false directions (though the “blind” person should not know this!).

One note, I used this illustration with one of my first lessons for the Middle School. I doubt anyone will remember, but there is a small chance!

Visual: Drawing Scripture

Unlike fiction books, which give us all the details to form the movie set in our minds, scripture is often void of the details. We must fill in the gaps to create scenes in which to sit! We are never adding truth, but adding the reaction of the crowd or what the fig tree looked like after dying! To help the group imagine scripture, lead them through an example.

One of my favorites is in John 6:22-25. Take a moment to read it... Now here is what I picture: The crowd is desperate to see Jesus, heck they wanted to make him king in verse 15. I imagine they still do! Then they realize Jesus must have gone to the other side – do they suspect the truth??? – so when boats arrive from Tiberias, they go. Here is where my imagination takes over, I do not think this crowd negotiated with the boats for a way across. They could not feed themselves the day before how could they pay! I think in mass they came down to the boats, while the sailors sold cargo, the crowd hopped into the boats and headed across the lake... stealing boats to see Jesus. Now I may be stretching, but when scripture begins to capture our imagination it is never bad to be carried away! You can use this example or choose your own.

Now have the students try it on their own. Give them paper to draw their mind’s eye. Then have them read the 1 Kings passage. Allow their pictures to tell the story! In these pictures they are beginning to learn to hear the Father!

Focus: Blessed to Bless

The call to follow, when we begin to hear it, will call us to others. Even Elijah, who has been on the run from evil, is called to “go back” to those who are oppressing him! In the same way when Jesus had the experience of the transfiguration, he refused Peter’s request to build shelters. Instead he pressed back into the community, for healing, for preaching. The blessing of God always flows, from us to others. Blessing is never stagnate!

Text: Genesis 11:27-12:5 (FOCUS 12:1-5)

Abraham’s decision to follow leads to blessing from God. This blessing leads to more blessing, but not for Abraham. Rather the blessing leads to blessing for others! Like a pyramid of cups, as one is filled it overflows to those beneath it.

Illustration: Cup overflowing...

Create a pyramid of Cups. Do this in a pan to collect the mess. As you fill the top it will overflow into others, which will overflow into the others. For a great verse on what happens if the flow is cut off, stagnate, check out Ezekiel 47:11, “the swamps and marshes (stagnate waters) will be left for the salt”. The rest of the passage (1-12) discusses living flowing water, which brings life, changing salt water into fresh.

Discussion: The Color Purple

What is blessing? What is royalty?

Andy pointed out to me the color for lent is purple. This might make sense because Lent involves sacrifice, so it bears the color of a bruise! Yet, it is so interesting to me that the color purple has already been used to represent royalty. Well before Jesus the people of Phoenicia used shellfish to create a purple dye, which became the standard dye for royal robes from Egypt to Rome.

I have attached multiple verses to elaborate that when Christ's life becomes the example of the blessed life, of royalty, our definitions need to change! Money is not a blessing, having and giving is the blessing (hence the verses in James!). Friends are not a blessing, having and serving them is the blessing. Gifts which do not lead to selfless action are not a blessing; instead, they may become the opposite! Royalty is not power, but sacrifice. Blessing is not accumulating, but giving! The world is upside down, but our faith is based on God becoming man! Who came to live and *die*, only to live again!

And we follow him into this life! Look back to Galatians 2:20, "For I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body I live by faith in the son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." Notice Christ does two things which causes Paul to have faith, first he loves, second he sacrifices. If Christ is now living for us, then our lives should be marked by the same two things! The blessing of Christ leads us to love and sacrifice for others – blessed to bless others!

Extra:

A movie clip from Spiderman, "with great power comes great responsibility" catches this idea. Even better is the second movie, as he struggles with personal desires over others (though this is probably too long!).

I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, become like him in his death, and so, somehow to attain to the resurrection of the dead. ~ Philippians 3:10-11

God should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering ~ Hebrew 2:10

He humbled himself and become obedient to death – even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name ~ Philippians 2:8-9

The brother in humble circumstances ought to take pride in his high position. But the one who is rich should take pride in his low position, because he will pass away like a wild flower. For the sun rises with scorching heat and withers the plant; its blossom falls and its beauty is destroyed. In the same way, the rich man will fade away even while he goes about his business. ~ James 1:9-11

You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. It is not this way among you. But whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave, just as the son of man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give His life for many. ~ Matthew 20:24-28



Focus: Commitment

This is the final lesson. The entire weekend we have attempted to create a unity with Christ in our own hearts, that our wills may die and He may reign in our lives! To culminate the weekend we are going to celebrate the Lord's Supper in the houses. We will take a different look at the theology of the event, as you will see below, focusing on our union with Christ.

Text: Matthew 20:20-23

This is not a common text for the Lord's Supper, but language makes the connection. Specifically the word "cup" radiates for me with the image of the cup Jesus passes around the table! Read the prior passage, 17-19, and you will see in this context the drink is Jesus death on the cross! Though James and John have no clue, Christ is announcing they shall drink from the same cup as he does. Their will shall die to God's and just as Jesus they will become a blessing to others.

