



NEXTSTEP

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WEEK 1

WHO ARE WE?

Welcome to NextStep!

We are so glad you chose to join this NextStep Small Group. We are excited that God has put you in our local church. We are honored to be part of God's plan to develop you into the person He has called you to be. We eagerly look forward to doing life with you and advancing the Kingdom of God together.

NextStep is very important to us at Manna. It helps us all get on the same page by answering four key questions:

- **WHO** are we?
- **WHY** are we here?
- **WHERE** are we going?
- **WHAT** is **MY PART**?

Please, plan to attend every single week of NextStep. It's only four weeks, and each one builds on the last. It's vital that you be here for every single one of them.

This week we will start with answering the question:

Who are we?

Human beings have many important things in common. Nevertheless, each person is unique. People have different personalities, temperaments, histories, talents, giftings, callings, and destinies. Life gets very frustrating when we try to become like everybody else. We do best when we discover who God created and called us to be and then live our lives with that as

our primary focus. Nobody can be everybody. Nor should people try to be everybody.

“Everybody is somebody, nobody is everybody.”

The same is true of churches. Most Bible-believing churches have a lot in common. But not all churches are called to emphasize the same things or “do church” in the same ways. God has given each church family its own unique calling and destiny. Each church should develop its own culture, “personality”, philosophy of ministry and way of “doing church” that expresses God’s vision for that church. Instead of trying to be like every other church, each church should discover, walk out, and fulfill its unique calling and destiny, and do so with excellence.

Who has God called **Manna Church** to be? **Who are we?**

A VISION TO CHANGE THE WORLD

We believe our Manna Church mission is to glorify God by equipping His people to change their world and by planting churches with a world-changing vision.

There’s a huge difference between “*equipping* His people” and “*ministering to* His people”. The Bible teaches that God has a calling on your life, that God has placed gifts and talents in your life, and that God wants to redeem your past to propel you into your future. Therefore, we don’t just **minister** to you; instead, our

priority is to **equip and empower** you to be the person that God called you to be and to do what God called you to do. How do we plan to accomplish this?

WE PLAN TO ACCOMPLISH THIS BY:

- **Helping God's people *discover* their individual gifts and callings, creating an environment where these may be *developed*, and *deploying* God's people into their world to be salt and light. Our Small Groups are designed to help accomplish this goal.**

There are many different versions of what “discipleship” means out there in the body of Christ. But, of this we are sure—Jesus was the best disciple-maker on the planet. Jesus built people. Jesus mentored people. In other words, Jesus disciplined people. And **He chose to do this in small group settings**. As a result, we believe Small Groups are where you grow spiritually. Small Groups are the best environments where you can discover and develop your gifts and calling. That's where you can be deployed into your world to be salt and light.

- **Helping God's people build *strong families* and creating a *community* where individuals may find fulfillment and expression regardless of age or marital status.**
- ***Planting churches* with the same vision both domestically and abroad.**

MANNA'S EMPHASES

Jesus Himself instructed us to embrace three fundamental values. We see these values expressed in the following Scriptures.

The Great Commandment

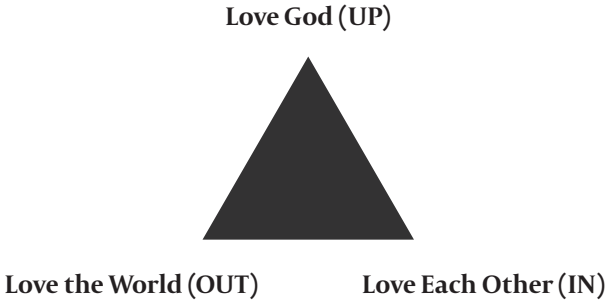
*But when the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" And he said to him, "You shall **love the Lord your God** with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall **love your neighbor** as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."*

Matthew 22:34-40 (ESV)

The Great Commission

*And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. **Go** therefore and **make disciples** of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." *Matthew 28:18-20 (ESV)**

OUR APPLICATIONS—WE DO THREE THINGS!



- **Love God**—Inspiring Worship Experiences
- **Love Each Other**—Life-Giving Small Groups (everything is a Small Group at Manna)
- **Love the World**—World-Changing Outreach

OUR PERSPECTIVE: “One Church, Many Locations”

- Church is people—not a place, an activity, or a method.
- Church is **anywhere** and **everywhere** people gather in His Name.
- If you want to multiply people, multiply groups.

OUR STRATEGY

Manna Church has developed a *Multiply Strategy* for reaching the World.

At the beginning of human history, God gave us a mission: “Go forth and multiply.”

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth...” Genesis 1:27-28 (ESV)

(see also Genesis 12:1-3; 15:1-7; 17:1-7)

Of the early Church, we read over and over that God multiplied their numbers.

And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem... Acts 6:7 (ESV)

So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied. Acts 9:31 (ESV)

But the word of God increased and multiplied. Acts 12:24 (ESV)

Multiply is the math of God; multiply happens when our “adds” add.

With a Multiply strategy, we can reach people anywhere and everywhere they can and will gather.

Our Multiply Strategy is comprised of *City-Sites*, *Multi-Sites*, and *Micro-Sites*.

City-Site: a Manna Church location with 100–1,999 people in attendance for weekend experience(s); may have Micro-Site and/or Multi-Site extensions.

Multi-Site: an extension of a City-Site.

Micro-Site: a gathering of people who are committed to glorifying God by helping to equip people to change their world. It embraces Manna's three values and keeps our name, logo, and Growth Track. (Those who start and lead Micro-Sites will have received additional training through another Step in our Growth Track—**MultiStep**)

Manna's *Military Highway Strategy*: We plan to plant a City-Site or a Micro-Site near every US military base in the world, starting with the Army bases. We also plan to plant City-Sites and Micro-Sites wherever people go when they leave military service or move to a different area.

Technology: Paul used the technology of his day to reach people (letters to the churches). Manna will use and develop the technologies of our day (video, the Internet) to help fulfill our mission.

Benefits of Manna's Multiply Strategy

- Multiply = **more**.
- More leaders being developed.
- More opportunities for people to serve and to discover and develop their gifts.
- More opportunities for members and guests to connect with our church family.
- More people being reached for Christ.

With this Multiply strategy, we can reach people anywhere and everywhere they gather: in prisons, in bus stations, in school, before school, after school, in the jungle, in the penthouse apartment of a high-rise in New York City, and down on the street among the homeless.

GOING DEEPER

- In what respects is Manna Church different from church environments you may have come from or heard about?
- What aspects of “Who we are” do you find most interesting and inspiring?

WEEK 2

**WHY
ARE
WE
HERE?**

In this session, we will discuss the foundational “Why” for Manna’s existence.

We believe the primary, overarching purpose of the Church is to demonstrate and advance the Kingdom of God.

The Kingdom of God was Jesus’ primary message. We believe it should be ours.

We Start with the “Dominion Mandate”

*Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. God blessed them; and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and **subdue** it; and **rule over** the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” Genesis 1:26–28 (NASB)*

Two Key Words:

“rule over” = *radah* (Hebrew): take dominion, or exercise authority over, everything (that you can see) that willingly submits itself to you.

“subdue” = *kabash* (Hebrew): take dominion, or exercise authority—by force, if necessary—over everything that does not willingly submit itself to you.

At the time God said this to Adam, there was nothing to “subdue”. Sin had not yet entered mankind. There was nothing Adam could **see** that opposed or undermined him and his God-given authority. God’s use of “subdue” indicated that there *would, in the future*, be something that would oppose and seek to undermine Adam’s God-given authority. God was giving Adam a “heads-up” about what was to come. . . .

The Garden of Eden: Satan’s Plan and the Fall of Man

- Satan wanted to be like God. As a way of opposing and rising up against God Himself, Satan sought to steal the authority God had given Man.
- God’s covenant with Adam, the federal head of the human race
- Satan’s deceptive temptation
- The Fall
- When Man fell, two things were lost:
 - ☐ Mankind—Man came under the authority and influence of Satan.
 - ☐ Planet Earth

Did Satan’s plan work? In a sense, yes...

...But—God already had set in place a plan of His own!