Discussion: Lord's Supper

What is the Lord's supper? The actual event in the New Testament can be found in Matthew 26:26-30, Luke 22:14-23, Mark 14:22-26 (It is not actually in John, instead there is the washing of the feet.). You can also look at Paul's take 1 Corinthians 11:23-34. Typically these passages and the supper are understood to be a moment of remembrance and a time for unity. This is definitely true but it is often all we consider when taking the supper.

But, there is another element to the event, unity with the life of Christ. The passage used in John for the supper is 6:53-58. In this passage we are not called to cannibalism (though the earlier church was accused), instead eating flesh and drinking blood are symbols – you are what you eat! We are to take on the life of Christ, or as Paul says to allow Christ to live in us!

The passage in John is loaded with theology, but it is difficult. I think the Matthew passage listed above is a much simpler passage which conveys the same thought. We are drinking the cup and eating the bread not just to remember the sacrifice of Jesus and the forgiveness and salvation he brought. We are drinking and eating to declare our unity with the son.

Illustration:

Press On

My friend, Jeremy Courtney, was in the middle of a move to Iraq as a missionary, when he was stopped by border patrol. It became a huge ordeal, costing lots of money and he questioned if he could not just stay in Turkey where he had been ministering. While all this was happening he was reading CS Lewis' Dawn Treader (part of the Narnia series). The basic plot of the book is that the new king of Narnia and a few of the Pevensie children set out to find the seven exiled lords of Narnia. When they eventually arrive at a place known as The Beginning of the End of the World, they are faced with a dilemma as to whether or not they should set launch all the way to the End of the World or if they should set up camp for the winter, enjoy a perpetual feast, and otherwise play it safe while waiting for more suitable conditions to arrive. And here's the part that floored my friend: one of the ship's men, named Rynelf, says,

"There's just one thing I want to say. There's not one of us chaps who were pressed on this journey. We're volunteers. And there's some here that are looking very hard at that table and thinking about king's feasts who were talking very loud about adventures on the day we sailed from Cair Paravel, and swearing they wouldn't come home till we'd found the end of the world. And there were some standing on the quay who would have given all they had to come with us. It was thought a finer thing than to have a cabin-boy's berth on the Dawn Treader than to wear a knight's belt. I don't know if you get the hang of what I'm saying. But what I mean is that I think chaps who set out like us will look as silly as - as those Dufflepuds - if we come home and say we got to the beginning of the world's end and hadn't the heart to go further."

My friends, today we stand on the edge of the world. Christ is calling farther... what will we do? Will we stay in the safety of the "normal" church or will we press out toward the unknown, throwing away our own wills to allow Christ to live in us!

On this same point there is a great movie clip in the Lord of Rings, where Frodo and Sam talk about the stories they heard growing up. How they seemed so easy, but in midst of a legend it was so hard and confusing! The easy way would have been to turn back to the Shire and yet, the path of Christ calls us to risk!

Activity: Lord's Supper

Participating in the Lord's Supper outside of the church in a small group, administered by YOU might seem crazy. But it is not. In fact the small, prayerful setting can be the most powerful moment. Also, there is no scriptural mandate that requires a certain experience!

One concern is that the Lord's Supper is only for believers. Currently everyone signed up is a Christian. Obviously this may change. If someone would join in your group who has not decided to follow Christ and/or you do not feel comfortable, this can be dropped from the lesson.

The actual of form of the supper can be done however you feel most confident. Personally I favor intinction, which how it is done in the contemporary service. To explain the cup is not passed, instead you will break off a piece of bread for each student and they will dip the bread into the cup. This not done all at once, instead they will come forward one at a time. You can say words over them, like "this is Jesus body broken for you" as you give them the bread, then "this is His blood spilled for you" as they dip the bread into the cup.

After you read and explain the passage, give them a chance to pray. Allow them time to make the comment to join with Christ. To let their own wills die! (Check out the next activity!)

Afterwards, celebrate! Just as the disciples sang a hymn with Jesus after the supper (Matthew 26:30), rejoice with your students!

Activity: Letters to "Future" Self

During the prayerful period before the Lord's Supper each student will be given paper and an envelope. They should address the envelope to themselves and then write a letter to their "future" self (A great clip would be "future Dwight" from The Office, but it would destroy the seriousness of this moment so we can not use it—still if you get a chance it is hilarious!!). Ask them to write down an area of their life where they do not follow Jesus or an activity they want to commit to doing after this weekend. Let them know that when they are finished they should seal the envelope, they will be the only one to know what is inside. In a month the church will mail the letters out to the students as a reminder of their commitment. We would also like you to write a note to each student, which we could include with the letter that we mail—so their sealed envelope will be inside another envelope with your note. We will work up stationary for this activity.