And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel. Genesis 3:15 (NIV)

*In the days of those kings the God of heaven will **set up a kingdom** which will never be destroyed, and **that** kingdom will not be left for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever. Daniel 2:44 (NASB)*

The Big Questions on Satan's mind through Old Testament times:

- **How was God going to crush him and the kingdom of darkness?**
- **How was He going to establish His Kingdom on Earth?**

Jesus—The Divine Revolutionary!

- His birth: fully God, fully man (yet, sinless).
- Came to destroy the works of the enemy.
- Defeated (crushed) Satan at the cross.
- Provided a way of freedom and salvation for those held captive by Darkness.
- Planted and established the Kingdom.

Jesus' Primary Message: The Kingdom of God

From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Matthew 4:17 (ESV)

From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men lay hold of it. Matthew 11:12 (NIV 84)

The First Time Jesus Uses the Word "Church"

And Jesus said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven."

Matthew 16:17-19 (NASB)

Jesus will Build a Church that Advances against and Overcomes the Gates of Hades (kingdom of darkness).

WE ARE THE PLAN!

The Kingdom that Jesus established is to be advanced *through His Church!*

Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Luke 12:32 (ESV)

...so that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places. This was in accordance with the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord... Ephesians 3:10–11 (NASB)

The Purpose of the Church is to Advance the Kingdom of God in the Earth!

GOING DEEPER

- In what respects is this view of “church” different from ideas you may have previously encountered?
- How has this teaching on the fundamental nature and purpose of the Church challenged, impacted, or inspired you?

WEEK 3

**WHERE
ARE
WE
GOING?**

LET'S REVIEW...

Manna's Mission Statement

We believe our Manna Church mission is to glorify God by equipping His people to change their world and by planting churches with a world-changing vision.

We plan to accomplish this by:

- Helping God's people discover their individual gifts and callings, creating an environment where these may be developed, and deploying God's people into their world to be salt and light. Our Small Groups are designed to help accomplish this goal.
- Helping God's people build strong families and creating a community where individuals may find fulfillment and expression regardless of age or marital status.
- Planting churches with the same vision both domestically and abroad.

On the way, we are going to do three things:

- **Love God**—Inspiring Worship Experiences
- **Love Each Other**—Life-Giving Small Groups
- **Love the World**—World-Changing Outreach

Question: Who is the “we”?

Remember: “the church” is not a building. It is not a program or a formula or a particular kind of meeting. It’s not limited to pastors or people on the stage. “The church” is **people**.

We are Manna Church—**All** of us—**Together**. If you want to understand us, who we really are, and where we’re going—if you want to more fully understand the Manna family of which you’re a part—exploring the following key Scriptures is important.

KEY SCRIPTURES FOR MANNA CHURCH

*And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the **equipping** of the **saints for the work of service (or ministry)**, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but **speaking the truth in love**, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, **being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies**, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.*
Ephesians 4:11–16 (NASB)

We view leaders as **coaches** whose primary focus is to equip the rest of the body to do the work of ministry that they are called to do. The real ministers are not the paid pastoral staff (they are “equippers”). The real ministers are *you*.

The more we are connected, the more we are able to strengthen each other. It’s unlikely we can develop real, life-giving connections just during our Worship Experiences. It’s in **Small Groups** that we experience real connection and build genuine community. The more we, as a church, are connected in this way, the stronger we become and the more effective we will be in fulfilling our mission together.

*And Jesus said to him, “Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but (**it was revealed to you** by) My Father who is in heaven. I also say to you that you are Peter, and **upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.** I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.”*
Matthew 16:17–19 (NASB)

It is *Jesus* Who defines the character and nature that the Church needs to have. He began the Church to establish and advance His Kingdom and reach people here on earth. The Church is the hope of the world. It is His Plan A.

It is on the rock of the revelation of Who Jesus is and what He's come to do that Jesus builds His Church; and He builds His Church that way in order to push back the gates of Hell and rescue people from the kingdom of darkness. We are part of His Church. We are part of something greater than ourselves. We—the Church—are designed to individually and collectively go forward to make a difference.

Though there may be battles, Jesus promises that His Church, built His way, will prevail against forces that resist the advancement of His Kingdom.

*...if my people, who are called by my name, will **humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways**, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will **heal their land**. 2 Chronicles 7:14 (NIV 84)*

The enemy of our souls can resist us in a lot of ways. He can hinder us, and he can hurt us. But, the enemy can't stop our prayers. Our prayers are powerful. They matter.

God will use the prayer lives of humble, teachable believers to heal and bring about Kingdom change in their communities and nations (“their land”).

God can also use our prayers for unbelievers to come to a saving knowledge of Jesus. In 2 Corinthians 4:4, Paul says that the “god” of this world has blinded the eyes of unbelievers. In Acts 26:24, Jesus called Paul when he was first born again. He said, “I want

you to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light, from the power of Satan to the power of God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and be sanctified among those who have faith in me.” We can ask God to remove people’s blindness—remove the spiritual veils that cover the eyes of their hearts and minds.

The LORD will be awesome (terrifying to them) against them; for he will famish (starve) all the gods of the earth, and to him shall bow down, each in its place, all the lands of the nations.
Zephaniah 2:11 (ESV)

There are many “gods” in the world: money, materialism, sex, fame, power, success, cults, false religions, and various demonic influences. People all over the world worship all kinds of things—and their worship feeds the influence of these “gods”.

So, how does God plan to terrify the “gods of this earth”? By “starving” them. And, how does God plan to starve the gods of the earth?

We are commissioned by God to reach out and bring the Gospel to those who worship and are held captive by the gods of the earth. Our goal is to win them to Christ! When they become Christ-followers, they transfer their worship from idols and false gods to God. That starves the gods of the earth. It reduces their influence. It changes the spiritual atmospheres of families, communities, and nations.

We are committed to worldwide outreach. It is our passion to reach out to and win as many people as we can, wherever we can, whatever the cost. People who don't know Jesus yet, don't always live in safe circumstances, communities, or nations. Often, they can be found in very dangerous and dark places. So, there is often a cost to bringing the Gospel to the nations. We have demonstrated that we are willing to pay that cost and will continue to do so.

*With my great power and outstretched arm I made the earth and its people and the animals that are on it, and I give it to anyone I please.
Jeremiah 27:5 (NIV)*

Jesus died for people. That makes people infinitely valuable.

As Christians, our most important inheritance from God is not money or things. Our most important inheritance from God is people: the people we serve, the people we pray for, the people we invest in, the people we live among, the people that God causes us to be interested in and care about.

Since God “owns” all the people of the earth, we can ask Him for an inheritance. We can ask Him for our families, friends, and coworkers. We can ask for communities and nations and all sorts of people groups. We can ask God for “Kingdom influence” in their lives.

How would you complete this request: “Lord, give me _____”?
Would you fill it in with a name, a place, a nation, a group of

people? And, if God granted your request, what would you be willing to do to accomplish it? How would you invest yourself in obtaining that inheritance?

After these first three weeks of NextStep, you should have a richer understanding of who we are, why we are here, and where we are going.

And, hopefully, you're excited that “we” includes you.

The next question is this: ***‘What is my part in being more involved with Manna Church?’***

Think about how you might answer this question before we explore it in Week 4.

WEEK 4

**WHAT
IS
MY
PART?**

Welcome to Week 4 of NextStep. You made it!

Thank you for participating in NextStep. More importantly, thank you for being a part of Manna Church. Thank you for taking your time, your talent, your treasure, who God has called you to be, and adding them to the mix of other great people at Manna. We are so thankful to God that He chose to put you in our local church, and we can't wait to see who you become as you march forward on your journey with God.

Your being a part of Manna makes Manna better. Because you're a part of Manna, we're going to be able to do some things we couldn't do without you. You're a vital part of the Body of Christ, and you're a vital part of what God is doing here at Manna.

GIVE: THE VERB OF THE BIBLE

Let's talk a bit more about the idea of giving of your "time, talent, and treasure".

We all know that a sentence includes two parts: a subject and a verb. Every sentence has to have a subject and a verb.

So, if the whole Bible were a sentence, Who would the subject be? **Jesus**, of course.

Now, if the whole Bible is a sentence, and Jesus is the subject, what then, is the verb? We believe the verb of the Bible is "give".

Consider a very well-known Scripture verse: “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” John 3:16 (NIV)

In light of this verse, some might think that “love” is really the verb of the Bible. To be sure, “love” is a very important verb in the Bible. But, when you think about it, the essence of genuine love is to give without conditions. (The counterfeit of love is lust—to get and to take). God so loved the world that He (what action?) gave.

Giving is what empowers love. “Give” is the verb of the Bible.

“Give” cuts across the root of our sin problem—self (“I want for me”).

When we give, we crucify self, act like God, and set ourselves up to be blessed by Him in powerful and unexpected ways. Look at how this is illustrated by the following passage:

*So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit (**self**) but in humility (**give**) count others more significant than yourselves (**give**). Let each of you look not only to his own interests (**self**), but also to the interests of others (**give**). Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped (**self**), but made himself nothing (**give**), taking the form of a servant (**give**), being born in the likeness of*

men (**give**). And being found in human form, he humbled himself (**give**) by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross (**give**). Therefore God has highly exalted him (**result**) and bestowed on him the name that is above every name (**result**), so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (**result**).
Philippians 2:1-11 (ESV)

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE GIVE?

- **Love:** When you give, you demonstrate love. “But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” *Romans 5:8 (NIV 84)* When you give somebody your time; when you give them your affection; when you give them forgiveness they don’t deserve; when you give them something financial; when you give them a gift; when you give them your heart; when you give them your undivided attention; when you focus on them and listen to what they say, they feel loved by that. In all these ways and more, you demonstrate love.
- **Invest:** When you give, you invest. We are a church that reaches people all over the world. We do that through outreaches, church planting, and bringing the Kingdom to unreached and unengaged people groups. So, when you give financially, when you get on your knees to pray for other people, when you give of your time and talents to serve

others, you're investing. You've got a vital part and a stake in what we are doing.

- **Store up treasure:** When you give of your time, talent, and treasure to advance the Kingdom of God to help other people—to minister to others—you demonstrate that you are not your own. Our time is not our own, it belongs to God; our lives are not our own, they belong to God; our money is not our own, it belongs to God. Our talents, abilities, and capacities don't belong to us; they belong to God.

Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Matthew 6:19–21 (ESV)

- **Empower:** In the following story, the innkeeper did the ministry, but the Samaritan got the credit—because he gave sacrificially. His giving empowered the innkeeper to serve in ways the Samaritan by himself couldn't.

*But he, desiring to justify himself (**self**), said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” Jesus replied, “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side (**self**). So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side (**self**). But a*

*Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion (**give**). He went to him and bound up his wounds (**give**), pouring on oil and wine (**give**). Then he set him on his own animal (**give**) and brought him to an inn and took care of him. And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, 'Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you (**give**) when I come back.' Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?" He said, "The one who showed him mercy (**gave**)." And Jesus said to him, "You go, and do likewise." Luke 10:29-37 (ESV)*

- **Partnership:** At Manna, when we give of our treasure, we are investing in and partnering with people and ministries all across our community, our state, our nation, and the world. We are partnering with Kingdom work that is way beyond what we could do by ourselves.

As followers of Jesus, we can give in three ways:

- **Time:** Giving of our time means serving. Ask God to show you where you can give of your time, serving others.
- **Talent:** Giving of our talent involves participating in or leading one of Manna's Small Groups.
- **Treasure:** Giving of our treasure involves finances.
 1. **Tithe:** the first 10% of your increase.

2. **Offerings:** as God or your heart leads you. We have a special offering every year called the Reach Out Celebration (ROC) Offering. It's one of the most exciting events of our year!
3. **Alms:** in service of the poor.

**WHY DO WE GIVE?
BECAUSE WE BELONG TO JESUS.**

You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body. 1 Corinthians 6:19b-20 (ESV)

Which of the following Action Steps are you ready to take?

- We want you on the team! Become a **member** of Manna Church (if you haven't done so already)!
- Join **LeaderStep** (must have completed the Manna Membership Process and NextStep).
- Attend and participate in one of the many **Small Groups** at Manna.
- **Be a part of our SERVE Team!**

SO... WHAT'S *YOUR* NEXT STEP AFTER NEXTSTEP?

